

Indian domestic political scene. Over the past months her government, elected to power in a sweeping victory last January, has faced a concerted effort by opposition parties to destabilize the situation, particularly by exploiting frustrations over the continued economic difficulties inherited from the previous regime. Inflation and continued communal (Hindu versus Muslim), regional, and caste tensions have been manipulated against the government.

The role of the left

Mrs. Gandhi has appealed to the opposition parties to join with the government in dealing with problems like communalism, casteism, and the separatist movements in places like the northeast state of Assam, problems on which there is ostensible agreement. The appeals have largely fallen on deaf ears. A crucial element in that is the negative attitude of the Indian left, including the pro-Soviet Communist Party of India (CPI) and the more Maoist-oriented (but also Moscow-influenced) Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) which heads the government of several states. The Communists have continually agitated against Mrs. Gandhi's alleged "authoritarianism" while offering half-hearted support on certain foreign policy issues.

It was not lost on anyone in Delhi that the Brezhnev visit, particularly the clear statement of support for Mrs. Gandhi's personal leadership, was a direct slap at the "short-sighted" and dangerously destabilizing activities of the left, particularly the CPI, which from 1969 to 1977 was a strong and crucial supporter of Mrs. Gandhi. Mrs. Gandhi made sure the message was not lost when she spoke at a civic reception in Delhi for Brezhnev. With the Soviet president looking on, Mrs. Gandhi spoke of the Indian nationalist movement as "our revolution," a "revolution" she said that was "understandably" opposed by right-wing elements but "not so understandably" also by the leftist parties.

During the course of the visit Brezhnev had a private meeting with the leadership of the CPI, not unusual in these circumstances. Informed sources reported before the visit that the top CPI leaders were unhappy with his decision to make the visit at all. It is likely that Brezhnev made it clear that the strategic interests of the Soviet Union and the imperatives of the dangerous international situation should be clearly understood by the Communist leadership in India; whether the message got through is not yet easy to tell.

Mrs. Gandhi and Brezhnev have both acted from clear practical realities of national interest. The Reagan team could learn something from the view in Moscow of the importance of India's role in the world, as opposed to the swings from benign neglect to blundering geopolitical interventionism that have most often characterized U.S. policy toward India.

Europe rejects NATO line on East bloc

by Susan Welsh

The U.S. press is deceiving the American public with blaring headlines of "tough anti-Soviet measures" by U.S. allies.

According to the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times*, the NATO foreign ministers' meeting in Brussels Dec. 11-12 resulted in total unanimity on the Carter administration's proposal to threaten the Soviets against a possible military intervention into Poland.

U.S. press reports notwithstanding, the Dec. 11-12 NATO meeting resulted only in the release of a mild communiqué stating that, while a Soviet military move against Poland would end détente, the NATO allies were committed to pursuing dialogue with the U.S.S.R.

Instead of heating up the situation, the NATO meeting "attempted to cool the rising temperature in East-West relations," noted the British *Daily Telegraph*.

Throughout the meeting, U.S. Secretary of State Edmund Muskie was insistent that the Europeans announce the cancellation of multibillion-dollar energy deals with the Soviet Union as an automatic response to any Soviet involvement in Poland. Muskie demanded that such deals be scrapped, even if the Poles attempt to use their own army to squelch unrest from the Solidarity independent trade union. (Under international law, the Soviets are entitled to move into Poland militarily, if the Polish government requests such intervention.)

His demands were rejected; instead, the Atlantic Alliance representatives only pledged to meet in an emergency session after a Soviet military move into Poland, if it should occur, and then to discuss possible retaliation.

German weight

France is not a member of NATO, but its partner West Germany used all its leverage in NATO to block the insane demands coming from Washington.

Upon West Germany's request, the ministers held discussions on Poland in a unique "super-restricted session" with only ministers and ambassadors present, in order to keep the potential for rumors to a minimum. The West Germans refused to engage in any discussion of specific sanctions, delegating a lower body to look into measures that might be taken if the Soviet tanks roll in Poland.

