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THE THREAT OF THE UNITED FRONT IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD*

I. PERSPECTIVE AND CONCLUSIONS

The communist strategy of the united and popular fronts^{1/} is best remembered from the 1930's and the early 1940's, when it represented a major effort by the Soviet Union and the Comintern to break out of isolation, to seek political and military allies against the rising threat of Fascism and Nazism, and to defeat Germany, Italy, and Japan. Although conceived as a defensive strategy in the short run, it has been applied in situations of purely political combat as well as in support of resistance, guerrilla warfare, and insurrection -- military operations in general.

The united and popular front strategy is characteristically both general in purpose and greatly diversified in its application. It was employed by the communists in the Spanish Civil War, by the communist resistance in Europe, South Asia, and China during World War II, by the anti-French communist insurgents in Indo-China from 1946 on, by the insurgent communists in Greece, Malaya, Burma, and the Philippines in the late forties and early fifties. Popular front puppet governments were established by the Soviets in Eastern Europe in the wake of World War II. The French and Italian Communist Parties, which had emerged from the resistance period as influential political forces, participated in post-war governments until ejected.

^{1/} In communist parlance the term "united front" denotes a narrow alliance with non-communist parties of the left, whereas the term "popular front" denotes a broad alliance with political forces of the right and of the left around a common denominator issue, such as anti-Fascism, anti-war, anti-imperialism, etc.

*This intelligence memorandum has been coordinated with the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State.

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The rise of many new nations in the underdeveloped areas after World War II provided new opportunities for Moscow to apply and refine united and popular front tactics. Early Soviet attempts at reviving these tactics during Stalin's reign were frustrated by the cold war which prevented both Moscow and the local communist parties from breaking out of political isolation. The gradual relaxation in the East-West conflict in the post-Stalin era, however, encouraged Moscow simultaneously to seek further detente with the U. S., to lessen the U. S. role in Europe, and to press for a reduction of Western, notably U. S., influence in the Third World. It did so under the guise of resisting imperialism and defending national integrity, i. e., through the creation of a broad anti-imperialist front.

As it has always done when resorting to popular front tactics, Moscow has generally been at pains to minimize its ideological differences with prospective allies in the underdeveloped world and to put major emphasis on those political issues that have the widest possible appeal, both nationally and internationally, and are at the same time consonant with Soviet objectives. To the extent that the Soviet themes of peaceful coexistence, anti-imperialism, and national integrity reflect the feelings of government leaders and non-communist elite groups in newly independent countries of Asia and Africa, and also in Latin America, the USSR has found it easier to extend its influence in these countries.

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The practice of open political collaboration has not stopped the Soviet intelligence services, however, from intensifying their covert exploitation of the improved climate. Similarly, local communist parties have continued their conspiratorial and subversive activities at the same time that they were attempting to attract maximum support and to gain political respectability.

The Soviet attempt to combine the tactics of detente with the developed nations and the tactic of the anti-imperialist front in the Third World, has come under heavy attack by China for being neither sufficiently anti-imperialist, i. e., anti-American, nor sufficiently revolutionary. The post-Khrushchev leadership seems to want to continue the attempt but to blunt the impact of the Chinese charge. Recent Soviet pronouncements, as well as exhortations to various communist parties, about the building of a world anti-imperialist front project a more intensive exploitation of anti-Americanism, particularly in the underdeveloped world. The Soviets hope thus both to undercut the Chinese position and to bring maximum pressure against the U. S. in Vietnam and Latin America.

Diversity, however, will continue to be the main feature of any new trend in popular front tactics. Moscow's ability to re-establish a common strategy and to dominate communist parties has been greatly circumscribed by the erosion of its authority in the communist movement. As a result, local situations and local issues will largely determine whether an anti-American popular front strategy succeeds or fails, and whether there are shifts back and forth between violent and peaceful tactics. Under the circumstances the

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Soviets can be expected, as in the past, to act pragmatically and to support different local strategies. Thus Moscow has been giving covert support to insurgency in Venezuela and to "liberation movements" elsewhere, while it has endorsed attempts at parliamentary frontism in Chile. On the other hand, Chinese pressure for revolutionary actions is not likely to relax. The continuation of existing insurgencies, or the threat of new ones, will thus depend on the character, outlook, and environmental situation of local forces.

In the recent past, communist parties have not been able to repeat the successes which they achieved with popular front strategies before, during, and immediately after World War II. They may have equal difficulty in the current period. There is a possibility, however, that both the Soviets and local communist parties and fronts may find greater receptivity for their present anti-American initiatives and win greater freedom from repression and surveillance in areas where the level of anti-Americanism is rising. In any case, at this time the potential of popular fronts for seizing power is minimal.

