



SOVIET ACTIVE MEASURES: THE WPC COPENHAGEN PEACE CONGRESS, OCTOBER 15-19, 1986

July 1986

The World Peace Council (WPC), the best known Soviet international front, is sponsoring its 14th major peace congress October 15-19, 1986, highlighting the UN's International Year of Peace. The themes of the congress probably will emphasize Soviet propaganda and policy initiatives on a variety of issues, particularly nuclear defense and arms control. In order to attract maximum participation, organizers have attempted to conceal the WPC's central role, but several independent peace groups already have denounced the undertaking and have declined to participate. Original projections of some 5,000 attendees have dropped significantly, and the success of the conference is now in question.

World peace assemblies or congresses are mainstays of the WPC agenda. Staged about every 3 years, they focus on a specific theme and invariably echo Soviet propaganda lines. This year's congress is dedicated to the UN International Year of Peace—a theme currently being exploited by all Soviet international front groups to support Soviet policies and condemn those of the West.

For the first time since the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the conference will be held in a non-communist capital, Copenhagen. The sponsors evidently anticipated that a free world site for such an event would provide a needed boost for the WPC's declining reputation in the peace movement. A disappointing turnout is expected, however, which will increase the conference's procommunist slant to a degree that could prove embarrassing to its organizers.

Preparations for the Copenhagen World Peace Congress

The Copenhagen conference was first referred to during the March 22-25, 1985, meeting of the WPC's Presidential Committee in Moscow. During a speech, WPC President Romesh Chandra said that a major world congress would be held in Copenhagen during 1986. In July an organizational meeting took place in Copenhagen with 41 delegates attending. On December 14-15, 1985, about 200 delegates from 58 countries and international organizations gathered in Koge, Denmark, to plan the upcoming world congress, with WPC President Romesh Chandra heading the WPC delegation. *Pravda* on December 20, 1985, reported that participants wished to avail themselves of:

... the favorable situation now existing for decisive and concerted action, by all national and international anti-war organizations, to promote disarmament and ensure a lasting peace Readiness to do everything to make 1986 the year

For further information about the World Peace Council, see:

- *Foreign Affairs Note* "Soviet Active Measures: The World Peace Council," April 1985.
- *Foreign Affairs Note* "The World Peace Council's 'Peace Assemblies'," May 1983.
- *Foreign Affairs Note* "World Peace Council: Instrument of Soviet Foreign Policy," April 1982.

of a breakthrough in international life, and of effective joint action in the interests of all States and peoples, was stressed both at the meeting in Denmark, and in an address issued by representatives of the national peace committees of Socialist countries meeting in Sofia.

Hermod Lannung—Danish Radical Liberal and long-time chairman of the Danish-Soviet Friendship Society—was chosen congress president. However, a December 31, 1985, article in the Danish independent socialist intellectual daily, *Information*, quotes Lannung: "I first joined the effort after certain preparations had been made." He stated that: "One could say that those who were involved in the beginning were rather East European-oriented...."

Participation

Many organizations still have not responded to the invitation to attend the Copenhagen congress; some have declined because of WPC sponsorship. The WPC originally hoped that some 5,000 delegates would attend the congress, but due to organizational problems and the increasing number of groups refusing to participate, attendance projections now have dropped to an estimated 2,000 participants.

For its part, the World Peace Council wants participants to represent a broad range of views to lend the congress an aura of legitimacy and independence. James Lamond, a WPC vice president from Great Britain, told the British Communist Party newspaper *Morning Star* (February 10, 1986) that religious, peace, trade union, and other groups were being asked to participate.

As usual with WPC mass events, an effort also was made to place well-known figures on the international congress preparatory committee. For example, former President of Mexico Echeverria, Portugal's former President Costa Gomes, and Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis—all vice presidents of the WPC—are serving on the Copenhagen Preparatory Committee.

According to a December 17, 1985, article in the Danish Social Democratic newspaper *Aktuelt*, Yuriy Zhukhov—chairman of the Soviet Peace Committee and a WPC Presidential Committee member—asserted that his committee wanted Denmark's major opposition party, the Danish Social Democrats (SDP), to be involved in the preparations for the congress. *Aktuelt* also noted on December 17, 1985, that the SDP was skeptical about the congress and had proposed that it be organized by the Danish UN Association in order to ensure broad-based participation. In February 1986, however, the SDP declined to participate in the congress, as did the Danish Youth Council, the Danish Socialist Youth Movement (DSLJ), and the Danish UN Association. Chairman of the LIN Association, Arne Stinus from the Danish Radical Liberal Party, stated:

We definitely feel that the scales are tipped in favor of communist forces. We did not feel that the UN Association was strong enough to go in and work for a better balance, and, therefore, we have chosen to withdraw.

