COMECON

As a result of the recent meeting of the Comecon Executive in Moscow, coordination of economic plans will provide the chief means of cooperation for the Comecon countries between now and 1980. A programme for this integration produced last June includes specialisation and co-operation on key scientific and technological problems, and a strengthening in the energy, fuel and raw materials sectors.

One of the main fields of cooperation is atomic power engineering. According to the Joint Forecast for the Development of Nuclear Power Engineering in Comecon for the period up to 1990, the combined capacity of atomic power plants in the Comecon countries by 1980 will be some 30 million kW. As with most Comecon projects, the Soviet Union plays the leading role in such developments, but the contribution of the other member countries to joint research and the exchange of nuclear technology is stated to be "constantly increasing". In 1975 this mutual exchange is said to have increased by 23%. Though no precise basis for this figure is specified, an increasing amount of work in this field is apparently being carried out beyond the Soviet frontiers.

Thus a joint investigation into nuclear breeder reactors by the Institute of Nuclear Research (Swierk, Poland) and the Institute of Nuclear Power of the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences is being carried out at Swierk, using the *Maria* reactor. Some bipartite agreements in this field have also been signed between individual member countries. These include a programme of co-operation between the Czechoslovak and Hungarian Atomic Energy Commissions covering reactor physics, the development of nuclear instruments and the development of nuclear power stations. Talks between J. Neumann and György Osztrovski, the Commission Chairmen, included discussion of the Heller-Forgo system of air-condenser cooling for reactors. Similar bilateral discussions have also been held between Bulgaria and Rumania.

The Conference of Comecon nuclear power engineers, which met earlier this year in Rheinsberg, East Germany, made no absolute claims for future expansion: the share of nuclear energy in the growth of electrical energy in the Comecon bloc over the last five years was 17%, it was said, and this "should" increase to 27% in the next five years. The general picture, however, is one of optimism. Poland is introducing a

special training scheme for nuclear engineers at the Cracow Academy of Mining and Metallurgy, using a 100 kW nuclear reactor provided by Swierk, and the Soviet Union is expanding the field of cooperation outside the Comecon block, assisting the Finns in the construction of a nuclear power station at Loviisa.

Cancer research provides another major field of cooperation. A conference in March of this year, held at the National Institute of Oncology in Budapest, laid down guidelines for future cooperation and integration. Hungary is to be in charge of pharmaceutical research and the testing of drugs, and the Soviet Union, notably the Moscow Oncological Institute, is to continue its research into the feasibility of neutron therapy, in which it is claimed that "substantial progress" has already been made. A Comecon X-ray morphological and diagnostic laboratory has been opened in Obninsk, and the possibilities of using π -mesons and proton radiation for the treatment of carcinomas is under consideration. This line of research, it is postulated, could be carried out with the cooperation of the Dubna Nuclear Research Institute.

The conference considered it particularly important to extend its contacts with the international cancer research organisations. WHO, the International Oncological Union, and the European Cancer Research Organisation already have links with certain Comecon States; the new proposals, however, suggest information-sharing between these bodies and the Comecon programme as a whole, presumably through the Moscow Oncological Institute, which acts as a co-ordinating centre and clearing-house for Comecon cancer research.

● One promising outcome of the recent agricultural crises in the Comecon block is the availability to

the USA of credits from the sale of "agricultural surpluses" to Comecon countries. In the case of Poland, some of these credits are to be used to establish the "Maria Skłodowska-Curie" fund to finance joint research, the exchange of specialists and the organisation of conferences, thereby providing a fresh stimulus to Polish-US scientific contacts. Recent joint undertakings between the two countries include a joint expedition to the North-West Atlantic to study plankton resources, and hence the possibility of developing new fishing grounds in the area.

● At a meeting in Luxembourg in February of this year, Gerhard Weiss, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of Comecon, and Gaston Thorn, the President of the Council of (Prime) Ministers of the European Community, discussed a number of fields of cooperation between Comecon and the EEC, including standardisation, conservation, and statistics. Regarding conservation, the Comecon countries and Yugoslavia have now affirmed their willingness to see closer cooperation with the EEC. This emerged at a symposium in Dresden on technical questions relating to production processes with little or no waste products. Dr Hans Reichelt, the East German Minister for Environmental Protection and Hydroeconomy, welcomed Mr Brezhnev's proposal that an all-European Congress on cooperation in environmental protection should be held in the near future.

● The Royal College of Psychiatrists in the UK has adopted a resolution reiterating its condemnation of the abuse of psychiatry for political purposes in the USSR, and has pledged itself to do all in its power to secure the passing of a similar resolution by the World Psychiatric Association at its next World Congress in Honolulu in 1977. The proposed resolution runs counter to the expressed opinion of Dr Denis Leigh, the Secretary General of the WPA, who would prefer that all resolutions should deal with general ethical principles and avoid questions connected with religion, national policies, political belief and so on. He told the English-language journal *Soviet News* in December that he felt it important that the Soviet Union should be represented at the Honolulu Congress, and described the Soviet Society of Neuropathologists and Psychiatrists as "one of the most loyal" members of the World Psychiatric Association.

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