

1976

M/E -- PRO-SOVIET ISRAELI CP LEADER CALLS FOR WORLD CONFERENCE F-36

Munich, December 16 (CNR/RAD/KD) -- In his report at the 18th Congress of the pro-Soviet Israeli Communist Party (Rakach), Secretary-General Meir Wilner yesterday called for a new international conference of communist parties, to be convened "after due preparation." The call came against a background of emphatic loyalty to the Kremlin -- a characteristic which distinguishes the Arab-Jewish Rakach from the rival Israeli CP, the overwhelmingly Jewish Maki. (1) The Tass report (December 15) quotes Wilner as saying that Rakach "believes that proletarian internationalism has been and remains the basis of the international communist movement," that it "regards the CPSU as the vanguard" of the movement, and that it believes that "the attitude to the Soviet Union and the CPSU has been and remains the touchstone of loyalty to socialism and the anti-imperialist struggle."

Wilner's statement is worth noting, because this appears to be the first time since the East Berlin conference of European communist parties at the end of June that a pro-Soviet leader has renewed the demand for a world conference at his party congress. In the months before the East Berlin meeting calls for a world conference came from East European party leaders at their party congresses. Zhivkov of Bulgaria and Husak of Czechoslovakia in April, and Honecker of East Germany in May, all declared that conditions for an international meeting had "ripened." At the 25th CPSU Congress in February Brezhnev himself had been significantly more cautious. Noting that "many" parties were calling for a new world conference, he said that the CPSU supported the idea "in principle," but that "when and how it is put into effect will, of course, be decided by common consent."

Brezhnev's caution was presumably based on his awareness that, while the great majority of the world's communist parties (including the Arab and Latin American parties en bloc) had already supported the conference project, important segments of the movement were against it. Apart from the independent-neutralist Asian regimes of Vietnam, North Korea, Laos and Cambodia, opposition had been expressed by the major West European parties -- now including the formerly loyalist French. A few weeks after the East Berlin meeting the Italian delegate Antonio Rubbi said in a Rinascita article of July 30 that "because of the methodology and goals which seem to inspire it," the world conference project "cannot have our agreement and our adhesion." In September Sergio Segre said in an interview that he thought the Soviets, as "realists," would quietly

- (1) The overwhelming majority of communist parties broke off relations with Maki at the time of the June War in 1967. Among the few which still maintain relations with it are the Rumanian, Dutch and Australian CPs.

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the world conference project, since they knew that the major West European parties would refuse to attend.

They may not have dropped it, but they would clearly face great difficulties in attempting to take it up again -- and it would take more than one loyalist Israeli voice to change that situation. Last month the third anniversary of the first calls for a new world conference (by the West German, Hungarian and Bulgarian party leaders) passed unsung and unnoticed.

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