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# Research

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### MOSCOW'S SEARCH FOR UNITY

On 10 March 1965, after more than a week of acrimonious debate, the March Consultative Meeting of 19 communist parties in Moscow issued its final communique. The event may be regarded as something of a milestone in international communist politics, particularly as regards Moscow's behavior in this arena, and one may therefore be justified in taking its first anniversary as an occasion for reviewing the developments of the intervening year. For those who promoted it, the Consultative Meeting was by no means much of an achievement. Held in the name of unity, it clearly depicted, and may actually have aggravated, the pervasive disunity of the international communist movement. While it might seem purely semantic and politically artificial to ascribe the quality of a milestone event to this poor shadow of Khrushchev's mistakenly over-advertised world conference of the fraternal parties, it is redeemed as a focus at least for study by a number of factors.

First of all, by simply holding this rump gathering the new Soviet leadership in a sense wiped the slate clean of Khrushchev's commitment to an international conference. Why they did it in this particular manner is not easily fathomed. But in any event they were now more or less free to hammer out their own strategy without the shackles of previous commitments and the difficult legacy of Khrushchev's strong-arm tactics. Moreover, the political context in which they had to operate had by this point assumed some clarity: One, it was clear that the depth of the Sino-Soviet rift had not diminished in the least as a result of Khrushchev's fall and that China had no intention of putting the overt manifestations of the split under wraps. Two, it was clear that, if Chinese intransigence continued, the linch pin of Soviet policies aimed at international communist unity would be,

as it was under Khrushchev, Moscow's ability to cajole or influence that broad spectrum of essentially pro-Soviet parties which placed a higher value on their independence and polycentrism than on international unity inspired by Moscow. Finally, it was clear that the Vietnam conflict would be a crucial symbol around which the debate on unity would revolve.

In March 1966, a year after the Consultative Meeting, the political context described above remains fundamentally unaltered: the Chinese are more intransigent than ever; the anti-centralist parties, such as the Italian and Rumanian CPs (to which must now be added the North Vietnamese and North Korean) continue to hold the trump cards; and Vietnam remains the symbolic focus of debate. All this is to say that the Soviets have not made any noticeable progress in pursuit of unity. It is obvious that they have devoted a great deal of effort to this cause. During the year 1965, according to Brezhnev and other Soviet spokesmen, the CPSU held consultations aimed at international unity with more than 60 fraternal parties. During the fall of 1965 the pace of consultations with East European parties, in which international communist unity was on the agenda, reached frenetic proportions. Yet, if the volume of the Soviet effort is apparent, its precise direction is by no means clear. One can certainly formulate in utopian terms what the leaders of the CPSU no doubt regard as desirable in their relations with the rest of the communist world. But the relevant issue is what they regard as possible and how they propose to achieve it. This is a question of strategy, of the correlation of ends and means. Khrushchev's was a strategy of showdown with the Chinese; his successors rejected it as unworkable and dangerous. But have they developed their own strategy?

#### The March Meeting -- Before and After

Even after one year it is not altogether obvious why the Soviets chose finally to hold the March Consultative Meeting. They had retreated steadily from the world conference which Khrushchev had posted for 15 December and could very well have retreated the last mile. After all, it will be recalled, considerable doubt prevailed in the West until the very last minute as to whether the meeting would be held or not. On balance, the decision to proceed with the Meeting was probably a compromise between competing considerations aimed at minimizing losses.

In October and November 1964 the new regime of Brezhnev and Kosygin appears to have been willing to contemplate and explore with Peking a significant reassessment of their relations -- but only within very critical limitations. As shown by sweeping policy



pronouncements issued within hours of their full assumption of power, they were not prepared to make substantive concessions regarding the doctrines laid down by the 20th and 22nd Party Congresses, to which the Chinese remained unalterably opposed. They were, however, prepared, in return for an end to polemics and a moratorium on organized factionalism, to normalize economic and technical relations and to put overall state relations on a more amicable footing. In all likelihood they were also prepared to terminate all efforts to isolate or excommunicate Peking in an international forum, efforts which were not proving very fruitful in any case.

In view of Moscow's ideological firmness, one may doubt whether Chou En-lai came to the 7 November Celebrations with an open mind. In any event, the discussions which took place there were clearly without positive result and Chinese attacks on the new regime, in an ascending curve of intensity, began almost immediately thereafter when Kosygin passed through Peking going to and from Hanoi in February. By mid-February at least it was surely apparent to the new Soviet leadership that they were in their relations with Peking in precisely the same situation as pertained in September, the one significant change being that they had unilaterally chosen to halt open polemics. They had evidently come to the conclusion that polemics did not influence Sino-Soviet relations at all and had an adverse effect on the CPSU's relations with other parties.

Meanwhile there remained the problem of the international conference. A world forum was clearly out of the question. But a number of important parties could be counted on for a conclave of lesser stature and, in any event, the Soviets had little to gain by conceding totally on the conference issue while talks with the Chinese were still possible. Once such talks had proven fruitless the Soviets surely felt themselves under some pressure to come through on their threat. In addition the commitments of those parties which had explicitly supported a conference or at least gone along with the idea were worth redeeming. The willingness of Cuba to attend such a conference was surely an important factor. Thus, in spite of the fact that the Consultative Meeting would be a signal indication of how far Soviet influence over the world communist movement had fallen, the Soviets felt more would be gained than lost by holding it.

Each of the 19 parties attending the Meeting (the CPUSA attended as an observer only) came with its own interests to defend and its own objectives to advance. All were persuaded that unity should be sought; the critical issue was the methods to be used and the context in which unity was to be, if possible, resurrected.

The Italians came to the Meeting for the same reason that the Rumanians stayed away, to ensure that international unity was not sought in ways which jeopardized the independence of individual parties. In this aim they were probably supported by the British CP and the Cubans as well as perhaps by the Poles. The French CP as well as several parties threatened by Chinese factionalism, such as the Indian, were doubtless hopeful that a strong anti-Chinese condemnation, perhaps supported by some "organizational" formula, would emerge. In most respects the final communique issued after the meeting reflected the Italian line. The purely consultative, i.e., non-binding nature of the talks was underscored. It was admitted that differences between parties would take a long time to overcome. Respect for the equality and independence of all parties was hailed as the essential principle of proper inter-party relations. The communique clearly implied that bilateral and limited multilateral consultations were to be the devices used in the near future to promote unity. It called in general for "unity of action" against imperialism, but this slogan only subsequently acquired a polemical connotation and was in March merely an innocuous platitude.

Yet the Directorate of the Italian CP shortly felt the need to voice certain "reservations" about elements in the communique.<sup>1</sup> The disputatious issue was clearly that of a new international conference of the communist parties. This was the only substantive point on which the communique diverged from the Italian line, and even then it did so only with the most extensive qualifications.<sup>2</sup> The communique stated that "international meetings...are effective means of exchanging views and experiences..." with the aim of "working out united positions in the struggle for common aims."

