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Bjarni Benediktsson – Stjórnámál – Trúnaðarskýrslur – Communist Policy & Tactics

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bjarnibenediktsson.is

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COMMUNIST POLICY AND TACTICS

APRIL 1968

SUMMARY

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST CONFERENCE - THE SECOND
BUDAPEST MEETING

The first session of the Preparatory Commission announced that the International Communist Conference will be held in Moscow starting on 25 November, 1968. There is still scope for disagreement in the working group which is to continue preparations. The Czechoslovak line is becoming more independent. Yugoslav and Rumanian attendance at the Conference is very unlikely. The C.P.S.U. has shown concern at divisive tendencies in the Communist Movement. The Hungarian party is still taking a middle course.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Rapid progress in democratisation will combine with a desire not to provoke the Soviet Union. There may be a Party Congress within a year. The leadership faces the problem of industrial unrest. Despite this Dubcek is strongly entrenched. The new government is largely liberal but contains some compromise figures. The Party's Action Programme provides for a genuinely more democratic society within a Communist framework. In foreign policy greater emphasis is likely on a specifically Czechoslovak approach, including the subject of Germany. But an early restoration of diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic is unlikely. The Czechoslovaks are continuing to adopt their own line on the Warsaw Pact and C.M.E.A. and will probably press for a thorough review of the latter, while developing economic relations with the West.

POLAND

Gomulka has made no real concessions to student demands. There has been a purge in senior posts. It is still not clear whether a struggle for leadership has begun. The resignation of President Ochab could be part of a process to strengthen Gomulka, but the change is evidence of some pressure within the leadership.

RUMANIA

The dismissal of Draghici by the Central Committee is intended to consolidate Ceausescu's position and, with the criticism of Gheorghiu-Dej, marks a new step in destalinisation. But the situation in Rumania remains fundamentally different from that in Czechoslovakia. The Central Committee also confirmed Rumania's independent foreign policy line.

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CONFERENCE OF PROGRESSIVE FORCES
OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

This Conference, mainly sponsored by the Italian and Yugoslav parties, was not a success, primarily because of disagreement between these two parties on the question of condemning foreign military forces in the Mediterranean. The Yugoslavs wanted to include the Soviet forces in their criticisms but were out-manoeuvred by the Italians.

SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS

There has been a marked increase in mutual criticism including a major ideological article from the Soviet side, which not only criticised Maoism but tried to minimise the significance of the Chinese Communist example as a whole.

VIETNAM

The North Vietnamese attempt to establish direct contact with the United States seems to have owed little to Soviet or Chinese influence. It may have strained Hanoi's relations with China. The Russians have tried to keep in line with the North Vietnamese while generally favouring the maintenance of the dialogue with the Americans.

MR. KOSYGIN'S VISITS TO PAKISTAN AND INDIA

These were part of the Russian balancing act between the two countries. The visit to Pakistan was primarily intended to reassure the Pakistanis over Soviet intentions in India but its material results seem rather thin. In visiting New Delhi briefly Kosygin probably wished to talk about anglo-Pakistani relations.

MR. KOSYGIN'S VISIT TO IRAN

Irano-Soviet relations continue to improve. The Russians have had to avoid commenting on the Iranian claim to islands in the Persian Gulf.

SOVIET MILITARY POLICY

The Soviet Union is doing more to demonstrate her military capabilities outside her frontiers. Activities include air force visits to Syria and the U.A.R., and naval visits to India and the Somali Republic. While part of a general trend, this is probably also due partly to personal activity by the Minister of Defence.

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SOVIET UNION - INTERNAL

There is more emphasis on the need for ideological indoctrination. The Soviet leaders are concerned at continuing intellectual dissent and about possible infection from the Czechoslovak reforms. There have been some signs of sensitivity by the leaders at possible criticism of their policies, but Brezhnev has probably strengthened his own position by shifts in the hierarchy.

CHINA - INTERNAL

Attacks on "Rightists" have dominated the period. Mao is emphasising the need for continued class struggle but evidently wishes to contain this within the framework of the new control system of the Revolutionary Committees. Senior military officers have been attacked, probably for objecting to a weakening of the Army's authority by the central leadership.

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INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST CONFERENCE -
THE SECOND BUDAPEST MEETING

The first session of the Preparatory Commission, set up at the previous Budapest meeting to prepare for the International Communist Conference, met in secret from 24 - 28 April. 54 Parties were represented, compared with 67 at the previous gathering. 7 ruling Parties attended, including Mongolia. A communiqué issued after the session announced that the International Communist Conference will open in Moscow on 25 November, 1968. It was also stated that a further meeting of the Commission would take place in September and that a working group had been formed to deal with the drafting of papers and other matters. Any party was free to participate in the group, which held its first meeting on 28 April.

The working group will clearly be a continuation of the Preparatory Commission on a smaller scale. Despite its technically 'open-ended' nature, the Russians may hope that they will be better able to sustain their point of view in this way. It is clear that no substantial progress on the documents was made in the Commission; the absence in the communiqué of any reference to 'unanimity' of views suggests that fairly wide differences were aired.

