

THE BALKANS IN THE COLD WAR

EDITED BY
VOJISLAV G. PAVLOVIĆ



BELGRADE
2011

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BALKAN FEDERATIONS, COMINFORM,
YUGOSLAV-SOVIET CONFLICT

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www.balkaninstitut.com
e-mail: balkinst@bi.sanu.ac.rs

Reviewed by

Mihailo Vojvodić, corresponding member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts
Dušan T. Bataković, Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

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PREFACE

The history of the Balkans in the Cold War has too often and too exclusively been looked at in the light of the Tito-Stalin split. Tito's break with Stalin undoubtedly was a momentous event in the history of the region, but the Cold War in the Balkans cannot be reduced to it. It was as early as March 1946 that Churchill, in his famous Fulton speech, had spoken of an iron curtain descending across Europe, from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic. In the British statesman's view, one of the loci of the emerging Cold War was in the Balkans, where Tito's Yugoslavia was in the forefront of the Communist offensive. It would seem, therefore, that Cold War types of conflicts started in the Balkans earlier than anywhere else. Tito's Partisans had clearly anticipated the logic of the Cold War even before they established contacts with the Anglo-Saxon allies. In March 1943, Tito tried to establish a truce with the Germans in order to be able to focus on destroying Mihailović's troops and thwart Allied landing on the Adriatic coast. When, from May 1943, instead of a massive landing, only a few officers were parachuted into his units, they were received with circumspection and kept under close watch. Behind Tito's distrust of British and American troops lay his fear that they might extend support to his adversary in the civil war, the royalist movement of General Mihailović. This kind of scenario was to take place in Greece, escalating, in 1946, into a civil war which went on until 1949.

This collection of papers, written by Serbian and Russian historians, makes an attempt to demonstrate how complex the Cold War in the Balkans was. Not only the Cold war logic was present in the Balkans already during the War but it was also hugely influenced by the inherent issues of the region such as, national relations, frontier making, and difficult regional cooperation. Geostrategic position of the Balkans gave particular importance to the local conflicts on the frontier of the two blocs in the making. The outcome of the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict was made even more important by Yugoslavia geographic

position. The Communist parties in the Balkans, and the people's democracies they had created with decisive Soviet assistance, had to address the increasingly pressing national question. This issue put the brotherly relations of the neighbouring parties and countries to a serious test, since the borders were anything but ethnic. Hence, an old concept was brought into play again, that of federations. The concept, however, meant different things to different parties. To Tito, in order to resolve the question of Kosovo and Macedonia, it meant that the Yugoslav federation should be enlarged by the inclusion of Bulgaria, and even Albania. Tito had sought to put the concept of a Balkan communist federation in practice even during the war. The issue of Macedonia lay at its core from the very beginning, since it was a region divided among Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Greece. After the Tito-Stalin split, and in the context of the civil war in Greece, there arose in Soviet circles the idea of creating an independent Macedonia as a solution to the problem. They believed that it would be a solution for the civil war in Greece, because the presence of British troops there rendered a victory unlikely. Moreover, an independent Macedonia would have driven Tito's Yugoslavia further into isolation. From the 1920s, Kosovo posed a tormenting problem to the Yugoslav communists. The Comintern's strategy envisaged the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and was based on the concept of self-determination, conferring the right to secede from Yugoslavia upon the Kosovo Albanians. In the period of the Popular Front strategy, beginning in 1935, the Comintern's solution for Kosovo was that it should be a constituent part of the Yugoslav federation. Whichever solution the Comintern advocated, it never took into account the interests and desires of the Serbian community in Kosovo.

From 1947, the Communist parties in the Balkans and elsewhere had an organization within which they discussed their relations and the issues of their movement. The creation of the Cominform was initiated by the Soviets as an instrument of control and pressure on other parties to comply with the Soviet line. Historical study of the Cominform has been slow to develop, the relevant documentary sources being virtually inaccessible until the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. It was only then that a serious study of the functioning of the Cominform could start, first of all by publishing its documents and meeting records. The organization, however, was not a long-lived one. Soon after Stalin's death, Nikita Khrushchev and the new leadership of the Soviet Union took the decision to dissolve it, but delayed implementing it while trying to work out new forms of organization to replace it. Eventually, they came to the conclusion that formal organizations such as the Comintern or the Cominform were not a suitable form of inter-party relations in a post-Stalinist era. It was the Stalinist nature of the Cominform that had prompted the Yugoslav communists to look for different foreign policy strategies. The containment strategy had an altogether new meaning in the case of Yugoslavia. The coun-

try turned to the West for help. NATO countries decided to help Communist Yugoslavia to withhold the Soviet pressure. The outcome of this peculiar economic and military cooperation was that Yugoslavia succeeded in defending itself, but did not join NATO. Instead, in 1953, it concluded a regional alliance with two of its members, Greece and Turkey.

Yugoslav-Soviet relations, however, greatly influenced the outcome of the Cold War in the Balkans. As they cannot be reduced to the Tito-Stalin split of 1948, it has been essential to study their evolution from the creation of the Partisan movement in Yugoslavia in 1941 to the signing of the Moscow Declaration in 1956. The autonomous evolution of the resistance movement of Yugoslav Partisans was in itself one of the main causes of the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict of 1948. The Anglo-Saxon, particularly British, tendency to look at the Yugoslav Communists only from the perspective of East-West relations did not take into account the real nature of relations between Belgrade and Moscow. Their consistent effort to have issues in Yugoslavia resolved via Moscow had proved unsuccessful even before 1948. Tito's Yugoslavia was much more independent than the British were aware. But, however independent Yugoslavia was, it was at the same time hugely dependent on Soviet military aid. From the Belgrade operations of 1944 until 1948, the Soviets had been lending a helping hand to Tito's troops, at first on the battlefield, then by supplying his divisions with armament and by training his officers.

The tension in Yugoslav-Soviet relations was not only an affair of state. For many, it also posed a personal dilemma. One of the most prominent figures in bilateral relations was Milovan Djilas. He was the first member of Tito's inner circle to go to Moscow in 1944. He was also the most outspoken member of the Yugoslav leadership, both by virtue of his post as head of Propaganda Department, and his character and temperament. Thus, he was both a staunch defender of close ties with the USSR and an unrelenting critic of abuses committed by members of the Soviet personnel in Yugoslavia up to 1948. The split itself did not pose any dilemma for Djilas, but the subsequent quest for a new kind of Communism did. His articles in 1953 caused upheaval in Tito's Stalinism-without-Stalin system, and drew attention of the Soviets. His punishment by being removed from all posts satisfied the Soviets and brought ideological peace to Tito's Yugoslavia. The fate of Djilas demonstrated that ideological similarities between Yugoslavia and the USSR outlasted the Tito-Stalin split. If Yugoslavia had formally been a Stalinist state before the conflict with the USSR, little changed in its aftermath. In its nature, the conflict was a matter of state rather than ideology. Both before and after the split, Yugoslavia accorded special attention to its relations with Albania, an area in which the Yugoslav leadership hoped to benefit from the normalization of relations with the USSR.

The collection of papers that is now submitted to the public is the result of two joint projects of the Serbian and Russian Academies of Sciences: “The projects of federations in the Balkans and in international relations during the Second World War and at the beginning of the Cold War” and “The Cominform of communist parties, Yugoslavia, Balkans, 1947–1956”. The projects were carried out jointly by the Institute for Balkan Studies on behalf of the Serbian Academy and the Institute for Slavonic Studies on behalf of the Russian Academy. The projects were directed by Leonid Gibianskii of the Institute for Slavonic Studies and Vojislav G. Pavlović of the Institute for Balkan Studies. The participation of the Institute for Balkan Studies in these projects was made possible as part of the project funded by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, “History of Political Ideas and Institutions in the Balkans in the nineteenth and twentieth century” (№ 177011).

Vojislav G. Pavlović

Vojislav G. Pavlović

Institute for Balkan Studies

Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Belgrade

STALINISM WITHOUT STALIN

THE SOVIET ORIGINS OF TITO'S YUGOSLAVIA 1937-1948

Abstract: The explanations of the origins of Tito-Stalin split are to be found in the evolution of the CPY from 1937 onwards, and are intrinsically linked with the actions of Josip Broz, better known as Tito. He became a member of the Central Committee in 1934 and as such went to Moscow, only to inherit the actual leadership of the Party during the purges. He proved to be a true Stalinist leader since he never questioned any instructions he got from Moscow. If anything, he showed himself to be overzealous. On several occasions, Georgi Dimitrov had to explain to him that there was no chance a social revolution could successfully be carried out in Yugoslavia before the War. The German attack on Yugoslavia did not incite Tito to act, but Hitler's attack on the USSR did. Once they joined the war, Tito and the CPY started pursuing their own agenda – social revolution as a consequence of the victory in the Civil War they had waged against the Yugoslav King, the Royal Government, and their Minister of War in Yugoslavia – general Dragoljub, Draža, Mihailović. For Dimitrov and the Soviet authorities, Tito's actions risked to provoke problems within the Allied coalition. Therefore he was reprimanded on several occasions, until the Partisan units under his command were recognized also by the Western Allies. The Partisan Army, and the state institutions that were created during the war gave his movement enough potential to be at the forefront of the conflicts in Trieste and in Greece which heralded in the Cold War. The conflict with Stalin was provoked by the same tendency of Tito's to advance his own interests without consulting Moscow. The causes of the conflict were not ideological since Yugoslavia was the most faithful disciple of the USSR. They were in fact geostrategic; the conflict was about the discipline within the Soviet bloc. The importance and solidity of Partisans and their institutions allowed Tito and the CPY to withstand the pressure of the Cominform countries.

Keywords: *Tito, Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Stalinism, Popular front, Second World War.*

The Tito-Stalin split of 1948 was an event of crucial importance for the history of the second, communist Yugoslavia. It gave Yugoslavia an exceptional importance during the Cold War. After being expelled from the Eastern

Bloc, Yugoslavia's communist leadership had the strength to forge itself a sovereign position on the world stage. The utmost importance of the event has made it virtually impossible to imagine the history of communist Yugoslavia without it. Moreover, the official historiography of Tito's Yugoslavia has formulated a theory of the natural evolution of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (hereinafter CPY), that has led it inexorably from its clandestine days through the war years towards the conflict with the USSR and Stalin. The split itself was explained by ideological differences that had detached the CPY from VKPb¹, if not before, then surely from 1937, when Tito took over the reins of the CPY. The conclusion of the theory was unequivocal: Tito and the CPY were never Stalinists, since they were the only ones that had stood up to Stalin, albeit only on one occasion, in 1948. This kind of *post factum* wisdom was not the exclusive domain of official Yugoslav historiography. Numerous books have been written in this vein, for example, those written by the British officers who had met Tito during the war, and later, when the Cold War broke out, felt the need to explain their support to the Partisans. For example, brigadier Fitzroy Maclean, the highest ranking British officer who had been parachuted to Tito's headquarters in occupied Yugoslavia, wrote in his memoirs that he knew that Tito was a different kind of communist. The uniqueness of its authentic resistance movement and its capacity to survive in a bipolar world incited other authors to dedicate hundreds of pages to the origins of the first communist state that broke off with Stalin.²

Whatever the explanation, there is no doubt that Tito and CPY had accomplished a remarkable feat. From the brink of dissolution in 1937³ they rose to become an equal partner of the CPSU⁴ in the Moscow declaration of 1956 that spoke of: "... cooperation that should be based on free will and absolute equality..."⁵ An autonomous resistance movement that grew into a fiercely independent communist state, which broke off from Stalin, could not have been Stalinist. Nevertheless, in our opinion, not only was that the case, but the CPY was the most faithful disciple of the USSR.

In order to demonstrate the validity of our hypothesis, it is necessary to find out whether the evolution of the CPY announced the forthcoming break with Stalin, as the official historiography of communist Yugoslavia has claimed. Therefore it is necessary to perceive the history of the CPY from 1937 to 1948

¹ All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks), with Russian abbreviation – VKP (b).

² On the historiography of the Tito-Stalin split see Leonid Gibianskii's paper: "Soviet-Yugoslav Relations, the Cominform and Balkan Communist Parties: Documentary sources and some aspects of its research" in this volume.

³ During the Stalinist's purges in Moscow this option was seriously considered by Comintern.

⁴ In October 1952, the Soviet party changed its name from VKPb to the Communist Party of the USSR, hereinafter CPSU.

⁵ *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi 1945-1956* (Belgrade: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia, 2010), 917.

in a chronological perspective, instead of considering it exclusively in light of the Tito-Stalin split. During this period Josip Broz, better known as Tito, was the undisputed leader of the CPY. Tito became an acting head of a small clandestine communist party on the brink of dissolution in 1937; a mere ten years later he would stand up to Stalin. This exploit had been the consequence of a continuous shift in the relations between the CPY and the Soviet party leadership. The main architect of this shift had been Tito himself, so this essay will follow his personal history during this period.⁶

The history of the CPY can be divided into two clearly distinct periods: before and after the appointment of Josip ižiński alias Milan Gorkić, as its leader in 1932. Prior to his arrival, the CPY had been governed by communists who had started their political life in the short but intense period of CPY parliamentary life. In the first parliamentary elections in 1920, the CPY won 58 seats in the Assembly of the newly created Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. It was therefore the third strongest political party in the country. Its leaders, such as Sima Marković, a professor of mathematics at Belgrade University, were intellectuals who continued the tradition of the pre-war Serbian Social Democratic Party. They took part in the work of the National Assembly and followed a clearly and democratically defined party line that expressed the political will of its electorate. Although communists, they participated in the political life of the Kingdom. After the CPY was outlawed in 1921, and was thus forced to convert itself into a clandestine party, a long process of transforming the party and its leadership began. Clandestine work brought forward new leaders and new imperatives. Unable to finance its activity, the CPY came to depend on the subsidies from Moscow. With the money came also ideology and new type of leaders that excelled in applying Moscow's directives. Those that continued to think independently and interpret the political situation in Yugoslavia from a local point of view were gradually put aside. The new Moscow line – a sort of universal communist credo – gradually widened the gap between the communists and the political realities of the Kingdom. The Moscow line proved completely inappropriate during the personal rule of King Alexander, who in 1929 proclaimed the birth of Yugoslavia and abolished the Constitution, along with all political parties.

⁶ The biographies of Tito are not very numerous. The hagiographic work of Vladimir Dedijer: Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953) reflects the CPY of cial propaganda. On the other hand the testimony of once Tito's close collaborator, Milovan Djilas, is of particular interest: Milovan Djilas, *Tito: the story from inside* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980). The War in ex-Yugoslavia provoked a regain of interest in Tito's personal history: Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Tito-Yugoslavia's great dictator: a reassessment* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992); Jasper Ridley, *Tito* (London: Constable, 1994); Richard West, *Tito and the rise and fall of Yugoslavia* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1994). Several Tito's biographies were published in last few years: Geoffrey Swain, *Tito: a biography* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011); Pero Simić, *Tito: fenomen 20. veka* (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2011); Jože Pirjevec: *Tito in tovariši* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2011).

The CPY followed the Moscow scenario of armed uprising that was supposed to bring them into power, thus positioning itself as the principal adversary of the new regime. As it was to be expected, the Royal police eliminated and imprisoned the bulk of the Yugoslav communists and decapitated its leadership. The decimated CPY was in no condition to continue its activity in Yugoslavia; therefore its leadership moved to Moscow and became completely dependent on the Comintern.

Tito, Gorkić's second-in-command

In 1932, after several *ad hoc* leaderships, the Comintern appointed Milan Gorkić as the acting head of the CPY. Gorkić was very young when he left Yugoslavia in 1924. In Moscow, he was first integrated into the higher ranks of the Youth International, and then those of the III-rd International or Comintern. During the years he spent in Moscow Gorkić made powerful friends and protectors, such as Dmitri Manouïlski, the VKPb representative in Comintern and Nikolai Boukharine, who had already become a leader of the VKPb by Lenin's time and would later go on to become one of the leading figures of Comintern. He became an integral part of the Soviet party apparatus and was as such sent to put some order in the Yugoslav party. His first and foremost duty was to finally transform the CPY into a section of the Comintern, marginalising all those who tried to think autonomously about the situation in Yugoslavia. Gorkić accomplished the Stalinisation of the CPY, subordinating it completely to his friends and protectors in Moscow.⁷ In 1934, Gorkić co-opted comrade Josip Broz, later known under the pseudonym Tito, into his Stalinist leadership of CPY.

Comrade Broz was a late recruit of the CPY. A native of Kumrovec in Croatia, during the First World War, he fought in the ranks of the Austro-Hungarian Army on the Eastern front and was taken prisoner by the Russian army in 1915. He spent the next five years in Russia and the Soviet Union, first as a Prisoner of War, and then as a free man, without becoming a communist. Only after he had returned to his homeland in 1920 did he become a member of the CPY in Zagreb. Since the CPY was soon banned, his membership did not become effective until the mid-twenties. Only then did his active political engagement begin; in 1928, it landed him in prison after the police caught him in possession of arms and communist material. His only theoretical background in communism was acquired in the prison cells of Royalist Yugoslavia by studying with his fellow prisoners, members of the CPY. He was released six years later, when he met Gorkić who co-opted him into the Central Committee and then sent him to Moscow to continue his education.

⁷ Branislav Gligorijević, *Komintern i jugoslovensko pitanje* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1992), 252, 253.

In his capacity of the leader of CPY, Gorkić chose Broz amongst other candidates by following Stalinist criteria. Broz was a worker by profession and the Yugoslav party leadership was full of intellectuals but there were only a few workers. He was also a comparatively new member of CPY, so he had no links with the previous leadership of the CPY that represented internal opposition to Gorkić. When he arrived in Moscow in February 1935, Tito proved to be an excellent choice. He spoke Russian fluently and he quickly found his way in the couloirs of the Comintern. Most importantly, he was screened and passed with honours the test of the Cadres Department. The Department was a sort of interior control of the International Communist Movement run by the officers of the Soviet security services. Tito was found to be a promising recruit, the sort of confidant the Department had in every communist party, since it needed to have insight into their work. Therefore a member of the Department, the Bulgarian communist Ivan Genčev alias Ivan Karaivanov, established close and lasting working relations with Tito during his stay in Moscow. Tito was thus trained to take care of the cadre's issues within the CPY. This was a strategic position since in a Stalinist party the knowledge of the staff, its movements and promotions gave considerable powers. No position could be filled without the approval of the Cadres Department. When he was sent back to Yugoslavia in October 1936, Tito's main task was to look after the cadre's issues of the CPY, but the overall leadership remained firmly in the hands of Gorkić.

Both Tito and Gorkić, when they left Moscow in October and December 1936 respectively, were given written imperative instructions. The leadership of the CPY was just supposed to follow them. No one even thought to question this *modus operandi* of the CPY. It was a branch of the International Communist Movement, and as such it was governed by the Comintern. Tito was second in command in a Stalinist party and had no issues with his position. On the contrary, Tito had no problems in explaining the concept of Popular Front to comrade Božidar Adžija. The latter had a PhD in Law from the Prague University, while Tito had only four years of elementary school. But their respective education was irrelevant, since they were not supposed to think about the concept but to understand it and apply it. In that respect Tito had an enormous advantage: he spoke in the name of the Comintern, and was therefore an undisputed authority for his comrades in Yugoslavia.⁸ The authority of the Comintern was so great that no order or directive was ever questioned. Thus the political action of the CPY was governed exclusively by the directives of the Comintern. Tito's work in the field provides the best illustration of the way in which the CPY operated.

Before leaving Moscow, Tito received written instructions from the German communist Wilhelm Pieck who was responsible for the Balkans in

⁸ Josip Broz Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. III, (Belgrade: Komunist, 1983), 40, Broz to Gržetić, Vienna, November 5th 1936.

the Executive Committee of the Comintern. His two main tasks were the establishment of the Popular Front and the sending of volunteers to the Republican government of Spain, which was at the time engaged in a Civil War. The concept of a Popular Front had a lasting influence on the CPY. It remained its principal political credo prior to and during the Second World War. The origins of the concept are quite clear. After Hitler came to power, it became necessary to find allies for the USSR. All over Europe Communist parties tried to foster large alliances which would reinforce the country's capacity to withstand German pressure and in the case of war may prove to be valuable allies for the Soviet Union. In the case of Yugoslavia, the policy of Popular Front meant a change of the general strategy. Until then the official strategy of the Comintern was that Yugoslavia, as a dictatorship of the Serbian bourgeoisie over other nations living in Yugoslavia, should disintegrate by allowing Croats and Slovenes to exercise their right to self-determination. Now, Yugoslavia as a potential ally was not supposed to disappear but to reform itself into a federation that could satisfy the claims of Croats and Slovenes, relieving them of the necessity to exercise their right of self-determination. By becoming a free union of all Yugoslav nations, Yugoslavia could survive and organise a large Popular front to withstand German invasion. As Tito explained to Božidar Adžija in Graz in October 1936, the Popular front was not a new political party, but the largest political movement possible, which would unite parties from all sides of the political spectre around a common antifascist policy. It was understood that such a movement would give enormous political influence to the communists, since up until then they practically had none – and that they were supposed at the end of the day to lead this movement. Those were the instructions given to Tito in October 1936, and they proved to be the essence of his political strategy up to 1945, when he officially came to power in Yugoslavia.

The fate of Yugoslavia in the eyes of Moscow depended exclusively on the interests of the Soviet Union, since the fate of the Communist movement as a whole depended on the survival of its homeland: Yugoslavia should survive because it may become a useful ally of the USSR. The CPY had no say in the matter. Yugoslav comrades had fought for years for its downfall as vigorously as they fought for its survival when they were told to do so, while receiving further imperative directions from Moscow.