Therefore, in the opinion of the participants, active and all-sided preparations for a new international meeting, to be held at a suitable time, fully conform to the interests of the world communist movement. To convene the new meeting and to insure its success, it is necessary to prepare it both as to its content and as to its organization, actively to create by joint efforts favorable conditions for all fraternal parties to participate in its preparation and to work tirelessly for an improvement of the atmosphere in the world communist movement. The meeting should serve the common cause of all communists.

1) L'Unita, 23 March 1965.

2) The sensitivity of the Italian party on this issue is best illustrated by the speech of its chief delegate to the Meeting, Enrico Berlinguer, partially revealed in Rinascita, 13 March 1965.



The communique then went on to call for a preliminary conference of the 81 parties which gathered in 1960 and in turn for bilateral consultations to precede even this preliminary conclave. This was a far cry from the old Khrushchev call for a showdown conference, which the Italian delegate subjected to vigorous criticism. Indeed, taken literally, the communique placed the new conference at the end of the process of retrieving inter-party unity rather than at the beginning.

Knowing the results of the Consultative Meeting and the Italian reaction to it, one can attempt to reconstruct what may have been the Soviet bargaining position. The Italians wanted to avoid two things: a) a polemical attack on the Chinese and b) a call for a showdown conference or any sort of conference in the near future. Now it is possible that the CPSU went into the Consultative Meeting looking for both elements. But having themselves chosen to forego open attacks on Peking, the Soviets in all probability regarded an accusatory statement as having rather low priority. Yet the Soviets must have insisted, and strongly, on some sort of call for a new international conference, otherwise it would not have been included in the communique over the evident opposition of the Italians and others. The anti-conference faction succeeded in turn in diluting this call as much as was verbally possible. It is impossible to assess how strong a statement on the conference the Soviets would have liked to issue; but the Soviet delegates must have numbered among the "some comrades" whom Italian delegate Berlinguer criticized for wanting to propose dates and deadlines. Perhaps several interpretations of the maneuvering behind the conference clause of the communique can be advanced. Yet, however the evidence is arranged, one can not avoid the conclusion that the CPSU delegation threw its weight behind a call for a new conference and probably sought a stronger statement than actually resulted.

While, on the face of it, Soviet pursuit of a new international conference at this point did not appear markedly out of character, this maneuver did not make a great deal of sense tactically. After all, the March Meeting was itself a mere face-saving shadow of the conference for which Khrushchev campaigned, a campaign that was surely recognized by all as destined for disaster. Why should the new Soviet leadership insist on pumping life back into a scheme which, as Berlinguer warned, "risks bringing us back to a situation like the very grave and threatening one through which our movement went between the end of 1963 and the first part of 1964..."? Furthermore, having insisted on keeping the conference issue open, why should they have agreed to a formulation which would only harden the resistance of such parties as the British and Italian CPs to a showdown meeting against the Chinese? Would it not have been wiser to drop the matter for the moment and let the anti-conference parties

come to their own conclusion at a later date that a meeting without the Chinese and their allies would be necessary after all? From an immediate tactical point of view, the only satisfactory answer to these questions is that the Soviets felt that only an explicit mention of a future conference would evidence their influence over the March consultations. Silence on the issue would be taken by Peking as a sign of weakness.

Immediately following the release of the Consultative Meeting's communique, the Soviets issued a lengthy interpreting statement on it.<sup>3</sup> This statement might serve as a monument to the art of esoteric communication. With the utmost care it ascribed a note of urgency to the conference clause which was not to be found in the original document. Stating that the question of a new international conference had "found due reflection" in the communique, the Pravda interpretation went on to suggest that the conclusions of the 1960 world conference needed up-dating and added, "It is necessary now to make a creative assessment of [recent] experience." Only the movement "as a whole" can make such reassessments, Pravda continued; therefore the Consultative Meeting regarded a new international conference as appropriate. "No one regards the conference as a panacea," said the editorial; "great and prolonged effort" will be required. But "the participants of the Consultative Meeting spoke unanimously against passive waiting..." Thus the Soviets attempted to portray the new international conference as something definitely on the agenda for the future, if not necessarily the near future. During the weeks immediately following the Consultative Meeting, several West European parties, led by the Italians, indicated quite clearly that they did not regard a new conference as on the agenda at all even though they might support the scheme "in principle."<sup>4</sup> Only the French CP showed unequivocal support. From East Europe support for a new conference appeared to be largely pro forma, as part of a general acceptance of the results of the Consultative Meeting. While the GDR went a bit further than the norm in acclaiming the idea, this support was more than negated by continued silence from Bucharest.

For a short period Soviet media continued to reflect a commitment to the idea of a new conference stronger than warranted by the language of the communique and the compromise which it represented. Thus Radio Moscow stated that while bilateral and multilateral meetings between the fraternal parties were very much in order, they were not themselves sufficient and that a new

3) Pravda, 11 March 1965.

4) See FWA Background Information, "West Europe's CPs and the Conference", by William McLaughlin, 25 March 1965.



international conference was definitely necessary.<sup>5</sup> But the rising level of negative comment from important parties of West Europe and, one may assume, cautionary signals from East Europe were casting serious doubt on the wisdom of a new Soviet campaign for a world conference of the communist parties. In addition, the Chinese issued their response to the March Meeting on 22 March in the form of a violent broadside against the new Soviet leadership, the most furious attack up to that date since Khrushchev's fall. While the Soviets had no reason to expect much better from Peking, this onslaught made it quite impossible for them to advertise the program of the March Meeting, with its call for a new conference, as a promising avenue toward healing the Sino-Soviet breach. Henceforth, or indeed from the very start, it could only be a program for the effective purpose of uniting the world's parties against the Chinese. This was precisely what the Rumanians, the Italians, and other polycentrists refused to underwrite.

The Presidium of the CPSU evidently came to the conclusion by the end of March that it should somewhat soften its stand. As a consequence the March Plenum of the Central Committee, after hearing Suslov's report on the Consultative Meeting, produced a resolution which removed some of the urgency from the Soviet line on the international conference, bringing it much closer to the actual wording of the 10 March communique.<sup>6</sup> The shift in innuendo was slight but sufficient to signal a relaxation of the Soviet position. On 2 April 1965 the Central Committee's bi-monthly Partiinaia Zhizn went to press with an article which may well be regarded as the capstone of this phase of the development of Soviet policy.<sup>7</sup> Although printed in the journal of the apparatchiki, as opposed to the more ideologically oriented Kommunist, the article, judging by its content, was clearly intended as inter-party discourse. Drawing extensively from Marx, Engels, Lenin, and the experience of the three Communist Internationals, the author forcefully asserted the pre-eminent importance of operational unity among the world's communist parties. While subscribing unreservedly to the principles of equality, independence, and non-interference in inter-party relations, he insisted that these principles could not be interpreted to the detriment of effective unity. At the same time, however, he conceded that the international communist movement had outlived the time when the notion of a single leading center

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(5) Radio Moscow in English to Southeast Asia, 21 March 1965.