Before the Budapest session these differing approaches were clearly apparent. Czechoslovakia in particular was preparing to take a more independent line. An important article in the Party newspaper "Rude Pravo" indicated that the Czechoslovak delegation would press for more open discussion, for non-doctrinal decisions paving the way for co-operation with non-communists, and for the strict observance of equality and independence of all Parties. It was made clear that Czechoslovakia would work to secure Yugoslav and Rumanian participation and that the Czechoslovak Party deplored the harping on the 1957 and 1960 documents, which would only strengthen Yugoslavia's objections to the Conference. The line taken by the paper in referring to the Rumanian walk-out from the last Budapest meeting was also distinctly more sympathetic to the Rumanian point of view than that adopted by the Czechoslovak representative at the time. The Czechoslovaks also sent a new delegate to Budapest, replacing Koucky with Lenart, a candidate Politburo member and until recently Prime Minister.

Despite the Czechoslovak efforts, Yugoslav and Rumanian attendance at the Moscow Conference looks most unlikely. The former have specifically ruled this out. Apart from their suspicions about Soviet aims, they are clearly disappointed at what they regard as the weak attitude of some parties, particularly the Italians. Yugoslav disillusionment with the Italian Party was strengthened at the Conference on the Mediterranean (see below). The Rumanians have said that they will attend the Conference only if they are given a public undertaking that no party will be criticised for its internal or international policies.

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It is clear that the Russians have no intention of meeting this Rumanian condition, as is shown by their renewed and authoritative attacks on Mao Tse-tung. Other Soviet comment before the Preparatory Commission reflected Soviet concern at further divisive tendencies within the Communist Movement. They claimed that the existence of nationalist, revisionist and politically immature elements provided opportunities for Western attempts to split the Movement. The Soviet Party sent a new delegate, Ponomarev, to Budapest in place of Suslov. It was not however clear whether this was simply because they felt that the Preparatory Commission warranted a lower level of representation (Ponomarev is a Party Secretary while Suslov is a Politburo member), or whether the change reflected any dissatisfaction with Suslov's handling of the consultative meeting.

The Hungarian Party has continued to adopt a middle course. An important lecture by Komocsin, the Hungarian Politburo member chiefly concerned with the Conference, on 1 April warned of the difficulties of organising it, although he maintained that it would take place irrespective of the number of participants. He proposed compromise solutions for a number of points of disagreement. But he was firmly against the Italian proposal that non-communists should take part in the Conference, although he agreed that a later "anti-imperialist conference" could be useful. He suggested that the question of inviting "splinter parties" might be further discussed, although most Parties considered that one Party should represent each country. (It seems however most unlikely that the Russians would agree to the participation of pro-Chinese factions). Komocsin was prepared to differ from the Soviet Union on the question of whether ideological questions should be discussed. He pointed out that the majority were against this; nevertheless he suggested that those who wished to raise such questions should submit proposals to the Preparatory Commission. The lecture included a strong attack on the Chinese and held out little hope that the principal absentees would change their minds.

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The degree of freedom of speech to which the Czechoslovaks have become accustomed will mean that pressure for rapid progress in democratising Czechoslovak institutions will be maintained; but desire not to fall foul of the Soviet Union, combined with the continued presence of a strong conservative element in the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Party will limit Dubcek's room for manoeuvre. The conservatives in the Central Committee cannot be removed except by a Party Congress, which would not normally take place until 1970. But the new programmes logically require a new Central Committee, and the Congress may well take place within the next twelve months.

Another important problem facing the new leadership is the danger of industrial unrest as the economic reforms begin to affect production methods, employment, salaries and prices. Some restraint is needed by the workers: if this is not shown, the Trade Union movement, in the new circumstances of freedom of expression, could represent a threat to stability. Accordingly, Dubcek, in his speech to the National Assembly on 24 April, stressed that the Government must ward off pressures for wage demands which, though frequently justified, were beyond the present means of the Czechoslovak economy.

This does not mean that Dubcek's position is vulnerable in the short run; on the contrary he is strongly entrenched. It does mean however that there are limits to the extent of reform on which he can embark with complete confidence. The new Government under Cernik, while containing a majority of new, liberal-minded figures, (notably Husak and Sik as Deputy Prime Ministers, Hajek as Foreign Minister, and Galuska as Minister of Culture), still has some elements of a compromise. Dubcek's conduct so far suggests that he understands the problems facing him. Since the January plenum he has clearly been striving for national unity. He has firmly eliminated from important positions in the Party and Government all the more flagrant dogmatists, but has carefully avoided replacing them too drastically with liberal intellectuals; he has allowed a vast amount of steam to be let off through unrestricted free speech and the exposure of old scandals, while at the same time sounding a warning about the dangers of anarchy; finally he has sponsored a detailed Programme of Action which, while ambiguously worded in parts, contains in essence a blueprint for a genuinely more democratic society within the framework of the leadership of the Communist Party.