Tito, the acting head of the CPY

In the summer of 1937, Gorkić was recalled to Moscow, and subsequently perished as one of the victims of Stalinist processes. Tito, became the acting head of the CPY, but the everyday life of CPY was paralysed since Gorkić's departure, because no money and no directives came from Moscow. Tito was staying in Paris where the Headquarters of the Party were, and he awaited instructions from Moscow. Only in January 1938 was he officially notified that Gorkić had

been removed and that all activities of the CPY had been suspended. The end of Gorkić's era gave new possibilities to his opposition and Tito, as Gorkić's man, became an object of contestation, since new candidates for the leadership of CPY had come forward. That's when Tito decided to go back to Yugoslavia, where he had, in 1936 and 1937, created the nucleus of his future Central Committee. He left Paris without Moscow's permission, convinced that the fate of the CPY would be decided in the country. There he could count on the support of Edvard Kardelj in Slovenia, Milovan Djilas and Aleksandar Ranković in Serbia, and Ivo Lola Ribar as the leader of Communist youth. He did not choose them; they were presented to him as the leaders of regional party organisations. Nevertheless, he accepted them and they acknowledged his overall leadership because for them he embodied the unquestionable authority of the Comintern. On his personal initiative this informal group constituted itself as the temporary leadership of the CPY, which was supposed to replace Gorkić's Central Committee, and give much needed credibility to Tito as its new leader. But this new leadership had no real legitimacy without the Comintern's approval. Tito wrote several times to Georgi Dimitrov, the head of the Comintern, trying to get permission to go to Moscow and explain his actions. Finally, the coveted invitation came and in August 1938 he arrived in Moscow.

Upon his arrival, he first had to justify his actions, and those of the CPY. In the meantime, a whole generation of previous leaders of the CPY had perished in Stalinist purges. Gorkić and his adversaries were eliminated in the same way. They perished in a process of security-inspired folly, supposed to rid the Soviet Union of all unwelcome foreigners, and everything that presented any kind of risk to the survival of the homeland of communism. During his stay in Moscow, from August 1938 to January 1939, Tito managed to obtain approval for his new leadership, and more importantly, for his actions in Gorkić's era and afterwards. When he left Moscow, he was once again supplied with imperative orders. He was supposed to organise a sort of conference of the CPY which would approve of the elimination of the previous generation of leaders of the CPY and would *post factum* exclude them from the party. That's exactly what Tito did as soon as he returned to Yugoslavia. He reunited his temporary leadership on the lake of Bohinj from 15 to 19 March 1939. There they promoted themselves into the Central Committee of the CPY. In this capacity, they excluded all those that had perished in the Stalinist purges from the CPY. Thus Tito and his newly formed Central Committee gave their full approval to the purges that had taken place in Moscow. Tito on the occasion expelled from the CPY all his rivals that have come forward after the disappearance of Gorkić.⁹ After he had faithfully fulfilled given instructions,

⁹ Tito, *Sabrana djela*, Vol. IV, 173,174.

Tito awaited summons to Moscow to give his report. Eventually he arrived in Moscow in September 1939.

Once again Tito had to go through the same process of verification in Moscow. He wrote his report on the actions of the CPY and presented it to the Executive Committee of the Comintern. While he was in Moscow, waiting for the situation of the CPY to be put on the agenda of the Executive Committee, he participated in the discussion on the situation in Europe after the outbreak of the War. The main issue was how to reconcile the antifascist policy advocated by Moscow with the conclusion of the Molotov Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939. Manouïlski was impressed by Tito's solution: he proposed simply ignoring it as if it did not exist.¹⁰ But even though the VKPb and Comintern did their best not to publicize the Pact, it became the cornerstone of their policy. The Alliance with Hitler's Germany made the strategy of the Popular Front obsolete since the peril of Nazi attack had disappeared. If there was no need for a common front with bourgeois parties, the VKPb and Comintern could revert to their previous strategy of fighting the left-wing parties such as Social Democrats for dominance amongst the working class. This was the strategy known as "The Popular Front created from below", that is to say by the exclusive communist influence amongst the peasants and workers. The Popular Front was to be created by surpassing and ultimately destroying all other political influence among workers and peasants. The period of political alliances was over and the CPY could go back to the policy it was most comfortable with – the uncompromising fight against all democratic political options.

The new strategy was presented to the CPY in the Instruction of the Executive Committee of Comintern, dated 29 October 1939, which Tito took with him when he left Moscow on 26 November 1939. The Instruction was partly based on the information he brought from Yugoslavia. He was present at the sitting of the Committee. The Instruction was in fact a precise agenda for the CPY that gave answers to very important issues, such as how to address the situation created by the outbreak of the War. The CPY was told that it should in the first place explain to its members and sympathisers that the War had an imperialist character and that all three major participants – England, France and Germany – were capitalistic powers with imperialist objectives. Therefore there were no differences between them, no aggressors and no victims; consequently, the USSR had the right to conclude the Pact in order to safeguard its interests. Furthermore, the USSR was the only power that followed a peaceful policy of aiding the nations that were fighting for their independence. England and France were spreading false propaganda by saying that they were fighting for peace and freedom of nations, or they were trying to spread the War by dragging other countries into it. Therefore, the CPY must oppose any attempt of the ruling

¹⁰ Archives of Yugoslavia, (hereinafter AJ), 837, IV-5-a, box 43, Tito's interview of 29 December 1979.

bourgeoisie to draw Yugoslavia in the War. Instead, the CPY must fight for the conclusion of a treaty on friendship and mutual aid with the USSR, which is the best guarantee of the freedom and independence of Yugoslav nations. Finally, the conclusion was that the general crisis of capitalism would certainly become even more acute during the war, thus creating favourable conditions for the elimination of capitalism altogether during the imperialist war.¹¹

These were the final instructions that Tito brought with him when he left Moscow for the third and last time in November 1939. On three occasions, during his stays in Moscow, Tito received written instructions which represented the essence of his domestic and foreign policy. The main points were: the Yugoslav federation, the Popular Front as the essence of the political strategy from either above or below, the Treaty on friendship with the USSR, keeping Yugoslavia out of the War, and last but not the least, the prospect of the downfall of capitalism during the imperialist War. These instructions, on each of the three occasions, were created during a process of consultation among the members of the Executive Committee. Tito was consulted by the Executive Committee as the principal source of information on the situation in Yugoslavia. He had an insight into the decision-making process, so therefore the conclusions were to him more than written directives. They were the essence of a policy that he had witnessed being made and that is the reason it remained a clear-cut guideline for him throughout the years he spent away from Moscow. It was not until the summer of 1944 that he again managed to establish direct personal contact with Moscow, when he flew from the island of Vis first to Romania and then to Moscow.

For a party leader with a limited educational background such as Tito, these rather simple concepts, contained in the series of instructions he got in Moscow, represented the sum total of his political ideas. He learned his Moscow lessons well and was never troubled by any kind of intellectual doubt. His political skill and acumen consisted of finding ways to put in practice the strategy that Moscow decided upon in any given moment. He gladly explained to Bozidar Adžija the concept of "Popular front from above", that is to say the need to cooperate with the bourgeois parties in order to create a large antifascist political movement, in accordance with the strategy established during the VIIth Congress of the Comintern. With the same vigour and conviction he subscribed to the Molotov - Ribbentrop Pact that rendered the Popular Front as he had described it to Adžija useless. The communist discipline, or opportunism, whatever it was that governed Tito's reactions, was never troubled by any moral dilemmas, since the best interests of the Soviet Union were always an imperative for him. Following his Soviet role model, he saw no issue with the change of strategy, which after the conclusion of the Pact called for virulent attacks on

¹¹ Russian State Archives for Social and Political History (Russian abbreviation is RGASPI), F. 495, Op. 11, d. 368, 60-65.

the bourgeois parties, Social Democrats especially, the allies of yesterday. Therefore, after a long journey from Moscow to Yugoslavia that took several months because he had been held up in Istanbul while awaiting his visa, he arrived in Zagreb on the 15th of March 1940 and started a virulent campaign in the Party journal, *Proleter*, against imperialist powers such as Great Britain and France,¹² and at the same time heartily saluted the victory of the USSR over Finland.¹³ For Tito, the succession of defeats of Norway, Holland and Belgium was a clear confirmation of his political logic. Small states that were driven into the War by the imperialist powers were subsequently abandoned and succumbed to Nazi invasion. The only way out was the one he had advocated: to stay out of the War and establish the closest possible economic and political ties with the USSR. That was the solution he advocated for Yugoslavia in *Proleter*.¹⁴ In the same time he started purging the Party from all who were still in favour of a “Popular front from above”, that is to say for collaborating with other left-wing parties. The title of Tito’s article announced his strategy and his intentions: *For the purity and the bolshevisation of the Party*.¹⁵ As for his attitude towards the Social Democrats, the titles of his articles speak for themselves: *Counter revolutionary leaders of the Social Democrats as warmongers and leaders of the anti-Soviet campaign*, written in June 1940;¹⁶ and *The Unity of Bosses, Police, and Social democrat traitors in the struggle against the workers*, written in July 1940.¹⁷ The radicalisation of his strategy reached its peak after the defeat of France, when he declared himself in favour of replacing the coalition government of Dragiša Cvetković and Vlatko Maček by a government composed of workers and peasants under the guidance of the CPY. He wrote in July 1940:

“The united working class in alliance with the peasantry and with the rest of the working population of Yugoslavia should prepare itself, under the guidance of the CPY, to carry out a struggle against the merciless exploitation of the workers by the capitalists and to lead a decisive battle to preserve the independence of Yugoslavia. The necessary condition for achieving these goals is to overthrow the existing regime and to create a real people’s government; a government of workers and peasants which will rule in the interest of working class, give the people their rights, and ensure the independence of the country by cooperation with the USSR, the country of workers and peasants, a state of gigantic progress and wellbeing, the protector of small nations and the most consistent partisan of peace”.¹⁸

¹² Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. V, 56-60, “Radnom Narodu Jugoslavije”, *Proleter*, 3-4, 1940.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 64-66.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 69-71.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 80-84.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 93-96.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 108-110.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 119,120.

Moscow did not approve of this radical strategy of the CPY. On September 28th Tito was told that the call for the creation of a people's republic in Yugoslavia was premature. The kind of political action the CPY should engage in was propaganda, writing of statements, resolutions etc.¹⁹

Tito, the Secretary-General of the CPY

The culmination of Tito's radical rhetoric was reached during his introductory speech on the 5th Conference of the CPY, which was secretly organized in October 1940 in Zagreb. The Conference was a very important one for Tito personally. He was still just the acting head of the CPY, and the Comintern treated him as such, since only the Congress of the CPY could appoint a new Secretary-General. Therefore he wanted to organize a Party congress in Zagreb in the fall of 1940. Moscow did not approve of organizing the Congress because there was a risk that the confidentiality of the Congress could be breached and the Party leadership might end up in Yugoslav prisons. Thus Tito was forced to rename the meeting of 108 delegates from all regional organizations of the CPY as the 5th Conference of the CPY. The Conference was opened by Tito's extensive report in his capacity of the acting head of CPY. He explicitly said that the CPY opposed the mobilisation of the Yugoslav Army in the summer of 1940. The CPY thus prevented Yugoslavia from being drawn into the war by the Royal government. He clearly defined the line the CPY should follow during the war which was raging in Europe:

“All activity and efforts of the Party should have an exclusively class basis. We have to put an end to all projects and agreements with the leaderships of various bourgeois, so-called “democratic” parties, which have become more reactionary, genuine agencies of the secret services of French and British instigators of the War. Our Party and all sections of the Comintern must undertake the following tasks: the struggle to win over the working class for the creation of a Popular front from below, by organising and leading everyday struggle for satisfying everyday needs of the working class, such as the struggle against the costs of everyday existence, the struggle against the war, struggle for the freedom and democratic and national rights of the nationally oppressed working class of Yugoslavia.”²⁰

Needless to say, Tito's introductory report became the basis of the conclusion of the Conference and he himself became the Secretary-General of the CPY. Under his guidance, the struggle for the interests of the working class was the CPY's overall priority. But when it seemed that the CPY was finally in battle order, with an official leader and a unanimously chosen strategy of the “Popular front from below”, Moscow intervened again. In September 1940, Tito sent his

¹⁹ Ubavka Vujošević, “Prepiska (radiogrami) CK KPJ – IK KI”, *Vojnoistorijski glasnik*, XLIII, 1-3, 1992, 323.

²⁰ Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol.VI, 20, 21.

personal envoy Nikola Petrović, a Belgrade engineer, to Moscow. Even though Petrović did not take with him any written report, he was **briefed personally** by Tito before his departure. Thus, when in October he arrived in Moscow, he was able to make an oral presentation on the situation in Yugoslavia and in the CPY before the Executive Committee of Comintern. After a discussion the Executive Committee reached a conclusion, the essence of which was communicated to Tito by telegram signed by Pieck and dated 25 October 1940.

Pieck advised caution, repeating that the creation of a people's government was impossible in the actual situation in the Balkans. Instead he pressed Tito to create a large movement capable of defending the independence of Yugoslavia and the right to self-determination of Yugoslav nations. On the other hand, the CPY should not advocate the defense of the **present borders of Yugoslavia**. Pieck suggested that Tito try to reach an agreement with bourgeois groups such as the Agrarian Party led by Dragoljub Jovanović. He encouraged Tito to think about creating a large political movement against the war, for the defense of the independence of Yugoslavia and for good relations with the USSR.²¹ **The full text of the conclusion of the Executive committee was sent to the CPY in the form of Instructions, signed by Manouilski, Pieck, Ercoli alias Palmiro Togliati, and Klement Gottwald. Petrović brought them back to Yugoslavia and in December he delivered them to Tito. These new imperative instructions altered the conclusions of its 5th Conference and the overall strategy of the CPY in 1940. First of all, the Executive Committee addressed the issue of creating a people's government:**

“In the present situation, the demand to overthrow the government and install a genuine workers' and peasants' government would as an action slogan, in the present situation, amount to the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat. The situation in Yugoslavia is not ripe for this kind of action.... The party should decisively deny any speculation that the Red Army could support such a venture.”²²

As for the strategy regarding the war in Europe, the position of the Comintern was rather ambiguous:

“Under the action slogan of independence for the peoples of Yugoslavia, their right of self-determination and their mutual aid against any violence, the Party should develop propaganda in the masses and among citizens against the readiness of the bourgeoisie and the government to capitulate before the projects of German and Italian imperialism to dismantle Yugoslavia. Yet, the Party should not put forward the slogan on the defence of the frontiers of the actual Yugoslav state, nor should it as an isolated political force, advocate armed resistance in the case of attack of the imperialist powers. Nevertheless, the Party should sustain and aid all tendencies among citizens and in the Army to organize

²¹ Vujošević, “Prepiska”, 324.

²² Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. VI, 202-204.

armed resistance in order to strengthen the opposition to capitulation and increase the potential for defending the country.²³

The Comintern position on the issue of the Popular Front strategy was rather more precise:

“The Party must make use of all occasions for cooperation with the elements of opposition and groups of opposition in the small bourgeois parties and with the forces inside the Social Democratic parties in order to widen, temporarily at least, the unified front against the reaction and for respecting the demands of the masses, as well as for the defence of the independence of Yugoslavia.”²⁴

After the defeat of France, and Hitler’s victory in Western Europe, the Nazi peril became real once again. Therefore the “Popular front from above”, conceived as an antifascist alliance with bourgeois and especially left-wing parties, was again needed to protect the USSR. With the same conviction and zeal as before, the new Secretary-General of the CPY, immediately started working on a large coalition capable of strengthening the defences of the country. Already on 25 December 1940, he informed Moscow that he had followed Pieck’s suggestion and had reached an agreement with the Agrarian Party of Dragoljub Jovanović on the basis of a common programme that consisted of: the signing of a treaty of alliance with the USSR, democratization, and efforts to ensure the independence of the country.²⁵

Petrović was the last member of the CPY who went to Moscow to present the situation in Yugoslavia and subsequently bring back from Moscow instructions for the CPY. In the spring of 1944, Milovan Djilas was at last given the opportunity to travel to Moscow and establish direct contact with the Soviet leadership. In the meantime, the communication was ensured via radio operated by Tito’s friend Josip Kopinič, a Slovene communist and a hero of the Spanish Civil War. He was sent from Moscow to ensure contact with the CPY and with another eight Balkan and Central European parties. The radio centre was operational from July 1940.²⁶ While Tito was in Zagreb, that is to say until May 1941, it was relatively easy for him to establish contact with Moscow. Nevertheless, the nature of radio contact did not permit anything more than the exchange of rather succinct telegrams. There was no way for Tito to receive comprehensive instructions on the strategy he was supposed to follow. Therefore he was left on his own to decide the course of action for the CPY. Until the outbreak of the war, Tito followed the instructions brought by Petrović. In early 1941, Tito defined the strategy of the CPY as follows:

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Vujošević, “Prepiska”, 291

²⁶ Vjenceslav Čenčić, *Enigma Kopinič*, vol. I (Belgrade: Rad, 1983), 128-130.

“The preservation of peace, the defense of national liberty and independence of Yugoslav peoples against the entrance of the said peoples in the war on the side of any belligerent imperialist party, because any link with any of the imperialist groups meant abandoning Yugoslavia’s independence. The only way to effectively defend its independence and keep the country out of the imperialist war is to rely on the USSR and to conclude with it an alliance on mutual aid.”²⁷

Therefore the CPY was just a spectator when officers’ coup overthrew the Cvetković-Maček government after it had joined the Tripartite Pact. The great demonstrations of March 27th in support of the coup were organized without any knowledge of the CPY. When late in the day its members joined the movement, the only slogan they put forth called for an alliance with the USSR. Not even the mass demonstrations provoked any changes in Tito’s strategy. On the following day he wrote to the Comintern that the CPY would organize the people to resist German and Italian armed attack but would also fight against any British action that could induce Yugoslavia to join the war on its side. The CPY wanted the new government led by General Dušan Simović to quit the Pact and to conclude an alliance with the USSR.²⁸ Even this rather passive attitude of the CPY was considered too risky by the Comintern. In response to the events of March 27th, Georgi Dimitrov, the Secretary General of the Comintern, ordered Tito not to take part in any overt action, since the moment was not ripe. All the CPY should do was to continue explaining its strategy to the working class and the Army.²⁹

After the coup, the German attack became just a matter of days, during which Simović’s government did comply with one of the most important demands of the CPY by **concluding an alliance with USSR**.³⁰ The CPY decided that its members should respond to calls for mobilization, but not the members of the Central Committee.³¹ The German attack on Yugoslavia started on 6th April and the War ended on 17th April with the capitulation of Yugoslav Army. The country was partitioned by its neighbors, Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria and Albania. In Croatia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina the Nazi’s established a puppet genocidal regime under the guidance of Ante Pavelić and his Ustaša followers, called the Independent state of Croatia. These were the issues which the Politbureau of the CPY addressed during its May meeting in Zagreb. After the meeting Tito moved to Belgrade, where he transmitted the conclusion to a Soviet diplomat. The Soviet legation was opened in Belgrade after the establishment of diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia in June 1940, and the last

²⁷ Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. VI, 207.

²⁸ Vujošević, “Prepiska”, 300.

²⁹ Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. VI, 215.

³⁰ *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije (SSSR) 1941-1945* (Belgrade: Savezno Ministarstvo za inostrane poslove, 1996), 45,46.

³¹ Vujošević, “Prepiska”, 302.

Soviet diplomats left the country as late as June 1941. The conclusions Tito transmitted were supposed to represent the CPY strategy for its actions under the foreign occupation. First of all, the conclusions stated that even though the country was divided into several occupation zones that were incorporated into the neighboring countries, the CPY had remained united and had continued its action on the territory of pre-war Yugoslavia. Before the outbreak of the war, the Party had 8000 members and 30 000 members in the Communist Youth. One of the major elements of the CPY strategy in the preceding months was presented as follows:

“The struggle against reactionary governments which refused to grant the people their democratic rights and liberties and for the creation of a peoples’ government that would give democratic rights and liberties to citizens of Yugoslavia and would reestablish national rights to the oppressed nations”³²

In his article written in June 1941, Tito said that at the May meeting it was concluded that in the country existed a “revolutionary energy of the masses”; that was provoked by:

“Brutal occupation regime and the spoliation of the people; even more brutal oppression of certain nations and the hatred it provoked against its perpetrators; the treason of the ex-governing circles recruited from the bourgeoisie; the evidence of the criminal national and social policy of the defunct regime..”³³

The evocation of the need for a people’s government and of the existence of revolutionary energy showed that Tito began to think that the occupation may present an opportunity to use the imperialist war for starting a revolutionary movement that could bring about a people’s government. He made no reference to this possibility in his telegrams to Moscow. Kopini transmitted only his assurance that the CPY was preparing for the war in the case of German attack on the USSR. That was also the content of the messages Tito transmitted to the Soviet diplomat when he met him in May in Belgrade.³⁴ The fact that his homeland was under foreign occupation could not incite him to engage on his own in any warlike activity. His instructions were clear and confirmed by Dimitrov’s telegram in March. The CPY should limit its activity on explaining its strategy and gaining as much influence as possible among the working class of Yugoslavia. Everything changed after 22 June 1941 and Hitler’s attack on the USSR.

The message that came from Moscow on the same day was urgent and perfectly clear. The CPY as well as other communist parties should create a single national Popular front and a common international Front to fight against

³² Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. VII, 18-25.

³³ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁴ Vujošević, “Prepiska”, 305.

German and Italian invaders since the attack on the USSR was not only a blow to the first Socialist country, but also an attack on the liberty and independence of all nations. The priorities were also clearly defined. During this stage of combat the CPY should fight for the liberation from foreign occupation and not try to realize a socialist revolution.³⁵ Soviet party authorities transmitted via the Comintern the essence of the so-called theory of “two phases” to the CPY. First, the creation of the “Popular front from above”, and only afterwards, when the situation was more favourable, should the CPY engage in a social revolution. The theory was dictated by the interests of the USSR which needed a large alliance with the United Kingdom, and afterwards with the United States too, to win the war against Hitler. Social revolutions during the war would have surely made such an alliance impossible. Therefore, the CPY as well as all other communist parties and sections of the Comintern were told to concentrate on the creation of a large Popular front capable of resisting and fighting Hitler’s Germany. Moscow had to repeat its message to Tito and the CPY once again on 1st of July, asking them explicitly to start creating partisan units in order to fight the Germans.³⁶

Tito, the Commander in Chief of the Partisans

Tito’s actions from the moment he became the acting head of CPY in 1937 until June 1941 demonstrated that he was a conscientious and obedient representative of the Comintern in Yugoslavia. Under his guidance, the CPY fulfilled all instructions Moscow sent without even once questioning them. The interest of Yugoslavia, its working class and its independence were manifestly less important to him than those of the USSR. Tito did not decide to start an armed uprising when Yugoslavia was attacked and occupied but when he was told to do so by Moscow, after the USSR was attacked by Hitler. The CPY was a section of the Comintern and acted as such as long as contact with Moscow existed. The only issue on which Tito and the CPY demonstrated a tendency to take initiative was the creation of a people’s government, that is to say an armed uprising against the Constitutional government of Yugoslavia. The will to take the power by arms was omnipresent in Tito’s thoughts even though he abandoned his plans each time Moscow told him to do so. Hitler’s attack and a series of defeats of the Red Army forced the Soviet government and the Comintern to pay less attention to the situation in Yugoslavia. Tito and the CPY were more or less left on their own from July 1941. It was only natural that they should revert to their strategy of seizing the power in Yugoslavia. It is important to note that this strategy was not imposed by the CPY leadership since it was spontaneously followed by the rank and file of the party.

