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SOVIET UNION - EASTERN EUROPE

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Communist Parties Remain at Impasse

The European Communist parties have postponed until January setting a date for the already much-delayed European Communist party conference.

The senior delegates, who met again in East Berlin this week, had been expected to complete work on the controversial document to be issued at the conclusion of the conference. Continuing differences between Moscow and the independent-minded Yugoslav, Italian, Romanian, and Spanish parties apparently prevented this and led, in turn, to the failure to set a date.

In the wake of the postponement, conference preparations in East Berlin will revert to lower-level editorial efforts to harmonize the various parties' positions.

Yesterday's postponement virtually excludes the possibility of holding a European Communist party conference before the Soviet party congress in February. The Soviets had made a number of concessions in an apparent effort to hold the conference before their congress.

The setback will be even more embarrassing to Moscow because the Soviets also failed at the last minute to have a CEMA summit meeting held this week. The two events are not directly related, but the consecutive postponements convey an impression of disarray in the Communist camp.

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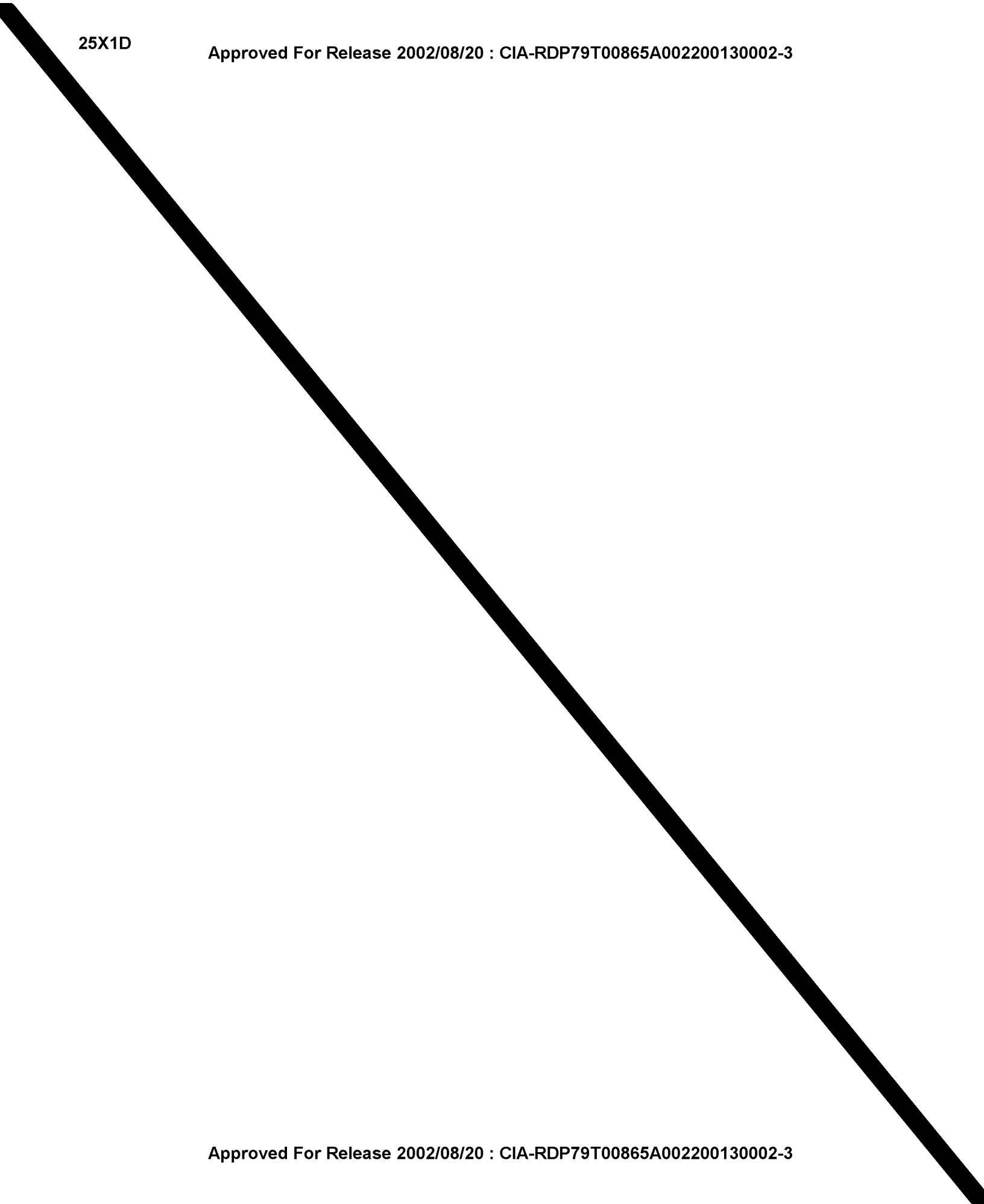