The Party's Action Programme published on 10 April shows the size of the task he has set himself. Its principal features include:

- (a) the need to reform the whole political system so as to combine "broad democracy with scientific, highly qualified management", and a guarantee against a concentration of power in few hands;

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- (b) the need for a new Press Law to exclude the possibility of factual censorship;
- (c) the need for personal safeguards (including the right, subject to preventing a brain drain, to travel abroad, and freedom from political victimisation);
- (d) rehabilitation of political victims;
- (e) the need for a new constitutional law defining the status of Slovak national bodies, on the basis of some kind of federal system;
- (f) alliance with the Soviet Union and the socialist countries will continue to be the cornerstone of foreign policy, but friendly relations are to be developed with all countries, and the possibility is mentioned of specifically Czechoslovak views being formulated on international issues;
- (g) decentralisation of industrial decision - making;
- (h) the need for new legislation to define electoral procedures, and the role of the minority parties in the national front;
- (i) the importance of opening the economy to world markets, the ultimate aim of which is to create conditions for the convertibility of the Czechoslovak currency.

This programme could be the manifesto of a man being swept along by forces which he no longer entirely controls; but if the general balance of the programme is viewed against the background of the high expectations aroused before its publication, a more accurate impression would be of a man who has made his calculations and is acting with deliberation. The main internal danger to the new order probably lies not in the over-enthusiasm of the reformers, but in the continued existence of latent conservatism.

FOREIGN POLICY

The action programme reserved Czechoslovakia's right to formulate its own standpoint on fundamental questions of world policies. It seems likely that the Czechoslovaks will put greater emphasis on specifically Czechoslovak approaches to international, and particularly European problems. Hajek, the new Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, has hinted at increased Czechoslovak attention to existing groupings of smaller European countries, e.g., Benelux and Scandinavia. There may also be increasing emphasis on Czechoslovakia's rôle as a bridge between East and West, a conception which originated with Benes and Jan Masaryk.

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There has been a change of tone in Czechoslovak comment on relations with the Federal Republic of Germany. Both Hajek and Cernik have publicly noted the existence of "realistic, progressive forces" there. By the end of April, the official paper of the non-communist People's Party (Catholic) was openly calling for early restoration of full diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic. There may well be no early change in Czechoslovakia's attitude on this, for fear of offending the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia's northern neighbours; meanwhile the existing commercial missions are probably judged to be sufficient for the transaction of day-to-day business.

There has been little comfort for the Russians in the development, since the Dresden Meeting of 23 March, of Czechoslovak attitudes to the Warsaw Pact and CMEA. In a speech to the National Assembly on 24 April, Cernik stated that as long as NATO existed Czechoslovakia would help strengthen the Warsaw Treaty, but would also develop greater initiative towards extending the work of the Joint Command. This implies the desire to see a greater East European share in the command of the Pact but the real intention may be to secure more firmly the right of national command over national forces. No date has yet been fixed for the Summit Conference on economic problems called for in the Dresden statement. But Cernik's speech of 24 April confirmed that, while economic co-operation with the Soviet Union remained basic to Czechoslovakia's economic relations, the Czechs were preparing proposals for "higher forms" of economic, scientific, technical co-operation within the CMEA which would respect differences in economic standards and planning patterns. He called for the gradual extension of the convertibility of the Czechoslovak crown over a period of five to seven years. It looks as if the Czechoslovaks will press for a thorough review of the entire operations of CMEA. Cernik's speech confirmed the importance that Czechoslovakia attaches to promoting economic relations with the West, and underlined Czechoslovakia's interest in reaching practical arrangements for joint production, technological exchange and license deals with enterprises in advanced countries. He also stated that the question of a foreign loan would be considered provided that it had no political strings attached and that it would create the means for its repayment.

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POLAND

Poland continues to present an entirely different picture; there is apparently no liberal element near the top of the Party. There has been no serious recrudescence of student and intellectual unrest since the disturbances of March, but the causes underlying them have not been tackled. On the contrary, Gomulka, who still seems to believe that he alone can hold Poland together, has made no real concessions to student demands, and no attempt to restrain the purge which, using the student unrest as an excuse, has been going on throughout April in senior Party and Government posts. The purge has so far involved the dismissal from their posts of upwards of a hundred senior persons, and although it has strongly anti-Semitic overtones, not all the victims are Jews. Those dismissed include a number of Ministers of relatively minor political importance, and the first Deputy Chairman of the Committee for Science and Technology. According to the Polish press on 21 April, over 8,000 people have been dismissed from the Polish Party. Gomulka's apparent acquiescence in this vindictive harassment of ability has seriously damaged what remained of his reputation as the independent and forward looking leader he seemed to be in 1956.