The DSU similarly noted that the congress was "communist inspired" and would be "one sided." The SDP's security policy spokesman, Lasse Budtz, subsequently told the *Berlingske Tidende*, a major Danish conservative daily: "It is a well-known fact that the World Peace Council is controlled by Moscow and, in our work for peace, we want to exert pressure on both sides in regard to rearmament [issues]." Another SDP party member wrote in the March 20 edition of *Politiken*, a leading liberal Danish newspaper, that:

... we do not believe that the Bella Center [Copenhagen] Conference will promote dialogue or provide a place for it, because our confidence in the communist World Peace Council is very small indeed.

We believe that the organization, which is controlled by Moscow, is one-sided. . . . It is evident from the answers that no other social democratic parties have been encouraged to participate, that the Danish Trade Union Federation has not been approached, that there were no concrete plans to invite the so-called alternative peace groups in the Eastern bloc countries but only the official peace organizations which are their government's mouth pieces—and later someone else told us that, for example, the U.N. Association would not participate. We haven't been able to obtain any assurances that, for instance, Afghanistan would be discussed—while we are certain that Nicaragua will definitely be on the agenda, which we also feel it should be—but not alone. . . . We do not wish to participate in a monotonous condemnation of one side because that leads nowhere. The so-called World Conference has been organized in a lopsided fashion from the start. If they had other intentions, why didn't they contact us at the very beginning instead of waiting until a great number of communists had been placed on the organizing committee? This is not how the proper climate for honest dialogue is created.

According to a June 26, 1986, article in *Berlingske Tidende*, the Socialist People's Party (SF) has announced that it will boycott the congress unless its International Secretariat accepts the party's compromise agenda—which closely adheres to the UN seven-point plan for the International Year of Peace—at its August 2-3 meeting in Geneva.

Although the organizers deny it, the Danish members of the Preparatory Committee, with the exception of several from the Radical Liberal Party, are predominantly from the far left and communist-dominated organizations. The Danish Communist Party has, for the most part, tried to camouflage its direct involvement so as not to endanger participation, albeit with limited success. A May 31 article in *Berlingske Tidende* by a Danish parliamentarian maintained that:

... the Danish Branch of the WPC, the Joint Committee on Peace and Security, has had decisive influence on the Danish preparations, and the Secretariat work has been carried out primarily by members of the Danish Communist Party and Denmark's Communist Youth, which was revealed when the Danish UN Council decided on its attitude to the Congress.

In an effort to further obscure the organizers' identity, even the office locations have been rearranged. The congress secretariat—initially located in a Copenhagen office shared by several communist and leftist peace groups—since has been moved to a more neutral address.

Marching in Step With Moscow

Given the WPC's organizational control of the Copenhagen congress and its traditional parroting of Moscow's line, the centerpiece of the Copenhagen conference will be the Soviet foreign policy and arms control themes advanced at their 27th Communist Party Congress, held February 25 to March 6, 1986. In fact, the WPC already has echoed the Soviets by dedicating its April 24-27 meeting (see box) in Sofia to plans for improved coordination and consolidation of peace movement efforts. In his letter to the Sofia gathering, Gorbachev encouraged world peace forces to work actively to overcome "disunity and prejudice" in the movement. The Sofia participants responded by endorsing Soviet arms control initiatives and adopting on April 24 a statement which declared:

The session urges all peoples of the world to rally against the US policy of state terrorism and armed intervention which undermines constructive efforts for the insurance of international security.

The World Peace Council expresses solidarity with the people of the Libyan *Jamahiriyah* in its struggle against the United States' aggressive actions, in the just struggle for independence, sovereignty and peace.

Gorbachev's arms control initiatives also certainly will be endorsed at Copenhagen, in particular, his January 15 call for the total elimination of nuclear weapons before the year 2000, the Warsaw Pact's call for "Atlantic-to-the-Urals" conventional weapons proposal, intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF), "Star Peace," and European nuclear-weapons-free zones proposals.

The WPC also will try to assure that the Chernobyl nuclear powerplant disaster does not become a source of controversy at the congress but, rather, is used to support Moscow's call for a nuclear test ban. As the WPC stated on May 16:

The accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station, tragic in itself, is a reminder of the all-embracing and irreversibly disastrous consequences of the use of arsenals of nuclear weapons in a nuclear war.

We reject the attempts to switch the attention of the world public opinion from such vital issues as halting nuclear tests, eliminating nuclear and chemical weapons, limiting conventional weapons, etc., to the Chernobyl accident and speculation and falsehoods about it.