³⁵ Reneo Lukić, *Les relations soviéto-yugoslaves de 1935 à 1945* (Bern : Peter Lang, 1996), 76.

³⁶ Vujošević, “Prepiska”, 302.

Tito and the rank and file of the CPY were both convinced that the issue of the war would be solved by a victorious advance of the Red Army, which would triumphantly march into Yugoslavia. Therefore the real task of the CPY was to solve the issue of power and social revolution before its arrival. The war against Germany could not be won without the help of the Red Army, but the CPY had to win the fight for power in Yugoslavia on its own. Therefore, when in July the first partisan squads started operating in Serbia, their goal was to fight the occupying German troops and the local Serbian gendarmerie, but most of all to demonstrate that the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had disappeared once for all. When eventually they entered small provincial towns in Serbia, the local partisan commanders started destroying all institutions of royal Yugoslavia. The mayors were imprisoned if not shot, the cadastres, the court and police archives, and the lists of conscripts were burnt, all pictures and emblems of the royal government removed. A new era commenced for Yugoslavia, and the CPY wanted this fact to be seen and understood by the ordinary citizens.³⁷ Tito informed the Comintern of this campaign in the second half of August saying that: "Partisans are replacing the municipal authorities; they are burning the list of conscripts, the tax lists and other types of archives, and creating people's committees as new forms of local government".³⁸ The purpose of this campaign was in fact to create people's councils on the local level. Edward Kardelj, a Slovene communist and Tito's second, explained in October 1941 that the Partisans had to replace the existing local administration because it served as loyal transmission of the occupation authorities. New forms of local administration were needed to mobilise the population for the fight against the Germans. The tasks of people's councils were to provide food and material aid to partisans units, to maintain order, and to organise the food supply of the population.³⁹ The new forms of local administration were not united in any sort of Partisans' pyramid of power in 1941. Long after the end of the War, Tito explained that he had abstained from organising local people's councils into any sort of representative body on national level to avoid making problems for the USSR. In September 1941, he was informed that Moscow had re-established diplomatic relations with the Yugoslav government which had been exiled to London. Thus he abstained from forming a representative body, a sort of people's government in Yugoslavia.⁴⁰

Tito was aware that Moscow had in mind another policy when the Comintern invited the CPY to organise an armed uprising in Yugoslavia. The

³⁷ AJ, 507, CK SKJ, II/3-8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 24, 25, 28, 32. Reports of the local commanders from Valjevo, Šabac, Požarevac, Užice, Niš, Leskovac, July-August 1941.

³⁸ Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. VII, 93, 94.

³⁹ Branko Petranović, *AVNOJ i revolucija. Tematska zbirka dokumenata* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1983), 115, 116.

⁴⁰ Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. VII, 82.

theory of two phases called for an urgent alliance with all resistance groups and in the case of Serbia it meant cooperation with the Tchetnik units of Colonel Dragoljub, Draža Mihailović. The situation in Serbia was peculiar, because it was under direct German occupation. Or, soon after the end of hostilities the larger part of German troops left for the Eastern front, leaving only two incomplete divisions in Serbia. The scarce presence of German troops in the interior of Serbia permitted Colonel Mihailović to organise a resistance movement already in May 1941. The ranks of his movement consisted of Serbian officers and soldiers driven by the shame of the defeat and the willingness to fight for the independence and liberty of Serbia. Therefore, when in July Tito's partisans started their actions, they had to compete with the existing units under Mihailović's command. The two resistance movements had opposing political strategies. The Colonel Mihailović was firmly in favour of restoring pre-war Yugoslavia with all its institutions. As we have seen, the Partisans started replacing by force all its local institutions.

Mihailović could rely on the prestige of his rank and could benefit from the network of his fellow officers that had remained in Serbia. Naturally he represented an authority for the whole remaining local administration as the only alternative to a Collaborationist authority which was put in place by the Germans from May 1941 onwards and strengthened by the creation of the government of General Milan Nedić in August. His strategy was mostly a defensive one. Mihailović relied on the overall victory of the Allies to liberate the country. He saw the role of his movement as a sort of organisation that should mobilise its followers to help the Allies when they eventually disembark in the Balkans. He did not have to fight for the legitimacy of his movement; he got it as soon as the Royal Government in exile give him its support.

On the other hand, Tito's partisans had virtually no political legitimacy because the presence of the CPY in the political life of Yugoslavia had been more than limited before the war. The only way Tito's Partisans could gain credibility and political legitimacy was to be at the forefront of the battle with Germans. That was also what Moscow expected them to do. One could even say that the battle against the German occupation served as a sort of political propaganda for the CPY. Only by fighting the Germans, but primarily the entire local administration that was incorporated in the occupation regime, the CPY could put in place its campaign for destroying the remnants of pre-war Yugoslav institutions. The political gap between the two movements was immense; nevertheless, Moscow demanded the creation of a single national Popular front to fight against the German and Italian invaders. Tito had to cooperate with Mihailović, his political opponent.

Before they met for the first time in September 1941, Tito intentionally ignored all activity of Mihailović's units in his reports to Moscow. He related only the operations of his troops, and stigmatized the collaboration of the volunteer units of Kosta Pećanac, who signed an agreement with local occupation



Partitioned wartime Yugoslavia

authority.⁴¹ The first time Tito informed Moscow that Mihailović's units were fighting the Germans was on 28 September, but he called them military Tchetniks without naming Mihailović.⁴² Tito in fact mentioned Mihailović's units only after he had met Colonel Mihailović and reached an agreement with him on 19 September 1941. The first time Tito mentioned Mihailović by name was on 25 November after the two movements had already started fighting against each other.⁴³ From then on, he denounced Mihailović in his telegrams to Moscow for collaborating with the Germans as often as he could. Tito did his best to present the Partisans as the only resistance in Yugoslavia from July 1941. He deliberately omitted to refer to any actions that were taken by Mihailović's

⁴¹ Vujošević, "Prepiska", 311, 314.

⁴² *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*, 103.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 135, 136.

units in order to create an impression in Moscow that he was the leader of the only resistance movement in Yugoslavia. But the Royal Government in exile started promoting Mihailović as the head of resistance in Yugoslavia. Therefore Tito's accusations incited Dimitrov to ask him what he meant when he spoke about military Tchetniks, and afterwards to explain the nature of his relations Mihailović. Finally Dimitrov wanted to know what was Tito doing to set up a united command of resistance in Yugoslavia.⁴⁴

Dimitrov's demand for clarification arrived in December 1941 at the time when the German of ensive in Serbia had wiped out both Partisan and Tchetnik units in Serbia. Tito had to withdraw to Sandžak with less than a thousand men. Mihailović ordered his units to disperse and he withdrew to Montenegro. Their collaboration was not possible any more, since they had started fighting each other in early November, and their forces were practically annihilated. Moscow's idea of a grand coalition was therefore impossible to realize in Serbia, as well as in Yugoslavia. Moreover, Tito's pressing demand for help in armaments, equipment, and ammunition was not answered. Not only was Moscow unable to liberate Yugoslavia, as Yugoslav communists had imagined in the summer of 1941, but the USSR was also unable to send them any help. They were left on their own, and in these difficult circumstances, Tito decided to follow his own strategy, as he had already done after the disappearance of Gorkić in early 1938.

Tito's strategy

The incapacity of Moscow to lend any help to Tito's Partisans and the manifest difficulties in which the USSR had found itself, incited Tito to try to find his own solutions for the problems of his movement. The theoretical background was the one he brought back from his trips to Moscow, but he was now for the first time free to use it as he saw fit. After crossing over to Sandžak and later to Bosnia, he found himself on the territory that was governed by Pavelić's Ustaša regime. He was thus confronted with a completely new situation. Hundreds of thousands of Serbian peasants went into hiding in the woods of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, trying to escape the genocide Pavelić's regime perpetrated against the Serbs, as well as Jews and Roma. In some cases they were organized into some sort of makeshift village militias, sometimes they joined the local partisan units, and some were under the command of local Tchetnik commanders who only nominally acknowledged Mihailović's overall command. The Serbs which were forced into hiding presented an ideal recruiting possibility for Tito and his Partisan units, since they could never find a place for themselves in Pavelić's Croatia. The latter regime pursued the following policy: a third of the Serbs living in the Independent State of Croatia should be killed; another third should be expelled; and the remaining third would be al-

⁴⁴ Vujošević, "Prepiska", 333.

lowed to stay but under the condition they convert to Catholicism. In order to win them over and have them join his Partisans units, Tito needed more than slogans about the common struggle against foreign occupation. He needed a comprehensive political and military strategy that could only be based on the concepts he had learned in Moscow. His strategy was based on the concepts of: Yugoslavia as a federation of nations; “popular front from bellow”; and the creation of a people’s government. His ultimate objective was to take over the power in Yugoslavia and carry out a social revolution.

Already on 21st December 1941, highly symbolic date since it was Stalin’s birthday, he created the First Proletarian brigade – a mobile unit of battle-hardened partisans that were ready to operate in every part of Yugoslavia. More often than not, the arrival of this kind of units in a region populated by Serbian peasants resulted in them joining the Partisan movement en masse. These units were more battle worthy than their Tchetnik counterparts, thus offering more effective protection against Ustaša crimes. The Partisans had an ideological advantage, since they fought not only against foreign occupation, but also for establishing a new political and social order. Everywhere the Partisans went they established people’s councils, or – as they were called from 1942 – Councils of People’s Liberation (in Serbian the abbreviation is NOO). Their organization was explained in the Instructions drawn up in February 1942. They were conceived as the base of a new political system the Partisans were establishing with the task of furnishing food and equipment to the Partisans’ units on the front. The NOO’s were a part of the Partisans’ battle order as they had the control at the rear of the front. Most importantly, members from all political parties could become part of NOO, but not as exponents of their parties.⁴⁵ Therefore they were formed according to the concept of “popular front from bellow”, that is to say under the supervision of the CPY which hand-picked the members of other political parties.

Tito’s new strategy was conceived during the period when he had few contacts with Moscow. After he was forced to leave Serbia, it became even more difficult for him to send and receive messages via Kopini in Zagreb. While in Serbia, Tito acquired the radio station which the Soviet services had left to the journalist Miša Brašić, before they left with the rest of the Soviet diplomatic personnel. Brašić was supposed to operate it on his own, but he was incapable of doing it, so he gave it, along with the codes to the Partisans, who brought it to Tito. The codes were not right and Tito could not establish a radio connection. Direct radio contact with Moscow was established only when Kopini came from Zagreb to Foča and brought his codes in February 1942. Tito failed to inform Moscow of his new strategy but the Yugoslav government in exile notified the Soviet government that the CPY was pursuing its own agenda in Yugoslavia. The proletarian brigades wore a distinctive sign on their berets

⁴⁵ Petranović, *AVNOJ*, 173-179.

– a red star which without any doubt defined them as communists. Therefore Moscow wanted to know whether the formation of these units had been necessary and whether the partisans units had a communist character. Most of all Moscow wanted to know whether Tito wanted to establish a Soviet political system in Yugoslavia. He was reminded that his primary objective should be the establishing of a large antifascist front that should include Mihailović. Instead Tito's messages spoke about the latter's treason, which seemed highly unlikely to Moscow since he had been serving as the Minister of War in the Yugoslav Government in exile from January 1942.⁴⁶

The fundamental disagreement between Tito and his superiors in Moscow thus came to light. Tito refused to follow the strategy of "two phases", since he broke off with Mihailović and started building his own political system that was shaped after the Soviet model. But the situation had changed because Moscow had no means of putting pressure to Tito. Their correspondence was filled with Moscow's instructions to make peace with Mihailović so that the situation in Yugoslavia would not become an issue within the alliance with the US and UK. Tito, however, continued his own agenda of denouncing Mihailović to Moscow and fighting his units in what would become a fully fledged civil war. Nevertheless, the communication with Moscow went on uninterrupted and the interests and exploits of partisans were publicized and broadcasted by the Soviet media. Gradually Tito succeeded in obtaining Moscow's tacit support for his vision of war in Yugoslavia. Soviet diplomatic envoys commenced echoing Tito's accusation against complaints in their contacts with the Yugoslav government in exile.⁴⁷

However, Tito's refusal to follow the strategy of "two phases" remained an unresolved issue in Tito's relations with Moscow. On 12 November 1942, Tito sent the following message to Moscow:

"We are now creating something like a government, and it will be called the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (NKOJ). All Yugoslav nationalities and various ex-parties will take part in the Committee".⁴⁸

Dimitrov's response underlined the existing disagreements. He agreed with the creation of NKOJ, but he didn't see it as a government but as a political body of the Partisan movement. He added:

"Do not confront it (NKOJ) with the Yugoslav government in London. At the present phase, you should not talk about abolishing the Monarchy. You should not put forward the slogan of creating a Republic. The issue of the political system in Yugoslavia, as you yourself understand, will be solved after the defeat of the Italo-German coalition and after the liberation of the country from occupation.... You should keep in

⁴⁶ Tito, *Sabrana djela*, vol. IX, 224.

⁴⁷ *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*, 214, 215.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 248.

mind that the USSR has established relations with the Yugoslav King and Government. Thus open confrontation with them would create difficulties for the common war effort of the USSR on one side and of the UK and US on the other side. You should consider the issue of your fight not only from the standpoint of your own national interest, but also in regard to the international Anglo-Soviet and American coalition".⁴⁹

Dimitrov's evocation of the "present phase" was an explicit reference to the theory of "two phases", which Tito had thus far deliberately refused to follow. Nevertheless, when Dimitrov instructed him to do so, he obliged. The first reunion of the institution called the Antifascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia (Serbian abbreviation was AVNOJ), which Tito had envisaged as the Partisans' assembly, was held in Bihać on 26 and 27 November 1942, but no Partisan government was formed during this session. On Moscow's explicit demand Tito had to abandon the project of creating the peoples' government. AVNOJ did create an Executive Council but its position was not defined. As Tito informed Moscow, the Partisans did not consider it their government, even though its task was to look after all issues of state interest relying on the network of NOO. Without calling it a government, the Partisans did create their pyramid of power, with NOO at the base, AVNOJ as their Assembly and the Executive Council as the governing body.⁵⁰ The democratic character of these institutions posed a problem even for the Partisans since they envisaged organising free elections for AVNOJ when the circumstances allowed it.⁵¹ In the meantime, the AVNOJ remained a creation of the CPY, who chose each and every one of the participants of the Bihać meeting. They granted their support to the CPY actions in the Civil War in Yugoslavia. AVNOJ denounced Pavelić and Nedić as Quislings and collaborators, as well as Mihailović.

The issue of collaboration with the Germans took an unprecedented importance for Tito's Partisans in the March of 1943. The spring of 1943 was a period in which both Tito's partisans and the German Command in Yugoslavia were under the impression that the Allies, after they had successfully completed their operation in North Africa, might organize a landing in the Balkans. Tito thought that the presumed Allied landing would bring decisive aid to Mihailović's units in the Civil War in Yugoslavia. As Vladimir Dedijer, the semi-official chronicler of the Partisan war noted, the objective of an Allied landing would be to preserve capitalism, centralism and monarchy in Yugoslavia.⁵² Tito even thought that the concentration of Mihailović's units in Montenegro in the spring of 1943 could be explained by the presumed Allied landing. His intention was thus to go back to Montenegro to destroy Mihailović's units

⁴⁹ Ibid., 254.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 256, 257.

⁵¹ Petranović, *AVNOJ*, 270.

⁵² Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi prilozii za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita*, vol. II (Rijeka: Liburnija, 1981), 803.

before the Allies landed and afterwards to continue to Serbia in order to welcome the advancing Red Army when it arrived to the borders of Yugoslavia.⁵³ It is evident that Tito's main objective was to win the civil war in Yugoslavia. In order to do so, he was even prepared to sign a truce with the Germans so that he could focus on destroying Mihailović troops and fight of an Allied landing on the Adriatic coast.

Before Tito could commence his move from Bihać to Montenegro, the German Command organized an offensive precisely to annihilate all resistance forces in the hinterland of the Adriatic coast, thus preventing them from welcoming the Allied forces if they landed in the Balkans. The first phase of the operation *Weiss*, which was begun in March 1943, was supposed to wipe out Partisans in north-western Bosnia, while the second phase was supposed to destroy Mihailović's units stationed in Herzegovina and Montenegro.⁵⁴ Pressed hard by several German divisions, Tito was obliged to withdraw in the direction of the coast and the main body of his troops was in the valley of the river Neretva, when he was informed that his units had captured a German Major, the commander of a battalion, in the German 717 division. Tito then decided to propose to the German Command an exchange of prisoners, since the Partisans had already made use of this procedure on several occasions starting from August 1942. Not only were the prisoners exchanged but a Partisan commander Marijan Stilinović went to Zagreb in August to help the Germans find the CPY members due to be exchanged. During his stay, he was received by Glaise von Horstenau, the representative of the German Army in Zagreb, who made him an astonishing proposal. He invited the Partisans to withdraw all their units in Sandžak, a region far away from principal communications routes, and a zone under Italian responsibility.⁵⁵ During a meeting with Djilas and Ranković held on 4th March 1943 Tito decided to actualize the proposal of Horstenau. He thought that the Germans could accept the retreat of Partisans in Sandžak since there they would not present any danger for immediate German interests. The Partisans could in this way focus on fighting the Mihailović's units and even Allies if they land.⁵⁶ Thus, he sent Milovan Djilas, Ko a Popović, the Commander of the First Proletarian division, and Vladimir Velebit, his man for special missions, to talk with the Commander of 717 German division. They proposed an exchange of prisoners, but they also proposed, following Tito's explicit orders, a cessation of hostilities between the Partisans and the Germans, and wanted to discuss the creation of a safe zone in which the Partisans could retreat unmolested by the Germans. The Partisan delegation explicitly said that they see no reason for the continuation of

⁵³ Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder. The Second World War in Yugoslavia* (London: Hurst, 2008), 155.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Mira Šuvar, *Vladimir Velebit, Svjedok istorije* (Zagreb: Razlog, 2001), 280.

⁵⁶ Mišo Leković, *Martovski pregovori 1943* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1985), 50, 51.

hostilities, since their main enemies are Mihailović's units. They declared that the Partisans were decided to fight of Western Allies if they land on Adriatic coast.⁵⁷ The delegation put her proposals in writing and gave them to Commander of 717 German division in order that he could transmit it to his superiors.⁵⁸

Popović did not want to wait the response of German Command and returned to his unit. Djilas and Velebit eventually went first to Sarajevo and then Zagreb to continue the negotiations. When they were received in Zagreb by Horstenau, he told them that the Partisans should first stop attacking the railway line Belgrade-Zagreb as a precondition for the continuation of the negotiations. Djilas and Velebit went back and transmitted the message to Tito, who sent the appropriate orders to the Partisan units in Bosnia. He also sent Velebit back to Zagreb so that he could, in the company of German officers, transmit the message to Croatian Partisans. Thus Velebit accompanied by the German officers went to see the Croatian Partisans. The ceasefire might not have been official but it was certainly effective in view of Velebit's mission. Finally the talks had to be abandoned since Hitler refused to negotiate with what he called „bandits”.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, these negotiations revealed the real nature of the civil war in Yugoslavia. Under attack from German divisions and convinced that Allied landing was imminent, Tito had no qualms in proposing some sort of cooperation – if not collaboration – to the Germans. His envoys on various occasions explicitly proposed a cease fire to Germans in order to fight against Mihailović's units and even against Allied forces if they land in the Adriatic. Hitler's intransigence prevented any agreement but Tito's priorities nevertheless became clear. Not only did he refuse to follow Moscow strategy of “two phases” but he in fact inverted them. His main priority was the political takeover in Yugoslavia and his main adversary Mihailović, as he explicitly stated in his instructions to Partisan units in Bosnia.⁶⁰ Moreover, he used the time which the negotiations with the Germans had bought him to pursue his advancement towards Herzegovina and Montenegro.⁶¹ When Tito eventually informed his superiors in Moscow about the negotiations with the Germans, he downplayed the whole event. In his message he simply stated that some Partisan delegates were in Zagreb to negotiate an exchange of prisoners with the Germans. It is interesting to note that, due to London's support to the Yugoslav government and Mihailović, Tito did not hide his animosity towards His Majesty's Government. He expressed it in a way he considered acceptable to Moscow. He said

⁵⁷ Ibid. 87.

⁵⁸ Dedijer, *Novi prilozi*, vol. II, 805.

⁵⁹ Šuvar, *Vladimir Velebit*, 284, 285; Dedijer, *Novi prilozi*, vol. II, 808-810.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Mladenko Colić, *Pregled operacija na jugoslovenskom ratištu 1941-1945* (Beograd: Vojnoistorijski institut, 1988), 104, 105.

that the Partisans and the Yugoslav nations were developing a genuine hatred towards England because of its refusal to open a second front in Europe.⁶² Dimitrov did not condone the talks and considered the animosity towards the UK counterproductive. He was astonished to learn that the Partisans were exchanging prisoners and conducting negotiations with the Germans.⁶³ Tito's explanations did not change the fact that there rose a fundamental disagreement in strategy between him and Moscow.

The scope of differences between Tito and the Soviet government was demonstrated by Moscow's decision to dissolve the Comintern. In order to preserve the Alliance with Western powers, the Soviet government had put an end to the institution that governed the international communist movement. Nevertheless, Tito's agenda remained the same, he still accorded overall priority to the communist conquest of power in Yugoslavia by fighting against Mihailović's units. However, he managed to find another way of setting up a large antifascist front by establishing direct contact with the British Army. The first British liaison officers were parachuted to his Headquarters in May 1943. Tito regularly informed Dimitrov about his contacts with the British and later with American liaison officers too. Their reports heavily influenced the change of Allied strategy towards the Partisan movement.