It is still not clear, however, that the struggle for the leadership of the Polish Party has yet in fact begun. The resignation of Ochab as head of state is not by itself an indication to Gomulka's position is yet seriously threatened. It could be the first move of a reshuffle intended to leave Gomulka where he is and to consolidate his régime, at least until the Fifth Congress later this year, but the fact that this change (which had been rumoured frequently over the past two years in the light of Ochab's deteriorating health) was allowed to occur at such a troubled moment is evidence that the pressures within the leadership were too strong to be contained completely.

The fact that Marshal Spychalski, not Cyrankiewicz as had been rumoured, was promoted to succeed Ochab could be interpreted as meaning that Gomulka was not prepared to create a vacancy at premier level which would have had to be filled by an eventual rival. Spychalski, one of the few surviving members of the pre-war Polish Communist Party is, if anything, even closer to Gomulka than Ochab was. Curiously enough (also like Ochab) he has a Jewish wife.

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RUMANIA

The Plenum of the Central Committee met from 23 to 25 April and passed a Resolution criticising illegalities committed by the Party leadership in the 40s and 50s, rehabilitating their victims, noting that the members of the Politburo at the time bore a serious responsibility and stripping of all Party functions Alexandru Draghici, a member of the Politburo and former Minister of the Interior.

Ceausescu's removal of Draghici indicates the consolidation of his personal position which has been progressively strengthened since his election to the leadership in 1965. This move also provides Ceausescu with a weapon against other potential rivals from the Politburo of the 50s - Stoica, Bodnaras and Apostol (all of whom lost ground during the government and party shuffle in December). The Resolution also contained the first public criticism of Gheorghiu-Dej, General Secretary of the Party from 1944 until his death in 1965. Dej's role has recently been largely ignored, but the publication of specific criticisms of his leadership marks a new step in destalinisation and the further consolidation of Ceausescu's personal authority, which has also benefited from the appointment of more of his supporters to the Praesidium and the Executive Committee.

Those who are rehabilitated are a mixed group who were all victims of the Old Guard. The main figures were Lucretiu Patrascanu and Stefan Foris, who led the Communist movement in Rumania during the war and were for this reason rivals to the Moscow orientated groups who took over after 1944. Patrascanu had advocated a form of Titoism for Rumania and was executed in 1954 for chauvinism.

Ceausescu's speech to the Central Committee promised safeguards against the abuse of power in the future but the situation in Rumania remains fundamentally different from that in Czechoslovakia since criticism is being confined to the past and to Ceausescu's rivals. Ceausescu is primarily concerned to assert his own position. His references to freer debate have yet to be seen translated into practice.

The Central Committee also underwrote recent developments in Rumania's foreign policy. It criticised the fact that the Dresden meeting, to which Rumania had not been invited, issued a declaration which directly concerned Rumania as a member of the Warsaw Pact and CMEA. It also stated the conditions for Rumania's participation in the International Communist Conference. While affirming Rumania's membership of the Warsaw Pact the Plenum also approved measures to increase domestic production of arms.

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CONFERENCE OF PROGRESSIVE FORCES OF THE
MEDITERRANEAN

The conference, held in Rome from 9 - 11 April, was attended by seventeen communist and non-communist parties from twelve countries. (These were the ruling parties of Algeria, Syria, UAR and Yugoslavia; the communist parties of France, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Morocco and Spain; extreme left-wing parties or fronts from France, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Turkey; observers from the World Council of Peace and the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation.)

The conference, which was the first attempt by the Italians and the Yugoslavs to put into practice their ideas on co-operation between communists and progressives, was not a success. It issued three documents; a resolution on Vietnam; a political resolution, which was not signed by the Yugoslavs; and a procedural document, not signed by the French Parti Socialiste Unifié (PSU). Discussion centred on the political resolution, as two rival drafts were presented. The Yugoslav draft demanded the elimination of all foreign military presence while the Italian resolution called for the withdrawal of the American 6th fleet from the Mediterranean but made no mention of the Soviet naval presence. The Yugoslavs were outmanoeuvred by the Italians whose resolution was finally adopted. The Turkish delegation (representing the Turkish Labour Party) said that they had supported the Yugoslavs on the withdrawal of the Soviet presence but in the event signed the resolution. The Algerian and Moroccan delegation came out in favour of the Soviet presence, and, according to an unconfirmed Lebanese press report, the UAR did the same.

The Yugoslavs were evidently bitter that their draft had not been accepted. Politika of 12 and 13 April claimed that discussion on it "had been avoided by means of procedural manoeuvres". The Yugoslavs also considered that participation should be wider and not limited to parties fighting for socialism.

In view of the differences it was decided not to set up a permanent organisation but to continue co-operation by bilateral contacts.

The Soviet Union, which was not invited to the conference and had not previously commented on the Mediterranean venture, must no doubt have been reassured by the outcome, for the proceedings of the conference were reported in the Soviet Press in a tone of restrained approval. The Yugoslavs' refusal to vote for the main resolution was, however, not mentioned.

