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MUNICH, 22 April 1969 (Communist Area Analysis Department: USSR -- Michael Boll).

Summary: The recent Warsaw Pact summit meeting at Budapest underlined the continuing conflict between the Soviet Union and several of its smaller allies. Intent upon gaining a condemnation of China, the Soviet delegates discovered that even temporary concessions toward greater Pact democracy were insufficient to resolve the strong Rumanian objection to a collective disavowal of Peking. As things stand now, there is little hope for the Soviet project of subordinating the member countries to any Russian dominated supra-national integration. Yet, it is likely that future allied conferences will witness new attempts to raise the ideal of Pact equality to an operative principle.

On March 17th, the long awaited summit meeting of the Warsaw Pact convened in Budapest amidst wide speculation that major changes in the Pact's organizational structure were to take place. For some time prior to the meeting, the Soviet Press had waged a campaign for closer economic and military integration among the east European states as a defense against alleged Western attempts to undermine Communist unity. Faced with the prospect of further clashes with China along her extensive eastern frontier, the USSR was expected to demand closer harmony within the Warsaw defenses, including, perhaps, an appeal for supranational integration of Pact forces under Soviet command. The list of participants, comprised of the First Secretaries of each constituent Communist party and including the respective Prime Ministers and Ministers of Defense, lent credence to the notion that a major change was in the offing. Yet, to the surprise of all, perhaps to the

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participants as well, the expected three-day conference completed its business in less than two hours. The final communiqué stated that "the Political Consultative Committee heard a speech from the commander-in-chief of the [Warsaw Pact] armed forces which concerned measures that had been worked out by the Ministers of Defense and approved by the respective governments. The governmental representatives at the meeting discussed in detail and unanimously approved the resolution about the united armed forces and the united command, and other documents ... intended to perfect further the structure and command bodies of the Warsaw Pact."

Although the resolutions of the Warsaw Pact meeting remain, as expected, unpublished, reports from Eastern Europe following the conference have shed additional light on their content. In the Czechoslovakian party newspaper Rude Pravo (March 19), the then First Secretary Alexander Dubcek stated that the approved resolutions will "... increase the participation of the individual countries in solving tasks before the Warsaw command." These measures, he continued, "... will make it possible to settle the military affairs of our defense system more purposefully." Dubcek's optimistic inference of greater participation in command decisions by the smaller members of the alliance was reiterated by a Radio Prague editorial the same day. An achievement of the meeting, Radio Prague stated, "... was an agreement on the restructuring of the Warsaw Pact

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whereby more attention is paid to the wishes of the individual member countries and gives more weight to the idea of their equal rights."

It would appear, therefore, that the Budapest meeting, far from granting the Soviet desire for closer integration, actually extended the degree of equality possessed by the constituent states in military planning. The resolution establishing the Committee of the Defense Ministers, about which we know less, is not an entirely new departure, since participation of the ministers of defense in military decisions is provided for in the original Warsaw Pact statutes of 1955. The reaffirmation of their role at this time, however, may well underscore the east European wish to increase their part in future Warsaw Pact decisions.¹

In contrast to the vague military communiqué, the second document issued in full by the Budapest conference, an appeal for an all-European security conference, offered striking proof that differences between the USSR and the Pact countries had dominated the two-hour meeting. The restrained tone of this three-page appeal indicated that the lowest common denominator upon which all the countries could agree omitted several issues over which the USSR had recently shown great concern. The section dealing

¹On March 25rd, Radio Budapest, in reviewing the Defense Ministers Committee resolution stated that "the Council of Defense Ministers would meet regularly," and that the agenda of these meetings would "always be fixed jointly, which means that each of the topics held by a minister as important will be included in the agenda." (Emphasis supplied)

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with the status of Germany in the future of Europe was especially mild, noting only that recognition of the GDR and West Germany were sine qua non for a lasting European peace. Further, little space was devoted to castigating Bonn for the recent presidential elections held in the divided city, despite the fact that Warsaw Pact commander Yakubov-sky considered that situation so serious in February as to warrant a special meeting of Pact military commanders. Statements on Vietnam, the Yugoslav Party Congress and relations with China were also conspicuous by their absence, which seems to confirm the suspicion that no unanimous agreement on any of these important issues could be reached. With few exceptions, this appeal for a European security conference embodied formulas and statements that—at least in principle—most Western leaders could accept.²

What Really Occurred at Budapest?