Among the reports of Allied officers, those of British Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean and American Major Lynn Farish were the most important. Both arrived to Tito's Headquarters on 19 September 1943. Maclean, who had spent several years in the British embassy in Moscow, was ideally suited for the job. He was promoted to the rank of brigadier, and was given direct access to Churchill.⁶¹ Farish was much less prepared to evaluate the situation in Yugoslavia, but his report nevertheless proved to be of utmost importance because Roosevelt had read it before he came to the Allied Conference in Tehran.

MacLean – the highest ranking Allied officer in Tito's Headquarters and Churchill's personal envoy – submitted his report on 6 November. He acknowledged that all key posts in the Partisan units and administration were in the hands of communists, and that all activities were conducted along strict party lines. He noted that the Partisans had built a "common anti-fascist front". He went on to say that if victorious the Partisans would establish a federal system in Yugoslavia. He considered them more apt than Mihailović's units to help the Allied war effort.⁶⁴ Farish, was in Yugoslavia as member of British mission, thus he was MacLean's subordinate. He wrote his report based on the experience he acquired while trying to build an airport in Livno. Maclean had sent him there to get him out of the Partisans Headquarters. Since he did not

⁶² *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*, 301, 302.

⁶³ *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*, 302.

⁶⁴ The National Archives, London, FO, 371, 37615, R11589/143/92, Rapport by Brigadier MacLean 6 November 1943.

speak the local language and he had no one to translate for him, he could not learn much about his hosts. Nevertheless, after only forty days he wrote his report which firmly stated that the future of Yugoslavia undoubtedly belongs to the Partisans. He insisted that the Partisans were more numerous and better organized than it was generally known outside Yugoslavia. The movement was started and led by communists but it did not have a communist character. However, the communists in their ranks tried to influence the post-war future of Yugoslavia. Its greatest quality was its continuous struggle against the Axis.⁶⁸

Both reports proved crucial for the talks on Yugoslavia at the Tehran Conference. Influenced by the Farish report, in an effort to build a climate of confidence with Stalin, on the first day of the Tehran Conference Roosevelt proposed a joint Allied operation with the Partisans in northern Yugoslavia, with the goal of helping the Soviet offensive in Romania. Churchill agreed, but Stalin was against it. The Soviet Union wanted the second front to be opened in France not in the Balkans. The Soviets considered all operations which were not tied to the landing in Northern France as a waste of troops and of valuable time.⁷² The fate of Yugoslavia was sealed when Stalin and Roosevelt agreed that there would be no Allied landing in Yugoslavia. Their agreement was based on the assumption that Yugoslavia would become a part of the Soviet zone of influence. Roosevelt was prepared to accept the creation of Soviet zone of influence, if that was the price to pay for a general agreement with the Soviets. Consequently it was natural that only the Soviet protégés were considered as Allies in Yugoslavia. All further decisions about Yugoslavia would first have to take into consideration Soviet interests. The final decisions of the Tehran Conference confirmed the Partisans as the only resistance movement in Yugoslavia which would receive Allied help.

Therefore Tito resolved the issue of anti-fascist front due to an US-Soviet agreement, and officially became the Allied Commander in Yugoslavia. Even before the decisions of the Tehran Conference reached Yugoslavia, he was confident enough to realize his project of creating of a people's government. The second session of the AVNOJ, held in the town of Jajce on the night of 29/30 November 1943, proclaimed the NKOJ as the government, annulled all rights of the Royal Government in exile to represent Yugoslavia, prohibited the King from returning to Yugoslavia, declared that Yugoslavia will be organized as a federation, and promoted Tito to the rank of Marshal of Yugoslavia.⁶⁵ The three main concepts of Tito's strategy, established in spring of 1941, were thus realized: a Yugoslav Federation, "Popular Front from below" and a "people's government". He managed to achieve all three without Soviet aid, and when finally it came, along with the Soviet military mission, he was already recog-

⁶⁵ Petranović, *AVNOJ*, 445-454.

nized as the overall Commander of Allied forces in Yugoslavia and had under his command a considerable number of troops.

The mission of general Kornyev arrived at Tito's Headquarters on 24 of February 1944. Just a few days later on 27 February 1944, the first American mission headed by Lieutenant Colonel Richard Weill arrived. Weill was the first American intelligence officer to come to Yugoslavia. His conclusions about the military organization of the Partisans were completely different from those of his predecessors. First he stated that the war in Yugoslavia had the character of guerilla warfare. Hence all claims about „free Partisan territory” were untrue. There were parts of Yugoslavia where there were no enemy troops, but they could enter them whenever they liked. He concluded that there were no established lines of front, and no free territories behind those lines. Weill believed that the Partisans had succeeded in disrupting the enemy's lines of communication. They had even forced the enemy to concentrate its forces in the cities and venture outside only in heavily armed convoys. However, he considered the Partisans' statements that they had single-handedly tied down more than 17 enemy divisions and over 500,000 enemy soldiers in Yugoslavia to be completely false. Weill firmly said that the Partisans were unable to: 1) drive the enemy out of the country; 2) prevent the enemy from withdrawing its troops from the country; 3) destroy enemy forces in their country. They were capable only of annoying them; preventing them from exploiting the country's natural resources; obstructing the transport of their troops and disrupting their lines of supply; and of weakening the moral of their troops by creating an atmosphere of general insecurity in the country. Weill considered the Partisans incapable of organizing a modern army with tanks and heavy artillery. He concluded that Tito had approximately 300 000 men under his command.⁶⁶

Weill's assessment of the Partisans' strength, tactics, and achievements was an impartial testimony of what Tito had achieved before he renewed contact with Moscow. His estimation of the number of troops Tito had was just that – an estimate, since he had no means of verifying the information he got from the Partisans. Nevertheless, their number was quite important and was perhaps the greatest achievement of Tito's strategy. At the beginning of the conflict, he had had 8000 members of the CPY and 30 000 members of the Communist Youth at his disposal. Three years later, he was commanding an army of a couple hundred thousand men which possessed – albeit in a rudimentary form – all necessary services: intelligence, police, propaganda, medical services, and most importantly was run by the CPY. For three years, this numerous following was exposed to assiduous propaganda about the importance of Tito's leadership, the authentic values of Yugoslav revolution, the solution of national issues in Federal Yugoslavia, the leading role of the CPY etc. Tito's Partisans

⁶⁶ National Archives Washington, RG 226, RG 226, microfilm 1642, roll 131, Weills' report, 27 March 1944.

consisted mainly of Serbs from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, who had invested everything they had in the movement and saw their future inextricably linked to the success of the Partisan movement. The concepts on which Tito built his wartime strategy were those he learnt in Moscow. There were no ideological differences between him and the Soviet authorities. He only applied them as he saw fit without paying attention to the interests of USSR. If anything, he was more of a Stalinist than Stalin himself, since he immediately proceeded to the phase of social revolution, without waiting for “favorable circumstances” as Moscow had demanded.

What may lie in the future for Yugoslavia under Tito’s rule Weill tried to anticipate. For example, When Tito told him that the Partisans would respect the political will of the people after the war, Weill concluded:

“The Partisan party presumably continuing in control as the means of expressing the people’s will in national affairs.”⁸⁵

Weill understood quite well the Partisans way of thinking. Tito told him that the King must first dismiss Mihailović as his minister before he could start negotiating with him. Even then Tito felt bound by the decisions of the AVNOJ, that forbade the return of the King, before a plebiscite could be organized to decide the form of political order. Weill concluded that:

“Tito’s political philosophy seemed to be that he would compromise, for the sake of valuable political support outside of Yugoslavia, with unimportant details of his political plans for the country, but that he would stand firm in support of his plan main outline - an outline which is, in his mind, clear and unequivocal.”⁸⁶

The nature of Partisans political plan was clear for Weill. The Partisans wanted to take the power in Yugoslavia, and they used the fight against the Axis as the means to achieve it. Weill described the Partisans plans as follows:

- “1) The Partisans will increase their quantitative and qualitative strength in the country, military and politically.
- 2) The strength of opposing factions will decline, although these factions may never be totally obliterated.
- 3) At the close of Axis hostilities with Yugoslavia, the Partisans will control the entire country, even if it involves the internal strife and bloodshed to assert and maintain this control.
- 4) The Partisans will remain in control for at least one year after the close of hostilities.
- 5) There is a good possibility that they will remain in control for several years.
- 6) They will fulfill their campaign promises: there will be plebiscites, local committees in an ascending pyramid from villages, to provinces, and regions, to the national Committee. In other words, there will be a representative form of government.”⁸⁷

The only issue the Partisans had yet to solve, before they could realize the program anticipated by Weill, was political recognition of their movement. Tito has been accepted as the Commander in Chief of Allied forces in Yugoslavia, but the Royal Government in exile and the King still had the support of United Kingdom and of the United States.

Tito, the political leader in Yugoslavia

Tito's victory in the civil war in Yugoslavia had to be confirmed by replacement of the Royal Government in exile with NKOJ. That was the imperative condition for gaining international recognition for NKOJ and other institutions within the Partisan pyramid of power. During this process, the Soviet aid and counsel were of outmost importance, but Moscow was no longer in a position to give out orders. Nore could Moscow extend openly its political and diplomatic support to Partisans without provoking dissentions inside the Allied coalition. Nevertheless, the of cial Soviet propaganda and the Communist press in UK and US were openly militating in favour of Partisans. The issue of the political solution for the civil war in Yugoslavia had to be solved in direct contact between Tito and the UK and US governments.

Maclean and Farish arrived again in Tito's Headquarters in January 1944 carrying letters for Tito from their governments. Their respective strategies were dif erent; Churchill opted for a personal approach. He wrote a personal letter to Tito in January 1944, that Maclean brought with him. In his letter the British Prime Minister said that his government would end its support to Mihailović, hoping that in return Tito would understand the moral obligation it had towards the young King of Yugoslavia.⁶⁷ The implicit proposal of a sort of barter, that should have been underlined by the fact that it came from the British Prime Minister in person, did not make any ef ect on Tito. Churchill persevered and in his second letter in February directly asked whether the King could be received in Tito's headquarters if he removes Mihailović from his government. Tito was not impressed by the contact on the highest level and repeated that the decisions of the Second meeting of Avnoj: the King cannot return in the country, the government in exile should be dissolved since NKOJ was the only legitimate government of Yugoslavia. Tito's refusal to accept Churchill's proposal was due to the instructions he received from Moscow. His letter to Churchill was written on the same day he got instructions from Dimitrov saying that the Royal Government should be got rid of along with its Minister of War Mihailović.⁶⁸ This kind of political solution of the Yugoslavia civil war was unacceptable for British government. The only solution possible was, as Anthony Eden, British Minister of Foreign Af airs explained to Tito, a

⁶⁷ Vojislav Pavlović, *Od monarhije do republike* (Belgrade: Clio, 1998), 321.

⁶⁸ *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*, 364, 365.

sort of transition government, before the issue could be definitely settled by the free elections to be held in Yugoslavia after the War.⁶⁹

The stalemate was broken by the American proposal brought by Farish to Tito. The American intelligence service, OSS (Office of Secret Services) proposed the arrival of the Viceroy of Croatia, Ivan Šubašić, in Yugoslavia. He was supposed to facilitate the transfer of the majority of the members of the biggest Croatian pre-war party, Croatian Peasant party, to the Partisan side. This was the plan that Šubašić in the summer of 1943 proposed to OSS. It was now officially proposed to Tito, who made use of it in order to find a way out in his talks with British government. Tito already had information that Šubašić had approved of, on several occasions, the struggle of Partisans. This was the information that he got via Moscow from United States where Šubašić was living after the fall of Yugoslavia. Therefore Tito proposed to MacLean the creation of a transition government composed from Partisans representatives and some pre-war Yugoslav politicians, amongst which he proposed in the first place Šubašić.⁷⁰ Therefore, in the beginning of 1944 in direct contacts with Western Allies Tito imposed his solution for the political solution of the civil war in Yugoslavia. The Tito – Šubašić agreement was the base for the gradual transfer of power from Royal government to the Partisans' one, that commenced by the arrival of Šubašić in Tito's headquarters on island of Vis in June 1944. The Western Allies supported the process even though they hoped that it would not end in a complete communist domination of Yugoslavia. However, they abstained from intervening directly since the country from Tehran onwards was in Soviet zone of influence. The Partisans's takeover went on without visible Soviet help, since the Soviet government officially stated that had no inside knowledge and no influence on the situation in Yugoslavia. However, Tito was diligently informing Moscow of every move he took. The situation changed after his voyage to Romania and USSR, in September and October of 1944, and the consequent arrival of the Red Army in Yugoslavia.

The Tehran decisions thus were realised and the decisive Partisan victory in Serbia in the fall of 1944 was achieved due to the presence of the Red Army. Therefore Tito could impose on the population of Serbia, composed of peasants and small entrepreneurs that throughout the war remained faithful to the Monarchy and free market economy, a communist dictatorship. Soviet military aid was crucial in transforming the guerrilla movement, as described by Weill, into a modern army capable of defeating the retreating German troops in Yugoslavia. Soviet political caution was indispensable for organising the elections for AVNOJ in November 1945 that legitimised the Partisan takeover in Yugoslavia. Amongst all people's democracies, Yugoslavia was the first to create an exclusively communist government. Tito stood at the fore-

⁶⁹ Ibid., 323.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 324.

front of the conflicts which heralded in the Cold War. Tito's Yugoslavia almost singlehandedly defied the West on the issue of Trieste and Venezia-Guilia. The USSR did not support Yugoslav claims concerning the north-eastern province of Italy. In 1946, the Yugoslav Air Force shot down American planes over Slovenia. The communist movement in Greece relied principally on Yugoslav aid during the Civil War. On every possible occasion and in every possible way Tito's Yugoslavia tried its best to demonstrate that it was the spearhead of the international communist movement. Yet the 1948 Tito-Stalin split put an end to this vigorous campaign, and the CPY was accused of ideological deviations and outright treason of the communist ideal.

The Yugoslav-Soviet conflict was not provoked by ideological differences. It was purely a matter of state interests. As was the case during the war, Tito followed his own agenda and Yugoslav interests as he saw them. Regional cooperation, Balkan federation, Yugoslav military presence in Albania – all these issues demonstrated that he considered himself to be in a position to develop his own foreign policy and to articulate the interests of communism in the Balkans as he saw fit. This kind of independent conduct was the real cause of his conflict with Stalin. From the ideological point of view, Tito's Yugoslavia was, if anything, the most accomplished copy of the USSR. Tito was able to stand up to Stalin not because he and the CPY were not Stalinists, but precisely because they were. Only a Stalinist firm and monolithic structure, based on the Partisan organisation created during the war could have withstood the pressure which Yugoslavia was exposed to after 1948.

Leonid Gibianskii

*The Institute of Slavonic Studies
Russian Academy of Sciences
Moscow*

FEDERATIVE PROJECTS OF THE BALKAN COMMUNISTS, AND THE USSR POLICY DURING SECOND WORLD WAR AND AT THE BEGINNING OF THE COLD WAR

Abstract: The Federation of Balkan communist countries originated as a project in the first stages of the Second World War, in order to solve the problem of the peoples that were present in several states of the region. The best known example was the case of Macedonia, that was divided between Yugoslavia, Vardar Macedonia, Greece, Aegean Macedonia, and Bulgaria, Pirin Macedonia. The main architect of such projects was the leadership of the CPY, which wanted to solve the Macedonian problem by creating a large federation that would enable the union of all three of its parts. The issue was whether such a federation would be an extension of the Yugoslav federation in the making, or its constitutive parts should be the concerned countries themselves. The Soviets did not solve the dilemma, since they tended to change their opinion on the issue in accordance with the reaction of the Western Allies. However, they imposed their veto on the projects of this kind when they considered that they have lost overall control over them. The issue was also one of the major causes of the Tito-Stalin split.

Keywords: *Federation, Balkans, Tito, Stalin, Dimitrov, Second World War, Macedonia,*

Historiography began the examination of the topic literally on a hot blazing scent of the events to be discussed. However, already with the first works which appeared first in the West¹, the examination and investigation

¹ This topic was considered predominantly both in the works on the Soviet bloc and its split (for example, A. Ulam, *Titoism and the Cominform* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952); Z. Brzezinski, *The Soviet bloc, unity and conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960) and in studies on ethno-territorial problems in the Balkans (for example, E. Barker, *Macedonia: its place in Balkan power politics* (London, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1950); S. Palmer and R. King, *Yugoslav communism and the Macedonian question* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1971).

behind the scenes of these events remained extremely difficult for a long time due to the lack of access to necessary documents in archives of the USSR and the Balkan communist regimes. Western researchers had to rely mainly on officious data published for propagandist purposes in Yugoslavia after its expulsion from the Soviet bloc in 1948². In the USSR, scientific research of this topic was altogether prohibited. In Yugoslavia, where the theme received certain development in historiography after 1948, and in those of the other Balkan socialist countries, where elaboration of the topic was partially allowed mainly in the late-Communist period (especially in Bulgaria), the access to most important materials in the archives of these countries was, however, as a rule, also denied. Those historians in the countries, who managed nevertheless to get familiarized with some archival documents, could use them solely within the frameworks of the official directives which determined the coverage of this topic in the corresponding national historiography at that time³. It was only in the 1980s when first publications of archival materials on the topic started to appear, first of all in Yugoslavia.⁴

The declassification of formerly closed archival documents, and then publication of some of them, that started with the collapse of Communist rule⁵, created totally new opportunities for the studies of this theme. A number of works where the theme was considered to one extent or another with the use of formerly inaccessible materials, started to appear during two post-Communist

² The officious publications were, for example: M. Pijade, "O pitanju Balkanske federacije", in *Borba*, 6 March 1949; M. Pijade, "Govor druga Moše Pijade o balkanskoj federaciji", in *Borba*, 29 December 1949.

³ Among most famous works, see: S. Nešović, *Jugoslavija - Bugarska: Ratno vreme 1941-1945* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, Prosveta, 1978); S. Nešović, *Bledski sporazumi Tito - Dimitrov 1947* (Zagreb: Globus, Školska knjiga, 1979); K. Paleshutki, *Jugoslavskata komunisticheska partiia i makedonskiiat vāpros 1919-1945* (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1985); G. Daskalov, *Bālgaro-iugoslavski politicheski otnosheniia, 1944-1945* (Sofia: University "St Kliment Ohridski" Press, 1989).

⁴ Most important: Ž. Avramovski ed., "Devet projekata ugovora o jugoslovensko-bugarskom savezu i federaciji (1944-1947)", in *Istorija 20 veka*, 2, 1983.

⁵ For example, L. Ya. Gibianskii and Yu. G. Murin eds., "Poslednii visit I. Broza Tito k I. V. Stalinu: Sovetskaia i iugoslavskaia zapisi besedy 27-28 maia 1946 g", *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 2, 1993; L. Ya. Gibianskii and V. K. Volkov eds., "Na poroge pervogo raskola v "sotsialisticheskom lagere": Peregovory rukovodiashchikh deiatelei SSSR, Bolgarii i Iugoslavii. 1948 g.", *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 4, 1997 a shortened version of both above-mentioned publications in English: L. Gibianskii ed., "The Soviet Bloc and the Initial Stage of the Cold War: Archival Documents on Stalin's Meetings with the Communist Leaders of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, 1946-1948", *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 10, (Washington D.C., 1998); D. Sirkov et al. eds., *Georgi Dimitrov, Dnevnik, 9 mars 1933 - 6 fevruari 1949* (Sofia: University "St Kliment Ohridski" Press, 1997); a shortened version in English: I. Banac ed., *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov, 1933-1949* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2003); N. Plasari, L. Malttezi eds., *Marrēdhēniet shqiptaro-jugoslave 1945-1948: Dokumente* (Tiraneë : Drejtoria e Peërgjithshme e Arkivave, 1996); Ts. Biliarski and I. Burilkova eds., *BKP, Kominternāti makedonskiat vāpros (1917-1946)*, Vol. II (Sofia: Archives of Bulgaria, 1999).

decades,⁶ including the works by the author of this paper.⁷ This paper is a general and perforce brief description of the events under analysis, on the basis of the documentation of various parties that participated in these events.

Documents now being available in historiography clearly show that during Second World War the efforts of the Balkan Communist Parties, aimed at ensuring the CPs' accession to power in the course of their countries liberation from the Nazi occupation or pro-Hitler regimes, were combined with aspirations of a number of communist leaders to create in the future an association of those states in the Balkans where establishment of "people's democracies" could become possible. Perhaps, the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) that led the most significant resistance movement in the region was first to display the aspiration most distinctly.

It was first manifested in connection with Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo's mission. He was sent by Josip Broz Tito, the CPY General Secretary and Commander of Yugoslav partisans, in the end of 1942 to Vardar Macedonia. Particularly, Tito instructed Vukmanović to get in touch, on behalf of the CPY's leadership, with the Albanian, the Greek and the Bulgarian Communists and to suggest the idea to form Balkan headquarters to govern partisan forces of each of the four CPs.⁸ The idea was approved during two meetings of Yugoslav, Albanian and Greek representatives convened on Vukmanović's initiative in June – July 1943 (Bulgarian communist representatives were absent). On the occasion it was also concluded that the creation of the headquarters would not only encourage coordination of the Partisans' struggle but also open up an opportunity to "ensure people's democratic power" in each country and the creation of "the Balkan confederation".⁹

⁶ See, for example: B. Petranović, *Balkanska federacija 1943-1948* (Šabac : Zaslou, 1991); M. Lalkov, *Ot nadezhda kam razocharovanie: idejata za federatsiata v balkanskiia iugoiztok 1944-1948* (Sofia: Vek 22, 1994); D. Michev, *Makedonskiiat väpros i bälgaro-iugoslavskite otnosheniia. 9 septemvri 1944 – 1949* (Sofia: University "St Kliment Ohridski" Press, 1994); V. Toshkova, "Velikite pobediteli i provalät na proektite za iuzhnoslavianska federatsiia sled Vtorata svetovna vojna" *Istoriesko bädeshte*, 1-2, 2000; P. Dragišić, *Jugoslovensko-bugarski odnosi 1944-1949* (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2007).

⁷ For example: L. Gibianskii, "Balkanskii uzet". in O. A. Rzheshesvkii, ed., *Vtoroia mirovaia vojna: Aktual'nyie problemy* (Moscow: Nauka, 1995); Ibid., "Problemy mezhdunarodno-politicheskogo strukturirovaniia Vostochnoi Evropy v period formirovaniia sovetskogo bloka v 1940-e gody" in M.M. Narinskii, ed., *Kholodnaia vojna: novyie podkhody, novyie dokumenty*, Moscow, 1995; Ibid., "Ideia balkanskogo ob'edineniia i plany eio osushchestvleniia v 40-e gody XX veka", *Voprosy istorii*, 11-12, 2001; Ibid., „Herausbildung des sowjetischen Blocks und Projekte osteuropäischer Föderationen in den vierziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts", *Forum für osteuropäische Ideen- und Zeitgeschichte*, 2, 2002.