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SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS

The volume of mutual polemic has recently increased significantly. Besides the standard topics, the incident at the beginning of April involving the detention of a Soviet tanker at Canton provided a new subject for abuse. The Soviet expulsion of a Chinese aviation expert from Tashkent was probably a reprisal for this.

A major article on 23 April in the Soviet Party magazine "Kommunist" was probably timed to coincide with the opening of the Budapest Preparatory Commission for the International Communist conference. The article is the first important Soviet venture into ideological criticism of Mao for some months. Besides saying that "the very existence of the CCP as one of the biggest units of the International Communist Movement is now at stake", the article is notable because it delves well back into the history of the Chinese Party in order to find points on which to attack Maoism, which it describes as heavily impregnated with traditional Chinese conservative thought. It specifically accuses Mao of having refused in the autumn of 1941 to adopt a more active posture against Japan in order to prevent it from attacking the Soviet Union in the rear.

In criticising Mao's attempts, as in the Great Leap Forward of 1958, to skip several steps in the advance to Communism, the article maintains the view that the economic and social conditions of China make it inevitable that progress towards full Communism must be very slow and tries to minimise the significance of the Chinese example for other countries. But the general impression which it gives is one of Soviet pessimism about the present developments in China. It refers to the existence of a genuinely Marxist-Leninist element in the Chinese Party but implies that it has little chance of early success. Moreover, in stating that the backward conditions of China has provided fertile ground for the development of Maoism, it tacitly admits the danger of underdeveloped societies following a similar course.

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VIETNAM

After their agreement in principle to establish direct contact with the United States, the North Vietnamese engaged in a month's hard bargaining with the Americans before announcing on 3 May that they would go to Paris.

The decision to agree to contacts at all seems to have been a purely Vietnamese reaction to the situation created by President Johnson's speech on 1 April and to have owed little to Soviet or Chinese influence. Neither seems to have been consulted in advance of Hanoi's decision though their subsequent tactics may have been the subject of consultation with both their allies. In any case the North Vietnamese seem determined not to be deflected from a policy of pursuing their objectives through direct contact and possibly negotiations as well as on the battlefield. Tactically they seem determined to extract the maximum concessions at all stages of negotiations while retaining sufficient flexibility to change course if they seem not to be achieving their objectives.

The policy of accepting contacts may have put considerable strain on North Vietnamese relations with China since the Chinese have consistently opposed and condemned peace talks. In the first days after the Hanoi announcement the Chinese did not mention it. The emphasis has been on throwing doubts on American sincerity by calling President Johnson's offer a peace fraud designed to camouflage an intensification of the war; on the need for a protracted war and on the theme that national liberation and reunification can only be won by thoroughly defeating the U.S. on the battlefield. Chinese efforts in private to sabotage the contacts may also be considerable; there are unconfirmed reports of North Vietnamese emissaries visiting Peking to explain their policy and a Chinese delegation arrived for an unexplained purpose in Hanoi on 21 April. Nevertheless there are as yet no signs that the Chinese are in any way reaching the point where they might contemplate interfering with their aid to North Vietnam and if talks make progress they can always fall back on the line that this represents a victory for the North Vietnamese.

The Soviet public line has followed that of the North Vietnamese while making the obvious and familiar propaganda points against the Americans. The Russians were clearly surprised by Hanoi's response to President Johnson and their first reactions were cautious and pessimistic. Thereafter they switched to full support for Hanoi's position, drawing what dividends they could in the Sino/Soviet dispute from the Chinese attitude to the North Vietnamese agreement to talks, as well as from alleged inconsistencies in the American position. They have so far shown no interest in Co-chairmanship activity and are clearly anxious to avoid any involvement that might put them out ahead of Hanoi. Nevertheless the Russian influence apparently favours the two sides maintaining their dialogue through this idea is expressed by warnings to the Americans against continuing the war.

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MR. KOSYGIN'S VISITS TO PAKISTAN AND INDIA

Mr. Kosygin's visit to Pakistan from 17 - 20 April and his call in Delhi on the way home were part of the Soviet Union's continuing balancing act between India and Pakistan. The Russians however undoubtedly attach priority to their relations with India. The volume of military and economic aid to India is considerably greater than it is to Pakistan and includes substantial hardware such as aircraft and submarines. Kosygin's visit to Pakistan may, therefore, primarily have been a public relations exercise, designed to reassure the Pakistanis over Soviet intentions in India as well as to continue the work of reconciliation between India and Pakistan which Kosygin began at Tashkent. Moreover, while Chinese influence in Pakistan is not as strong as it was, the Russians cannot take their own influence there for granted and they have to take care to keep their relations with Pakistan in good order.

The results of Kosygin's visit appear to have been rather thin. There is no hint of further Soviet arms for Pakistan. The offers of technological aid are vague. The Pakistan press see no reason to expect a change in Soviet military assistance to India. Nonetheless, the press has expressed great satisfaction with the visit and the growing "depth" of Soviet-Pakistan relations.

