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NINTH WORLD YOUTH FESTIVAL

Report by the Alternate Chairman

The attached paper analyses the Ninth World Youth Festival which is to be held in Sofia, Bulgaria, from 28th July to 6th August. It contains background information on the Festival, as well as the best estimate of Delegations as to likely themes of Communist propaganda.

2. Although the Festival does not appear to have attracted much attention in non-Communist countries, the member governments of NATO will no doubt wish to take into account certain unusual aspects of this Festival, as compared with previous occasions, in determining what attitude to adopt towards the event.

3. The Festival takes place against a background of unprecedented and often violent student ferment in the societies of Europe and North and South America. The militant pattern among some contemporary students, whether they claim to be Maoists, Marcusites, Fidelistas, Trotskyites, Guevaristas or Anarchists, confronted the organizers of the Festival with a dilemma. On the one hand, encouraging the widest possible attendance could result in difficulties in managing troublesome elements. On the other hand, excluding or discouraging the attendance of groupings judged to be troublemakers as well as any faction which might not give at least some support to the orthodox Soviet "anti-imperialist" line on Vietnam and other issues might limit the scope and impact of the Festival. The organizers have in fact shown concern regarding the problem of keeping motley ideological elements under adequate control, and have gone so far as to state that they will stand for no "anti-Festival activities" or opposition.

4. The Festival will be noteworthy to the extent that a common topical interest emerges or fails to emerge between youthful romantic revolutionaries and the case-hardened pro-Soviet front organization. Attacking the West's social order could, for different reasons, appeal to both camps of the "old" and "new" revolutions, but an explicit alliance of this sort would seem difficult to forge.

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5. Still another point of interest is the Soviet attempt to use the Festival to lionise Arab youth delegations as an adjunct to the USSR's Middle East diplomacy. Most of the requests by Israeli youth groups to attend the Festival have been refused.

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OTAN/NATO,
Brussels, 39.

THE NINTH WORLD YOUTH FESTIVAL

BACKGROUND

1. Since World War II, two Soviet-dominated youth organizations - the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) and the International Union of Students (IUS) - have sought to mould the attitude of the young throughout the world to serve Communist ends. The WFDY, whose headquarters are in Budapest, was founded in 1945, ostensibly as a non-partisan organization dedicated to the consolidation of all national youth movements in a single, and supposedly legitimate, international body. The IUS, located in Prague, was established a year later amid similar assurances that it would be a non-partisan international organization for students. By claiming to be non-political, the Communist sponsors of both groups managed to attract several uncommitted youth organizations. Later, however, when the pro-Communist bias of the WFDY and IUS became obvious, non-Communist participants gradually withdrew. Nevertheless, both have persisted in their efforts to influence non-Communist as well as Communist youth. One of their principal methods has been the scheduling of so-called "world youth festivals", the largest and most expensive of all Communist front activities. Eight such festivals have been held since 1947. Their success has been limited, largely because of the domination of all activities by the Communist organizers to a point where various delegations have walked out in protest.

METHODS OF ORGANIZATION

2. The Festivals are sponsored and organized by an ostensibly representative International Preparatory Committee (IPC). Despite its appearance, this Committee is in fact only a front for the WFDY and IUS. On the national level, if the climate permits, the IPC, the IUS, WFDY or a local Communist Party or front will usually seek to organize a National Preparatory Committee (NPC), which will appear to be, but in a few cases actually is, a relatively representative group. Usually the Communists will retain control or at least strong influence over the NPC in order to make the final delegate selection and thus to determine the ideological composition of the delegation and to ensure that it is responsive to what the IPC and ultimately the Soviets will expect of it at the Festival. National delegations will vary markedly in size, from several hundred official delegates from some Eastern European countries to a mere handful of foreign students residing in the USSR or other Communist countries and representing nations which are small, distant, or politically unreliable from the Soviet point of view.

THE SOFIA FESTIVAL

3. The "Ninth World Festival of Youth and Students for Solidarity, Peace and Friendship", will take place in Sofia from 28th July through 6th August, 1968. First scheduled for Algiers in 1965, the Festival was postponed for one year after the June 1965 ouster of Ben Bella and the site was changed to Ghana. When Nkrumah was overthrown in early 1966, the Festival was again postponed, and the site again changed. In selecting Sofia, the Soviets rejected a Cuban offer, virtually a demand, that the Festival be held in Havana. The 1968 Conference in Sofia will be the first Festival to be held in a Communist country since 1957, when the Sixth Festival was held in Moscow. The first Festival was held in Prague in 1947. The next five were held in Communist capitals, but the two most recent Festivals were in Vienna (1959) and Helsinki (1962).