USSR-Czechoslovakia: Speculation on Husak's Visit

No reason has been given for the visit to Moscow by Czechoslovak President and party chief Husak later this month, but the signing in October of a new East German - Soviet Friendship Treaty during party leader Honecker's visit has led to speculation that Husak might sign a new Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty.

Unlike the case of East Germany, where the previous friendship treaty had clearly become outdated, there appears to be no compelling reason for a revision of the 1970 treaty between Prague and Moscow. The latest East German document incorporates the "Brezhnev Doctrine," expands the provision of mutual assistance beyond Europe, and abandons support for the reunification of Germany. The Czechoslovak treaty already contains the first two elements and the last does not apply.

Indeed, the two documents are very similar; the Czechoslovak treaty may even have been used as a model for the East German - Soviet accord. New elements in the East German treaty include specific references to closer cooperation and coordination in the political, military, economic, and ideological fields, but these themes, already familiar in the speeches of Czechoslovak leaders are not sufficient in themselves to warrant rewriting the 1970 treaty to include them.

Statements on further cooperation and pledges to defend detente and the results of the CSCE could easily be contained in a joint protocol, should Brezhnev feel the need for an easy foreign policy success before the coming Soviet party congress. This would accomplish Moscow's aim without the embarrassment to Husak that a revision

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of the friendship treaty would entail. The Czechoslovak leader would probably not want to focus attention on the 1970 document, which is the first embodiment of the Brezhnev doctrine in international law.

On the surface, there are no pressing bilateral problems that require resolution at the summit, but Husak may seek to work out unresolved details of trade arrangements between the two countries before their respective five year plans are announced at the end of the year. He may also report on the status of his party as preparations begin for its April party congress and try to get a reading from Brezhnev on how things stand in the Soviet party.

Whatever the agenda, there is no doubt that the Husak visit will provide an occasion to celebrate the unity and cohesion of the socialist camp, a quality much in need of advertising in the wake of the abrupt postponements and delays in moving toward a CEMA summit and convening the European Communist conference. The example so ostentatiously set by the East Germans and Czechoslovaks may also be used by Moscow to persuade others in the camp to fall into line.

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Yugoslavia: Vojvodina Party Leader in Trouble

Dusan Alimpic, party boss of the Serbian province of Vojvodina, is evidently in hot water, and the first personnel shake-up for the Tito regime in years could result.

Alimpic, a former secret police official and a hard-line orthodox Communist, came to power during a purge of liberals in December 1972. He now appears to be in trouble for the very traits that first brought him to party prominence. Alimpic's reputation as a dogmatic disciplinarian and his record of suppressive tactics strongly suggest that he sympathizes with the "firm hand" program advocated by the Yugoslav neo-Stalinists. There are, in fact, rumors that he is a Cominformist.

Although the rumors are probably unfounded, Alimpic's stewardship in Vojvodina is definitely being criticized. For at least the past year, Stane Dolanc--Tito's number two in the party--has made an unusual number of visits to the outlying towns of the province in an apparent effort to survey the people's mood. Tito himself grilled provincial leaders--minus Alimpic--on the local state of affairs in early November. He was clearly not satisfied.