It is not clear why Kosygin chose to fly direct from Pakistan to India. One reason will certainly have been his desire to reassure the Indians about the talks with the Pakistanis. It is also likely that he wished to talk about Indo-Pakistani relations: he seems to have gained the impression that President Ayub was personally in favour of some measure of "normalisation" of relations, and probably wanted to make Mrs. Gandhi aware of this.

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KOSYGIN'S VISIT TO IRAN

The visit of Mr. Kosygin to Iran from 2 - 7 April produced no surprises, although it is reported that the Soviet Union has agreed to make available credits totalling \$333 million for Iran's fourth Five-Year Plan. It can be seen as another step in the gradual improvement in relations between the two countries. The Russians have avoided taking a stand on the Iranian claim to Bahrain and certain other islands in the Persian Gulf. They cannot afford to curry favour with the Iranians by supporting their claim because they would thus fall foul of Arab opinion. The Soviet Union has however considerably increased its propaganda on the general subject of the Persian Gulf, particularly attacking the plan for the federation of a number of the Gulf States. It has also been reported in the press that ships of the Soviet Far East Fleet are to visit Iraq in May. This is one example of the Soviet policy of demonstrating an overseas military capability which is discussed below.

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SOVIET MILITARY POLICY

In recent years the Soviet Union has encouraged increasing publicity for her military capabilities outside her frontiers. This owes a good deal to the war in Vietnam. It has also been encouraged by the Middle East crisis which accelerated the increase in the Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean. During March the Minister of Defence, Marshal Grechko, paid official visits to Iraq, Syria and Cairo and a military delegation paid an eleven-day visit to Aden. In April squadrons of Soviet bombers paid goodwill visits to Damascus and Cairo and the number of ships at Alexandria was increased from seven to nine. Naval units visited Latakia. Following a visit in February to India by the Naval Commander-in-Chief, a naval squadron from the Pacific Fleet paid a visit to Bombay and Madras in April and subsequently moved to Mogadishu; further visits are apparently intended, including Basra. It has also been noted that more ships are on patrol in the Sea of Japan, and more long-range aircraft are probing off the North American coast. These trends coincide with a new emphasis in Soviet propaganda on military aid as one of the major forms of Soviet aid to newly independent nations.

In general these developments reflect a growing consciousness, which has been expressed on several occasions by Brezhnev, of the importance of military power as a basis for a more effective foreign policy. But it is probable that Marshal Grechko, the Minister of Defence, has added a special impetus at the present time as part of a programme to assert his own personality and to improve the standing and morale of the armed forces.

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SOVIET UNION - INTERNAL

A plenary meeting of the CPSU Central Committee, called hurriedly to approve the Politburo's conduct of foreign and international communist policy, was the main event of the month. It also affirmed the need for more effective ideological indoctrination of Party members and the population at large. There were two main reasons for calling it. In the first place expressions of dissent have continued to accumulate from Soviet intellectuals, some of them with very important family connections (e.g. the sister, brother-in-law and nephew of the President of the Academy of Sciences). To these the leaders have responded with a massive campaign of social pressure and re-indoctrination, reinforced by selective expulsions from the Party and other forms of intimidation and punishment. Evidently, scapegoats have also been sought. Thus, three important conforming intellectuals were dropped from the Committee of the Moscow city Party organisation by its recent conference, which also replaced officials responsible for cultural matters who had merely advocated methods of persuasion. But the Party has stopped far short of the threat to 'shoot', which Khrushchev made to intellectuals after the rebellion in Hungary, and seems to prefer that the intellectuals' own organisations should put their house in order rather than intervene more sharply itself. Producers of contentious plays have been left in place although they have expressed no contrition.

Secondly the Party leaders probably regard the possibility of infection from the Czechoslovak reforms as in the long term more dangerous. The foreign side of the Czechoslovak programme has been reported fairly fully in the Soviet press but the publicity for internal reforms has been heavily slanted to obscure those aspects most objectionable to the Soviet leaders. Probably the prospect that the role of the Party will be reduced in Czechoslovakia causes the deepest concern. While the Soviet May Day slogans expressed the usual hope for communist unity, the omission of the word "solidarity" implied a recognition of realities. Soviet propaganda has attributed both internal and bloc difficulties to heightened Western propaganda, including 'bridge-building' and the effort to counter this may well have consequences for Soviet policies.