4. Jean Diard (France), Secretary of the IPC, has stated that 120 countries "had confirmed their intention to take part". According to official IPC publications, the Sofia Festival will be attended by approximately 20,000 delegates and between 7,000 and 10,000 "observers and tourists". Some doubt about these figures has arisen recently, and the Festival Committee has apparently considered propagandizing the Festival more vigorously in major countries. It had been announced that Bulgarian participation would include more than 3,500 delegates and 7,000 "official guests", but later reports have put the Bulgarian attendance at 3,880. The USSR will send about 940 participants. According to the organizers, 23 special trains, 570 buses, 200 autos, and 100 trucks have been provided to meet transport needs. Two Soviet ships reportedly have been made available to carry delegates from South America and various Mediterranean countries. A Festival centre, comprising 10 buildings, five eating halls, a recreation facility and a swimming pool, is under construction. A first issue of a special periodical, Festival, appeared in April, and was devoted entirely to Vietnam. A television programme will be broadcast during the Festival by the Communist network "Intervision" via Soviet satellite. Propaganda material containing the Festival themes has been distributed to 1,620 youth and student organizations.

SOVIET PROPAGANDA THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

5. The main Festival themes are crude, polemical propaganda under the slogan "Solidarity, Peace and Friendship". Politics will clearly be in command, despite an overly full programme of mass culture, folklore and sporting events. Petar Mladenov, Secretary of the Bulgarian National Preparatory Committee said, "The Sofia Festival will have a clearly underlined political character ..." and "vast political significance".

A WFDY representative in Vienna said that the Festival would be "boldly engaged in the political struggle. This is a fact that we feel ought not to be hidden but stressed ... We should not have any complexes about the programme being over-political in character." The themes of the Festival include:

- (a) The struggle against US "aggression" in Vietnam, and against US "imperialism" as the main danger to world peace.
- (b) Solidarity with national liberation movements and all those fighting "imperialism, colonialism or neo-colonialism".
- (c) The unity of the "anti-imperialist and peace-loving forces" in the struggle for national independence and peace.
- (d) The fight against US "interference" in Latin America and for the defence of Cuba.
- (e) Solidarity with the "fight for liberation" of the Africans under Portuguese "colonial" rule.
- (f) Support for the Arab peoples against "Israeli aggression" and against "imperialist" manoeuvres in the Middle East and Mediterranean basin.
- (g) The fight against all forms of "intervention by American imperialism" in Asia.

6. The IPC has already made it explicitly clear that Vietnam will be the dominant theme of the Ninth Festival. Thousands of young people condemning the United States' rôle in Vietnam will be useful propaganda, but Vietnam may be the only point on which there is something approaching the emotional unanimity the Soviets seek to create at the Festival. They presumably hope to shift some of the passion generated over Vietnam to other issues - issues on which perhaps they view the Festival participants as targets for indoctrination and as potential activists who could play a rôle in helping to fulfil certain Soviet foreign policy objectives. Two issues which they could seek to exploit are support for Soviet anti-NATO propaganda and "European security" themes as well as endorsement of the increasing Soviet presence in the Middle East and the Mediterranean.

7. On the European security and anti-NATO question, the Soviets may have an attractively large and challenging target for their propaganda: for the first time since the Festivals began in 1947 significant numbers of West European non-Communists, many of them Social Democrats, are officially joining the Communists to make up the national delegations. There has already been considerable attention devoted to the "European security" issue by many of the international fronts,

IUS, WFDY, World Peace Council (WPC) and others. With the provision for withdrawal from NATO (article 13 of the Treaty) coming into effect in August 1969, the Soviets, it seems clear, are increasingly directing their Front organizations, Communist Parties and other mechanisms available to them against the NATO target. Vietnam has already proven a useful vehicle for establishing a working relationship between normally disparate groups, including Communists, Marxists of various types, and the radicals of the "New Left" in some Western European countries. The "European security" issue may be exploited with the same operational skill.

8. On the Middle East issue, the Arab delegations will probably be larger than ever before and no doubt will be lionized second only to the Vietnamese. Applications to attend from most Israeli student and youth organizations have been refused, and reportedly only the pro-Moscow group of the Israeli Young Communist League will be admitted. The Soviets can be expected to try to impress delegations from Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America with the cordial relations developed between the USSR and the Arabs. In this way the Soviets probably hope to gain support for their policies in the Middle East as well as to demonstrate that Soviet tactics are more effective than those of Castro and Mao.

SOVIETS MAY FACE DIFFICULTIES TOO

9. The Festival agenda is, of course, strictly under Communist control, and this control will be all the tighter because the Festival takes place in a Communist country which is a close client of the USSR. But despite the location and the use to which the Soviets can put the Vietnam issue, Moscow may have considerable problems in confining the Festival within its rigid propaganda format.

