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BRITISH EMBASSY	
16 FEB 1982	
MOSCOW	REGISTRY
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N E Sheinwald Esq
EESD
FCO

2 February 1982

Dear Nigel,

Am. n.c.
in column
1972

1) cc: Mr M Jones, Int. D
~~WED~~; Mr Lewis, A/Catt
Mr Reed, PUSD
Mr Holloway, PUSD
Mr Baines, Parners

2) Mr Smith, Mr Mansel

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THE INTER-COMMUNIST PARTY DEBATE

1. In his letter of 28 January to Nigel Broomfield, Andrew Wood outlined the way in which the Soviet CP-Italian CP debate had latterly gone public. The latest January (No 2) issue of Kommunist has now weighed in with two articles: one, a lengthy post-mortem on the Prague "Problems of Peace and Socialism" conference; and the other, an unsigned and relatively low key continuation of the exchanges with the Italian CP.

2. The first, signed article both adds and subtracts from the earlier article on the Prague meeting in Pravda for 25 November. It is more explicit about the Japanese but silent about the British CP. The main, familiar point it seeks to make is that the requirements of anti-imperialist solidarity must take precedence over doctrinal differences. It argues (vis a vis the Japanese et alios) that although the CPSU and the USSR are no longer the directing centre, they are still "in the centre" "in the vanguard" with a "special role" to play. However fine the distinction, it gets the Soviet Union off the charge of setting itself up as the one and only model, on which the Soviet leadership clearly feels itself vulnerable. At the same time, with the aid of supporting statements from various tiddlers, such as the Senegalese CP, a firm reminder is issued to potential defaulters that:

- a) proletarian internationalism is sacrosanct;
- b) the singling out of disagreements with the USSR is an unacceptable way of underlining one's own independence;
- c) (to paraphrase Ponomarev) criticism cannot be divided up on the basis that criticism in one direction is a sign of a creative, independent, innovative approach but in the reverse direction is a sign of dogmatism, deviousness and meddling.

At the same time, in relation to (c) above it is noteworthy that the article commends criticism of the Chinese: refraining from it "in the opinion of many Parties is a rejection of Marxist-Leninist positions"!

3. Having staked out the bounds, Kommunist then gets down to the business. From the unusually explicit section about an international Communist conference (some calls for which were voiced at the Twenty Sixth Party Congress in Moscow), it does begin to look as if the Soviet leadership may be trying to get one together within the foreseeable future. The implicit question was how this could be done on a non-unanimous and non-doctrinal basis. The answer that now emerges is that:



- a) preparations for it can be both bilateral and multilateral (thus avoiding the need for clearing everything with everyone).
- b) participation would be on the basis of the voluntary decision of each CP, and without any need for the consensus of "absolutely all parties" but with "widest possible representation" as a desideratum (thus avoiding the twin pitfalls of a veto and a unanimity clause).
- c) the agenda would be "the role of Communists in the defence of peace" (thus neatly sidestepping the internal debate).

Kommunist adds - obviously for the benefit of the Italians and other like-minded - that such a conference cannot and should not be interpreted as a gesture of secession from other parties eg those of the Socialist International, to which it would be simply complementary.

4. These look like the opening moves in the promotion of what Ponomarev earlier called "the Communist Parties' historic mission of universal salvation" or, put in simpler terms, the widening and systematising of the peace movement, partly for the purpose of obscuring the fragmentation and ossification of the Communist movement itself.

Your word,
Michael
M J F Duncan

cc:

G Murrell Esq, Research Dept, FCO; agreements with the USSR as an acceptable way of underlining one's own independence;

ROME;

UKDEL NATO; (paraphrase Ponomarev) criticism cannot be divided up

WASHINGTON; basis that criticism in one direction is a sign of a creative, independent, innovative approach but in the reverse

PARIS; direction is a sign of dogmatism, deviousness and meddling.

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(a) ...

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