The fact that 'full and complete' approval of the Central Committee for the Politburo's course was underlined in an unprecedented way and had been preceded by formal statements of support for their actions at Budapest and Sofia seems to reflect some concern among the leaders. This could have stemmed both from their recollection of the challenge at the June Plenum in 1967 to their policies on the Middle East and also from fear of criticism of their patchy achievements at Budapest and of their failure to foresee or influence events in Czechoslovakia more effectively. The line of militant self-justification taken at the plenum was characteristic of Brezhnev, and was foreshadowed by him in a speech in Moscow at the end of March. It looks as though he may have exploited the fluid situation at the time of the plenum to achieve some changes in power relationships which could strengthen his own position. Thus, one of his closer colleagues, Kirilenko, seems to

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have gained in importance; there are indications that this may have been at the expense of Suslov, the veteran ideologist and authority on international communism, but these are far from conclusive. One new Central Committee Secretary, Katushev, was elected by the plenum; he appears to have been close to Brezhnev in the past. Five promotions were made to full membership of the Central Committee. These were on a conservative kind and included the Minister of the Interior, who has been close to Brezhnev, and a symbolic foundry worker. It is noteworthy that rumours that the Central Committee Secretary responsible for culture and propaganda and the Minister of Culture would be removed were not justified. Their replacement might have meant rocking the boat too seriously. In general, the plenum seems to have brought a closing of the ranks, with confirmation of the leadership and of responsible cadres, all on the basis of a more militant ideological line and firm social discipline.

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CHINA - INTERNAL

The need to defend the achievements of the Cultural Revolution against attacks from the Right was the dominant theme of internal propaganda. Among the various tendencies mentioned in this context were the so-called "Rightist attempts to reverse the verdicts" i.e. attempts to obtain the rehabilitation of officials who had been purged earlier in the Cultural Revolution or in previous campaigns. Press articles suggest that in many areas such officials have claimed that they should be rehabilitated on the grounds that they were wrongly punished as a result of Liu Shao-ch'i's "bourgeois" policies or other erroneous tendencies. Other Rightist tendencies frequently mentioned are "conservatism" and "capitulationism". These expressions apparently refer, generally not to any manifestations of organised opposition, but to feelings of disillusion or apathy towards the campaign - a lack of enthusiasm for the new Revolutionary Committees and a lack of concern lest "class enemies" (non-Maoists) might again obtain influence.

Mao personally has given added emphasis to the theme of a continuing fierce class struggle with a statement, published on 12 April, in which he compared the Cultural Revolution with the civil war against the Kuomintang as an example of a "great political revolution" made by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. Mao may have sensed that, with the formation of Revolutionary Committees in most areas, the need to maintain order and control would threaten to quell the militancy generated by the campaign; his intention in issuing this pronouncement seems to have been to impress on his followers that in these circumstances they must pay special attention to conserving the revolutionary spirit.

Mao has, however, made clear that he approves of the Revolutionary Committees as at present constituted, on the basis of the "three-in-one combination" of the masses, officials and People's Liberation Army (P.L.A.). In an instruction published on 30 March, he emphasised the value of the "three-in-one" system and called on the Committee to organise revolutionary leading groups which keep in close contact with the masses. This instruction seems to reflect Mao's desire to consolidate the system of Revolutionary Committees and to use it as far as possible as a means of genuine mass participation in administration and public affairs. Thus Mao seems to be sponsoring a shift back towards greater militancy in the Cultural Revolution, not with the aim of making new upheavals but in order to conserve revolutionary fervour within the framework of the new system of control. If these are Mao's aims, to put them into practice will mean imposing a heavy burden on the leading members of Revolutionary Committees. It seems quite likely that this policy may have caused fairly widespread misgivings in the P.L.A. which has provided a large number of personnel to help run the Revolutionary Committees.

There have been reports, mainly from posters, of new disorders in the provinces of Liaoning, Shensi and Szechuan and of fighting between rival factions at Peking University. There were no clear indications

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of the scale and violence of the disorders in the three provinces (one poster spoke of heavy casualties, but it is common for such reports to be exaggerated), but the posters probably reflect quite serious local disagreements - possibly between groups contending for influence in the formation of Revolutionary Committees.

With the formation of the Hunan, Ningsia, Anhwei and Shensi Revolutionary Committees only four provinces and three regions remain without provisional organs of power (i.e. Szechuan, Yunnan, Fukien, Liaoning, Kwangsi, Sinkiang and Tibet). This may however appear somewhat disappointing to the leadership in the light of earlier announcements that the system of Revolutionary Committees should be "basically completed" by 1 May.

Among the leaders, Chiang Ch'ing, Mao's wife, received special praise for her part in exposing Yang Ch'eng-wu, the P.L.A. Acting Chief of General Staff, Yu Li-chin, the Air Force Political Commissar, and Fu Ch'ung-pi, the Peking Garrison Commander, who were dismissed as "Right-wing splitters and anti-Party plotters" in late March. Huang Yung-sheng, the Canton Military Region Commander, was appointed to take over from Yang. The immediate causes of the Yang Ch'eng-wu affair are unclear, but the incident probably reflected a growing resentment by Yang and the other senior officers at the strains imposed by the Cultural Revolution on the P.L.A. It is possible that these officers objected to the enforcement of the "three-in-one" system in Revolutionary Committees on the grounds that the system would weaken the P.L.A.'s authority.