10. For example, the question of artistic and cultural freedom in the USSR will probably be aired and seized upon, even by many Communists and others who support the Soviet position on Vietnam and other matters. The European Left - "Old" and "New" - has been highly critical of Soviet repression of intellectuals and the denial of freedom to Soviet writers. The ferment and changes in Czechoslovakia and the repression of Polish students and intellectuals will add to the difficulty of stifling criticism. The composition and activity of the Czech delegation could add a troublesome note.

11. Further progress of talks on Vietnam between the United States and North Vietnam may somewhat deflate the principal propaganda issue of the Festival.

12. Although it now appears certain that the Albanians, Chinese, and Cubans will boycott the Festival, in any case there is sure to be wide ideological divergence among the Marxists who attend. There will undoubtedly be fervent

"Fidelistas" from Latin American countries and elsewhere, and Maoist-style ultras, not to mention autocentrists, polycentrists, and various stripes of nationalist-Communists such as the Rumanians and Yugoslavs. While the Soviets will hope that Vietnam and perhaps a few other issues can be used to paper over these differences, it seems inevitable that ideological disputes will break out. It is perhaps for this reason that in the official publications of the Festival, the IPC is emphasising the non-political aspects except for Vietnam. The usual cultural extravaganzas, sports events, motorcycle shows and East European circuses will probably play an even more prominent rôle in this Ninth Festival than they have in the first eight. Nevertheless the political aspects of the Festival will dominate the event and its impact upon those who attend, for the objectives of Moscow remain political, however vulnerable it may be politically.

13. An interesting comment on the prospects for the Festival was given by Sergey Pavlov, Secretary of the USSR Komsomol Central Committee (TASS, 18th May). He said that some "well-known" opponents who had "tried to upset things" at previous Festivals in Vienna and Helsinki had suddenly expressed a desire to go to Sofia and people who had formerly financed all kinds of subversion against the Festivals had now opened their purses for "official" delegations. Pavlov added that "some youth leaders" wanted to go to Sofia to make political capital out of it and because they feared becoming politically isolated in their own countries. Pavlov warned that a "bitter ideological struggle could therefore be expected at the Festival and it was necessary to prepare for it."

PROGRAMME OF NINTH WORLD YOUTH FESTIVAL,
SOFIA, 28TH JULY - 6TH AUGUST, 1968

The International Preparatory Committee (IPC)
on 2nd April, 1968 approved the following programme:

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| 28th July | - Official opening in Vasil Levski Stadium. |
| 29th July | - Day of solidarity with Vietnam; young Americans meet young Vietnamese; departure of special plane with gifts for Vietnam; meetings and demonstrations; sports events. |
| 30th July | - Opening of forum on international policy. |
| 31st July | - Day of solidarity with Youth Fighting for National Liberation, etc. |
| 1st August | - Day of Friendship with Bulgarian Youth and Peoples. |
| 2nd August | - Day of Girls. |
| 3rd August | - Day of Revolutionary and Patriotic Youth; international youth carnival. |
| 4th August | - Day for Protecting Human Rights; ascent of Mount Vitosha from Tcherni Vrak. |
| 5th August | - Day for Peace and against nuclear weapons. |
| 6th August | - Final day; press conference; procession for peace and friendship; concluding meeting. |

In addition a variety of cultural, sports and scientific meetings will be held throughout the ten days - (Source: Bulgarian press, 2nd April, 1968).

PARTICIPANTS FROM NATO COUNTRIES
AT SOFIA WORLD YOUTH FESTIVAL

CANADA

A "Montreal Preparatory Committee" (Quebec) and a "Toronto Preparatory Committee" (rest of Canada), both controlled by the Canadian Communist Party, have attracted the attention of a number of non-Communist groups, including various student and religious organisations. It has been estimated that the Canadian contingent to the Festival will number about 150, 50 to 60 of these persons being from Quebec. Some 20 or 30 Canadians now in Europe may be included in the Canadian Delegation.

DENMARK

Some two hundred Danes, including a Faeroese contingent, plan to travel to the Festival in a special train.

GERMANY

Karl Heinz Schröder, leader of the "West German Working Group" for the Festival, told the West German student newspaper "Elan" that "in all about 600 Germans" from the Federal Republic were expected to go to the Festival (World Youth, No. 4, 1968). Fifty youth and student organisations from the Federal Republic, including the "Association of Objectors Against Conscription", youth sections of the German Peace Society, and the Federation of Trade Unions (latter as observers only), were to attend (Bulgarian Press Agency (BTA), 25th April).

ITALY

According to reports, the Federation of Young Italian Communists had intended to send about 800 delegates but later reduced this number to 300 or 400. An "Italian Committee for the Preparation of the Festival" has been formed in Rome. Apart from young Communists, it includes one representative from the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (PSIUP) and one "independent". The initiative is almost wholly in the hands of the Federation of Young Italian Communists. Although the Italian Festival delegation will consist largely of Communists together with a PSIUP minority, it is likely that the organizers will also permit inclusion of some Catholic Left and Radical Party youth.