II. LATIN AMERICA

There is no national situation at present in Latin America where the use of popular front tactics promises to lead in the near future to the establishment of a popular front government. However, elections in the Dominican Republic might bring to power an anti-American and communist influenced government, although moderate forces appear at present to be favored. Elsewhere, the election or accession to power of an intransigently anti-U. S. and communist influenced government is unlikely during the coming year. Because most communist parties have been pursuing variants of popular front lines, an over-all shift in communist tactics is not required although some changes in emphasis, particularly propaganda emphasis, are discernible.

Where communist parties are now committed to a mixed program of both armed struggle and non-violent political activity (Venezuela, Guatemala) the prospects for attaining their objectives through violence are remote, and their options are limited. While there are indications that some leaders of the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) are eager to disengage from the armed struggle and to intensify political action, the resistance offered by the hardline party faction and radical left allies militates against a major tactical shift. The Guatemalan communist party (Guatemalan Labor Party, PGT) on the other hand, has been reported as increasing its activity in support of its own unit, the FAR (Revolutionary Armed Forces); it is likely that it will continue to combine guerrilla and united front tactics. The Venezuelan and Guatemalan parties could improve their positions through united front maneuvers if the authorities were to permit increased "legal" communist

party activities.

In the majority of Latin American countries the communist parties have been traditionally and opportunistically trying to supplement their strength through various non-violent united and popular front maneuvers. With the exception of Chile, nowhere is there a stable united left sector. In fact the unification of the left and other important forces in an alliance with communist elements -- the key to eventual success of a popular front policy -- is unlikely to develop on any significant scale without a definite increase in tensions and serious threats to the leftist position. The kinds of threats and tensions that are needed to make important political forces unite with the left and become receptive to offers from the communist parties, could develop from the following contingencies (in greatly varying degrees of likelihood):

Bolivia -- if the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) is excluded from effective political participation.

Brazil -- if the government seeks to usurp or destroy the functions of the party system and to repress popular interest groups.

Chile -- if the Christian Democratic reform program fails and the Frei government swings sharply left or right.

Colombia -- if the National Front system of government breaks down and the country reverts to acute civil strife.

Dominican Republic -- if rightist regime is imposed on the country.

Uruguay -- if economic difficulties continue and rightist forces take over.

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Venezuela -- if the AD-URD (Democratic Action-Democratic Republican Union) coalition breaks up and the URD returns to intransigent opposition.

The communists have no power to produce these changes in the present situation. Meanwhile their appeals for anti-imperialist unity built around threats of US intervention (The Dominican crisis, Camelot, etc.) can play on nationalist psychoses to produce a wider audience. The communists will recruit for membership, tighten bonds with accessible groups, and generally increase their readiness for opportunities when and if they arise. They are doubtless also concerned to maintain paramilitary capabilities either for self-defense or for participation in mass-based movements that may form during periods of tension.

Some united front programs are being pursued politically by the communists toward such ends as "restoration of democratic freedoms" (Brazil, Argentina), for a "government of democratic peace" (Venezuela), or for an anti-U. S. stand by individual governments on one or more key international or national issues (Chile). These programs have some, albeit tenuous, prospects of achieving their goals to a limited extent.

In other instances, the communist parties -- with even less to build on -- are looking for a specific issue around which a limited objective popular front could coalesce. U. S. interventionism and the threat -- real or fabricated -- of right-wing repressive measures against democratic forces are favored themes.

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Concerning the thrust of Soviet tactical thinking, recent information indicates that the Soviets desire a stronger accentuation of anti-Americanism as the unifying issue for a broad anti-imperialist front. Constrained by their acknowledgement that communist parties -- the pro-Soviet ones -- are independent, the Soviets have said they will accept local tactical decisions. The CPSU has by no means rejected violent struggle tactics and will agree to their use where feasible.

Similarly, competent observers on the scene stated recently that Soviet policy may continue to vary from country to country; they did not discount the possibility that the Soviets will support the revolutionary path to power in countries where it promises success or where competition with a pro-Chinese party requires a more militant position so that the pro-Moscow party may remain in the ascendancy. In any event, in Soviet basic concepts, united front and insurgency tactics need not be mutually exclusive.