Reports concerning the actual flow of negotiations at Budapest³, including the reasons for the five-hour delay of the official session, are understandably speculative. Still, the vast bulk of material points to one major factor hindering Russian plans for closer Pact cooperation—the issue of China.

²Speaking on Ottawa television in April, West German Foreign Minister Willy Brandt stated that the Budapest appeal "included a number of principles which we could accept from the general point of view," and predicted that a general European security conference "will come one day."

³Although the two-hour "official conference" was open to journalists, all the important negotiations occurred prior to the meeting itself.

Although the general topics for discussion at Budapest were determined well before March 17th, it is clear that the major Soviet-Chinese engagement along the Ussuri River of March 2nd interjected a new issue in the planned proceedings. According to an extensive report filed by a special correspondent in Budapest for the Yugoslavian weekly, Nin, Soviet ~~para~~ ^{leaders} ~~arrived~~ arrived in the Hungarian capital with a demand that the seven-nation conference give its full support in the conflict with Peking. Such a declaration had a precedent in a similar resolution passed by the Warsaw allies in 1961. In exchange, the Soviets promised to postpone the controversial issues of closer Pact integration and confine the proceedings to less sensitive topics, on which general agreement had already been reached. "Although tempting," Nin's correspondent, Miodrag Marovic writes, "this proposal was rejected by the Rumanian representative. The basic Rumanian argument has been: The Warsaw Pact was created in order to defend the European socialist countries against the imperialists so that it has no reason whatsoever to interfere, in any way, in the relations between the Soviet Union and China."⁴ Unknown to Marovic, the Rumanian Party leadership was even then prepared to send a letter of friendship to the impending Chinese Party Congress.

When the Rumanians firmly stated that they would not sign any final communiqué condemning the Peking regime,

⁴ Miodrag Marovic, "Blitz Conference," Nin (Nedeljne Informative Novine) March 23, 1969. See Radio Free Europe research report "Yugoslav Journalist Claims Budapest Conference Complete Failure" by Slobodan Stankovic.

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the way was open for other matters of dispute. According to Marovic, President Svoboda of Czechoslovakia raised the question of Soviet military behavior in Czechoslovakia in the post-invasion days—a very sensitive subject which had recently received much attention in his nation's as yet independent press. It is also clear that Dubcek must have agreed with the Rumanian intention to stay shy of the explosive Chinese question, since he was later to stress that Czechoslovak troops would not be sent to the Soviet-Chinese border.⁵ The Soviet leadership, prevented from achieving its main purpose and mindful that a display of further disunity within the Warsaw Pact would have a negative effect upon the world conference of Communist and Workers' parties scheduled for June in Moscow, apparently shelved ^{its} their plan for closer integration until some future date. In its place, several resolutions, drafted as early as the Sofia Warsaw Pact conference and granting a degree of equality, were presented for unanimous approval before the eyes and cameras of the world journalists at the final open meeting.

The Problems Remain

Organized in 1955 as a response to West Germany's admission into NATO, the Warsaw Pact was initially relegated to a minor role in the Soviet defense thinking. It was only in the present decade that Moscow began to consider converting the organization into a serious fighting force. In 1961, N. Khrushchev began to equip the east European armies with modern

⁵Radio France Domestic, March 27.

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weapons in an attempt to place much of the burden of conventional defense on the shoulders of his Warsaw allies. This new posture of strengthening the power and prestige of the border armies, however, inspired new demands by the Pact forces for increased democracy in military decisions. The most consistent obstacle to converting the Pact into a pliable tool of Moscow has been and will continue to be Rumania.

Rumania

As early as 1966, informed sources suggested that Bucharest had called for rotation of command within the Pact's military structure in addition to joint consultation prior to the use of nuclear weapons.⁶ Proud of her enormous industrial gains in the past decade and intent on chartering her own socialist path toward social reorganization, the Rumanian regime increasingly considered her previous subservient status as incompatible with her nationalistic aspirations. The following year, in sharp contrast to the other Pact members who had taken a strong anti-Israeli position at the bequest of Moscow, Bucharest concluded several trade agreements with Tel Aviv and refused to sign the condemnation of Israel which followed the June, 1967 ^{Communist} conference in Moscow. Rumania's relations with West Germany also caused deep concern in Moscow when Bucharest's extension of diplomatic relations to Bonn in January, 1967 formally broke the previously unanimous refusal of the east European states

⁶ See, for example, Strategic Survey 1966, published by the Institute for Strategic Studies, London, p. 21.