(6) Pravda, 27 March 1965; see also Pravda's lead editorial, 29 March 1965.

(7) Ye. Bugaev "Marxism-Leninism on International Unity and Cohesion of the Communist Parties", Partiinaia Zhizn No. 7, April 1965, p. 50ff.

(i.e., Moscow) could be considered appropriate, admitting: "Attempts to resurrect forms of mutual relations between parties, which were justified in the past, may have negative consequences..." The article concluded with strong arguments for a new international conference, but conceded that the immediate focus must be on "careful preparations," on "improving the atmosphere," on bilateral and multilateral talks, and on terminating open polemics. It also stated, in flagrant contradiction to historical truth, "Neither Marx, Engels, nor Lenin ever considered that any ideological struggle, any disagreement between parties, ought to culminate in an organizational schism."

In the political context of the moment, the message which the Soviet leadership intended to convey through the Partiinaiia Zhizn' article and its relaxation on the conference issue is fairly apparent. First it wanted to declare that it regarded the pursuit of inter-party unity as the top-priority problem the moment and that it felt other parties should be prepared to sacrifice certain parochial interests in that cause. But secondly it wanted to lay to rest, as fully as possible, any fears that Moscow was either hell-bent on forging an anti-Chinese front or seeking to revive the organizational discipline of the Comintern-Cominform periods. As for the international conference, the Soviets continued to regard it as on the agenda, but the pressure was, for the moment, somewhat reduced.

#### "United Action" -- Phase One

By all appearances, the tactical retreat which the Soviet leaders executed in the month following the March Consultative Meeting emerged from their realization that through a preoccupation with the conference issue they were simply boxing themselves into the same blind alley into which Khrushchev had gotten himself. Why it took them a month to bring this situation into focus is not altogether clear. The obvious difficulties encountered over the conference clause at the Meeting and Berlinguer's outspoken critique should have been warning enough that, when those parties which favored a conference stepped forward to be counted, there were going to be some very large and embarrassing gaps in the line. In all likelihood, the Soviets felt that, having wheedled the conference clause out of the reluctant delegates, they now had some sort of bludgeon which it would have been a waste of previous effort not to use. Perhaps it is a credit to their perspicacity that they indeed allowed themselves to be disabused of this notion in as little time as it took.

Discontented rumblings from the parties of West Europe were not the only factors which dictated a shift in the Soviet line. Since the turn of the year a new political constellation was beginning to emerge in communist Asia, a combined result of Soviet efforts, American bombs, and the fact that the polycentric dynamic is not limited to Europe. The principal stars in this new constellation were North Vietnam and North Korea.



For the past several years, during which the Sino-Soviet dispute had boiled into the open, North Vietnam and North Korea had been properly regarded as the principal allies of Peking. It is true that, for internal as well as international reasons, the North Vietnamese party had kept its anti-Soviet position relatively moderate, had attempted to retain some of the credentials of neutrality, and had even aspired to something of a mediating role between the feuding giants. But when the dividing line was drawn on the ideological questions in dispute and on the issue of organizing the world communist movement, North Vietnam came down with North Korea on the Chinese side. In the months after Khrushchev's fall, however, it appeared that, if the Soviets could manage to blur or erase the sharp dividing line and create instead a suitable no-man's land, both North Vietnam and North Korea might find themselves willing to move away from Peking.

In the case of North Vietnam, it was the escalation of the Vietnam conflict, even before systematic American bombing of the North began, which persuaded both the USSR and Ho Chi-minh that their relations should be reappraised. Alexei Kosygin's trip to Hanoi in February 1965 was intended to initiate this reappraisal; the beginning of regular American air raids during his stay gave it impetus.<sup>8</sup> For the quid of Soviet military and economic aid the DRV promised the quo of improved relations with the USSR, minimization of open ideological differences, and possibly some effort to influence Peking. The Soviets paid for their new-found foothold in Hanoi with the hard coin of economic and military assistance which North Vietnam badly needed; but for all this, they found the relationship to be extremely delicate and the influence that they seemed to acquire in Hanoi very tenuous and difficult to exploit, both in the Sino-Soviet context and as regarded the conduct of the Vietnam conflict. Despite the Soviet commitment, North Vietnam remained surprisingly immune to pressure from Moscow. Indeed, an ill-timed Soviet effort to bring the conflict to the conference table in late February, in the apparent absence of clear North Vietnam agreement, put the new Moscow-Hanoi relationship under a severe strain which was only eased when First Secretary Le Duan visited the USSR in mid-April.

The events behind the improvement of Soviet-North Korean relations are rather more difficult to assess, in part because of the lack of a clear motive in the form of an external crisis, as in the Vietnam case. It appears, in any event, that the Kim Il-song leadership chose to exploit the USSR's new found interest in Asia and its post-Khrushchev willingness to avoid

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(8) For an appraisal of this turn in Soviet policy see CAA Background Information "Soviet Objectives in Vietnam: A Review" by Fritz Ermarth, January 1966.

showdown tactics in the Sino-Soviet rift for the purpose of increasing the overall independence of the North Korean regime. An improvement of relations with the Soviet Union could serve as both a symbol of this independence and a lever against China. The ground work for this improvement was laid during a visit to Pyongyang by Kosygin (on his way home from North Vietnam) which resulted in a remarkably warm communique. In a speech on the 95th anniversary of Lenin's birth, CPSU Secretary Pyotr Demichev gave a positive appraisal to both Soviet penetrations into the hitherto Chinese sphere of influence stating "... it is evident that there have appeared a specific group of general political questions on which the positions of our party and the positions of the Workers' Party of Vietnam and the Korean Workers' Party coincide and have come closer together."<sup>9</sup> In May the new Soviet-North Korean relationship was placed on a firmer footing when a North Korean military delegation was given a high-level reception in Moscow and, after nearly a month's stay, departed with new Soviet promises of military aid.<sup>10</sup>

Neither North Vietnam nor North Korea sought, by improving relations with Moscow, to shift sides in the Sino-Soviet dispute. On the contrary, both sought a position somewhere in the middle where they could be courted by each side, accept the assistance of each side while rejecting undesirable pressures. For their part the Soviets could only take advantage of and promote these new relationships if they avoided forcing either Hanoi or Pyongyang to take a clear-cut stand on any new Sino-Soviet issue. There could hardly have been a more destructive issue than that of a new international conference, the only purpose of which could have been, in the nature of things, to draw a clear line between the pro-Soviet and pro-Peking parties. As early as the March Meeting, Berlinguer had aptly pointed out to his Soviet counterparts:

Recently...there have appeared signs and possibilities of an improvement of relations with the parties that have positions close to those of the Chinese Party...