Fragmentary data from the recent -- 13th -- national congress of the communist party in Chile, illustrate these points. After his return from Moscow in July 1965, the secretary-general of the communist party in Chile, Corvalan, had articulated his willingness to support the Frei government in pursuing selected objectives, some of which are contrary to U. S. interest. This line of emerging policy was formalized at the 13th congress when U. S. imperialism was strongly identified as the major enemy, and a dramatic appeal was made for the creation of a patriotic front to unite individuals from all parties and of all political persuasions who wished to preserve Chile's sovereignty and recognize the threat of U. S. imperialism. Against this

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background, a leading Soviet delegate to the congress stressed, in confidential talks with Latin American communist party delegates, the need to devise locally well-conceived programs to serve against "Yankee imperialism" and to look for elements with which to unite in a single anti-imperialist front. A leader of a Central American communist party, who returned from Moscow in August 1965, was earlier reported saying that the Soviet Union was concerned with the formation of national fronts in each country to fight imperialism.

Recent evidence also suggests strongly that one immediate objective of these Soviet moves was to promote the organization and strengthening by local communists of reliable national anti-imperialist fronts as a necessary step toward creation of such a world-wide anti-imperialist front as would be responsive to Soviet guidance. The measures taken since September to convene the long projected Three Continent Conference (Havana, January 1966) tend to support this.

As increase of anti-U. S. popular front activity in Latin America can therefore be expected, in which the time-honored tactics of student demonstrations, labor unrest, violence, and scurrilous propaganda will probably be employed. (See Appendix A for brief judgments on communist united front prospects in selected Latin American countries).

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III. FAR EAST

In Indonesia, the most ambitious and successful popular front operation undertaken anywhere is threatened with destruction because of a power shift on the Indonesian political scene. The army, long fearing PKI domination of Indonesia as inimical to its own interests, has used Communist complicity in an abortive power attempt on October 1 as the reason to launch a campaign against the Communist Party. This campaign includes the purging of communist members and sympathizers from the government and quasi-government bodies, a virtual ban on communist organizational activities, and security action against areas where the communists have opposed the anti-PKI drive. Whether the Indonesian Communist Party will survive in its present form and with its present program depends on the ability of its protector, President Sukarno, to again gain ascendancy and halt the anti-PKI drive.

Even if the present organization is destroyed and the party is forced to go underground, the prospect of an unsettled political future for Indonesia, particularly after the death of Sukarno, may well result in the reemergence of the popular front idea at a later date.

Elsewhere, only in Japan does the popular front tactic represent a significant long term threat. The overcoming of the present splits in communist and socialist ranks and resumption of a unified front campaign might by 1970 generate enough political force to be a serious threat to U. S. interests.

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Both Malaysia and Singapore have weak popular front political groups in opposition to the dominant parties in power. Local police have the activities of both groups under close surveillance and important leaders of both have been under detention for many months. Neither appear to have the political strength to come to power in the next elections, 1968-69. In the long term, there is an outside chance that a popular front movement could gain control of the government if there were a change in the balance of influence in Asia as a whole in favor of Communist China and excluding the West.

In Burma, the fact that the Communist parties are illegal and, under Chinese influence, opposed to the one-party government set up by General Ne Win tends to obscure the equally valid fact that the Ne Win government itself includes individual Marxists in its ranks and to a degree fits the specifications for a Soviet-style government of National Democracy. Given the stubborn refusal of the pro-Chinese communist parties to surrender, however, the chance for communists to gain a broad based position and extensive influence in Burma under Ne Win is minimal.

In Laos, the manifesto issued jointly by the Neo Lao Hak Xat (NLHX) and the dissident neutralist contingent at the end of October 1965 may well be a first step toward the eventual repudiation of the inoperative tripartite government formula. It may presage the launching of a people's revolutionary front alternative, to prosecute a new political/military offensive and consolidate control of as much as Laos as possible.

The popular front organization that nominally exists in Thailand is still so isolated and small as to represent a potential military/insurgency threat rather than a political one.

IV. MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

Popular front tactics, in many forms, have had spectacular though temporary successes in the Arab world since 1957. After numerous setbacks the most recent series of moves for popular fronts were sparked during 1964-65 by Soviet endorsement of the idea of building popular fronts by communist cooperation with Nasirists throughout the area. In Egypt itself this took the unpalatable and so far unprofitable form of absorption of communists as individuals into the nascent single party, the Arab Socialist Union. A more satisfactory and potentially effective form was found in Lebanon, where a united front of Nasirist and leftist parties, including the Communist Party, was set up. In Syria the Communist Party stresses a middle course in its united front efforts, avoiding cooperation with the Nasirists. A few communists entered the Hafiz government -- an immediate communist goal -- but this operation has little prospect of lasting success.