⁸ B. Krivokapić, *Tempo: Ja i Tito*, Belgrade, 1990, 20.

⁹ *Dokumenti o spolnoj politici Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije* (hereinafter – DSP SFRJ), 1941-1945, Vol. I (Belgrade: Jugoslovenski pregled, 1988), 347-349, 353-355, 361-363. See also: S. Vukmanović, *Borba za Balkanot* (Skopje: Mislja, 1982), 113-132.

The resolve of creating a federative or confederative union of the Balkan states was traditional for the socialist and, later Communist movement in the region. For the Communists, this orientation was conditioned, on the one hand, by doctrinal reasons: the idea of international association of peoples liberating themselves from the domination of exploiters, and by the example of a supposed federation in the USSR, whose experience was taken as a standard. On the other hand, this orientation was stimulated by the actual needs to solve problems typical for the Balkans, and for Yugoslavia in particular. The issue was that nations, ethnic groups and their traditional territories spread well beyond the internationally recognized borders of the states in the region. One of the striking example was the situation with Macedonia that due to the Balkan wars of 1912-1913 and, later after World War I, found itself partitioned between Greece (Aegean Macedonia), Yugoslavia (Vardar Macedonia) and Bulgaria (Pirin Macedonia). During Second World War when the CPY led the political and armed struggle, which evolved into a Resistance movement and a revolutionary force that in the end seized power in Yugoslavia, all practical problems, such as Macedonian one, not only remained significant but also gained in importance for Yugoslav communists and their movement.

Thus, this movement when it started the armed struggle in Vardar Macedonia, along with other parts of Yugoslavia, in contrast to the politics of the pre-war Yugoslav state, acted under the slogans of national liberation of Macedonian people together with all other Yugoslavia's peoples. But the proclamation of such aim ("national liberation of Macedonian people") also implied the need to answer the question of the future of unification of three parts of Macedonia. Since the CPY stood for the integrity of Yugoslavia it appeared that they were talking about annexation of the other two parts of Macedonia to the Yugoslav part. In fact, the question was raised in this way in the manifesto of the Headquarters of the Partisan forces on the territory of Vardar Macedonia in October 1943.¹⁰ This formulation of the question, however, provoked serious difficulties in the relations of CPY leadership and their Communist comrades from Greece and Bulgaria (to be discussed below).

A somewhat similar problem but one they had to face under unfavorable conditions, Tito and his fellow fighters had in connection with Kosovo. On the one hand, the Albanian majority of Kosovo's population welcomed annexation of this region to a Quisling regime of the occupied Albania and treated with hostility the CPY-led movement that was fighting for restoration of Yugoslavia. This movement could only rely on certain segments of the Serb population in

¹⁰ *Zbornik na dokumenti od Antifashistichkoto sobranie na narodnoto osloboduvane na Makedonija* (ASNOM) (Skopje: Institut za nacionalna istorija, 1964), 68-74.

Kosovo.¹¹ On the other hand, leaders of the Communist Party of Albania¹² (CPA), in their own country, stood, to some extent similar to the CPY, at the head of a powerful military-political movement against invaders and the Quisling regime. Although, they had close ties and were even patronized by the CPY, nevertheless, they showed an interest in reaching an agreement with the Yugoslav Communists on the prospect of Kosovo's unification with a future Communist regime in Albania. The need for such agreement was put to the CPY leadership in the summer of 1943, first through Miladin Popović, the CPY CC representative at the CPA CC, and later directly in the contacts of the Albanian Communists with prominent CPY functionaries.¹³

Tito rejected this proposal. Assuring the CPA leadership of his respect of the right of Kosovo Albanians for self-determination, he, however, stressed that the slogan of the prospect of Kosovo's incorporation into Albania at this stage would play into the hands of opponents of the CPY-led movement.¹⁴ The proclamation of such a slogan threatened to discredit the Yugoslav Communists in the eyes of the whole Serb population of Yugoslavia. At the same time Tito could not help being aware of the growing complexity of the Kosovo issue, which a little later, in the end of 1943 and early 1944, was evident in the fact that the CPY's leading activists in Kosovo supported the right of the Albanians of the region for unification with Albania.¹⁵

Under these conditions, the idea of any future unification on a federative or confederative basis of Bulgaria, Albania and Greece with Yugoslavia that could have happened in the aftermath of the Communists' victory in those countries, became more attractive to the CPY's leadership as a means to solve such problems as the Macedonian and Kosovo ones. The establishment of such federation or confederation would have provided an opportunity for unification of all three parts of Macedonia or Kosovo's annexation to Albania not as re-carving of the state borders with some territorial losses for one or another state but as a mere regrouping of the internal structure of a new large state common for all participating countries and peoples.

During several months that followed the above-mentioned Yugoslav proposal on a creation of the Balkan headquarters, the aspirations of the CPY leadership were manifested in their course for the future formation of South Slavonic, i.e. Yugoslav-Bulgarian, federation and for the establishment of "spe-

¹¹ See, for example: *Dokumenti centralnih organa KPJ: NOR i revolucija 1941-1945* (hereinafter DCO), Vol. 13 (Belgrade: Komunist, 1990), 22-24.

¹² Albanian abbreviation is PKSh.

¹³ DCO, Vol. 14 (Belgrade: Komunist, 1990), 391, 392, 408; B. Petranović, "Kosovo in Yugoslav-Albanian Relations and the Project of a Balkan Federation" in: *Srbi i Albanci u XX veku* (Belgrade: SASA, 1991), 353-354; S. Djaković, *Sukobi na Kosovu* (Beograd: Narodna knjiga, 1986).

¹⁴ DCO, Vol. 14, 391-393, 408-409.

¹⁵ Ibid., Vol. 15 (Belgrade: Komunist, 1986), 211 (see also 207-217).

cial relations” with eventual Communist regimes which gradually emerged in the form of insurgent authorities in a number of regions in Albania and, later, in Greece. This course was especially prominent in the autumn of 1943 when Tito and his most intimate circle set about preparing for the constituting of a new revolutionary Yugoslav statehood at the forthcoming II Session of the Anti-fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (Serb abbreviation is AVNOJ). The meeting of the CPY CC, held in mid-October 1943, which outlined the plan of holding the AVNOJ Session, the nature of its main decisions, and of setting up, at the session, the National Committee of Liberation of Yugoslavia (Serb abbreviation is NKOJ). On the same occasion, the Politburo decided that NKOJ would advance a “programmatically slogan” of “the Federation of South Slavs” and a special addresses to Greek and Albanian peoples in its declaration.¹⁶

In envisaging the above mentioned course of action, the ruling body of the CPY, headed by Tito, assumed that the Yugoslav side would play the dominant role in the planned federative or confederative association in the Balkans.

From the very start, the CPY leadership’s integration plans for Communist movements of Resistance and future Communist regimes in the region, have been based on the idea of Yugoslav domination. If one is to believe Vukmanović’s testimony, while issuing him instructions regarding the Balkan Headquarters in the end of 1942, Tito meant that the CPs of Albania, Greece and Bulgaria would recognize Yugoslav Partisan Supreme Headquarters as such.¹⁷ However Vukmanović was not able to implement this plan: in the summer of 1943, at the above-mentioned meetings of the Yugoslav, Albanian and Greek Partisan representatives, it was agreed that joint Balkan Headquarters, in which the Bulgarians were also supposed to take part, would be set up on a parity basis and comprise, respectively, of four commanders and four commissars.¹⁸ A year later, in his harsh criticism of Vukmanović for that decision, Tito stressed that Yugoslavia “plays a leading role in the Balkans” in terms of the scale of the armed struggle against invaders and successes in establishing of the new revolutionary authority, and hence “we must act as the center for the Balkan countries, both in military and political respects”.¹⁹

Proclaiming creation of federative Yugoslavia at II AVNOJ Session on November 29, 1943, its Communist leaders viewed the formation of a federation in Southeastern Europe as an expansion of Yugoslav federative state by the incorporation of other countries of the region. So, in their message to Albanian

¹⁶ B. Petranović, M. Zečević eds., *Jugoslavija 1918-1988: Tematska zbirka dokumenata*, (Belgrade: Rad, 1988), 636.

¹⁷ Krivokapić, *Tempo*, 20.

¹⁸ As footnote 9.

¹⁹ *DSP SFRJ, 1941-1945*, Vol. I, 392.

Communists sent after II AVNOJ Session, the CPY leaders gave them the task of circulating the session's resolution on establishment of federative Yugoslavia and in parallel to lobby for "the opportunity for other Balkan peoples to join this federation and to create a strong and large Balkan state of equal peoples".²⁰ In April 1944, Tito explained the same principle as the basis of Bulgarian participation in the planned federating process to the head of the Soviet military mission, General Nikolai Korneyev, who latter informed Moscow.²¹

Tendencies of two origins merged together in this aspiration of Yugoslav Communist leadership. On the one hand, Tito, either consciously or unconsciously, essentially continued the policy of territorial domination of more powerful neighbors over the weaker ones that was traditional for relations among the countries of Southeastern Europe. On the other hand, the CPY leadership that headed the most powerful Resistance movement in the region and achieved most impressive successes in the fight for power, in fact, viewed itself as the center of revolutionary changes in the region, a kind of mini-USSR on a scale of the Balkans or even the Balkan-Adriatic zone. That is the reason why the CPY CC believed it necessary to popularize new Yugoslavia as the center and Tito as the leader of "all people's democratic movements in this part of Europe", that is to say in the Balkans and in Italy.²²

However, in the end of 1943, Tito came to a conclusion that implementation of measures similar to those for the establishment of a Balkan Headquarters or public advancement of the slogan of federation in the Balkans, could at that time provoke an extremely sharp reaction in the West which might look upon it as an attempt to bolshevize the region. This could cause troubles for the new Yugoslavia whereas the latter was making efforts to win the recognition of Western allies. In addition, Tito was not satisfied with Vukmanović's agreement with the Albanian and the Greek Communists on formation of the Balkan Headquarters on a parity basis. Tito also took into account that the Soviets rejected, in the end of 1943, the British plans of federalization in Central and Southeastern Europe, and hence he tried to avoid making steps that could have been used as a precedent by the British. In this situation, he decided to abandon both his plans to establish a Balkan Headquarters (afterwards the Yugoslav official version alleged as if Vukmanović had no instruction from Tito to set up such Headquarters) and the idea of putting forward publicly the slogan of the formation of a South-Slavonic or Balkan federation. However, this abandonment was only a temporary tactical maneuver. The goal of a fed-

²⁰ Here quoted from: Petranović, *Kosovo*, 348.

²¹ This information, without indication that it was received from Korneyev, was translated into Bulgarian and published in: Biliarski and Burilkova eds., *BKP*, Vol. II, 1101.

²² *DCO*, Vol. 15, 354.

erative unification in the region per se, and on the basis of Yugoslav domination, remained.²³

The attitudes of the CPs of Albania, Bulgaria and Greece to the Yugoslav plans of integration were far from simple. On the one hand, the idea of federative or confederative unification of the Balkans was for Communists of these countries, to a great degree, as traditional as for their Yugoslav comrades. On the other hand, these CPs displayed serious doubts about Yugoslav claims for leadership. This was especially prominent among Greek and Bulgarian communist leaders who, in this respect, were first of all concerned with the issue of Macedonia and with ever more present Yugoslav claim on all of it. As a result, despite initial agreement on the establishment of the Balkan Headquarters, the leadership of the Greek CP (Greek abbreviation is KKE) soon renounced implementing this plan. Later, the CC of Bulgarian CP (then its name was the Bulgarian Worker's Party, with Bulgarian abbreviation – BRP), which was carrying on clandestine activity in Bulgaria, also expressed its negative attitude.²⁴

In addition, for both of them, the perspective of being involved in Yugoslav projects regarding Macedonia were contingent on the threat of being accused by their countrymen of supporting concession of a part of the national territory to another state. That is why Greek Communist leaders suspiciously treated creation in Aegean Macedonia, within frameworks of party-led Resistance movement, of special Slavomacedonian organizations strongly attached to the movement led by CPY in Yugoslav Macedonia. Later, starting from the spring of 1944, the communist party of Greece took measures to dissolve such organizations.²⁵ The position of Communists in Bulgaria was also complex. While they condemned their ruling regime's seizure of Yugoslav and Greek parts of Macedonia, nonetheless, they were aware of the fact that the entire Macedonia was perceived by the majority of Bulgarians as an integral part of the territory of the Bulgarian people. Trying to slide between Scylla and Charybdis, the underground Central Committee of the Communist party, together with its non-Communist partners of the Patriotic Front (PF), instead of answering the question whether territories occupied in Macedonia should be returned to Yugoslavia and Greece or, on the contrary kept by Bulgaria, issued a declaration in December 1943 where they suggested a creation of sovereign

²³ *DSP SFRJ, 1941-1945, Vol. II, Belgrade, 1989, 28-30; Arhiv Jugoslavije (hereinafter AJ), Collection 836: The Chancellery of the Marshall of Yugoslavia, (Serbian abbreviation is KMJ), I-3-c/3, 17.*

²⁴ *DSP SFRJ, 1941-1945, Vol. I, 372-373; Vukmanovich-Tempo, Borba, 178; Ts. Dragoicheva, Povelja na dälga (Spomeni i razmisli), Vol. 3 Pobedata (Sofia: Partizdat, 1979), 358-359.*

²⁵ On Slavomacedonian movement in Aegean Macedonia and its relations with the KKE during Second World War see, for example: Kh. Andonovski, *Makedontsite pod Grtsiia vo borbata protiv fashizmot (1940-1944)* (Skopje: Institut za nacionalna istorija, 1968), in particular, chapters 5-9; A. Rossos, "Incompatible Allies: Greek Communism and Macedonian Nationalism in the Civil War in Greece, 1943-1949" *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 69, 1, 1997, 47-53.

united Macedonia, independent from all Balkan states. However, in the declaration were mentioned only the parts of Macedonia that used to a part of Yugoslavia and Greece, whereas no reference was made to Pirin Macedonia that had been a part of Bulgaria before the war.²⁶

The proposal to create independent Macedonia contradicted the plans of Yugoslav Communist leadership who declared Macedonia as one of the six constituent parts of the federative Yugoslavia at the II AVNOJ Session (they meant Vardar Macedonia but implied that Pirin and Aegean Macedonia would be annexed later). On January 24, Tito sent a radiogram to Moscow, in which he assessed the position stated in the PF of Bulgaria declaration as “hostile to our national liberation struggle”.²⁷ The radiogram was addressed to Georgi Dimitrov who acted in two roles: on the one hand, as the Bulgarian Communist leader, on the other, as the head of the International Information Department of the CPSU (b) CC which continued functions of the Comintern, now formally dissolved.

Dimitrov took into consideration Soviet and interests of the world Communist movement, thus his decision differed from that of the underground CC in Bulgaria itself. During 1943 – the spring of 1944, Dimitrov and the Foreign Bureau of the BRP headed by him, which in fact was the BRP’s highest body, following the directive of the ruling Soviet body’s, were drawing up projects for uniting the future “people’s democracies” in the Balkans. These projects were based, like Tito’s plans, on the idea of creating a Balkan or South Slavonic federation. The united Macedonia was supposed to be a full member of the future federation.²⁸ While elaborating those plans, Dimitrov, in contrast to the underground CC in Bulgaria, attached special importance to Yugoslavia where Communists in the course of military struggle achieved more significant successes in comparison with other countries of Southeastern Europe. This is why he believed it necessary to support the resolutions of II AVNOJ Session,

²⁶ See declaration, for example, in: Biliarski and Burilkova eds., *BKP*, Vol. II, 1083-1085.

²⁷ *DCO*, Vol. 15, p. 149.

²⁸ Tsentralen dārzhaven arkhiv – Sofia (hereinafter TsDA), Collection 3b, inventory 4, file 598, 5-12, 17-19, 21-22; file 599, 8-9; Coll. 147 b, inv. 2, file 332, 81-88, 93-95, 97; N.S. Lebedeva, and M. M. Narinskii, (compilers), K.M. Anderson, A.O. Chubar’ian eds., *Komintern i vtoroia mirovaia voina*, Part II (Moscow: Pamiatniki istoriceskoi misli 1998), 447; Ts. Biliarski, I. Burilkova eds., *BKP*, Vol. II, 1093-1095, 1103. In the opinion of Serbian historian Branko Petranović, Tito found about these plans from Bulgarian communist Shteriu Atanasov, who arrived in Tito’s Headquarters from Moscow. These plans caused, in mid-October 1943, the adoption of above-mentioned decision of the CPY CC Politburo to advance a slogan in favour a creating of the South Slavs federation (Petranović, *Kosovo*, 346; *Ibid.*, *Balkanska federacija*, 72-73). However, it is obvious from his cited works above that, Petranović did not have any data confirming that Tito received such an information from Atanasov, and moreover that it caused the adoption of the Yugoslav decision. There are no such data in documents studied by historians up to now. Nevertheless, one decade and a half later, Petranović’s opinion was reproduced by Petar Dragišić who refrained from making a comment regarding this issue (Dragišić, *Jugoslovensko-bugarski odnosi*, 59).

including those pertaining to Macedonia as one of the federal units of Yugoslavia. Correspondingly, already in the beginning of January 1944, he gave a directive to the underground CC in Bulgaria not to advance the slogan of independent Macedonia. And when he received Tito's radiogram of January 24 with the protest against the above-mentioned PF declaration, Dimitrov, in his response to Tito, disavowed the declaration.²⁹ Dimitrov's position was inseparable from the position of the Soviet leadership which, in their political strategy with respect to the Balkans, also attached special importance to Yugoslavia as a country with the most promising prospects for Communists' victory due to the successes of the CPY-led struggle. In response to Tito's complaints regarding the politics of Bulgarian Communists on Macedonia, the USSR leader Joseph Stalin and the Soviet diplomacy chief Viacheslav Molotov in mid-April 1944 sent a radiogram to Tito in which they stressed that Moscow treated new Yugoslavia as the main Soviet ally in the Balkans and assured him that no decision on Macedonia would be taken without consent of the Yugoslav Communist leadership.³⁰ As for the issue of a future federation in the Balkans, in particular a federation of South Slavs, the Soviets, and also Dimitrov, believed that it was premature, for the present, to openly advance this goal, taking into account the actual international circumstances.³¹

However in the autumn of 1944, in the situation when Hitler's domination in Southeastern Europe was being liquidated and Communists were seizing power in Yugoslavia, Albania and to a greater extent in Bulgaria, Tito, Dimitrov, and apparently the Kremlin which had the last word, considered that the favorable moment to implement federative plans had come. This task was discussed during Tito's secret visit to Moscow in the second half of September, 1944, where he conducted negotiations with the Soviet leaders and Dimitrov. The latter wrote in his diary about agreement with Tito on "the line that we have set down – the formation of a union between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia that actually amounts to a federation of South Slavs".³²

Nevertheless, difficulties arose in the course of Bulgarian-Yugoslav negotiations on a specific implementation of the project. The negotiations followed in November 1944 – January 1945. The Yugoslavs immediately pushed for a speedy establishment of the federation on the basis of equal status of Bulgaria and each of the six federal units of Yugoslavia. The Bulgarian side in fact headed by Dimitrov who continued to occupy his post in Moscow, more perceptibly as

29 Biliarski and Burilkova eds., BKP, Vol. II, 1087; DCO, Vol. 15, 444.

³⁰ AJ, Coll. 836, KMJ, I-3-b/574.

³¹ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (hereinafter RGASPI), Collection 495, inventory 74, file 599, 41; Biliarski and Burilkova eds., BKP, Vol. II, 1103; Lebedeva and Narinskii (compilers), *Komintern*, Part II, 447.

³² Sirkov et al. eds., *Georgi Dimitrov, Dnevnik*, 440 (in English: Banac ed., *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov*, 337.

the time went by, advanced the line of a more gradual formation of federation, through intermediate phases, with a dualistic nature, with equal status of Bulgaria and the entire Yugoslavia. This was also combined with disagreements in respect to Macedonia. Bulgarians agreed to the unification of the Bulgarian part of Macedonia with the Yugoslav part but insisted that it should be done only in case of establishment of the South Slavonic federation whereas Yugoslavs tried to achieve annexation of the Bulgarian Macedonia to the Yugoslav one before that, i.e. already during the preparatory stage.³³

In this situation, in accordance with the hierarchy of relations in the Communist movement and the emerging Soviet bloc, a member of Yugoslav leadership Andrija Hebrang, on Tito's directive, at the meeting with Stalin on January 9, 1945, accused Bulgarians of actual sabotage of the creation of South Slavonic federation. Stalin, however, did not support the Yugoslav claims and spoke about the dualistic nature of the federation justifying it with the necessity to take into consideration the reality of existence of Bulgaria as a state and to prevent a situation when the Bulgarians could be hurt by what they perceived as a "desire to swallow them". Stalin said that it was necessary to gradually move towards a federation, starting at this stage from "a union, a treaty of mutual assistance". He took the same position at the meeting with leading figures of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, summoned to Moscow, two weeks later. And as a result of the meeting, it was decided that the immediate goal was the conclusion of such treaty while creation of the federation was a more distant future.³⁴

Sources, now available for researchers, have no data to reliably enough determine real causes for Stalin's position as well as whether the line of the Bulgarian party expressed by Dimitrov was the result of his own thinking or was secretly dictated by the Kremlin. It has been suggested in the historiography and in the works of this author, in particular, that Bulgarian-Yugoslav contradictions were one of the reasons why Stalin decided to postpone the decision on the federation issue. Another reason could be the objection of British Government, received by the Soviets on January 1, 1945. The British had learned about the secret Yugoslav-Bulgarian negotiations and expressed their disagreement with unification of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia into federa-

³³ Documents on the course of negotiations see: Biliarski and Burilkova eds., *BKP*, Vol. II, 1177-1178, 1179-1191; Avramovski, "Devet projekata".