We are profoundly happy about all this and we appreciate the steps which the comrades of the Soviet Communist Party have made in this direction; but precisely the prospect of these possibilities of improvement of the political climate between parties must, in our opinion, dissuade us from every act that risks compromising these possibilities....

During the month immediately following the March Meeting, the import of these words seems to have struck the Soviet leadership with increased force, perhaps in conjunction with the

(9) Pravda, 23 April 1965. See also CAA Background Information "North Korea: Back In the Middle" by j.c.k., 7 May 1965.

(10) TASS, 31 May 1965.



unexpected difficulties they were encountering in Hanoi over the possible settlement of the Vietnam conflict. They concluded surely that great care would have to be exercised to preserve their Asian bridgeheads. Significantly, Demichev's major address of 22 April, mentioned above, did not raise the issue of a new international conference and somewhat downplayed even the importance of the March Consultative Meeting, saying that "some comrades" had criticized the Meeting but had not come up with any better suggestions.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile developments on the strictly Sino-Soviet axis were not entirely at a standstill. As already pointed out, Kosygin's two February stopovers in Peking had not yielded any improvement in relations. In March, precisely when the Consultative Meeting was concluding its labors, Chinese students in Moscow provoked an ugly clash with Soviet militia before the American embassy which could only be suppressed by the regular armed forces. The Chinese immediately represented this incident as a conflict between Asian revolutionaries (since some Vietnamese and Korean students were around at the time) and anti-revolutionary, pro-American Soviet power. There ensued an exchange of angry diplomatic notes. Then came the major Chinese attack of 22 March.

The Soviets decided, however, that things could not simply be permitted to rest at this rock-bottom level. First of all, the involvement of the Soviet Union in Vietnam demanded that some working arrangement on the transit of military and economic goods be established with China. Chinese obstructionism seems to have begun as soon as Soviet aid began to move. As became apparent only some time later, the Chinese objected to giving the Soviets any special rights to Chinese air corridors and bases and sought to pressure the Soviets into maximum use of sea traffic so as to increase the chances of a direct Soviet-American confrontation. Apparently some arrangement was worked out, but it took considerable time and represented far less than the Soviets desired. -In the meantime there were acrid recriminations behind the scenes. -Second, the Soviets probably felt that their reputation as chief guardian of communist unity and

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- (11) During the first half of 1965 developments occurred in Soviet-Cuban relations which could be regarded as roughly comparable to Soviet penetration of pro-Chinese Asia. Cuba had been considered something of a neutral in the Sino-Soviet dispute with her "pocket book in Moscow and her heart in Peking". On 13 March Castro delivered a major speech which destroyed this conception. He, first of all, exhibited a towering vexation with the Sino-Soviet dispute itself, declaring that it encouraged imperialism. He then criticized China, without directly naming her, for engaging in factional activity inside Cuba. While he did not spare criticism of the USSR, his overall line was basically coincident with Moscow's regarding the Sino-Soviet rift; therefore Pravda printed his speech in full on 18 March. Throughout the year Cuban-Chinese relations continued to deteriorate, with an open clash coming in January 1966.

the more responsible party to the dispute depended upon keeping some sort of dialogue with Peking open, even in the face of obvious rebuffs. Impelled by this dual motivation the Soviets broached to the Chinese on 3 April a proposal for a tri-party "summit conference" on the Vietnam issue to embrace the USSR, the DRV, and China. Through silence or an explicitly negative response, the Chinese indicated their refusal to participate in such a conference. On 17 April, which must have been very shortly after the Chinese refusal, the CPSU sent a harsh letter to the Chinese apparently setting forth the charges of obstruction of Soviet aid to Vietnam and blasting their refusal to cooperate in united actions. As the Chinese put it, "... your letter of 17 April arbitrarily abuses us and even goes so far as to slander us as 'encouraging the aggressor'".<sup>12</sup>

The Soviet Union probably presented its proposal for a tri-party summit to the North Vietnamese at the same time they broached it to China. This occurred, significantly, just before Le Duan came to Moscow to negotiate further Soviet military aid and to define the limits which Hanoi's war plans placed upon Soviet diplomacy regarding the Vietnam conflict. It is most likely that the North Vietnamese took the realistic view that Peking's decision was the critical one, that they would accept if Peking did -- which Peking did not. The Le Duan visit to Moscow may indeed have been arranged after the tri-party summit had failed to meet Chinese approval. In any case, the North Vietnamese seem to have shown no willingness to exert pressure, at least public pressure, on China at this point. That there may have been hidden difficulties between Peking and Hanoi is suggested by the fact that Le Duan's stopover in Peking on his way home resulted in no communique. But the warm communique signed a few days previously in Moscow contained no hint of the accusations which the Soviets had just, on 17 April, leveled at Peking.<sup>13</sup> The rising Soviet commitment to Vietnam was apparently making no dent in Hanoi's policy of public neutrality.

(12) This material is taken from a letter allegedly sent by the Chinese to Moscow in July 1965 which came into the hands of Edward Crankshaw "from an East European Communist source." It was an apparent answer to the 17 April CPSU letter and subsequent Soviet statements set forth a detailed indictment of Soviet "collaboration with imperialism" over Vietnam, and rejected charges of Chinese obstructionism. This letter appears subsequently to have been circulated among other parties and its substance, if not every detail, was publicly revealed via the joint People's Daily/Red Flag editorial of 11 November 1965. Indirect information from the French CP suggests that this letter was delivered to the Soviets on 14 July 1965 and it will be referred to as the 14 July letter. See Edward Crankshaw in the Observer, 14 November 1965.

(13) TASS, 18 April 1965.



This, then, was the CPSU's situation at the end of April: Neither a campaign for a new international communist conference nor direct appeals to China on the Vietnam issue has proved to be serviceable strategies for the pursuit of interparty unity. The first strategy required much too painful decisions from too many reluctant parties; the second foundered on Chinese intransigence. The CPSU needed a new strategy, one which would not force painful choices on its own stubborn allies or the neutral parties, one which would, if it did not produce Chinese cooperation, at least isolate them and put them in as bad a light as possible. The new strategy focused on the slogan "unity of action." The Soviet line publicly crystallized around this formula in a major Pravda editorial of 20 June 1965.

To trace the precise semantic lineage of the slogan "unity of action" would be a tedious and perhaps not very fruitful exercise. The slogan seems to have cropped up in various forms since the beginning of 1965, particularly in the March Meeting. Throughout the first half of 1965 a variety of parties across the spectrum of political loyalty, including the North Vietnamese and North Korean, had subscribed to it. But it only acquired a clearly polemical connotation after the 20 June Pravda editorial and especially after the 14 July Chinese letter, which denounced the slogan as a Soviet subterfuge.<sup>14</sup> This paper will concentrate on the formula "unity of action in support of Vietnam against imperialism" where the center of gravity of Soviet discourse on the subject appears to lie.