For the past six weeks Alimpic has been out of the limelight, and it is his subordinates who have been making the mandatory noises against Cominformists. During a brief Tito visit to Vojvodina last week, Alimpic's name was prominently absent from the list of local officials who welcomed him.

On Tuesday, one of Alimpic's subordinates--the chief of the Novi Sad party organization--made the

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public announcement that nine Cominformists are under arrest. The nine, who allegedly "were inspired and encouraged from abroad," could, when tried, provide an opportunity for Alimpic's political enemies to criticize him openly for his laxity in checking hard-liners.

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The Shape of Rumors and Speculation About Soviet Leadership Changes

Reports and rumors of future changes in the Kremlin affecting leaders other than General Secretary Brezhnev have been received sporadically over the past year. They can be expected to increase in frequency if not in accuracy as the CPSU Congress scheduled for next February draws closer.

To a very large extent these reports appear to spring from recognition that a generational changeover is impending in the Politburo. The general secretary and his deputy are 69, the premier is 71, the president and the minister of defense are 72, and the ideological "high priest" is 73. Only Premier Kosygin has a clear "heir"--First Deputy Premier Mazurov--in place. The lack of visible preparations for the next generation to move up has generated speculation among both Soviet and foreign observers. It should be noted that, with few exceptions, the reports received this year concerning changes in the Kremlin have come from sources outside Moscow who are themselves exposed to--and presumably influenced by--Western speculation.

Most of these reports contain no suggestion of a coup and are cast in terms of "plans" to deal with the contingencies of failing health and advancing age. The scenarios are extremely fragmentary, as if the speakers lacked a complete list of Kremlin VIPs and had forgotten or never heard of the less visible but still key leaders and portfolios. Those variously rumored to be on the way out have been the most visible seniors--Brezhnev, Podgorny, Kosygin, Suslov and--since he gave the October Revolution address this fall--Pelshe. Polyansky, although by no means a senior, has also been rumored on his way out, obviously because of the bad harvest this year.

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There has been no speculation concerning Grechko despite his age. Equally curious is the tendency to separate Kirilenko (69) from his age group of "outgoing" seniors and to view him as a member of the replacement generation. Presumably this is because there is a lack of confidence on the part of the speculators in trying to single out a successor to Brezhnev who is really from the next generation.

The cast of players from the take-over generation in the circulating scenarios is limited essentially to those leaders whose duties keep them in the public eye in Moscow. A very mixed bag of Kirilenko, Mazurov, Gromyko, Romanov, Ponomarev and Demichev are posited individually, never as a group, as the "next" generation. We have received no speculation thus far concerning KGB Chairman Andropov, Moscow party boss Grishin, party secretary for agriculture Kulakov, or RSFSR Premier Solomentsev. Less surprisingly, regional leaders such as Kunayev of Kazakhstan and Rashidov of Uzbekistan have also been ignored as have party secretaries Ustinov (defense industry), Kapitonov (cadres), Dolgikh (heavy industry) and Katushev (relations with ruling CPs).

With the exception of the obvious promotions of deputies--Kirilenko to replace Brezhnev and Mazurov to replace Kosygin--there is little consistency in the pattern of the reports. In contrast to last year when his removal was frequently rumored, Gromyko this year is regarded as a stayer, with East Berlin sources positing that he will be part of a "troika" to succeed Brezhnev. (Gromyko's son is assigned to the Soviet Embassy in East Berlin).

25X1 [redacted] notes wistfully that while they expect Kirilenko or Mazurov to succeed Brezhnev, they would prefer "someone like Gromyko." This East European reasoning is based on their view of Kirilenko and Mazurov as wanting to keep Eastern Europe on a tighter leash than would Gromyko who is associated with the greater flexibility of detente policies.

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Kosygin's departure is predicted fairly often, although one report has him moving to the less onerous slot now occupied by Podgorny. Suslov's age is implicitly recognized with his "understudies" --Ponomarev and Demichev--variously suggested to succeed him. Either one is logical if one looks at the two portfolios he carries--international communism and Soviet intellectuals--but Ponomarev who will be 71 in January is scarcely representative of the next generation, and Demichev has been clinging by his fingernails to his candidate Politburo membership since he lost his secretary slot last fall.