³⁴ G.P. Murashko ed., et al., *Vostochnaia Evropa v dokumentakh rossiiskikh arkhivov 1944-1953 gg.*, Vols. I, II, (Moscow, Novosibirsk: The Institute of Slavonic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, 1998); *Otnosheniia Rossii (SSSR) s Iugoslaviei, 1941-1945 gg.: Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow: Terra, 1998), 398, 405; Sirkov et al. eds., *Georgi Dimitrov, Dnevnik*, 460, 463 (in English: Banac ed., *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov*, 352, 356, 357); TsDA, Coll. 147 b, inv. 2, file 1025, 2; Avramovski ed., "Devet projekata", 94-96, 113-121.

tion.³⁵ Considering British prerogatives in relation to Bulgaria as a defeated country, London's objections were in fact viewed as a "veto" on the creation of federation, and Stalin had to take those into account. Meanwhile, Bulgarian historian Vitka Toshkova suggested that Stalin did not want a federation of Bulgaria with Yugoslavia at all, though he concealed it. In order to thwart the creation of the federation, he apparently in the first ten-days of January 1945 created thesis, that have been imposed behind the scenes on Dimitrov, on the necessity to insist on a dualistic nature of the federation and to resist Yugoslav line as threatening to absorb Bulgaria. The British objection came just in time to be used by Stalin as another tool in his efforts.³⁶

This conclusion is not at all impossible, furthermore, a delicate analysis, characteristic of Toshkova's many works, makes author's argumentation worthy of attention in this case as well. However, in this case, due to the above-mentioned incompleteness of available sources, this argumentation is not backed by unambiguous documental evidence. Moreover, the conclusion is forcibly constructed chiefly on the basis of author's interpretation of some indirect data that not always takes into account all sides of the events under consideration. For example, such facts as the above-mentioned Dimitrov's agreement with Tito in Moscow in the end of September 1944 on the course of the events that should lead to the formation of a federation of South Slavs or the issue on the necessity to expedite the process of such formation raised by Stalin himself at the meeting with Yugoslav representatives in the end of November 1944,³⁷ remained outside Toshkova's analysis. It is difficult to believe that the agreement could take place without the Kremlin's sanction. And it is no less difficult to understand Stalin's position at the meeting with Yugoslav representatives, if the Soviet leader, in Toshkova's opinion, was against federation. Or he wasn't against it then, but later he changed his opinion and by January 1945, he took a negative view of federation? But if we are to suppose that he did so, then why? Was it because of the British veto? Toshkova's version does not provide answers to these questions. Then, how reliable and, all the more, comprehensive is her version in explaining what was going on?

In any case, whatever we think of one or another of the versions, as a result of the above-mentioned Soviet-Yugoslav-Bulgarian meetings in Moscow held in the end of January 1945, a treaty on the union between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria was urgently prepared under Soviet guidance. A simultaneous signing of a secret letter-appendix to the treaty was also stipulated. It specified that the

³⁵ On British objection see: Arhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereinafter AVP RF), Collection 0144, inventory 30, case for documents 118, file 10, 13-14; V. Toshkova, et al. eds., *Bălgariia – nepriznatiiat protivnik na Tretia raikh* (Sofia: "St. Georgi Pobedonosec" Press, 1995), 195-196.

³⁶ Toshkova, *Velikite pobediteli*, 9-24.

³⁷ *DSP SFRJ, 1941-1945*, Vol. II, 311.

main goal was the formation of South Slavonic federation. And it was decided, with Stalin's approval, not to predetermine the question whether a federation would be dualistic or, within it, Bulgaria would take a position analogous to each of federal parts of Yugoslavia.³⁸ Meanwhile, the Soviet Government in its counter note of January 29 to the British, stated that there was no question of formation of a federation at present and the negotiations concerned only the signing of a Bulgarian-Yugoslav pact on mutual assistance, considered as positive by the USSR.³⁹

However, at the subsequent Crimean conference the British side likewise opposed the treaty. The Soviet efforts undertaken after the conference to continue negotiations on this issue with Western allies were unsuccessful.⁴⁰ So, signing of a Bulgarian-Yugoslav treaty had to be postponed.

After the unsuccessful negotiations with the Bulgarians about a federation and the expression of Stalin's stand in favor of the dualistic variant which did not correspond to Tito's plans, the latter, as far as it is possible to judge from the documents, lost interest in plans for establishing a federation. In any event, when that issue was raised by the Bulgarian Minister in Belgrade in April 1946, Tito was negative about a possibility to implement this idea in the nearest future and informed Dimitrov, who returned to Bulgaria from the USSR, that he did not believe, for the present, it timely even to sign a union treaty between two countries.⁴¹ The Yugoslav leader took the same view of the federation during his meeting with Stalin in the end of May 1946 and even to some extent argued with the Kremlin's boss who insisted on the need for setting up a federation. As a result, Tito accepted the directive reiterated by Stalin to begin with signing of a Bulgarian-Yugoslav treaty on friendship and mutual assistance and, in fact, to go significantly further in establishing close ties between the two countries.⁴² It is possible that Tito was particularly influenced by the possibility of annexation of Pirin Macedonia to the Macedonian republic of Yugoslavia which existed within the framework of Yugoslavia. Meanwhile Stalin, during the Tito's visit to Moscow, demonstrated the Kremlin's readi-

³⁸ *Otnosheniia Rossii (SSSR)*, 405; Avramovski ed., "Devet projekata", 95, 113-121; Sirkov et al. eds., *Georgi Dimitrov, Dnevnik*, 463 (in English: Banac ed., *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov*, 356, 357); TsDA, Coll. 147 b, inv. 2, file 1025, 2.

³⁹ AVP RF, Coll. 0144, inv. 30, case for docs 118, file 10, 14.

⁴⁰ *Sovetskii Soiuz na mezhdunarodnykh konferentsiakh perioda Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny 1941-1945 gg.*: Sbornik dokumentov, Vol. IV: Krymskaia konferentsiia rukovoditelei triokh soiuznykh derzhav – SSSR, SShA i Velikobritanii (4-11 fevralia 1945 g.) (Moscow: Politizdat, 1979), 197, 240, 244-245, 252, 255-256, 281; AVP RF, Coll. 0144, inv. 30, case for docs 118, file 10, 14-15; T. Chepreganov, ed., *Velika Britaniia i Makedoniia: Dokumenti*, Vol. I (18 avgust 1944 – 8 mai 1945) (Skopje: Institut za nacionalna istorija, 1995), 83-195.

⁴¹ AVP RF, Coll. 0144, inv. 30, case for docs 118, file 15, 39-40, 47-48, 72; Sirkov et al. eds., *Georgi Dimitrov, Dnevnik*, 525 (in English: Banac ed., *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov*, 402-403).

⁴² Gibianskii and Murin eds., "Poslednii visit I. Broza Tito", 23, 26-27.

ness to meet this desire and issued directives for the leadership of Bulgaria to start preparations for such annexation in not-so-distant future. At that stage, the issue was about measures that would ensure a sort of autonomy of Pirin Macedonia.⁴³

Stalin's directive determined the nature of the well-known resolution on Pirin Macedonia, which was adopted at the plenum of the Central Committee of the BRP (Communists) (such was the CP's name then) in August 1946. In accordance with the resolution, an intensified implementation of a program for establishing of national (ethnic) Macedonian autonomy and of very soft cultural rapprochement to Yugoslavia's Macedonian Republic was started in Pirin Macedonia.⁴⁴ This sort of measures met the aspirations of the Yugoslav side.⁴⁵ The latter, however, wanted a more speedy solution of this issue and in the end of 1946 subjected the Bulgarian leadership to sharp criticism, including public one, for the fact that the draft of the new Bulgaria's Constitution published at that time had no mention of Macedonians as an ethnic minority. So sharp and public Yugoslav attack provoked Moscow's negative evaluation.⁴⁶

Since the spring – summer of 1947, mainly on Dimitrov's insistence, Sofia and Belgrade undertook measures for signing the Bulgarian-Yugoslav treaty on friendship and mutual assistance as well as a number of agreements on integration in economic sphere that were considered as a first step towards a future federation of South Slavs.⁴⁷ At the same time, the leaders of both countries, however, did not consult to a sufficient extent Moscow and even neglected the Soviet directives not to sign the bilateral treaty until the peace treaty of the United Nations with Bulgaria would come into effect. This behavior provoked Stalin's fierce condemnation who nonetheless, after the peace treaty with Bulgaria came into effect, gave the green light to sign the pact between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.⁴⁸ As for the federation, no decision was taken on its future organization, including the fundamental issue whether it should

⁴³ Biliarski and Burilkova eds., *BKP*, Vol. II, 1269, 1270.

⁴⁴ The plenum's materials are published partly in: *Ibid.*, 1278-1284.

⁴⁵ These measures were being defined in Bulgarian historiography as a forced "debulgarization" of Pirin Macedonia's population, which had been dictated from exterior see, for instance: Michev, *Makedonskiiat vāpros*, chapter 2; V. Angelov, *Khronika na edno natsionalno predatelstvo: Opitite za nasilstveno denatsionalizirane na Pirinska Makedoniia (1944-1949) g.* (Blagoevgrad: "Neofit Rilski" University Press, 1999), 108-237. But such opinion was being disputed in Macedonian historiography (for example, see: Velianovski, N., *Makedoniia vo iugoslovensko-bugarските odnosi (1944-1953)* (Skopje: Institut za naionalna istorija, 1998). One can see a tendency in contemporary Serb historiography to consider these events in Pirin Macedonia with a various and even contrary views (for example: Dragišić, *Jugoslovensko-bugarски odnosi*, 176-192).

⁴⁶ Murashko ed., *Vostochnaia Evropa*, Vol. I, 708.

⁴⁷ These agreements and treaty signed in August and November 1947, see: *Vānshna politika na Narodna republika Bālgariia: Sbornik ot dokumenti i materiali*, Vol. I. I (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1970), 90-99; *DSP SFRJ, 1947*, Vol. II. Belgrade, 1986, 84-92, 374-377.

⁴⁸ AJ, Coll. 836, KMJ, I-2/17, 69, 70.

become dualistic or with Bulgaria gaining the same status as any one of Yugoslav republics. In essence, a creation of a federation was postponed for an indefinite period and transformed into a political-propagandist slogan rather than a direct practical goal. In the meanwhile, the Yugoslav leadership tried to a maximum degree to reinforce the influence of Yugoslavia's Macedonian Republic upon Pirin Macedonia.

However, even more active efforts were undertaken by the Yugoslav leadership to integrate, in fact, Albania with Yugoslavia during the first years after the war. Thanks' to a largely patronizing role which the CPY was exerting on to the CPA since the war, Yugoslavia seriously influenced the activity of Albanian authorities through Yugoslav military and civilian counselors in Albania. In his contacts with the Soviets, Tito showed aspiration for Albania's incorporation, in the end, into federative Yugoslavia.⁴⁹ This issue was raised, in particular, during Tito's visit to the USSR in the end of May – first half of June 1946. In the course of the negotiations with Stalin, Tito replied in the affirmative to the latter's question whether Enver Hoxha, the Albanian Communist leader, agreed to Albania's incorporation into Yugoslavia, although, judging by available documents, at that time Hoxha did not express his opinion so categorically and openly. Stalin, however, while approving of the idea of concluding a Yugoslav-Albanian treaty of friendship and mutual assistance which would have "brought closer together" Albania to Yugoslavia, spoke of the prematurity of the former's incorporation into the latter. He justified his position by the necessity for Yugoslavia to achieve first a desired solution of the Trieste issue. Tito had to agree with that.⁵⁰

It is not clear from the available documents whether Stalin's argument was the actual expression of Soviet position or a mere tactical ruse to prevent the entrance of Albania into Yugoslav federation. In one way or another, as a result of the 1946 Moscow negotiations the issue of direct unification was removed from the agenda for a time. While giving Tito the green light for concluding of the treaty of friendship and mutual assistance and the agreement on close economic cooperation with Albania, the Soviets informed simultaneously Albanian leadership that Moscow adhered to this position and approved the idea of "Albania's orientation to close contacts with Yugoslavia". This had influenced Albanian position and, in particular, that of Hoxha, who arrived in Belgrade in the end of June 1946, and promoted signing of the corresponding Yugoslav-Albanian documents in the beginning of July.⁵¹

In the course of the negotiations with Tito in June 1946, Hoxha raised the Kosovo issue. He did not consider at all that it would be expedient to raise the issue of Kosovo's annexation to Albania as an urgent goal. He apparently

⁴⁹ See, for example: AVP RF, Coll. 0144, inv. 30, case for docs 118, file 10, 1; file 15, 38-39.

⁵⁰ Gibianskii and Murin eds., "Poslednii visit I. Broza Tito", 23, 26.

⁵¹ AVP RF, Coll. 0144, inv. 30, case for docs 118, file 15, 167-168; file 16, 1.

understood that it would be politically impossible for the Yugoslav leadership at that stage. Hoxha asked Tito to somehow publicly outline the perspective of Kosovo's annexation to Albania in the future, for example, by noting it in the Albanian-Yugoslav treaty of friendship and mutual assistance. He justified this by the necessity to counteract opponents of the Communist rule both in Albania itself and among ethnic Albanians in Kosovo who accused the Albanian Government that the latter had sold the fortune of Kosovo to Yugoslavia. However, as during the war times, Tito, on the one hand, assured Hoxha that he supported the right of Albanians in Kosovo to a union with Albania in the future. But, on the other hand, Yugoslav leader spoke of the impossibility to advance the issue of annexation of this region to Albania at that moment in any form. He referred to unfavorable international situation and that the advancement of the Kosovo issue would have weakened domestic positions of the Yugoslav Government, especially in Serbia. Tito proposed to take measures to facilitate communications of Kosovo Albanians with Albania, even by opening the border between Kosovo and Albania, but Hoxha's response was quite reserved.⁵²

The issue of Kosovo and Yugoslav-Albanian relations was also touched upon in the course of Soviet-Yugoslav negotiations in April 1947 when Edvard Kardelj, the number two figure in the Yugoslav leadership, told Stalin about Belgrade's intention to transfer Kosovo to Albania in the future with Albania's simultaneous integration with Yugoslavia. Stalin, at least orally, approved this plan.⁵³ The way the question was put suggested that Kosovo, in essence, would be a sort of a price to be paid for the factual appropriation of the entire Albania by the Yugoslav Communist regime.

However, the gradual establishment of direct Soviet-Albanian contacts, especially after Hoxha and Koçi Xoxe, second after Hoxha in the ranks of the Albanian leadership, visited Moscow in July 1947, caused Tito's anxiety since he feared that this could threaten Yugoslavia's dominant position in Albania. His concerns grew when the Yugoslavs found out that Nako Spiru, an influential member of Albanian leadership who held anti-Yugoslav views, had had special contacts with the Soviet representatives in Tirana. In the end of November 1947, Spiru facing Yugoslav accusations of hostile activity committed suicide when he lost hopes for Moscow's much awaited support.⁵⁴ But Tito, alarmed by Spiru's Soviet connections even after the latter's suicide, nevertheless addressed the Kremlin, trying to obtain a confirmation of their consent for Yugoslavia to continue its dominant role in Albania. He also wanted to get

⁵² Murashko ed., *Vostochnaia Evropa*, Vol. I, 476-477.

⁵³ AJ, Coll. 836, KMJ, I-3-b/639, 9.

⁵⁴ See: AJ, Coll. 507, CK SKJ, IX, 1/I-135, 10-13, 14-15, 16-21, 26-30; 1/I-141; 1/I-142; Coll. 836, KMJ, I-3-b/651, 3, 4-5; Murashko ed., *Vostochnaia Evropa*, Vol. I, 735-737.

the Soviet approval of measures in order to strengthen the role.⁵⁵ In response, in his conversation with one of Tito's closest collaborators, Milovan Djilas, in mid-January 1948, Stalin declared himself in favor of further development of Albania's close ties with Yugoslavia up to their union. At the same time, however, just as he did at his meeting with Tito in May 1946, he spoke of the necessity to postpone the union until more favorable times.⁵⁶ The available documents do not provide again clear answer as to whether this were Stalin's real aspirations or was this merely a tactical game with Yugoslavs.

Meantime, upon receipt from Djilas of information about the Soviet position, Tito asked Hoxha to grant a military base in South Albania for a Yugoslav division to be stationed there. He referred to the threat of a Greek invasion of Albania with Western support. Hoxha agreed.⁵⁷ According to Djilas' memoirs, Tito's real aspiration was to strengthen Yugoslavia's positions in Albania by bringing troops there.⁵⁸ In any case, Tito made this decision without consulting the USSR. As soon as the Soviet leadership found out about Belgrade's action they sharply condemned it and immediately summoned high-ranking Yugoslav representatives to Moscow.⁵⁹

Simultaneously, Bulgarian leaders were also summoned to Moscow after the Kremlin sharply condemned Dimitrov's published statement of January 17, 1948 about future creation of a federation of all Eastern European countries. The statement was also made without any preliminary arrangement with the Soviet leadership and only reflected Dimitrov's personal ideas. Stalin negatively evaluated the idea of the establishment of a large Eastern European federation, and Dimitrov was subjected to public criticism in "Pravda".⁶⁰ Tito also negatively treated Dimitrov's statement and promptly, even before he learned about this Stalin's reaction, sent a proposal to Moscow suggesting that Soviets strongly reprimand the Bulgarian leader.⁶¹ Tito's position was understandable: he was not interested in creating a large federation where Yugoslavia would be only one of the members. His federative plans were, to the contrary, directed at incorporation of some neighboring Balkan states into Yugoslavia.

⁵⁵ AJ, Coll. 836, KMJ I-3-b/651, 1-5; former Arhiv Saveznog sekretarijata za inostrane poslove (now this is Archives of Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Serbia), PA, 1947 god., F-IV, Str. Pov. 1765; RGASPI, Coll. 77, inv. 3, file 99, 1-5, 8, see also: T. Volokitina, ed., *Sovetskii faktor v Vostochnoi Evrope. 1944-1953 gg.: Dokumenty*, Vol. I (Moscow: Rosspen, 1999), 510-512.

⁵⁶ AJ, Coll. 836, KMJ, I-3-b/651, 10-11; M. Djilas, *Vlast i pobuna* (Belgrade: Književne novine, 1991), 127-128.

⁵⁷ AJ, Coll. 836, KMJ, I-3-b/651, 24; I-3-b/34.

⁵⁸ Djilas, *Vlast i pobuna*, 125.

⁵⁹ See the publication of documents: "Konflikt, kotorogo ne dolzhno bylo byt' (iz istorii sovetko-iugoslavskikh otnoshenii)", *Vestnik Ministerstva inostrannykh del*, 6, 1990, 57, 59, 60.

⁶⁰ AJ, Coll. 836, KMJ, I-3-b/140, 7-8; *Pravda*, 28 January 1948.

⁶¹ AJ, Coll. 836, KMJ, I-3-b/651, 15.

Although Tito was agreed with Stalin in condemning Dimitrov's statement, nevertheless, Yugoslav leadership, because of Belgrade's attempt bring troops into Albania undertaken without the Kremlin's knowledge, was no less at fault in the Soviets' eyes than Dimitrov. However, in contrast to the latter who, after having been summoned, arrived in Moscow together with his closest collaborators Traicho Kostov and Vasil Kolarov, Tito did not come to Moscow but sent Kardelj, Djilas and Vladimir Bakarić for unpleasant explanations with the Soviets. At the meeting with Bulgarians and Yugoslavs on February 10, 1948, Stalin again sharply condemned Dimitrov's idea on a federation of all Eastern European countries. As for Yugoslavia, firstly, Stalin prohibited the stationing of Yugoslav troops in Albania. He said that Yugoslavs tried to do this because they feared that the USSR would play a leading role there. Secondly, instead of the unification of Albania with Yugoslavia, heartily desired by Tito, Stalin suggested the idea of the formation of a Bulgarian-Yugoslav federation, which would be later joined by Albania.⁶² Historiography does not have available documental data to discern whether he really indented to implement such union, or whether it was a tactical game only. In any case, advancement of this plan contravened Belgrade's projects with respect to Albania.

The Bulgarian leadership accepted Stalin's directives and enthusiastically welcomed the idea of creating Bulgarian-Yugoslav federation.⁶³ The Yugoslav side, however, upon return of its delegation from Moscow, decided not to agree to federation with Bulgaria at this stage.⁶⁴ At the same time, Belgrade tried to persuade Tirana to initiate the deployment of Yugoslav troops in Albania and Albanian union with Yugoslavia.⁶⁵ Thus, proceeding from its own interests, the Yugoslav leadership began to act contrary to Soviet directives and, by doing this, regardless of the hierarchy of relations within the Soviet bloc.

This served as a most important starting-point for the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict to emerge.⁶⁶ The exclusion of Yugoslavia from the bloc that followed as a result of the conflict brought to an end all plans to federate countries of Southeastern Europe under Communist power.

⁶² See: Gibianskii and Volkov eds., "Na poroge pervogo raskola", 97-99, 100, 103, 105, 107, 108, 117 (notes 34, 37).

⁶³ TsDA, Coll. 147 b, inv. 2, file 62, 42-49 (on the federation - 48); AJ, Coll. 507, CK SKJ, IX, 15/I-102; 15/I-104.

⁶⁴ B. Petranović ed., *Zapisnici sa sednica Politbiroa Centralnog komiteta KPJ (11 jun 1945 - 7 jul 1948)* (Belgrade: Arhiv Jugoslavije, Službeni list SRJ 1995), 234, 242-244.

⁶⁵ AJ, Coll. 507, CK SKJ, IX, 1/I-135, 1/I-163, 1/I-164; Coll. 836, KMJ, I-3-b/135, 3; RGASPI, Coll. 17, inv. 128, file 472, 78-79, 84-86.

⁶⁶ For more details, see, for instance: L. Gibianskii, "The Soviet-Yugoslav Split", in K. McDermott, and M. Stibbe, eds., *Revolution and Resistance in Eastern Europe: Challenges to Communist Rule* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2006).

Dušan T. Bataković

Institute for Balkan Studies

Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Belgrade

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF YUGOSLAVIA, THE COMINTERN AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION THE CASE OF KOSOVO AND METOHİJA

Abstract: The Comintern policy in Yugoslavia (1919–1943) proved to be crucial for the eventual settlement of the national question by its section, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, including the case of Kosovo and Metohija, the southern province of Serbia after 1945, with a strong Albanian population. For years, and in particular after its Fifth Congress, the Comintern, dominated by Stalin, favoured the dismemberment of Yugoslavia in order to stir up dissatisfied nations and minorities within the multinational Yugoslav kingdom into a communist revolution. Within the policy of the Popular Front in 1935, its policy was modified in favour of a federal communist republic of Kosovo, fully ignoring the interests of the Serbs, the alleged bearers of “Greater Serbian hegemony”. Despite Tito-Stalin split in 1948, and mounting rivalries with Albania during all phases of the Cold War after 1948, the Comintern’s patterns for resolving the national question within the communist Yugoslav federation remained unshaken in the further development of the status of Kosovo and Metohija within Tito’s Yugoslavia.