On one point one can be quite certain: the Chinese are absolutely correct in regarding the slogan as an anti-Chinese device. For what is, after all, its real political content? Apart from North Vietnam, there are only two communist powers involved in the Vietnam conflict, the Soviet Union and Communist China. In terms of material assistance to Hanoi, the "unity of action" of other parties, in and out of power, is of more or less marginal significance. In terms of political and diplomatic pressure on the United States, it is of equal insignificance. For is the communist world supposed to rise as one man, united in action, in a wave of strikes, demonstrations, diplomatic representations, and other adventures which would either be irrelevant or place the national goals of specific parties in jeopardy? This is hardly likely to happen. Clearly "unity of action" is a rallying cry designed to put pressure not on the United States but, first, upon parties which on any other terms would refuse to line up against China, and second, upon China itself to modify its anti-Soviet stand. The Soviets calculate that "unity of action" has such an altruistic ring that, like "mother and home," nobody can object to it.

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(14) A truly comprehensive history of the "unity of action" line would have to disentangle further complications. It would have to distinguish between "unity of action" (yedinstvo deistviia) and "joint actions" (sovmestniye deistviia), which seem at various times to have been used almost interchangeably; the latter formula would seem to have more limited, almost bilateral implications in contrast to the more sweeping scope of the former. It would also have to determine whether there is anything politically significant in the difference between "unity of action against imperialism" and "unity of action in support of Vietnam." The assumption is made here that these semantic modulations are not too crucial.

When and how precise in form the "unity of action" line began to take shape in Soviet councils is difficult to pinpoint. But by the end of May 1965 a distinct shift in Soviet strategy was beginning to emerge. From 19 to 31 May CPSU Secretary Boris Ponomarev led a delegation to Paris to consult with the French CP, the staunchest Soviet ally among the European parties. In the middle of the talks, the French First Secretary Waldek Rochet went to Geneva to consult his Italian counterpart, Luigi Longo. The communique resulting from the Paris conversations contained conventional appeals for inter-party unity on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and the 1957 and 1960 statements; but, according to the Pravda version, it contained no reference either to the March Meeting or a new international conference.<sup>15</sup> There can be little doubt that Ponomarev told his French colleagues that the CPSU had decided to drop the international conference issue in favor of a platform built around the Vietnam theme. This may have come as something of a shock to the faithful French CP. In the middle of June it issued a careful revision of its line on the conference; it declined, in part to save face and in part because the Soviets were not to drop the conference altogether either, to drop the issue of a new conference but stated that such a conference should be held specifically to help Vietnam and not to resolve the ideological problems of communist disunity.<sup>1</sup> About the same time CPSU Secretary and Presidium member Mikhail Suslov issued in Sofia an impassioned call for inter-party unity, arguing that national parochialism is incompatible with proletarian internationalism but failing to mention a new international conference.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, in the Pravda editorial of 20 June, the CPSU gave a more or less well-defined picture of its new line, in the wake, significantly, of another major Chinese attack entitled "Carry the Struggle Against Khrushchev Revisionism Through to the End."<sup>18</sup> The Pravda editorial was appropriately titled to signal the new line: "Unity of Action is an Imperative Demand of the Anti-Imperialist Struggle". It began, in reference to the March Consultative Meeting, by stating, "One can say without exaggeration that the problems which were examined by its participants are still the center of attention of the world communist movement." In other words, little progress had been made since March. Nevertheless, by Pravda's count, more than 38 parties had indicated their agreement with the results of the Meeting.

(15) Pravda, 1 June 1965.

(16) Raymond Guyot in France Nouvelle, 16-22 June 1965.

(17) Pravda, 5 June 1965

(18) Hsinhua, 13 June 1965.



In contrast to its previous interpretations, the CPSU now placed the entire stress of the March Meeting on the theme of "unity of action."

Even with the existence of differences on the political line, on many important problems of theory and tactics, it is possible and necessary to press for unity of action in the struggle against imperialism, for universal peace, for the vital interests and historic tasks of the working class. This thesis expresses the truth that even at present..., even under the present serious differences, there exist a real possibility and need of achieving unity in practical actions...

Joint actions in the struggle for common aims--this is the most reliable road to overcoming existing disagreements. This situation reflects the truth that joint actions are dictated not only by the requirements of the struggle for socialism, against the common enemy, but also by the international requirements of the communist movement. In fact, this is the basic link in the struggle for the unity of the communist movement and by seizing it one can pull out the whole chain, gradually and steadily, step by step, and strengthen the cohesion of communist ranks.

[Emphasis added]

Thus Pravda argued that unity of action is not the result of unity on principles, but that ideological unity can proceed from practical unity of action. Ideological differences need only be soft-pedalled for the moment. Regarding means for achieving unity, Pravda continued:

There exist various forms and ways of the struggle for mutual understanding and the elimination of disagreements which hinder unity, and all these forms must be used, including bilateral and multilateral meetings and consultations, regional conferences, and lastly a new international conference. However, under prevailing conditions, joint actions, not excluding but presupposing the use of all the other forms..., are the main road to strengthening unity.

The editorial went on to argue that imperialism was presently taking advantage of communist disunity to press its aggressive aims and that the problem of Vietnam was now the principal focus of concern:

Every party has nowadays every possibility to prove by deeds its solidarity with the people of Vietnam and there is no better way to help the people of Vietnam than to take part in joint actions in its support. Unquestionably only joint and not separate uncoordinated actions will yield the best results. Marxists-Leninists are fully aware of this.

The editorial stated in addition that the CPSU had, by positive proposals and halting polemics, sought to improve relation with China, but that its position "has not been given the correct interpretation by the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party."

The essential effect of the now explicit "unity of action" line was to draw a new demarcation line behind which the true Marxist-Leninists could gather. By drawing it on the least common denominator of united opposition to imperialism and support for a beleaguered fraternal party, the Soviets hoped either to embarrass the Chinese into some form of retreat or to maximize their isolation. By voicing the least controversial rallying cry, they hoped to persuade even the most suspicious parties that they could take a stand without risk to their independence.

As was argued above, the real political content of the slogan "unity of action" was next to zero in anything but an anti-Chinese context. It is therefore rather difficult to illustrate and describe Soviet strategy on this line in a positive manner, especially in the way it was conducted during the summer months of 1965. The slogan was repeatedly employed in public statements, in inter-party discourse, and in analytical comment. As might have been expected, the Soviets had little difficulty in getting a long list of nominally pro-Soviet parties to subscribe to the slogan. Even the Rumanians were willing on occasion to make positive noises. Coincident with the "unity of action" campaign, a variety of North Vietnamese delegations journeyed around East Europe soliciting promises of material assistance. At this point, at least, the Soviets were probably content to soft-pedal the anti-Chinese implications of the unity of action line, despite a lack of positive response from Peking, since to represent the line even behind the scenes as a maneuver to pressure or isolate China would have been counter-productive.

