

'BRIDGES' TO EAST FACE OPPOSITION IN NEW CONGRESS

Prospects of Cooperation
With Soviet Dim — 90th
Session Due Tomorrow

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 8—Because of the political shadows cast by the Vietnam war, Administration hopes are dimming for favorable Congressional action on legislation designed to open new avenues of East-West cooperation.

The new Congress opens Tuesday and President Johnson plans to deliver his State of the Union Message to a joint session at 9:30 P.M.

The Administration had hoped and planned that legislative steps toward "building bridges" to the Soviet bloc would be the major foreign policy achievement of the new Congress.

But the initial mood of diplomatic enthusiasm about new initiatives on East-West policy first generated by President Johnson's European policy speech last October, has now been supplanted by a feeling of political pessimism about moving Congress toward the Administration's concept of "peaceful engagement" with the Communist bloc.

In both Administration and Congressional circles there is a common appraisal that the hardened political sentiment toward Communism created by the Vietnam war is likely to result in a largely negative response to legislation promoting East-West cooperation.

Proposals To Congress

The Administration has committed itself to submitting these pieces of East-West legislation to the new Congress, probably in the following order:

¶The outer space treaty worked out by the United States and the Soviet Union last fall and approved by the United Nations General Assembly last month. The treaty outlaws nuclear weapons in space and prohibits military use of the moon and other celestial bodies.

¶The United States-Soviet consular convention, the first bilateral treaty between the

two nations. Signed in 1964 but never ratified by the Senate, the convention is designed to promote commercial and cultural relations between the two nations by providing for improved consular services.

¶The East-West trade bill, authorizing the President to extend "most favored nation" tariff treatment to the Soviet Union and Communist countries in Eastern Europe.

¶Removal of the restrictions in the new Food-for-Freedom program prohibiting food shipments to any nation trading with North Vietnam or Cuba. The restrictions seriously impair the Administration's ability to use food as a political-economic instrument in such Communist countries as Yugoslavia.

Least Controversial

On the theory that it is the least controversial, the Administration plans to proceed first with the space treaty, hoping that Senate ratification will help clear the way for action on the other measures.

Some Capitol Hill officials however, believe the Administration is being overly sanguine if it expects routine ratification

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of the treaty in the face of the present political climate in the Senate. It is pointed out by these officials that any East-West measure can expect automatically to draw 15 to 20 votes in opposition.

If serious objections are raised, 15 other votes might line up in opposition, or enough to jeopardize the required two-thirds majority.

One objection that Capitol Hill observers expect to materialize is that the treaty does not provide for any inspection to check on whether Soviet satellites are carrying nuclear warheads. This point is acknowledged by Administration officials, who insist that the United States has independent means, which they decline to specify, for determining whether the Soviet Union is launching "orbital bombers."

The fate of the consular treaty, in the opinion of both Congressional and Administration officials, depends largely on the willingness of the White House to take public issue with J. Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The treaty was enthusiastically endorsed in 1964 by President Johnson as "a significant step" toward improving United States-Soviet relations, and was approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1965. But both in 1965 and 1966, the White House and the Senate Democratic leadership decided not to press for ratification, largely because of the opposition building up among conservative Republicans and Democrats and right-wing groups.

Much of this opposition is based on a statement by Mr. Hoover before a Congressional committee in 1965 that the treaty would permit Soviet in-



Harris & Ewing

J. Edgar Hoover, chief of F.B.I., has strongly opposed ratification of a consular treaty with Soviet Union.

telligence services to achieve "a cherished goal" by extending their espionage network in the United States.

If the Administration takes the initiative in openly rebutting the Hoover statement, as it has thus far failed to do, the treaty is given an even chance of Senate ratification.

It appears, however, that the Administration is in danger of losing the initiative to the opposition. The Liberty Lobby, a right-wing group that in the past stirred up much of the opposition to the convention, began deluging Senators this week with letters opposing ratification.

Privately, Administration officials have all but abandoned hope for favorable Congressional action in the coming session on the East-West trade bill. Because of the likely hostile reception, the Administration at present does not intend to re-submit the legislation until late this spring, in time to fulfill a pledge given in the President's speech but probably too late for Congressional action.

In an unexpected way, the fate of the East-West trade bill has become tied into the personal fate of Buel Ray Wortham, a young American sentenced by a Soviet court last month to three years in a labor camp for stealing a statue of a bear from a Leningrad hotel.

In a concatenation of events that causes State Department officials to shake their heads in despair, Mr. Wortham comes from the Congressional district of Representative Wilbur D. Mills, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, which will handle the trade bill.

As American diplomats have been trying to point out pri-

vately to their Soviet counterparts, Mr. Mills cannot be expected to look favorably on a measure to increase East-West contacts when the Soviet Government hands out such severe punishment for what the State Department has proclaimed to be a "youthful prank."

On Capitol Hill, the Administration is given little chance on removing the restriction on the Food-for-Freedom shipments, if only because such a request places the legislators in the difficult position of justifying food aid to countries that are trading with a nation at war with the United States.

As for Cuba, the Administration has tended to compromise its case on Capitol Hill by opposing any trade with the Castro regime, as it did once again last week in opposing the sale of a British fertilizer plant to Cuba.