

Brezhnev reasserts a war-avoidance policy

by Rachel Douglas

A five-point proposal for the security of the Persian Gulf made by Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev Dec. 10 during a visit to India marks the re-emergence of a war-avoidance policy from Moscow. Brezhnev called on the United States, Western Europe, the People's Republic of China, and Japan to join with the Soviet bloc in assuming "mutual obligations" to secure the region from war.

U.S. Secretary of State Edmund Muskie glibly dismissed the Soviet offer as a "fox in the chicken coop" proposal—referring to the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan. Yet Brezhnev's plan provides the kind of political framework which could make possible an eventual Soviet withdrawal from that country. The plan was immediately welcomed by the Gulf states of Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, while Saudi Arabia said the proposal should be studied and a common Arab position on it drawn up.

Brezhnev's initiative follows a lengthy period in which Soviet policy toward the Middle East has been based primarily on the Arab communist parties and the radical states of Libya and Syria. The Soviet leadership has been embroiled in factional battles over the Polish crisis. Marxist-Leninist "hardliners," allied with worried nationalistic military leaders and cynical British-linked layers of the KGB intelligence service, were conspiring to use the Polish situation to wreck East-West cooperation—whether by provoking a Soviet military invasion of Poland or just by using the Polish developments to purge the advocates of détente from leading positions in both Poland and the Soviet Union.

These factional battles are by no means resolved. But Brezhnev's move, combined with signals to the United

States and Western Europe coming from high-ranking associates of the Soviet President, point to a growing recognition that détente would indeed not survive a Warsaw Pact invasion of Poland, and threaten both Soviet national interests and world peace.

What will Reagan do?

Whether or not this perception continues depends as much on events in Washington and Western Europe as on the factional battles in Moscow. If the incoming Reagan administration works to support the efforts of Bonn and Paris to maintain a workable and productive relationship with the Soviet Union, this will bolster the Soviet political forces which orient toward cooperation with the capitalist world, and thereby lessen the likelihood of military action against Poland.

Ironically, the fact that Western Europe refused to commit itself, at a NATO foreign ministers meeting in Brussels Dec. 12, to a catalogue of sanctions requested by the United States "in case" of a Soviet invasion of Poland, has contributed most to actually preventing an invasion. Had the Europeans lined up behind Secretary Muskie, the Soviet antidétente "hardliners" would have been strengthened. Instead, the French and West German governments are forging ahead on large-scale energy deals with the U.S.S.R., deals which will underwrite political ties with a firm foundation of mutual economic benefit.

Valentin Falin, the former Soviet ambassador to West Germany who is now deputy chief of information for the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee, appealed to both the U.S. and Western Europe to

continue this policy. Falin, from his post in Bonn during the 1970s, was a key figure in building up Brezhnev's negotiations with Chancellor Schmidt, including the historic May 1978 Bonn summit which resulted in a 25-year treaty of peace and cooperation.

Falin, interviewed in the Dec. 15 issue of the West German weekly *Der Spiegel*, criticized the American foreign policy running from Henry Kissinger's manipulation of the October 1973 Middle East war through the four years of the Carter administration. "The whole world knows how the American voters have judged this policy," Falin commented. He said that he expected a more "consistent" policy from Reagan.

Falin denied that Moscow wants to split Western Europe from the United States. "We have never wanted to nor been able to uphold the view that West Germany or all of Western Europe should steer a policy against the United States," he said. "Whoever thinks this does not understand anything about the modern alignments."

Falin declared that Moscow is confident that the Polish leadership could maintain control of the situation in Poland within the existing power structure.

Twice, he contradicted the spirit of some commentaries on Poland from within the Soviet bloc, commentaries that appeared to press for a showdown. He stressed that the Kremlin was evaluating Polish events by relying "not on the reports of journalists, not even primarily TASS, but on the estimations given by the Polish leadership," an allusion to a Soviet news agency release recently about the strength of "counterrevolutionaries" in Poland. That release was not carried in the central Soviet press.

He said it would be wrong to "reproach our Polish friends" for borrowing too much from the West—a defense of former Polish leader Edward Gierek's industrialization policies. Falin pointed out that borrowers in the East and the West had both made mistakes because "it is not so easy to take into account all connections, especially given the vacillating world conjuncture."

The Polish leadership under Stanislaw Kania has effectively been granted a breathing space by the Kremlin to try to consolidate a stable government and to reverse the country's precipitous economic decline. This was the outcome of a summit meeting of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow Dec. 5. Following this meeting, military maneuvers near the Polish border concluded, and Polish party, Church, and trade-union leaders all began to issue appeals for national unity and reconciliation to prevent a national "catastrophe."

The current lull is unstable, however, and pressure for a Soviet military intervention can be expected to resume if the economic situation and the country's slide toward anarchosyndicalism is not reversed.

Leonid Brezhnev's five-point proposal

In a speech to the Indian Parliament Dec. 10, Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev made the following five-point proposal for security of the Persian Gulf:

The region of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean is becoming an increasingly more dangerous seat of international tension. On the invented pretext of the protection of their "vital interests," powers situated many thousands of kilometers away from the region have concentrated there a military armada and are intensively building up armaments, expanding the network of their military bases, subjecting to pressure and threats the small countries which do not follow in their wake.

Attempts are being made to justify such actions by talk of the "Soviet threat" to that region's oil wealth. It goes without saying that this is sheer fabrication, and its authors are well aware of that. The U.S.S.R. does not intend to encroach either on the Middle East oil or its supply route.

Certainly, for us it is not at all the same what is taking place in the area which is so close to our frontiers. We want a normal, calm situation to be created here. We advocate the doctrine of peace and security, which offsets the imperialist doctrine of aggression and *diktat* against the Persian Gulf countries.

These are not mere words. This is our real policy. We propose to the United States, other Western powers, China, Japan, all the states which will show interest in this, to agree on the following mutual obligations:

- Not to establish foreign military bases in the area of the Persian Gulf and adjacent islands; not to deploy nuclear or any other weapons of mass destruction there;
- Not to use and not to threaten with the use of force against the countries of the Persian Gulf area, not to interfere into their internal affairs;
- To respect the status of nonalignment, chosen by Persian Gulf states; not to draw them into military groupings with the participation of nuclear powers;
- To respect the sovereign right of the states of the region to their natural resources;
- Not to raise any obstacles or threats to normal trade exchange and the use of sea lanes that link the states of that region with other countries of the world.

We believe that such an accord, with the states of the region themselves to be, naturally, full-fledged parties to it, would meet their vital interests. This would be a reliable guarantee of ensuring their sovereign rights and security.