Other sensitive topics, such as human rights, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and martial law in Poland are unlikely to receive much of a hearing at Copenhagen if past conferences are any guide. The WPC, the real power behind the scenes, will exert maximum pressure on the participants to neutralize, if not negate, any dissenting voice. A Danish parliamentarian writing in the May 31 edition of *Berlingske Tidende* sums it up:

The unserious political character of the Congress is revealed by the way in which the initiators have tried to avoid the conditions raised from many sides that the independent East European peace movements were also to participate. It is now said that exile groups from Solidarity, Charter 77, and others may participate as part of the delegations from the Western countries. Nothing has changed the fact that only the state controlled, party loyal, "peace movements" from Eastern Europe are supposed to participate.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that, although non-communist groups will be heard during the group sessions, for instance, on the Afghanistan question, the external image and the conclusions of the congress will be completely dominated by the initiators.

The April 1986 WPC Plenary Session in Sofia

At the April 24-27 WPC meeting in Sofia, WPC President Romesh Chandra was reelected for another 3-year term, but his power was diminished with the reinstatement of the position of general secretary.

During the session's proceedings, however, Moscow's iron grip on the WPC was reinforced through WPC Presidential Committee member Yuhy Zhukov. In his speech to the Sofia session, Zhukov criticized the WPC Secretariat for its failure to unite antiwar groups to respond to the "intensified threat of a nuclear war" brought on by the West.

All this requires from us not only energy but also the skill, first, to dispel the false interpretations of the WPC activities and, secondly, to establish cooperation with those who so far have been keeping aside from us, though they express a sincere desire to work against the threat of a nuclear war.

And here we must openly say that all of us, the World Peace Council, its leadership and, above all, the Secretariat are responsible for failing to achieve this cooperation.

Chandra, whose speech preceded Zhukov's, openly accepted responsibility for problems in the leadership. He called for the revamping of the secretariat in his speech to the session but only suggested "discussion" of the subject, with implementation at a later date.

In a clear demonstration of his Soviet authority, Zhukov bypassed Chandra's proposal and moved to immediately implement changes which included reinstating the position of general secretary—a post absent since 1977—and, thereby, effectively removing Chandra's authority. Zhukov maintained that:

We believe it is important to strengthen radically the political and organizing role and responsibility of the WPC Secretariat. . . . Therefore, a number of national peace committees have recently put forward a proposal to reinstate the post of the WPC General Secretary who, by cooperating in a close tandem with the President, would be responsible for all day-to-day activities of the Secretariat.

We, in the Soviet peace movement, have decided upon a comprehensive discussion to support this proposal. We hope it will be met with approval at the session. Since, at the current stage, the task of a broader cooperation with Western antiwar movements has acquired special importance, it may be appropriate to vest the office in a prominent representative of some national peace movement of Europe, preferably from the host country of the WPC headquarters [Finland].

The Soviet decision was then implemented. Johannes Pakaslahti, head of the National Peace Committee of Finland and member of the Stalinist wing of the Finnish Communist Party, was elected general secretary and charged with the day-to-day management of the WPC.

What to Expect: A Look at Past Congresses

The first WPC-sponsored peace congress in April 1949 was held jointly in Paris and Prague because French authorities denied visas to most East European delegates whose communist regimes recently had been installed by the U.S.S.R. Subsequent assemblies, at about 3-year intervals, were held in Warsaw (November 1950), Vienna (December 1952), Helsinki (June 1955), Stockholm (July 1958), Moscow (July 1962), Helsinki (July 1965), East Berlin (June 1969), Budapest (May 1971), Moscow (October 1973), Warsaw (May 1977), Sofia (September 1980), and Prague (June 1983).

The assemblies aim to attract maximum noncommunist participation by focusing on issues of concern to a broad range of social and political opinion. Several common features, however, underscore the assemblies' pro-Soviet bias.

- Most participants are Soviet and East European Communist Party members or representatives of foreign communist parties and other Soviet-backed international fronts; noncommunist participation gives the event credibility.

- Discussion usually centers on the inequities and evils of Western socioeconomic systems generally and on the military and foreign policies of the United States and other "imperialists," in particular.

- Resolutions advocate policies favored by the U.S.S.R. and other communist nations and are passed "by acclamation," not by vote. In many cases, delegates do not see the final texts until they are published in the communist media.

- Attempts by noncommunist delegates to discuss Soviet actions (such as the invasion of Afghanistan) are dismissed as "interference in internal affairs" or "anti-Soviet propaganda."