Keywords: *Comintern, Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia, national question, Albanian minority, Tito, Cold War*

The Third Communist International (Comintern) was founded by the Russian Bolsheviks in March 1919. As natural leaders among other communists, the Russian, and subsequently Soviet, Bolsheviks considered the Comintern as an important vehicle of a projected, Soviet-led, world revolution. Even though Grigory Zinoviev was officially the figurehead of the Comintern (The Chairmen of its Executive Committee, 1919-1926), Lenin and Stalin were behind all key decisions relating to the struggle of “international proletariat” for the global spread of communism. During the last years of Lenin’s life, the Comintern, in expectation of the world revolution, used all means for achieving this ambitious goal, including manipulation of the national question as a way

to recruit new followers among frustrated national groups in various multinational states.¹

The nationalism of bigger nations within multinational states was considered by the Comintern as the nationalism of “oppressors”, and it was, in most of cases, labelled as reactionary. In contrast, the nationalism of smaller nations was generally considered a progressive and potentially revolutionary force.² The Comintern’s strategy for the national question was, therefore, dependent on regional or local power struggles and the types of inherited social relations. As for the Balkans, taking into account the lack of industrialization and therefore of a working class, the Comintern’s strategy was more focused on the frustrated agrarian masses, as they constituted a vast majority of the Balkan population. Apart from their social discontent, the peasants’ demands were often based on already defined national aspirations. Nationalism thus became a tactically important lever for mobilizing the agrarian population and poorer social elements for the promising idea of a world revolution apt to provide universal social justice.³

Continuity in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia’s policy on the position of national minorities shows that basic political principles, outlined in its interwar programmes and resolutions, were consistently implemented after the communist dictatorship was eventually established in 1945. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY), founded in April 1919 as the *Socialist Workers’ Party of Yugoslavia (Communists)*, became later that year a section of the Moscow-based Comintern, under the control of Lenin. The name Communist Party of Yugoslavia was finally adopted at its second party congress held in April 1920 at Vukovar. In 1920, the activity of the CPY was forbidden by a government decision known as *Obznana*, and in 1921 the party was banned under the State Protection Law (*Zakon o zaštiti države*). It went underground, for some time continuing as an illegal organization, and eventually became divided into several factions.⁴

The CPY, although banned after assassination attempts at highest Yugoslav officials, coordinated its general programme for the multinational Kingdom of Yugoslavia with the general position of the Soviet-dominated Comintern. During the whole interwar period, with minor exceptions in its early phase, the

¹ Pierre Broué, *Histoire de l’Internationale communiste, 1919–1943* (Paris: Fayard, 1997).

² For more detail see: Branko Lazitch & Milorad M. Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986).

³ George D. Jackson Jr, *Comintern and the Peasant in East Europe 1919–1930* (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1966), 213–236.

⁴ D. T. Bataković, “Kosovo i Metohija u planovima komunista: Kominternu, KPJ i albansko pitanje“, in: *Sveti Knez Lazar, 1/2(29/30)*, Prizren 2000, 135–146.

CPY was fully dependent on the Moscow headquarters in terms of structure, organization and funding. Apart from certain differences at the early stage, it also remained strongly dependent on the Comintern's decisions until the latter's official dissolution in 1943: the Yugoslav communists not only received political directives from the Comintern headquarters, but coordinated with it their military actions during the civil war (1941–1945) which raged in Yugoslavia during the Second World War. The CPY leadership, either approved or simply imposed by Moscow, was steadfast in fighting any political, national or ideological opposition to the Comintern's official ideological line.⁵

Both the Comintern and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia held the stance that the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, created in December 1918, was an artificial creation (comprising three related "tribes", Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, forming a single nation) and could not be regarded as a viable nation-state, burdened with discontent of several large ethnic minorities. For the Comintern, it was a kingdom in which the ruling class of only one (Serbian) nation oppressed all the other nations and ethnic groups. The notion of a "Greater-Serbian bourgeoisie" and "Greater-Serbian hegemony" developed by the Comintern owed much to the Austro-Hungarian anti-Serbian propaganda pursued prior to and during the First World War. From Vienna's imperial perspective, the "Greater-Serbian threat", i.e. the movement for Serbian and, subsequently, Yugoslav unification had allegedly become the main obstacle to long-term political stability in the Balkans. Similar positions, though with a more pronounced ideological component, can be found in the writings of the Austro-Marxists urging for cultural autonomy, when such stereotypes were taken and integrated into the official views of the Third International regarding the national question in the Balkans.⁶

In the CPY's first phase, in which its secretary-general was Sima Marković, the stance of the Yugoslav communists regarding the solution of the national question was slightly different from that of the Comintern, already influenced by Austro-Marxism and compatible political objectives of the Moscow leadership.⁷ After the fall of Sima Marković, the position of the CPY

⁵ For more detail see: Desanka Pešić, *Jugoslovenski komunisti i nacionalno pitanje (1919-1935)* (Belgrade: Rad 1983), passim; cf. also: Dušan T. Bataković, *The Kosovo Chronicles* (Belgrade: Plato 1992), 10-15. Many communist leaders that were not in line with Stalin, such as two general secretaries, Sima Marković and Milan Gorkić, were removed and condemned in Stalin's purges, only to lose their life, as well as other 800 Yugoslav communists. (Pierre Broué, *Histoire de l'Internationale communiste, 1919-1943*), 721-723.

⁶ Kosta Čavoški, "KPJ i kosovsko pitanje", in: *Kosovo i Metohija u srpskoj istoriji* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga 1988), 361-381. Cf. documents in: *Istorijski arhiv Komunističke partije Jugoslavije*, (Belgrade: Istorijsko odeljenje CK KPJ, 1949, vol. I-II, passim; *Komunistička internacionala* (Gornji Milanovac: Dečje novine, 1982), vol. VIII, passim.

⁷ Sima Marković was the only Serbian communist who openly defied Stalin's positions on the national question in Yugoslavia: Sima Marković, *Tragizam malih naroda. Spisi o nacionalnom*

leadership on the national question, fully in line with the general directives of the Comintern, were additionally radicalized.⁸

At the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in December 1924, Yugoslavia was designated as a potential candidate for the establishment of workers and peasants' government. The CPY, at its Third National Conference (*Treća zemaljska konferencija*) in December 1923, had adopted, through its left-wingers, a policy of resolving the agrarian question in a way proposed by the Comintern, demanding the expropriation of large estates and redistribution of land to the poor masses. In that respect, the Croatian Peasant Party, led by a renowned Croatian populist, Stjepan Radić, was, after it adopted Republicanism, considered by the Comintern as a potential revolutionary element within multinational Yugoslavia, even more promising than the Communist Party itself.⁹

Wavering Policy on Yugoslavia: From Dismemberment (1924) to Preservation within the Popular Front (1935)

The Comintern's attitude towards the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was determined by the Soviet policy towards the "Versailles system" created under "imperialistic peace accords" at the end of the First World War, a system of states supported by the archenemies of the Bolshevik regime — Great Britain and France — as dominant Western powers. The Fifth Congress of the Comintern (1924) abandoned the idea of federal restructuring of the states created as a *cordon sanitaire* against the "proletarian revolution" and for a struggle against the Soviet Union, arguing that "western imperialists" were preparing a joint attack on the "first country of socialism". As stressed by D. Z. Manouïlski, "the Balkans is the crux of the entire imperialist policy of the Big Powers of Europe. The victory of the workers' and peasants' power in the Balkans, the corridor of the international imperialist cliques, means the victory of the international proletariat."¹⁰

Thus, the general standpoint of the Fifth Congress of Comintern on the nationality question in Eastern Europe encouraged the "liberation movements" of peasant political parties throughout the states considered as the Western *cordon sanitaire* against the Soviet Union:

pitanju, ed. by Desanka Pešić (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić 1985). Cf. also: Gordana Vlajčić, *Jugoslaven-ska revolucija i nacionalno pitanje (1919–1927)* (Zagreb: Globus, 1987).

⁸ For more detail see: Aleksa Djilas, *The Contested Country: Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution, 1919–1953* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

⁹ George D. Jackson Jr, *Comintern and the Peasant in East Europe 1919–1930*, 223. For more see: Branislav Gligorijević, *Komintern, jugoslovensko i srpsko pitanje* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1992).

¹⁰ Quoted in: Ivo J. Lederer, "Russia and the Balkans", in: I. J. Lederer, *Russian Foreign Policy. Essays in Historical Perspective* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1966), 424.

The importance of the struggle against national oppression is still further increased by the fact that the oppressed nationalities in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Greece are largely peasants in their social composition, and the struggle for national liberation is at the same time the struggle of the peasant masses against foreign landlords and capitalists.

In view of these facts, the Communist parties of Central Europe and the Balkans are confronted with the task of lending full support to the national revolutionary movements of the oppressed nationalities.¹¹

According to the Comintern, all non-Serbian nations and nationalities (minorities) within the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (from 1929 renamed Kingdom of Yugoslavia) were oppressed nations. Therefore, the right of Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia to secession was emphasized, and a special resolution stressed the need to aid the movements of the “oppressed” nations for their independent states and “for the liberation of the Albanians”. The resolution of the Fifth Congress of Comintern regarding the national question in Yugoslavia underlined the following:

- 1) Yugoslavia is a multinational state. The Serbian bourgeoisie, which is pursuing its hegemony, represents the [Serbian] people who accounts for only 39 percent of the total population of Yugoslavia. The other peoples, who together form a vast majority of the population, are more or less subjected to a regime of national oppression and a policy of denationalization.
- 2) The Serbs, Croats and Slovenes are three different nations. The theory of a single three-name nation of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes is just a cover for Greater-Serbian imperialism.
- 3) It is the task of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) to lead a resolute struggle against national oppression in all of its forms and for the self-determination of peoples, to encourage national liberation movements, striving at all times to sway the movements away from the influence of the bourgeoisie and tie them to the overall struggle of the working masses against the bourgeoisie and capitalism.
- 4) The national question in Yugoslavia is not a constitutional question and, therefore, cannot be equated with that of revising the *Vidovdan* [St. Vitus Day] Constitution. It is firstly the question of the struggle of the oppressed population for its right to self-determination and, secondly, of the revolutionary struggle of the working masses in all of Yugoslavia.
- 5) The struggle against national oppression and for a people’s right to self-determination unto secession, and for government by workers and peasants, must be tied to the overall struggle against the reactionary Serbian bourgeoisie, against monarchy and against the Constitution of *Vidovdan* [1921].
- 6) Even though the national question cannot be resolved by revising the Constitution, the CPY must be actively engaged in the struggle

¹¹ Quoted in: George D. Jackson Jr, *Comintern and the Peasant in East Europe 1919–1930*, 224.

for constitutional revision with the aim of overthrowing the violent incumbent regime ... by explaining to the masses that it is only by a government by workers and peasants that the national question can be definitively resolved.

7) As there is in Yugoslavia a mass movement against national oppression in all of its forms, a mass movement for the right to self-determination, the national question has an urgent and sharp edge to it, and it immediately concerns the interests of the working masses. For that reason, the overall slogan pertaining to the right to self-determination launched by the CPY must be expressed in terms of the withdrawal of Croatia and Slovenia and Macedonia from Yugoslavia and the creation of independent republics.¹²

The foreign policy of King Aleksandar of Yugoslavia (1921–1934), openly hostile to the Soviet regime, had an additional effect on the Comintern's stand towards Yugoslavia. The royal Yugoslav government had not recognized the Soviet state and, in the 1920s, provided refuge to a large number of Russian civilian immigrants and members of the White Guard military units, including the imperial troops of General P. N. Wrangel. Furthermore, Russian émigré societies frequently saluted their patron, King Aleksandar I Karadjordjević (related to the Romanov dynasty through his sister Jelena and his Montenegrin aunts married to princes of the Russian imperial family), as the probable new Slav Emperor of a restored Russian Empire.¹³

The policy of dismemberment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, following the Comintern's official guidelines, culminated in the decisions of the Fourth Congress of the CPY, held in Dresden, Germany, in 1928. Its statement that about one-third of the Albanian nation had remained under the rule of the "Greater-Serbian bourgeoisie", which imposed on the Kosovo Albanians the same "oppressive regime" as it did in Slavonic Macedonia, was supplemented by the statement that their liberation and unification with Albania could only be achieved by their common struggle with the CPY. In that sense, support was extended to the "Kosovo Committee", an organization of Albanian émigrés from Kosovo and Metohija based in Albania which, supported by the Tirana government and sponsored by Mussolini, made raiding incursions into the Yugoslav border areas in order to achieve the annexation of Kosovo, Metohija and western Macedonia to Albania.¹⁴

¹² Quoted in: Dušan T. Bataković (ed.), *Histoire du peuple serbe* (Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 2005), 291.

¹³ See Dušan T. Bataković, *Yugoslavie. Nations, religions, idéologies* (Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 1994); Branislav Gligorijević, *Kralj Aleksandar I Karadjordjević* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 2002).

¹⁴ Paul Shoup, *Communism and the Yugoslav National Question* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968): on the national question between 1919 and 1941, 31–60; on Kosovo and Metohija, 51–53, 104–105, 137–138, 217–218.

Tens of thousands of Serbian colonists settled in Kosovo, Metohija and adjacent areas during the extensive agrarian reform — mainly the families of former Serb volunteers in the First World War originating from Montenegro, Herzegovina, the former Military Frontier (*Vojna Krajina*) and Dalmatia — were labelled by the Yugoslav communist press as “agents” and “servants” of the “Greater-Serbian” policy, regardless of the fact that most of the land distributed to the colonists had not been seized from Kosovo Albanians. Similar views were reiterated at the Fourth National Conference of the CPY held in Ljubljana in 1934, which stressed that the Yugoslav kingdom meant nothing less than the “occupation of Croatia, Dalmatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina by Serbian troops”, which made it imperative to “expel the Serbian *chetniks* from Croatia, Dalmatia, Slovenia, Vojvodina, Bosnia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Kosovo”.¹⁵ Denying any Serbian character to these regions, even though they had a mixed population, and often an absolute or relative Serbian majority, the CPY officials thought that these provinces should be organized as separate federal units within the future communist Yugoslavia.¹⁶

The new Secretary-General of the CPY from 1937, nominated by Moscow and officially confirmed in 1939, became Josip Broz Tito, an experienced Croat communist. Trained at the Hotel Lux in Moscow, he had survived Stalin’s successive purges of the Comintern leadership. The Comintern’s new instructions, and change in the balance of power within Europe, led to a certain shift in the position on the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija.

The official policy of dismembering Yugoslavia underwent considerable modifications in 1935, after the Comintern formulated a new “popular front” strategy aimed at assembling leftist forces throughout Europe against the threat of the growing influence of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in all of Central Europe.¹⁷ The Yugoslav communists were thus compelled to abandon their previous decision regarding the future annexation of Kosovo and Metohija to Albania. This shift became official at their Fifth National Conference (*Peta zemaljska konferencija*), held in Zagreb in 1940, by which time Albania had been under Italian occupation for more than a year. Even so, the Yugoslav communists denounced the alleged “colonialist methods of the Serbian bourgeoisie” again, and emphasized the need for establishing a separate republic of Kosovo:

¹⁵ D. T. Bataković, *The Kosovo Chronicles*, 12.

¹⁶ D. T. Bataković, Kosovo. *La spirale de la haine* (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1998), 42-45. Cf. also: Vuk Vinaver, “KPJ i balkanska politika Jugoslavije“, *Balkanica*, vol. III, Belgrade: Institut des Etudes balkaniques 1972, 440-443.

¹⁷ Kosta Čavoški, “KPJ i kosovsko pitanje”, 365-369.

The ethnic problem can be resolved by creating a free labour-peasant Republic of Kosovo after the Greater-Serbian fascist and imperialist regime is overthrown.¹⁸

The Yugoslav communists' continuous diatribes against Serbian political dominance in royal Yugoslavia practically equated the Serbian bourgeoisie with the Serbian nation. For that reason, the idea of forming a communist party organization for Serbia was abandoned anew by Tito's overtly anti-Serb leadership, although communist party organizations for the other Yugoslav provinces, such as Croatia and Slovenia, and a regional party committee for Kosovo and Metohija, had already been established.

In order to understand Tito's political stance regarding the resolution of national questions in the Balkans and Yugoslavia, it is important to take a closer look at his basic ideological and national commitments. The future communist dictator of Yugoslavia was a Croat by nationality, brought up in the Habsburg Monarchy, which nurtured fear of the "Greater-Serbian danger", and finally shaped by the ideological pattern of Lenin's teaching, incorporated into Comintern's policy, that the nationalism of big nations was more dangerous than that of smaller ones. For these reasons, Tito was consistent in stifling any sign of what he saw as a real or potential threat of "Serbian hegemony", which, according to the communists, was embodied in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. It was in the interwar period that this position was supplemented, during his special training in Moscow and visits to Yugoslavia, by a narrow, predominantly Croatian, view on the struggle against "Greater-Serbian hegemony". As far as J. B. Tito was concerned, "Versailles [i.e. royal] Yugoslavia born in Corfu, London and Paris [...] was the most typical nationally oppressive state in Europe", where the "Croats, Slovenes and Montenegrins were inferior, and the Macedonians, Albanians and others, enslaved and without any rights".¹⁹ Tito always denounced the royal Yugoslav government in strongly ideological terms: "A handful of petty hegemonic Greater Serbs, headed by the king, ruled Yugoslavia for twenty-two years in their greed for wealth, setting up a regime of gendarmes and prisons, a regime of social and national enslavement".²⁰

It was with such a strong anti-Serbian and potentially anti-Yugoslav stance that the CPY faced Nazi Germany's sudden attack on Yugoslavia in April 1941, after the military coup carried out by Serbian officers on 27 March had practically annulled the accession to the Axis signed by the Cvetković-Maček government in Vienna two days earlier.

¹⁸ *Istorija saveza komunista Jugoslavije* (Belgrade: Izdavački centar Komunist 1985), 102; for more see: D. T. Bataković, *Kosovo. Un conflit sans fin ?* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme 2008), 97-98.

¹⁹ J. B. Tito, *Nacionalno pitanje u svetlosti NOB* (Zagreb: Kultura, 1945), 5.

²⁰ J. B. Tito, *Temelji demokratije novog tipa* (Belgrade: Kultura, 1948), 28.

The National Policy of the CPY and the Civil War (1941–1945)

The question of Kosovo and Metohija was reopened after the Nazis, supported by their Axis allies (Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria), attacked the Kingdom of Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941. The Royal Yugoslav Army, after most Croat officers and soldiers deserted or joined the Nazis, was forced into unconditional capitulation only eleven days later. As the Third Reich's chief enemy in the Balkans, the Serbs were punished for their loyalty to their old Entente allies and leading European democracies, France and Great Britain, and for carrying out the putsch, by the partitioning of all areas they inhabited: most of Kosovo along with Metohija, western Macedonia and fringe areas of Montenegro were allotted to Albania, which had been occupied by Italy in 1939. Pro-Nazi Bulgaria was given a small portion of Kosovo, while its northern part, including Trepča mines, entered into occupied Serbia where a German protectorate was established.

King Vittorio Emanuele III, by decree of 12 August 1941, established Greater Albania. In Kosovo and Metohija, a 5,000-strong Albanian voluntary militia — *Vulnetari* — was set up to assist the Italian forces in maintaining order, but they also carried out surprise attacks on unarmed Serbian civilians on their own.

The Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija, declared victims of Greater-Serbian hegemony both by Italian fascist and by communist propaganda, were granted the right to hoist their own flag and to open schools in their mother tongue. Patriarchal and tribal Albanian society in Kosovo and Metohija, accustomed to rigid subordination and absolute submission to local landowners, welcomed the new order. The destruction of Yugoslavia, which its ethnic Albanian citizens had never considered as their own state, was received with vindictive enthusiasm. In the first few months of the 1941 occupation, some ten thousand colonist houses were burned down, mostly in night raids, and their owners and their families subjected to harassment, assaults and, eventually, expulsion.

An influential Albanian leader from Kosovo, Ferat-bey Draga, said that the “time has come to exterminate the Serbs [...] there will be no Serbs under the Kosovo sun”.²¹ Serb Orthodox churches were being burned down and demolished, Serbian graveyards desecrated, many priests and monks killed. Kosovo Albanians sought to eradicate every trace, recent and historic, of Serbian presence in these areas, the heartland of medieval Serbia and seat of the Serbian Patriarchate both under the Serbian and the Ottoman Empire. A visit of Mustafa Kruja, Prime Minister of Albania, to Kosovo in late 1942 added fuel to the already inflamed passions: placing all the blame for previous discrimination against Albanians in royal Yugoslavia on Serbs, he encouraging their

²¹ Hakif Bajrami, “Izveštaj Konstantina Plavšića Tasi Diniću, ministru unutrašnjih poslova u Nedićevoj vladi oktobra 1943. o kosovsko-mitrovačkom srezu”, *Godišnjak arhiva Kosova*, XIV-XV, 1978-79, 313.

further expulsion. Kruja gave heated speeches throughout Kosovo, claiming that “Albania is an independent state, guaranteed by the Axis powers, and not only within the present borders: after the war they will be extended all the way to Skoplje and Rascia [Novi Bazar or Raška area], because we will not live again as slaves in Yugoslavia.”²² Moreover, Kruja underlined to his Albanian compatriots the following: “You should tyrannize the native Serbs and force them to leave, and kill all the immigrants: civil servants and colonists alike.” The immediate result of Kruja’s visit was the expulsion of more than 2,000 Serb families from Priština and Uroševac (Ferizaj). The other expulsions followed in the Drenica area and central Kosovo, strongly supported by the members of the Kosovo Committee and Ferat-bey Draga, the commissionaire of the district of Kosovo.²³

During the Second World War, driven out by Albanian terror, roughly 100,000 civilians, including most of 60,000 Serb colonists and tens of thousands of native Kosovo Serbs, fled to Serbia and Montenegro. Some 10,000 Serbs, both colonists and natives, were killed by Albanian fascists and nationalists before they managed to escape.²⁴ Under a plan of the Italian government, adopted before the occupation of Yugoslavia, there also began an extensive settlement of Albanians from Albania on the estates of the expelled colonists. Their number is estimated at roughly 80,000–100,000; the first post-war estimate places it at about 75,000 Albanian immigrants.²⁵

According to an eyewitness, Gavriilo Kovijanić, a schoolteacher from Peć, in his confidential report to the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade, “in the Peć district sixty-five percent of all houses were burned down, and ninety-five percent in other districts, so that burnt ruins are all that remains of entire villages.”²⁶ Some owners of these houses and their families were expelled to Montenegro and central Serbia; others were confined in prison camps in Albania. At least 900 Kosovo Serbs were arrested and sent by the Albanians to the Porta Romana concentration camp in Durazzo (Durrës). Most of these were from Gnjilane, while others were from Prizren, Priština, Peć, Uroševac and Lipljan. Furthermore, roughly 600 Serb prisoners from the Gnjilane area aboard a cargo ship drowned on their way to concentration camps in Italy. In the Italian-

²² Arhiv Jugoslavije (Archives of Yugoslavia), Belgrade, Komesarijat za izbeglice, fasc. 196 and 125, report of 25 June 1942; Djordje Borozan, “Kosovo i Metohija u granicama protektorata Velike Albanije 1941–1944”, in: *Kosovo i Metohija u velikoalbanskim planovima 1878–2000*, 120–122.