A revealing gauge of the Soviet line in the summer of 1965 was its great circumspection regarding the issue of a new international conference which, while dormant, refused to die a natural death. The Soviet media repeatedly carried statements from non-Soviet sources endorsing, with varying force, the idea of a new conference along lines proposed by the March Consultative Meeting. For example, Pravda carried the following items in support of a new conference: on 3 June, a joint statement by the Bolivian and Chilean parties; on 13 June, a strong statement by the Portuguese CP; on 7 July, a joint statement by the French and Bulgarian CPs supporting the conference and condemning polemical attacks on the CPSU; and on 27 August, a Brazilian CP resolution (passed the previous May) supporting the conference.



On the other hand, the Soviets themselves did not, with the exception of the very mild mention in the Pravda editorial of 20 June, issue any call on their own for a new conference. Even when a delegation of the Chilian CP, a previous endorser, visited Moscow, the joint statement ignored the conference issue.<sup>19</sup> Apparently the Soviet leadership wanted to keep the idea of a conference alive but, at the moment, did not want to bear the burden of promoting it.

Meanwhile, on other fronts, the CPSU was seeking to promote its ties with the communist parties of Asia. With an apparent Soviet promise not to engage in "peace offensives" not cleared in Hanoi and the steady flow of promised military aid, relations with North Vietnam continued fair and warmer, although the Soviets must have wondered at times what good it was going to do them in view of Hanoi's rigorous insistence on avoiding unnecessary slaps at Peking. In August the progress of Soviet-North Korean relations was highlighted by the appearance of Alexander-Shelepin at celebrations in Pyongyang and the absence of any important Chinese. The Soviets made an attempt to better relations with the Indonesian CP, sending Rashidov to Jakarta in June and inviting Aidit to Moscow in July. But nothing much seems to have come of this since Aidit departed after a secret stay of nearly a month without signing any sort of joint statement.<sup>20</sup> In view of subsequent developments in Indonesia, the Soviet leadership probably concluded this was just as well.

In the immediate context of Sino-Soviet relations, the most important single event appears to have been the secret Chinese letter of 14 July.<sup>21</sup> In this letter the Chinese accused the Soviet Union of seeking, in its relations with North Vietnam, to gain control over the Vietnamese revolution with the aim of starting peace negotiations and selling out to the imperialists. It stated that the Soviet accusations that China was obstructing aid to Vietnam were slanderous but at the same time justified a policy of minimal cooperation with the USSR on the basis of the nefarious nature of Soviet motives. "Frankly speaking," said the letter, "we do not trust you. We and other fraternal countries have learned bitter lessons in the past from Khrushchev's evil practice of control under cover of aid." It also summarily

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19) Pravda, 10 July 1965.

20) Pravda, 1 August 1965.

21) See Footnote 12.

rejected any form of "unity of action.":

You talk glibly about united action. Why then do you continue your hostile policy toward fraternal Albania?

You talk glibly about united action. Why then do you carry out subversion and disruption against the Communist Party of Japan in collusion with U.S. imperialism and the Japanese reactionaries?

You talk glibly about united action. Why then do you incessantly distribute anti-Chinese propaganda and constantly spread lies against China among fraternal parties and in international democratic organizations and ceaselessly carry on secret diplomatic maneuvers against China in many capitalist countries?

You convened the March Moscow meeting and in so doing went a step further in openly splitting the international communist movement. Instead of making any effort to correct your mistakes you are now continuing with your splitting activities. This being so, what is the meaning of your cry for united action?

Clearly enough, by united action you mean that the fraternal parties should obey the orders of your 'father party'...

It is not altogether clear when the Chinese letter reached other parties than the CPSU, but one may be relatively certain that the Chinese Communist view of "unity of action" was abroad in relatively short order.

#### "Unity of Action" -- Phase Two

By the end of August or the beginning of September Soviet behavior within the Bloc and the international communist movement seemed to be entering a new phase during which the tempo of activity on several fronts rose to a level not seen in the summer and which can be said to have lasted until the end of January 1966. Amid all this hectic activity, it is extremely difficult to find convincing and comprehensive explanations of particular events. Therefore, despite the length and obvious importance of this period, it is necessary to give it a rather broad-brush treatment in order to avoid the tedium of chronicling details whose significance is not readily adduced.

The most dramatic development testifying to the activation of Soviet inter-party politics was an intense round of



high-level state and party consultations with East European leaders. This veritable maelstrom of activity began with great vigor in September and tapered off somewhat in subsequent months. It ranged from formal state receptions of East European delegations in Moscow to sudden junkets by Soviet First Secretary Brezhnev to several East European negotiating points, revealed only ex post facto. In virtually all of these consultations, the "situation in the world communist movement" was indicated as on the agenda. Yet a large number of other issues were also being confronted and may even have over-shadowed Sino-Soviet and international communist problems. Comecon and the Warsaw Pact Organization were clearly prominent concerns and subsequent Soviet statements claimed progress in promoting the integrity and purposes of these bodies. It appeared that much attention was also being devoted to the task of working out a coordinated policy on relations with West Germany. Related to this, there remained the problem of deciding on some response in the event NATO resolved its inner differences in favor of an enhanced nuclear role for Germany. Finally there were bilateral problems of various kinds to be resolved, for example, the matter of Soviet grain deliveries to Czechoslovakia. It is quite impossible to disentangle the international-communist/Sino-Soviet complex from these other problems in any satisfactory manner. In this context, the events which stood out, however, were the visit of Rumanian First Secretary Ceausescu to Moscow, during which the Soviets seemed to solidify their new-found modus vivendi with Bucharest by recognizing anew the validity of Rumania's independent line and promising continued respect for Rumania's political and economic sensibilities, and a similar visit by Czechoslovak First Secretary and Premier Novotny, which renewed the public call for an international communist conference.

The second trend which placed its imprint upon the period was the visible escalation of Soviet attacks on Peking, particularly after the People's Daily/Red Flag editorial of 11 November. Prior to this general onslaught by Peking, the Soviets had adhered to and indeed prided themselves upon their policy of no polemics. For the most part they contented themselves, as did Brezhnev at the September Plenum of the Central Committee, with stating that they had made magnanimous overtures but that Peking had chosen to reject them. With the exception of several statements on the Indo-Pakistani dispute, they refrained from detailing their disagreement with Chinese policy. In all likelihood, the Soviet leadership would have continued along these lines had it not been for the exceptional violence of Peking's 11 November attack. In substance the 11 November joint editorial was a restatement of the accusations contained in the 14 July letter, impugning Soviet motives in Vietnam and denouncing in even more heated terms any "unity of action." In addition, however, it accused the Soviets of conducting a

campaign of "pressure, sabotage, and subversion" against China among other parties and in international organizations. It indicated moreover that Chinese factional activity in the international movement would continue by stating, "At present the task facing all Marxist-Leninist parties is to draw a clear line of demarcation both politically and organizationally between themselves and the revisionists." The split, said Peking, can not be bridged:

The antagonism between Marxism-Leninism and Khrushchev revisionism is a class antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie; it is the antagonism between socialism and the capitalist road and between the line of opposing imperialism and that of surrendering to it. It is an irreconcilable antagonism.