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CHRONOLOGY

- March 31 - Rumanian Prime Minister visits Finland
5 April
- April
- 1 Resumed meeting of Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee - speech by Dubcek.
- 1 - 6 Bulgarian Foreign Minister visits Sweden.
- 2 - 7 Soviet Prime Minister visits Iran.
- 3 Rumanian State Council issues decrees on functioning of Ministry of Internal Affairs and creation of State Security Council.
- 3 Resignation of Czechoslovak Minister of Defence, General Lomsky.
- 3 Soviet protest to China on detention of ship at Canton.
- 3 Anglo-Soviet Navigation Treaty signed.
- 3 Soviet Far East Fleet visits Bombay.
- 3 North Vietnam's offer to talk about the cessation of American bombing.
- 4 New Praesidium of Czechoslovak Communist Party elected.
- 4 Chinese permit Soviet ship to sail from Canton after making counter-protest.
- 5 Soviet Government statement supports North Vietnamese stand on talks.
- 5 - 8 Soviet Deputy Prime Minister, Mazurov, leads delegation to Finland for 20th anniversary of Fenno-Soviet Treaty of Friendship.
- 6 New Rumanian Draft Penal Code published.
- 6 "D.D.R." referendum on new Constitution.
- 6 Sino-Syrian News Agency Co-operation Agreement signed.
- 6 Cernik succeeds Lenart as Czechoslovak Prime Minister.
- 6 Soviet Air Force squadron visit UAR and Syria.

/6-7 Bulgarian

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- 6 - 7 Bulgarian Foreign Minister visits Denmark.
- 7 - 10 Bulgarian Foreign Minister visits Iceland.
- 8 New Czechoslovak Cabinet announced.
- 8 Hunan Revolutionary Committee established.
- Polish President Ochab resigns.
- 8 - 10 Extraordinary Session in Moscow of General Council of World Federation of Trade Unions on solidarity with Vietnam.
- 8 Chinese expert expelled from Soviet Union.
- 8 - 11 Rumanian Prime Minister visits Sweden.
- 8 - 15 President Tito visits Japan.
- 9 Czechoslovak Action Programme published.
- 9 Chinese protest to Soviet Union over expulsion of Chinese expert from Tashkent.
- 9 Sino-Polish Trade Protocol for 1968 signed.
- 9 - 10 Plenary session of Central Committee of CPSU.
- 9 - 11 Conference of Progressive Forces of the Mediterranean in Rome.
- 10 Ninghsia Autonomous Region Revolutionary Committee established.
- 10 'Radio Peace and Progress' broadcasts in Chinese comments on Chinese failure to publicise North Vietnam's offer on talks.
- 11 Sychalski elected President of Poland.
- 12 U Thant sees North Vietnamese representative, Mai Van Bo, in Paris.
- 13 "D.D.R." issues decree banning travel through East Germany by members of Federal Government.
- 15 'People's Daily' criticises President Johnson's statement on talks on Vietnam.
- 16 Appeal by Ginzburg, Galanskov, Dobrovolsky and Lashkova rejected.
- 16 Statement by Mao Tse-tung in support of U.S. Negroes.

/16-21 President Tito

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- 16 - 21 President Tito visits Mongolia.
- 17 "Pravda" carries shortened report of Czechoslovak Action Programme.
- 17 - 20 Soviet Prime Minister visits Pakistan.
- 17 - 24 Soviet naval squadron visits Mogadishu.
- 18 Anhwei Provincial Revolutionary Committee formed.
- 18 Soviet naval units visit Latakia.
- 18 - 21 UAR Foreign Minister visits Soviet Union.
- 19 Marshal Yakuborsky, C-in-C of Warsaw Pact visits Poland.
- 20 Speech by Soviet Ambassador in Warsaw praising Gomulka.
- 21 UAR Foreign Minister visits Czechoslovakia.
- 21 Soviet Prime Minister visits India.
- 21 Marshal Yakubovsky, Commander-in-Chief of Warsaw Pact Forces, visits East Berlin.
- 22 Soviet Foreign Ministry statement on non-proliferation.
- 22 Guinean Government economic delegation arrives in Peking.
- 22 Soviet Trade Mission visits Malta.
- 22 - 28 President Tito visits Iran.
- 23 Soviet "Kommunist" attack on Maoism.
- 24 - 28 Meeting in Budapest of Preparatory Commission for International Communist Conference.
- 25 Rumanian Party Central Committee dismisses Draghici and criticises Gheorghiu-Dej.
- 26 Governing Mayor of West Berlin refused permission to travel overland to Federal Republic.
- 26 Czechoslovak-Bulgarian Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance.

/27 Chinese Foreign

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- 27 Chinese Foreign Minister criticises idea
of talks on Viet-Nam.
- 27 Sino-Pakistan Trade Protocol for 1968 signed.
- 28 President Tito visits Soviet Union.
- 28 Letter from Ambassadors of three Western Powers
to Soviet Ambassador in East Berlin protesting
at East German decree denying access to
Federal Government Members.
- 30 Soviet press reprints Finnish article critical of
Rumania.

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