Though a "united front of all progressive forces" is the stated goal of the pro-Soviet communists of Turkey and Iran, they have made little headway. In Pakistan, a pro-Chinese communist front party, itself a kind of united front, though without influence, has succeeded in achieving limited cooperation with the government. The pro-Soviet (rightist) Communist Party of India, whose members have traditionally looked to the left wing of the ruling Congress Party as their main potential ally, called in August 1965 for a united front of all left parties as an alternative to Congress rule. The past history of the Indian leftist movement indicates that neither a permanent front nor an

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alternative government is likely to result from this effort. In Ceylon, the pro-Soviet Communist Party acts as an influential, though small, component of the official opposition and could, if the present government fell, acquire significant influence in that context.

V. AFRICA

Three main variants of the broad anti-imperialist front tactic, all advocated by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, are being applied at the national level in Africa. The first, and most conventional, currently being applied in the Sudan, requires the existence of an established communist party, and seeks to build a united front in which parties of the left are led by the Communist Party. The second, the 'National Democratic States' formula first defined at the conference of 81 communists and workers parties in 1960, has been pursued with varying success in countries such as Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Congo (Brazzaville), Tanzania, Algeria, and Kenya. The third, being applied in the white-ruled territories of Rhodesia, Angola, and Mozambique, involves the establishment of a popular front of revolutionary liberation forces in which local communists seek to grasp key positions.

The basic weakness of most African communist contingents is their lack of sufficient organized strength to exploit systematically and fully the chances for extending or consolidating their national positions that either arise spontaneously or are created by united front operations. But, since the

anti-communist forces are often equally if not worse off in this regard, the communist weakness often goes unexploited. As events in the Sudan, Algeria, and Kenya during 1964/1965 show, extensions of communist influence may occur abruptly or just as abruptly be halted if not reversed by the decisions of individual national leaders, military coups, or any of the other power plays that are inherent in the instability of most African governments. Aware of their weakness many local communist leaders have since 1960 been trying to recruit and develop additional forces, an operation in which they have received substantial training aid from the USSR and East European parties and governments.

With the narrow base of Communist influence in Africa apparent, both the Soviet Bloc and the Chinese have placed great emphasis on exploiting at the international level even the most modest of gains in influence within individual African governments. Anti-imperialist solidarity has been the theme around which the effort has consistently centered, and its effectiveness has been most apparent in such ventures as the All-African Trade Union Federation, the Afro-Asian Solidarity Organization, and the 1964-65 attempt to overthrow the Tshombe government in the Congo (Leopoldville).

Sino-Soviet divergences have jeopardized though not yet disrupted this effort. Soviet efforts to carry the international popular front with Africans into the UN and international agencies such as the ILO, and to give increased emphasis to anti-imperialist measures in the economic field, are denigrated

by the Chinese. Conversely, Chinese efforts to tie African governments to their concept of the anti-imperialist front and to bring them to give real and effective support to revolutionary people's wars in Asia and Latin America as well as in Africa are being criticized, undercut, and preempted by the Soviets. Soviet exploitation of anti-U. S. themes in Africa, which during the past year has involved a wave of operations suspected to originate with the desinformatsia element of Bloc intelligence services, appears to be part of their preemptive effort.

At present the projected Havana Tri-Communist Conference is a major international united front project -- at the non-governmental level -- in which African liberation fronts governing parties, and front organizations -- at least those in the trade union field -- are expected to participate.

Appendix A

ARGENTINA

In the face of present policies of the Argentine military/political leaders, the ability of the Argentine Communist Party (PCA) to manipulate non-communist groups through united front tactics is limited and not likely to increase greatly in the near future. Their chances for exerting effective pressures against the government by broad front operations with Peronists and others on anti-American issues are likewise limited.

Current united front efforts include a campaign to collect money, clothes and medicine for forces trying to "liberate" South Vietnam. Most recent was the formation by several non-communist Argentine senators, reportedly at PCA initiative, of a Latin American Anti-Imperialist Front, to promote a campaign against the OAS foreign ministers' meeting in Rio de Janeiro and U. S. interference in Latin America.

BRAZIL

Prospects of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) organizing a successful united front of leftist and national forces seem dim due to both the inherent weakness of the party, and the determined opposition of the government. Sentiment for a united front is likely to increase, however, as long as improvement in the economic situation is not generally apparent. The political climate in the opposition for exploitation of anti-American themes similarly is favorable, but organized expression of these views has little chance to develop.

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CHILE

The Communist Party of Chile (PCCh) -- already well established with its left-wing united front, FRAP (Revolutionary Popular Action Front) -- is now attempting to create on anti-U. S. themes, a broader "patriotic" front, to unite individuals of other persuasions with those of the FRAP.