In sum, this crop of rumors and reports

--appears to spring primarily from widespread recognition of the visible generation gap in the Kremlin;

--is too inconsistent to represent a concerted effort to push a given Soviet line;

--ignores several key figures and in many cases shows a distorted understanding of power positions in the Kremlin;

--represents an interesting but not unexpected political phenomenon in the increased willingness of Soviets abroad to voice speculation on the top leaders.

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Sakharov's Prize: The Dissidents' View*

The award of a Nobel Peace Prize to Andrey Sakharov appears to be generating a degree of cohesive activism among members of the Soviet dissident community that may give the regime pause, at least over the short term. In the longer term, however, the dissidents' prospects remain grim.

Support for Sakharov among the dissidents gained momentum with the release to the Western press on November 19 of a statement reportedly signed by 77 Jewish activists praising Sakharov's contribution to peace. The document is the third public declaration of support for Sakharov and his principles that has appeared in as many weeks. The first, signed only by a handful of the most prominent names, was made public on October 30, evidently in response to the publication by *Izvestia* of a statement by 72 members of the Academy of Sciences condemning Sakharov and the Nobel Committee.

Last week, 37 dissidents of differing philosophical stripes joined in issuing a statement condemning the regime's refusal to permit Sakharov to travel to Oslo next month for the award ceremony. The dissidents pledged support for Sakharov and charged that the regime's action is proof of its "fear in the face of the unwavering movement of civil thought and morality" in the USSR.

The first two declarations, both of which may have been drafted and organized by writer Andrey Amalrik, brought together such figures as reformist, Marxist historian Roy Medvedev, sculptor Ernst Neizvestny, former general Petr Grigorenko, poet Aleksandr Ginzburg, members of the official writers union Vladimir Kornilov and Osip Cherny, and Larisa Bogoraz, wife of writer Anatoly Marchenko. Also among the signatories were Jewish activist Vitaly Rubin and mathematician Vladimir Albrecht. The latter is the secretary of the Moscow branch of the London-based

**Some copies of the Staff Notes of November 19 did not contain page 2 of this article. It is therefore reprinted in full today.*

human rights organization Amnesty International--a post formerly held by Sakharov's associate Andrey Tverdokhlebov, who was arrested in April and reportedly is scheduled to face trial soon.

Although the dissidents' claim to a cohesive "movement" is an overstatement, Sakharov's award has become a focal point for some persons in and out of the establishment who until now have not been prepared to play an active role in the human rights field. For both the big names and the lesser lights, the regime's handling of the dilemma presented by Sakharov is less important than the fact of the Nobel award itself. They see in the prize proof that Sakharov's efforts, and by extension those of the dissident community as a whole, have been recognized by the West in the most dramatic way possible. They clearly hope by their actions to sustain and broaden the West's attention to their cause.

The dissidents' actions are a product of Sakharov's confrontation with the regime over basic principles--freedom of thought and movement--which all can support. Their new-found courage and seeming unity, however, do not stem from a common assessment of the situation and are, therefore, probably fragile and temporary.

Some of the dissidents hope that a united front on the issue of Sakharov will increase official concern over the Soviet image abroad, especially now in the post-Helsinki and pre-CPSU congress period, and result in an improved domestic climate. Others, more numerous, believe their long-term prospects and those for democratic change in the USSR are so dismal that nothing will be lost by grasping the opportunity provided by Sakharov's prize to rake the regime over the coals. Jewish activists--while pleased with Sakharov's award and willing to stand up for him--appear convinced that neither support nor lack of it for Sakharov's cause will have any measurable effect on their specific interests, mainly eased emigration.

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The more pessimistic majority see the Kremlin as willing to use Sakharov's case to make even clearer than before that the CSCE agreements cannot be cited by the West to press for change in Soviet domestic policy. They also point to the Soviet leadership's recent retrenchment on doctrinal issues as an indication not only of pre-congress closing of ranks, but also a reaction to perceived exploitation of human rights by some in the West to sabotage detente. In this atmosphere, the dissidents see their future as dark.

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