As Lenin said, "Unity is a great thing and a great slogan. But what the workers' cause needs is the unity of Marxists, not unity between Marxists and opponents and distorters of Marxism."

The Soviet leadership concluded that the violence of this attack was too great to permit their continued silence. Their reply appeared in a Pravda editorial of 28 November. Reaffirming the policy of united action, it stated, "This approach finds its expression in the decisions and actions of the overwhelming majority of fraternal parties..." It then launched into a direct attack on China:

Guiding itself by the supreme interests of the revolutionary cause, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union...is sparing no effort to overcome the difficulties that have developed in the communist movement. The CPSU and its Central Committee have done and are doing everything in their power to ensure a normalization of the relations between the USSR and China, between our two parties. In the past year, the CC CPSU has time and again proposed to the Chinese leadership to come out together on highly important specific issues, to develop relations between states, to settle the many problems in dispute.

Demonstrating its good will...our party has refrained for over a year from open polemics. This is not because it has nothing to say. The CPSU, educated by Lenin, has fought resolutely throughout its history and is fighting now against nationalism, dogmatism, and revisionism to rally the communists on the principled basis



of the revolutionary theory of Marxism. It has always been implacably opposed to any opportunists who, donning various masks, including those of 'super-revolutionaries', have tried to divert the communist movement from the right-road and consequently to undermine its struggle for the cause of the working class.

In refraining from polemics the CPSU Central Committee was guided by the supreme interests of the international communist movement...

Unfortunately the CPSU and other Marxist-Leninist parties met with no positive response from the CPC leaders in their desire to ensure unity of action of communists...

The policy of subverting unity of action, the line of intensifying attacks on the Marxist-Leninist parties is harmful to the entire international communist movement...

Rejection of joint actions is especially dangerous when it is the question of parties which are in power in socialist states...

A line of political and organizational division, a line of splitting the communist movement, is now actually counter-posed to the clear-cut position of Marxist-Leninist parties which come out for unity of action. The declaration of this course is accompanied by fierce attacks on the Soviet Union in the spirit of the worst examples of anti-communist propaganda.

The Soviet riposte was again taken up in a major Pravda editorial of 12 December commemorating the 1960 international conference. Again the CPSU justified its attempts to normalize relations with China and repeated the charge that the Chinese leadership "have rejected all initiatives aimed at effecting unity of action in the struggle against imperialism and for a normalization of the situation in the world socialist system and in the international communist movement."

The CCP leadership has not only not shown a desire to coordinate its activities with other parties in the struggle against imperialism but has also been intensifying its activities to split the communist movement and all revolutionary forces.

In the present situation the solidarity of action of all socialist countries and all fraternal parties in giving support to the Vietnamese people...is of particular importance... There is no need to prove the great importance of coordinating the efforts of the Soviet Union, the CPR, and all socialist countries on this issue. Refusal to cooperate and to employ unity of action in the sacred matter of aiding the fraternal DRV and the entire Vietnamese people can in no way be justified...

Refusal of unity of action, demands for political and organizational demarcation, continuation of fractional activities in the communist movement, and a sharpening of open polemics and political struggle against fraternal parties cannot fail to evoke the condemnation and protests of all Marxist-Leninists.

When an attack is being unfolded against the holy of holies of every genuine revolutionary, against the unity of the international communist movement, the Marxist-Leninists cannot but adopt a firm, principled position.

[Emphasis supplied]

The significance of the statements cited above lies not merely in their anti-Chinese content for, while they went beyond the limits the Soviet leadership had imposed on itself since October 1964, they remained far below the intensity of Soviet polemics under Khrushchev. Equally striking is the element of urgency which they ascribed to the task of countering Chinese actions. In this respect they clearly represented an admonition to third parties to muster "condemnations and protests" and to "adopt a firm, principled position." This sense of urgency was conveyed also in a perceptible shift of the Soviet line in the international conference back toward its immediately post-March position. The Soviets by no means initiated a major campaign for a new conference, but they began at least to mention it themselves after having for several months left the task to other parties.

The need for a new international conference was first brought up by Novotny during his visit to Moscow in September. While he stated that it should only be convoked "at an appropriate time", he suggested that what he had in mind was not merely a conference limited to the relatively uncontroversial matter of supporting Vietnam but also directed toward solving "internal problems of our movement", i.e., the Sino-Soviet split as such would be on the agenda. The joint communique resulting from the visit also endorsed a conference in moderate terms. Whether or not the Soviets put Novotny up to this is



not clear; they did not in any event see fit to suppress the issue as too divisive.

On two subsequent occasions the Soviet Union unilaterally raised the issue of a conference: in a 4 October speech by Suslov commemorating the 7th Comintern Congress and in Boris Ponomarev's address to a Prague conclave on the same theme held later that month.<sup>22</sup> While both these references were extremely mild, they, along with the hectic tempo of bilateral consultations within the Bloc, created speculation that the Soviets hoped to organize some sort of communist summit conference to coincide with the anniversary celebrations of the October Revolution. Such a summit failed to materialize even though over sixty parties sent delegations. Thereafter the Soviets dropped the issue of the conference in public until it again came up in the joint Soviet-Mongolian statement issued after Brezhnev's trip to Ulan Bator in January 1966. As in earlier periods what seemed striking about these allusions to a new conference was their cautious nature and infrequency. When they appeared they were phrased almost by way of a footnote. At the same time, a whole series of major editorials in Pravda, including blasts at China, made no mention of the issue. Even in a somewhat shrill Pravda statement of 27 October, which came close to rehabilitating the "leading role" of the CPSU in international communist affairs, silence prevailed on the conference. Clearly the Soviets had learned to tread very lightly on this matter.

If Soviet caution on the conference was striking the explanation for it was to be found in the continued lack of enthusiasm for the idea among other important parties. Longo, as could be expected, attacked the idea as harmful and dangerous at an October Plenum of the Italian Central Committee, and his colleague Ingrao raised old fears by alluding to a crisis in the concept of "monolithism" in the communist movement. At the Prague conference on the 7th Comintern Congress, not one delegate appears to have seconded Ponomarev's call for "carefully prepared world forums."<sup>23</sup> In October the Chilean CP held a congress attended for the Soviets by Presidium member Kirilenko; the conference was not mentioned according to lengthy coverage in the Soviet press. The CPUK had its word to add: quoted in Pravda of 21 November, First Secretary John Gollan stated that a conference could be held only in the unlikely event all parties participated, which he said was the goal of the British party. Pravda did not carry a later statement to the effect that a conference was not now suitable.