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(the USSR excluded) to recognize the Federal Republic. Shortly thereafter, Rumania refused to attend the Karlov Vary conference of Communist leaders—a meeting which affirmed support for East not West Germany.

It was, however, the Czechoslovak crisis of last fall that revealed most clearly the split between Bucharest and her allies. Refusing to participate in the invasion, Rumania denied the mantle of Pact unanimity, dealing a serious blow to Soviet prestige in his highly controversial matter. Since the invasion, persistent rumors have pointed to a Rumanian refusal to allow Warsaw Pact maneuvers in her territory. The strong Rumanian denunciations of the doctrine of "limited sovereignty" once again demonstrated Bucharest's distaste for any Pact activities which would further limit its national self-determination.

Czechoslovakia

Although the Rumanian defiance of Pact unanimity was, until last year, the major barrier to increased Pact solidarity, the August invasion of Czechoslovakia introduced a new unknown into future Pact activities. Besides proving that the Warsaw alliance could be used against one of the signatory nations,⁷ the occupation seriously undermined the reliability of the small but well respected Czechoslovak army. This has been remedied, in part, by the recent Status of Forces Agreement which allows the USSR to station troops (about 70,000 as of this writing) on Czechoslovak soil.

⁷A sidelight to the invasion was that Albania, as a result of this deed, officially severed all connections with the Warsaw alliance.

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Yet despite this measure, and the increased readiness of Soviet troops in the Ukraine, recent maneuvers in the "northern tier," comprising Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Poland, demonstrate Moscow's persistent concern about military preparedness in this strategic area.

It is difficult to see how the USSR can extricate herself from the dilemma caused by the invasion, since active cooperation between Czechoslovaks and Soviet occupiers remains tantamount to treason. Increased concentrations of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia can hardly constitute a solution, when such a violation of the Status of Forces Agreement would only augment Czechoslovak unreliability. Undoubtedly, the task of re-integrating the Czechoslovakian army within the Warsaw Pact will pose a problem for some time to come.

China -- The Need for a Two-Front Defense

Although the Warsaw statutes specify that the alliance is restricted to the European theater of defense, the recent clashes between the Soviet Union and Mainland China along the Ussuri River has intensified Soviet efforts to subordinate further the east European allies to the needs and requirements of Moscow. Published reports indicate that Soviet troop concentrations in the Far East have diminished in the past four years so as to require reinforcements if the anticipated Chinese troop build-up is to be neutralized.⁸ Although rumors that Pact forces might be

⁸The 1964-1965 Military Balance of the Institute of Strategic Studies listed seventeen Soviet divisions in the Far East compared with fifteen listed for 1968-1969.

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used for garrison duty in the East have been firmly denied by the respective Pact leaders, the diversion of Soviet troops from European assignments will increase the significance of the Warsaw Pact as a mainline force in eastern Europe. This, in turn, will increase Soviet pressure for closer harmony among the allies.

The Coming Decade

Throughout the fourteen years of its existence, the Warsaw Pact has buttressed the dominant Soviet position in eastern Europe. To be sure, threats to that hegemony have erupted, as witnessed by the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the abortive Bulgarian military coup of 1965, and the more recent invasion of Czechoslovakia. Still, the alliance has served the Soviets well, providing the opportunity to penetrate deeply into the internal affairs of the constituent countries under the guise of maintaining eternal vigilance against the western world. The Budapest meeting, however, shows that Soviet domination is now liable to serious challenge, and the coming decade of the 1970's will surely see a more concerted attempt by the junior partners to convert the idea of equality into an operative principle. In contrast to past, violent attempts to achieve full national sovereignty, the next ten years is likely to revolve about more subtle, quid pro quo negotiations, as was illustrated by the Soviets at the summit conference.

In an era of anticipated détente with the United States, including some agreement of nuclear limitations, Moscow

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will certainly conclude that future defense arrangements will lean more heavily upon conventional forces, thus promoting the value of the existing Pact. Further, the USSR is unlikely to allow willingly any diminution of her heretofore dominant role. Threatened on the East by China and faced with a resurgence of NATO arising from the Czechoslovakian invasion, the USSR will continue her attempts to rally the Warsaw armies to the supranational goal of defending Europe's socialist commonwealth. As of now, however, it appears that objections to closer integration with Moscow will persist, and short of military force, it is questionable whether the current trends toward disunity can be stemmed. The recent Budapest meeting may be only the first of many unsuccessful Russian efforts to reverse the process which has decisively undermined the postwar Soviet empire in eastern Europe.