Its chances for success depend in part on the communist party's ability to exert its influence with the more militant socialist and nationalist elements within FRAP and the related trade union body CUTCh (Single Center of Workers of Chile) to make them play appropriate roles in the "patriotic front" operation. In this effort the communist party is receiving Soviet assistance, and the chances are good that FRAP will play its role properly.

Critical to the future of the patriotic front is the Christian Democratic government's response to PCCh policies and the stand Frei takes on various foreign policy issues. Should the Christian Democrats move far enough to the left in their foreign and domestic policies to jeopardize U. S.-Chilean relations, one of the primary immediate communist objectives would be realized though not necessarily as a result of communist maneuvers. However, PCCh is likely in any case to continue to support FRAP and to use unity tactics at the grassroots level to split off the left wing of Christian Democratic voters.

COLOMBIA

The Communist Party of Colombia (PCC) has for a number of years sought to combine leftist-oriented and other dissident groups into a Democratic Front of National Liberation, but without success in the face of the national front system of government. There is still little prospect that a marked gain will

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be registered by the communists in the foreseeable future.

The PCC has long sought, through support and penetration of the Liberal Revolutionary Movement (MRL), to break the national front system which is now under attack from both left and right as the country prepares for 1966 elections. Only an extremist faction of the MRL openly advocates a formal alliance with the PCC.

Though the PCC has publicly advocated a policy of "self-defense" of the masses which, by PCC definition, is the training and arming of rural elements under communist influence against the "criminal" attacks of the government, this form of militancy does not necessarily require abandonment of the basic united front line the PCC has long pursued.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The Dominican communists are currently engaged in developing a "united anti-imperialist front" using opposition to U. S. intervention and a return to the 1963 constitution as rallying points. This front, which was proclaimed in September by the three communist parties, has faced almost insurmountable barriers of party factionalisms and rivalries. Although the communists are aided by a polarization of political opinion in the Dominican Republic, the bonds earlier established between the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) and the Christian Socialist Revolutionary Party (PRSC) and the three communist parties in the name of "constitutionalism" have not been formalized, and there is little prospect that a popular front alliance will be negotiated.

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National and international communist exploitation of the Dominican issue is designed to provide a basis for solidarity campaigns. In this context ad hoc cooperation with the PRD is being encouraged by Dominican communists. This effort will probably reach its peak with the Havana Three Continent Conference in January 1966.

GUATEMALA

At the cost of some internal dissension the Guatemalan communist party (Guatemalan Labor Party -- PGT) has officially rejected the possibility of a peaceful revolutionary path and has adopted the armed struggle as the only appropriate tactic. Mass united front activity is envisioned, directed towards preparing more people for the armed struggle to insure a broad base for political power. This effort is just getting under way, insofar as the orthodox communists are concerned. Until early 1965, when PGT control over the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) was established, the armed struggle effort was dominated by the 13 November Movement.

In recent months the PGT has begun to shore up and organize FAR committees in all parts of Guatemala, to step up activities in the labor unions and other mass organization, and to form and train small clandestine action cadres. There is, as yet, little prospect that an effective political complement to the FAR will develop, through which leftist political activity can be coordinated.

URUGUAY

In September 1965, communist groups created the Unity of the People (UDP) movement for the purpose of exploiting anti-U. S. themes. The UDP

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is also designed to attract the political support of dissident members of the Blanco and Colorado parties in the November 1966 elections. Its Executive includes leaders of the Communist Party of Uruguay (PCU), at least one leader of the Socialist Party (PSU), and other figures prominent in the Castro/communist political front F. I. D. E. L. (Leftist Liberation Front). Various labor leaders and their followers are also represented in the organization. Both PCU and PSU leaders hope that the new organization will prove to be an effective instrument for the collaboration of their parties in the 1966 elections and will attract support from people who would not vote for F. I. D. E. L. as such. Neither the F. I. D. E. L. nor the PSU has yet agreed to support the UDP effort, albeit for different reasons.

VENEZUELA

In Venezuela, communist recognition of the fruitlessness of further pursuing armed struggle at this time is growing, but since mid-1964 efforts to carry out popular front policies based on anti-U. S. issues have proved ineffective because of the communists' illegal status. If the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) should be able to control or dispose of the hardline elements in its own ranks and its hardline allies, it may eventually work out a position from which to negotiate a truce with the government. At present the likelihood that this alternative will develop seems remote in the absence of government (and military) willingness to effect such a rapprochement.

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