Otto Wolff von Amerongen, president of the Association of West German Chambers of Commerce, declared in an interview with the *Mainzer Allgemeine Zeitung* Dec. 13 that he completely opposes demands for a "drastic cutback" in trade with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Von Amerongen particularly defended the 10 billion deutschemark deal which German banks are negotiating with the Soviet Union, to build a pipeline that will supply natural gas to Western Europe. The text of the interview follows:

Q: Escalating political tensions between East and West are overshadowing the mutual exchange of goods and services. There are many voices demanding a drastic cutback in trade with the East. What do you think of that?

Amerongen: Whoever demands a drastic cutback in trade with the East in times of crisis is neglecting the importance and the special problems of this trade, although its share in the total foreign trade of the Federal Republic of Germany has for years been only between five and six percent.

But if one is trading with the East one cannot act like an automobile driver who has to change his speed when going over rough ground. It is not that simple. Particularly in foreign trade, reliability and loyalty to signed contracts are indispensable and this is the basis of our international reputation. What applies here are the rules of world trade, and trade with the East is just a part of that.

Everything we are doing now is the result of long-term negotiation processes, planning and careful production and the deployment of considerable financial means. Furthermore, we have seen that a great power like the Soviet Union, which is economically autarchical and productive, cannot be influenced in its political decision-making on the basis of economic considerations.

Q: Especially strong concern has been expressed about the announcement of a ten billion deutschemark loan by German banks to the Soviet Union. There are fears that the planned extension of Soviet natural gas supplies will increase the vulnerability of the Federal Republic in economic terms, and that additionally such a large credit makes it easier for the Soviet Union to increase its arms buildup. What is your opinion of that?

Amerongen: The ten billion deutschemark loan you mentioned is to be tied to specific projects, so far as I know. It is granted only for deliveries of pipes for the construction of huge pipelines and the necessary compressor stations, that is for civilian facility construction.

The loan cannot be used for purchases of other goods, such as for arms and military goods. Besides that, deliveries of strategic materials are forbidden by

international agreement (COCOM). I think the delivery of natural gas in exchange for the credit is a good thing. I share the Federal Government's opinion that there will no increase in the energy dependency of the Federal Republic resulting from the increase in Soviet natural gas deliveries from the present 16 percent to 30 percent of German needs.

Growing problems in the crude oil sector make it appear desirable to move from oil to other resources, to decrease our dependency upon oil-producing countries. Additionally, the scheduled pipes-for-gas contracts will also involve other neighboring countries. Therefore, the contract has not a bilateral but an international character. Thus deliveries from the Soviet Union cannot be misused as a lever only against the Federal Republic.

Q: There are also credit relations to Poland. Do you share the concerns of many that Poland will, because of its overindebtedness, hardly be able to pay back its loans in time?

Amerongen: No. I do not share the concern that Poland might not be able to pay back all its loans in time. All of the East bloc countries have proven to be exemplary debtors, who have always paid their obligations in full, unlike many countries of the world, even in Europe.

Q: Is there any viable alternative to trade with the East bloc, like a reorientation towards the developing countries in the Third World?

Amerongen: There can hardly be a viable alternative to trade with the East bloc nations, and surely not by reorienting towards developing countries in the Third World. You can neither increase trade with the Third World nor decrease trade with the East intentionally. I repeat: such an alternative does not exist.

Q: What do you think will be the importance of trade between East and West during the present period and during the coming period—will the total volume shrink or will it expand?

Amerongen: Trade with the East will maintain its importance for the German economy. There are complementary ways, as the pipes-for-gas deal shows. Whether or not the total volume will expand depends on our own economic situation as well as theirs. If the economic situation worsens, naturally we will be able to import less. At the same time, the exchange of goods is determined by the other side's ability to deliver and to buy; for example, we see that the new Five Year Plan of the Soviet Union shows lower growth rates than their predecessors.

Or in other words, growth rates in trade with the East like those at the beginning of the 1970s are less likely for the 1980s because the gross national product will grow less on both sides.