- Invitations to human rights advocates and Nobel Peace Prize winners, such as Andrey Sakharov, who are identified with the peace cause are opposed and usually blocked by the WPC organizers.

- Dissent among delegates rarely gets to the floor and is never acknowledged in final resolutions or communiqués.
- Assemblies praise the U.S.S.R. and other "progressive" societies and endorse Soviet foreign policy positions.

The June 1983 Prague Congress. A look at the proceedings of the WPC's last congress, in June 1983 in Prague, may offer a preview of the October Copenhagen congress.

The World Assembly for Peace and Life Against Nuclear War—which took place June 21-26, 1983—drew 3,625 delegates from 132 countries and 119 international organizations. Tomas Travnicek, chairman of the Czechoslovak Preparatory Committee and a WPC vice president, told a press conference on June 20 that participants would be able to express their opinions openly and to hold informal meetings throughout the country. He claimed the assembly was funded by a collection, worth more than 62 million Czechoslovak *koruna* (\$10 million), of "voluntary contributions" from Czechoslovak citizens.

Once the assembly convened, the work was divided among 11 dialogue groups; various special interest groups, such as trade unionists, journalists, and lawyers; and women's and religious groups. The dialogue groups focused on issues such as the arms race and disarmament; European security; the exchange of experiences and ideas of peace movements in support of disarmament; the UN role in peace and disarmament; social, psychological, and ethical aspects of the arms race and war; the Nonaligned Movement's role in peace and life; development and international economic cooperation; the danger of war and the problems of the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Latin America; and education for peace and the prevention of war (*Czechoslovak News Agency* (CTK), June 21, 1983).

According to a June 26, 1983, *Czechoslovak News Agency*, report, the final plenary session was largely devoted to reports from the dialogue and special interest groups. The first dialogue group denounced the concept of a limited nuclear war; called

on the United States, the United Kingdom, and France to follow the Soviet Union's lead in announcing that they would never be the first to use nuclear weapons; and condemned NATO plans to deploy intermediate-range nuclear forces in Europe. Similar 11 unanimous stances emerged from the 5th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th dialogue groups.

The other four groups were less of one mind. The second was "almost unanimous" on the need to halt the arms race outside Europe; in the third, a "large number of participants" stressed the responsibility of the Reagan Administration for the present stage of the arms race; in the fourth, participants agreed on the need to counter efforts to split East and West but acknowledged "differences in motivation and approach to peace work"; while the sixth could rally only a "number of participants" to stress that the military-industrial complex used its profits to influence political circles in favor of the arms race.

Various statements by special interest groups represented at Prague also voiced demands in keeping with Soviet propaganda lines.

- Trade unionists called for social rather than military spending.
- Women's groups criticized the Western media for failing to report the peaceful life in socialist countries.
- Artists and writers called for the establishment of an international organization to promote exhibitions on peace themes and cooperate with the peace movement.
- The education group called on supporters to lobby governments to provide funds for a world disarmament campaign.
- Medical personnel condemned the amounts spent on arms and the cuts in social programs.
- Religious representatives called for unilateral moves to reduce the risk of war and generate multilateral agreements to halt the arms race.

• Journalists blamed the monopoly control of the media and news agencies for the attitude of the Western press to the peace movement.

• Parliamentarians expressed concern at the building of new military bases by the imperialist powers in the "Indian Ocean, the Malvinas, and Turkey."

• Lawyers called for more effective use of existing international laws banning the use of nuclear weapons and stressed the need for a new convention banning the production, stockpiling, and use of nuclear weapons.

A final congress "appeal" warned that all talks on limiting and reducing arms were virtually stalemated and new types of weapons of mass destruction were being developed. A particularly acute danger "is posed by the plans to deploy new first-strike nuclear missiles in Western Europe"; it was "utterly essential" to stop these. "We are deeply convinced that whatever differences there may be between us over some problems, nothing should divide us in the face of our common goal to save peace and life and prevent a nuclear war," the appeal stated (*Morning Star*, British Communist Party newspaper, June 27, 1983).

WPC President Chandra told the closing session that after Prague, the peace movements of the world would never be divided again and dialogue would enter a new stage. Vice President Travnicek asserted that, despite different political, ideological, philosophical, and religious views, a sincere and open dialogue had taken place (*CTK*, June 26, 1983).

In their remarks, however, the congress' officials ignored important evidence contradicting the upbeat assessment of the congress. West European peace activists attending the congress were prevented from meeting Czechoslovak dissidents, despite an official promise by the Czechoslovak Government. Plainclothes police blocked West European delegates from displaying signs against Soviet missiles on a Prague street. In other words, the free discussions that were promised were, in fact, not carried out. 🐞

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