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MOSCOW STILL PRESSING FOR WORLD COMMUNIST CONFERENCE

Moscow is continuing its lengthy effort to bring at least most of the world's Communist parties together, despite the opposition of several key West European parties. This opposition--led by the Italian, Austrian, British, and French parties--has already forced postponement of the next preparatory meeting until 17 November, and an indefinite postponement of the world meeting earlier set for 25 November.

The communiqué issued at the end of the Budapest meeting in late September said that the period prior to 17 November would be used for consultations among the various central committees. In fact, the Soviets have used the delay to argue bluntly for the need for Communist unity and to exert more direct pressure on certain parties. Pravda has run several articles citing the need for a meeting. One of these, appearing on 10 October, argued strongly that world Communism must have coordinated action and not just common aims, and reminded the weaker parties of their dependence on Moscow.

The Soviets have not confined themselves to the printed word, however. Especially in the case of the French Communist

Party (PCF), the Soviets have made unprecedented approaches to local leaders and have inundated the rank and file with pro-Soviet propaganda. Although a serious division has resulted in the ranks of the PCF, the leaders remain united and will go to Moscow early next month. Presumably, the Soviets will offer to ease their pressure in return for a more forthcoming French attitude. Moscow appears to have subjected the Austrian and Finnish parties, and probably others, to similar but perhaps more subtle tactics.

Nevertheless, opposition to the conference remains strong. The Italians have conducted extensive consultations with other European parties, and have been active in Latin America. The Austrian, British, and Scandinavian parties show no signs of bending to the Soviets. The prospects for a separate meeting of West European parties have diminished, however, and the opposition movement has gained little support outside of Western Europe. If Soviet pressure succeeds and the situation in Czechoslovakia is further "normalized," Moscow will probably propose rescheduling the international meeting after the briefest possible delay.

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