There were some who could support a new conference. A regional conclave of Central American parties declared themselves

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23) World Marxist Review, No. 12, December 1965.

in favor.<sup>24</sup> The Portuguese CP reiterated its stand on the advisability of a conference in "agreement and cooperation" with all parties.<sup>25</sup> The French CP continued to advocate the practice of international conferences without specifying that one was in order at present. Among the ruling parties of East Europe, that of the Czechoslovaks could be counted formally for the affirmative when they issued an extremely diluted statement in their new Theses on the conference. But the rest, and probably even the Czechoslovaks, were either reserved or negative on the idea. They seemed in agreement with the emerging Hungarian view that bilateral and multilateral talks were the only realistic or desirable methods by which to promote unity for the moment.<sup>26</sup>

It is not clear what purpose the Soviets had in mind during this period in raising the issue of an international conference again. They may simply have been probing or testing the wind. If so they must have decided that the wind was not right, for in the face of evident resistance, silent and open, a new conference remained largely out of the question. But they still had one more device in their arsenal to unite a significant bloc of parties on a platform to put pressure on China; this was a meeting of the ruling parties of Europe and Asia under the auspices of the Warsaw Pact to forge "unity of action" on the Vietnam conflict. As of the present it appears that this cannon has misfired.

Rumors of some sort of Warsaw Pact conference on Vietnam began to circulate in late 1965. On 29 December Zeri i Popullit asserted that the Soviet Union was sending Alexander Shelepin to Hanoi to persuade the North Vietnamese to join such a conference, along with the North Koreans, "to demonstrate international communist solidarity and to isolate Communist China and Albania from their joint stand." On 5 January 1966 a formal invitation was issued by Warsaw, clearly at the behest of the Soviet Union, to the parties in question. The only public response so far has been that of Albania, which revealed the measure and rejected it in uncompromising terms on 12 February. But the project foundered not in Tirana nor in Peking, but in Hanoi. While there can be no doubt that one of Shelepin's major tasks was to elicit from the North Vietnamese some demonstration supporting

24) Pravda, 1 November 1965.

25) Pravda, 11 November 1965.

26) Resolution of the Hungarian Central Committee upon the return of Kadar from Mongolia and Fock from the DRV and DPRK. MTI, 20 November 1965.



"unity of action" and indirectly condemning China, he failed utterly to budge them from their position of neutrality. In view of Peking's attitude, their neutral position would have been severely compromised by participating in a Bloc conference in China's absence. At the same time such a conference could have had only marginal impact on their practical military concerns if it did not lead to concessions on the part of Peking. After a stay of nearly a month in Hanoi during January and February, Norwegian CP Secretary I.B. Norlund was asked by a Yugoslav journalist what had been the North Vietnamese reaction to the Bloc conference proposal. He stated,

They are discussing this. I think that as long as I was there they had not taken any determined stand. In any case, the Vietnamese leaders do not like to speak about this, but not because they do not appreciate the motives of such an initiative.<sup>27</sup>

Comrade Norlund, one may imagine, somewhat understated the reserve he found in Hanoi.

### Conclusions

The history of Moscow's pursuit of international communist unity over the past year presents the observer with a striking paradox. On the one hand, it would appear that many of the ingredients required to ensure the success of its efforts were present. The CPSU, by and large, adjusted its tactics to conform with the views of the majority of pro-Soviet and neutralist parties, taking its stand on issues where maximum agreement, at least formally, could be expected and eschewing the high-pressure salesmanship so resented under Khrushchev. It made significant progress in improving its relations with the two critical parties of Asia, the North Vietnamese, and the North-Korean CPs. At the same time, China suffered a stunning series of international setbacks. She alienated a potential neutralist if not ally in Fidel Castro. She saw her major non-ruling protege, the Indonesian CP, collapse almost overnight. By her tactics in Africa, her warmongering between India and Pakistan, and her behavior in international organizations and forums, she has distanced herself from the great body of political elites in the underdeveloped world. As the Soviets have indeed claimed, the great majority of important parties throughout the world, including perhaps some which share China's ideological views, have come to regard that country's politics with considerable distaste. Yet, on the other hand, one can not say that

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27) Vjesnik, 2 March 1965, datelined Moscow.

the CPSU has made substantial progress in forging any sort of unity against Peking -- the only sort of unity that appears possible in view of Chinese intransigence.

The resolution of the paradox is both specific and general. Specifically it hinges on the particular position of North Vietnam. One of the central motivations under which the Soviet engaged themselves in the Vietnam conflict was to create a platform on which to conduct political war on Chinese factionalism. Ever since, the Vietnam issue has been the keystone of Moscow's unity campaign. Yet, however warm Soviet-North Vietnamese relations have become, North Vietnam's geographical and ideological position prevents it from joining the campaign. Even more, North Vietnam has a practical political interest in holding to a neutralist position where it has maximum control over its own policies and maximum influence over both Moscow and Peking. China's irresponsibility or clumsiness would have to be extreme before the North Vietnamese would find it in their interest to take a stand against her. In the meantime, as long as Hanoi refuses to cooperate, the Soviets can hardly promote a campaign to unite the communist world against Peking over Vietnam, however appealing the slogan.

In this specific explanation one can easily see a micro-cosmic image of the more general reason why the Soviet strategy for unity is not succeeding. For as North Vietnam's primary political objective in dealing with the rest of the communist world is the maximization of her political autonomy, so precisely are the objectives of the other key parties involved in the wrangle over unity. There can be no doubt that even the most "polycentristically" oriented parties take the matter of unity very seriously. But they can not fail to see in every Moscow-promoted scheme for promoting it against China a threat to their freedom of action. The experience of the past year has reinforced the lesson learned from the last years of Khrushchev's rule that the Soviets, in spite of their pledges to the contrary, find it most difficult to resist the temptation to put "organizational teeth" into the unity campaign. For of what value is unity if it does not yield usable political power; and how can power result from unity unless it is based on discipline?

It would be a mistake to be too categorical, on the basis of the material presented in the foregoing pages, in predicting what the immediate future will bring. It may be that the Soviets will be able to arrange some sort of forum for the condemnation of China. It is unlikely that they will give up trying since "unity of action" without such a manifestation has proven to be a phantom having no political substance. In any case, it is hard to see how such a meeting could be any more successful than the March Consultative Meeting. It is even conceivable that, in a tactical switch, the Chinese might agree to attend some international communist conference. But unity in the international communist movement is and has been dead for some time. It exists merely in the collective historical mind of world communism, to use Marxist parlance, a "remnant of the past."