²³ For more see: Jovan Pejin, *Stradanje Srba u Metohiji 1941–1944* (Belgrade: Arhivski pregled, 1994); *Stradanje Srba na Kosovu, Malom Kosovu i Siriničkoj župi, 1941–1944: povodom stogodišnjice osnivanja Arhiva Srbije*, ed. Radmila Popović (Belgrade: Arhiv KiM & Arhiv Srbije, 1999), 242.

²⁴ Detailed data available in: Slobodan Milošević, *Izbeglice i preseljenici na teritoriji okupirane Jugoslavije 1941–1945* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1981), 56–104.

²⁵ D. T. Bataković, *The Kosovo Chronicles*, 32–35.

²⁶ Archives of the Holy Synod, Belgrade, Patriarchate of Belgrade, 1941.

Balist *questura* of Prizren, the large building of the Roman Catholic Seminary was used as a prison for Serb detainees, often tortured to death. Many Serbs “ended up in concentration camps in Priština and Mitrovica. These Serbs were apparently used as a labour force for fortification works in Italian Albania, and in the Trepča mines working for the Germans.”²⁷ In addition, the Kosovo Albanians, both local and fresh settlers from Albania, would plough up the colonists’ fields so as to erase every trace of Serb settlement and forestall their return. Should Serbs try to return after the war, they would have trouble recognizing their seized fields.²⁸

An insurrection against the Nazis was raised in mid-May 1941 by Serbian army officers under the command of Colonel Dragoljub Draža Mihailović, who organized the *Chetnik* (guerrilla) movement throughout Yugoslavia: his troops were proclaimed the *Yugoslav Home Army* (*Jugoslovenska vojska u otadžbini*) by the royal government-in-exile, while Mihailović was made General and appointed Minister of War in early 1942. Two weeks after Hitler’s assault on the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Yugoslav communists stirred up an uprising, at Moscow’s demand. Under the guise of a popular struggle for liberation, it in fact was the movement for a revolutionary takeover.²⁹

After initial cooperation with Mihailović’s Chetniks, Tito’s communist-led Partisans started a long and bloody civil war in Serbia and Montenegro, and also in the pro-Nazi satellite state, Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna država Hrvatska*), which encompassed all predominantly Serb-inhabited areas of the former *Vojna Krajina* (Lika, Kordun, Banija, Slavonija), as well as the whole of Bosnia, Herzegovina and Srem, which also had a relative Serb majority. The genocide against the Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia, perpetrated by the Croat fascists and nationalists, left at least 600,000 dead among Serbs, and tens of thousands of Jews and Roma.³⁰ Although there were in the Yugoslav territory several collaborationist regimes, with strong military formations, the Partisans, Stalin-supported military force of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, saw the rivalling antifascist resistance movement of the royalist Chetniks as their archenemy, symbolizing the continuity, both state and political, of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.³¹

²⁷ Bernd J. Fisher, *Albania at War 1939–1945* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1999), 87.

²⁸ D. T. Bataković, *Kosovo. Un conflit sans fin ?*, 100–101.

²⁹ An important, non-biased testimony on civil war: Zvonimir Vuckovich, *A Balkan Tragedy, Yugoslavia 1941–1946: Memoirs of a Guerilla Fighter* (East European Monographs, Boulder & New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

³⁰ For more on the genocide against Serbs perpetrated by Croat fascist within the Ustasha regime see: D. T. Bataković, “Le génocide dans l’Etat indépendant croate (1941–1945)”, *La question serbe*, Hérodote, 67, Paris 1992, 70–80.

³¹ D. T. Bataković, *Kosovo. Un conflit sans fin ?*, 99–100 ; for more see: Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies 1941–1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987); Jean-Christophe Buisson, *Héros trahi par les Allies. Le général Mihailović 1893–1946* (Paris : Perrin, 1999).

In the five years' civil war that ensued, Kosovo and Metohija played a secondary role. The Chetnik movement, regrouping mostly Serbs, mainly in northern and eastern Kosovo, was organized into two, roughly 1,500-strong, Kosovo corps. Close collaboration between the Italian fascist forces and the pro-fascist Albanian voluntary gendarmerie, however, left room neither for stronger military engagement of the royalist forces nor for any tangible protection of the remaining Serbs either in Metohija or in Kosovo. Thus, the persecuted Kosovo Serbs sought refuge in occupied Serbia, where they were received first by the German-established local administration, and then by the Commissariat for Refugees under the government of General Milan Nedić.³²

In the fertile plain of Metohija, settled mostly by Serb colonists from Montenegro, there were more followers of the Communist Party than among Kosovo Albanians: at the outbreak of the war its overall local membership amounted to 270 members, including some two dozen Albanians. As we have seen, in many of its declarations issued prior to the Second World War, the CPY had strongly denounced the "Greater Serbian" policy of the ruling "Serbian bourgeoisie" against the oppressed minorities, in this case the ethnic Albanians. During the war, the CPY called upon the Albanians to rise together with the Serb colonists and natives for a "new and just society", i.e. Soviet-type communism. The response of the Kosovo Albanians, apparently quite satisfied with the rights they were granted by fascist Italy, remained insignificant. An Albanian functionary of the CPY, Ali Shukria, tried in 1941 to justify this unenthusiastic response by stating that the mere name of Yugoslavia provoked unanimous indignation among the Kosovo Albanians. Within the civil war, clashes between communist Partisan and royalist Chetnik formations on the one hand, and the Albanian gendarmerie on the other, showed that the Kosovo Albanians still considered the Serbs as their "age-old enemies" and thus saw both antifascist movements as nothing more than two different Serb-organized resistance movements.³³

The small combat units with Albanians in their ranks were named not only after major Kosovo Albanian communists (e.g. Zeinel Aidini, Emin Durraku), but also after prominent leaders of the secessionist movement against Serbia and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia (e.g. the notorious Kosovo Committee member — Bairam Curri). Pro-Yugoslav communist propaganda among the Kosovo Albanians, who were strongly attached to the ruling pro-Fascist, and after September 1943, pro-Nazi regime, gave no tangible results. Old communist propaganda that after the war was over and communism established, the ethnic Albanians would obtain their full national

³² Documents published in: Rastislav V. Petrović, *Zavera protiv Srba* (Belgrade: Dositej, 1990), 137-175, 353-358.

³³ Djoko Slijepčević, *Srpsko-arbanaški odnosi kroz vekove sa posebnim osvrtom na novije vreme* (Himelstir: Srpska pravoslavna crkva, 1982), 307-336, 347-455.

rights within Yugoslavia was left without results, even though it consistently labelled the pre-war policy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as “fascist” and “repressive”. In fact, most pro-communist ethnic Albanians expected that both Kosovo and Metohija would join a Greater Albania after the war was over and communism firmly established in both Yugoslavia and Albania.

In the ranks of the Communist Party of Albania (CPA), formed from various factions on 8 February 1941 under the supervision of Yugoslav instructors (Miladin Popović and Dušan Mugoša), many advocated a “Greater Albania” under communist rule. The communist leader of Albania, Enver Hoxha, had taken first steps towards achieving accord on creating a “Greater Albania” after the war. Namely, on 2 August 1943, in the village of Mukaj, he reached a short-lived agreement with representatives of the *Balli Kombëtar*, an anti-Yugoslav, Pan-Albanian nationalist organization, highly popular throughout Kosovo.³⁴ The main Yugoslav instructor, Miladin Popović, shared a similar stance, recommending to the CPY leadership that the Albanians from Kosovo and Metohija should be placed under the command of Albania’s Chief of Staff, while Metohija was to come under the organization of the Communist Party of Albania.³⁵

The overt anti-Yugoslav aspirations culminated in a declaration issued on 2 January 2 1944 in the village of Bunaj (Bujan). At the Bujan conference, attended by 49 representatives of the Albanian and Yugoslav partisan communist units (including 43 Albanians, one Muslim Slav and seven Serbs present), the following statement was presented as the common will of Albanians from both sides of the Yugoslav-Albanian border:

Kosovo and Metohija is an area mostly inhabited by ethnic Albanians [Shqiptars], who have always wished to become united with Albania. We, therefore, feel it our duty to point to the road that is to be followed by the Albanian people in the realization of their wishes. The only way for the Kosovo and Metohija ethnic Albanians [Shqiptars] to unite with Albania is through a common struggle with the other peoples of Yugoslavia against the invader and his lackeys. It is the only way of winning freedom, when all the peoples, including Albanians, will be able to make their options with a right to self-determination, including secession. The guarantee for it is the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia and the National Liberation Army of Albania, with which it is closely linked.³⁶

³⁴ The agreement with the CPA was short-lived and the *Balli Kombëtar* (set up in 1942) entered into cooperation with the German occupational forces after the capitulation of Italy (September 1943).

³⁵ *Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu jugoslovenskih naroda*, vol. VII/1 (Belgrade: Vojnoistorijski institut JNA, 1952), 338-339.

³⁶ Alex N. Dragnich & Slavko Todorovich, *The Saga of Kosovo. Focus on Serbian-Albanian Relations* (Boulder & New York: Columbia University Press 1984), 143. See also *Konferenca e Bujanit*, Instituti i Historisë (Tirana: Akademia e Shkencave e Republikës së Shqipërisë, 1999).

The decisions reached in Bujan, under which the name Metohija was replaced by the Albanian one *Rrafshi i Dukadjinit*, were at variance with a declaration by a communist body, AVNOJ (Antifascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia), issued at its second session held in the Bosnian town of Jajce in late November 1943: that a new, communist Yugoslavia, headed by J. B. Tito as partisan marshal, would be established as a federation where “all peoples [...] will be fully free and equal”, and the ethnic groups guaranteed all minority rights.³⁷ In his instructions to the communist leaders in both Kosovo and Montenegro, Tito rejected the decisions of the Bujan conference, believing that they had raised issues which should not be dealt with until after the war, within the new geopolitical framework. Moreover, J. B. Tito was fully aware that his movement, mostly comprising Serbs and Montenegrins, would lose many followers if he upheld the demands of the Kosovo Albanians. With the war still not over and the establishment of a communist system as yet uncertain, the decision not to question the pre-war borders of Yugoslavia was the only possible solution.³⁸

Despite efforts by CPY activists to win over fresh adherents, ethnic Albanians' hostility towards the Yugoslav partisan movement did not decrease. The membership of the Albanian *Balli Kombëtar* was growing and their national solidarity proved to be stronger than ideological divisions. After the capitulation of Italy in September 1943, the Nazi authorities encouraged aspirations towards the creation of an ethnic Albania. Thus, on 19 September 1943, the “Second Albanian League” was founded on the model of its predecessor — the First Albanian League of 1878 — advocating fiercer clashes with Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija. Moreover, a separate SS-Division, Scanderbeg, was formed from local Albanian forces to fight both communist Partisans and royalist Chetniks.³⁹

A delegate of Tito's Supreme Command, Svetozar Vukmanović Tempo, sent in 1943 to reorganize the partisan units in Kosovo, Metohija and Macedonia, reported on strong chauvinist hatred between Albanians and Serbs. The extent of the Albanian “chauvinist animosity towards the Serbs is evident from the fact that one of our [partisan] units comprising ethnic Albanians was surrounded by 2,000 armed ethnic Albanian peasants, and after several hours of fighting the latter recognized that our unit comprised ethnic Albanians. They dispersed, leaving the Italians in the lurch.”⁴⁰ Fresh partisan units, set up in

³⁷ *Prvo i drugo zasedanje AVNOJ-a* (Belgrade: Kultura, 1953), 227-228.

³⁸ D. T. Bataković, *Kosovo i Metohija. Istorija i ideologija* (Valjevo: Hrišćanska misao, 1998), 147-163.

³⁹ L. Latruwe & G. Kostic, *La Division Skanderbeg. Histoire des Waffen SS albanais des origines idéologiques aux débuts de la Guerre Froide* (Paris: Godefroy de Bouillon, 2004).

⁴⁰ *Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu jugoslovenskih naroda*, vol. X/2, 153.

September and October 1943, operated outside Kosovo and Metohija, with no more than 600 men in five battalions. Although they were reorganized in the summer and fall of 1944, the number of Albanians remained the same.

The imposition of communist rule after the retreat of the Nazi troops in November 1944 was assisted, at Tito's request, by two new ethnic Albanian partisan brigades. The *Balli Kombëtar* followers and other Albanian units, which had been mustered into partisan formations and rearmed in November–December 1944, organized a large-scale rebellion against Tito's partisan forces. The Albanian revolt was brutally crushed only after additional troops were brought in and military rule was set up in Kosovo and Metohija from February to May 1945. However, a leading Albanian communist from Kosovo, Fadil Hoxha, maintained contact with the outlaws. He was soon exposed, but Aleksandar Ranković, Tito's closest associate at the time, assessed that his execution would stir up a fresh revolt. Hoxha was appointed minister in the Serbian government.⁴¹ Concessions heralding a lenient attitude towards the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija were made immediately after the new authorities were established: settlement of at least 75,000 colonists from Albania was tacitly legalized, and a special decree of 6 March 1945 forbade most of some 60,000 Serbs settled in the interwar period from returning to their estates in Kosovo or Metohija.⁴²

The Serbs in the army, party and police of Tito's regime were carefully selected on the criterion of blind obedience and devotion to the supreme party leader, which entailed their readiness to fully subordinate Serbian interests to those of the Communist Part of Yugoslavia. Through a negative selection process, most of them were recruited from patriarchal Serbian environments in the Serbian-inhabited regions of Croatia, Herzegovina and Montenegro, or from lower, undereducated social strata in Serbia, as lacking deeper understanding of the national, political and state traditions of Serbia. In continuity with the Party's interwar policy, their major political and ideological task during the whole period of Tito's reign was the relentless struggle against "Serbian nationalism and chauvinism", which, considering the fact that Serbs were the numerically predominant nation, was seen as the most serious threat to the communist regime. These communist Serbs steadily obliterated everything that stood for, or even resembled, the traditions of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Kingdom of Serbia; among other things, they were ringleaders in persecuting the dignitaries and clergy of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Under such circumstances, the communist authorities in Yugoslavia were able to deal with the national question in accordance with

⁴¹ Spasoje Djaković, *Sukobi na Kosovu* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1986), 226–228.

⁴² Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 123; D. T. Bataković, *Kosovo. Un conflit sans fin?*, 102.

their previously set designs, relieved of concerns for the stability and duration of their rule.⁴³

The preponderance of Serbs in the military units of the new regime required that the question of the status of Kosovo and Metohija be addressed prudently, as the CPY had no other followers in that region but Serbs and Montenegrins (i.e. Serbs who embraced the communist ideological notion of a separate Montenegrin nation). The decision that Kosovo and Metohija, unlike Slavonic Macedonia, be rejoined to the rest of Serbia was made after the abolition of military rule on 10 July 1945. It may have been prompted by Albanian large-scale resistance to the new communist authorities. Namely, there is evidence that mistakes made during the Albanian uprising in December 1944 led to the Regional Party Committee of Kosovo and Metohija being replaced after the First Congress of the Communist Party of Serbia in May 1945, and placed under the direct control of the headquarters in Belgrade, but, as a result of protests voiced by the Kosovo Albanian communists, this decision was soon revoked.⁴⁴

The motives behind the conflict between the CPY and the Albanians during the civil war (1941–45) were both ideological and territorial. The CPY could not afford to let the fascist and nationalist forces in Kosovo establish Greater Albania as a permanent state, since that would have disrupted the integrity of the newly-established communist state of Yugoslavia. Most Albanians, however, continued to support the *Balli Kombëtar* and its maximalist solution to the national question.⁴⁵ The Albanian communists on both sides had hoped that the eventual triumph of communism would precipitate the unification of all Albanians into a single state. As a result, communist Yugoslavia was regarded by most Albanians as an ideologically modified continuation of the pre-war Yugoslav kingdom.⁴⁶

⁴³ The extensive documentation available in: *Zadužbine Kosova. Spomenici i znamenja srpskog naroda* (Prizren, Belgrade: Eparhija raško-prizrenska, Bogoslovski fakultet 1987). Cf also: Nenad Antonijević, *Albanski zločini nad Srbima na Kosovu i Metohiji za vreme Drugog svetskog rata. Dokumenta Državne komisije za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača* (Kragujevac: Muzej žrtva genocida, 2004).

⁴⁴ Spasoje Djaković, *Sukobi na Kosovu*, 239–245.

⁴⁵ Arhiv Srbije (Archives of Serbia), Belgrade, Zapisnik Oblasnog komiteta KP Srbije za Kosmet, 26 januar 1949.

⁴⁶ The post-war illegal Albanian terrorist organisations, including those of Adem Demaqi, were Stalinist-inspired and often Tirana-sponsored groups. Cf. more in: Sinan Hasani, *Kosovo. Istine i zablude* (Zagreb: Centar za informacije i publicitet, 1986), 158–165. See also: Pedro Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia 1963–1983* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 156–159.

Communist Yugoslavia: A Comintern-inspired Solution to the National Question

The first, Royal Yugoslavia (1918–1941) had been a French-inspired nation-state marked by the Serbian — Jacobin and centralist — vision of Yugoslavism. Communist Yugoslavia (1945–1992), on the other hand, was based on an opposite model: the Croat — federal, one-party — vision of Yugoslav unity, combined with the Comintern-inspired solutions to the national question.⁴⁷

After the communist takeover under Tito in 1945, Yugoslavia was restored as a Soviet-style communist federation, with a constitutional system inspired by the Stalin-imposed Soviet Constitution of 1937. In accordance with the Stalinist model, Serbia became one of six Yugoslav federal units, and the only internally federalized: with one autonomous province (Vojvodina) and one autonomous region (Kosovo and Metohija) within her borders. Moreover, a major privilege was granted to “brotherly” communist Albania, still dominated by Yugoslav communists. A decree of 6 March 1945 issued by Yugoslav communist authorities banned Serbian interwar colonists from returning to Kosovo and Metohija, thus making most of 60,000 Kosovo Serb settlers temporarily homeless or internally displaced persons left waiting to be resettled elsewhere.⁴⁸ Kosovo and Metohija was granted the status of an autonomous region (*autonomna oblast*) within federalized Serbia in 1946, and was elevated to an autonomous province (*pokrajina*) in 1963, the status already granted to Vojvodina in 1946.

Although Tito referred to the inter-republican boundaries established in 1945 as mere lines on the granite column bonding nations and minorities into communist “brotherhood and unity”, his policy was obviously based on an ideological *langue de bois*. In an interview to the Paris daily *Le Monde* in 1971, the prominent Yugoslav dissident Milovan Djilas did, however, confess that the post-Second World War partitioning of the Serb-inhabited lands in Yugoslavia among five out of the six constituent republics had been aimed at curbing the “centralism and hegemonism” of the Serbs, seen as the main “obstacle” to the establishment of communism.⁴⁹

The Serbian pre-war elites had been largely destroyed during the communist “Red Terror” (1944–1947), and post-war Serbia was placed under the rule of Tito’s confidants from the ranks of Serbian communists. From 1945, alleged Serbian hegemony, a Comintern-inspired obsession of the Yugoslav

⁴⁷ D. T. Bataković, “Twentieth-Century Kosovo-Metohija: Migrations, Nationalism and Communism”, *Serbian Studies* 13:2 (1999), 1–23

⁴⁸ “Privremena zabrana vraćanja kolonista u njihova ranija mesta življenja”, No 153, *Službeni list DFJ* 13 of 16 March 1945; “Zakon o reviziji dodijeljivanja zemlje kolonistima i agrarnim interesima u Makedoniji i u Kosovsko-metohijskoj oblasti”, *Službeni list DFJ* 56 of 5 August 1945; see also *Službeni list ENRJ* 89, 1946.

⁴⁹ *Le Monde*, Paris, 30 December 1971.

communists (most senior Serbian party members included), was perceived as the embodiment of the Serbian-led regime of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and as a permanent ideological threat to communism both in Yugoslavia and the Soviet-dominated group of states defined as “popular democracies”.⁵⁰

The Kosovo communists officially formed part of the Serbian Communist Party, but in fact they operated under direct instructions of the Yugoslav party leadership. Fearing fresh revolts, the CPY instructed the officials in Kosovo to suppress the supporters of unification with Albania. The communist dictator of Albania, Enver Hoxha, was dissatisfied with the attitude of Miladin Popović, the CPY chief instructor in Albania who, upon returning to Kosovo, withdrew his previous promises that Kosovo and Metohija would join communist-led Albania after the war. In March 1945, Popović was assassinated in Priština by a follower of the *Balli Kombëtar*. The assassin, who committed suicide immediately upon accomplishing his mission — had with him a flag with the inscription “Kosovo united with Albania”.⁵¹

The reasons for the Albanians’ deep discontent were not ideological but national in nature: in new, communist, Yugoslavia, their aspirations for the annexation of Kosovo, Metohija and western Macedonia to Albania were betrayed. Tito’s international political ambitions, however, required a special attitude towards the Kosovo Albanian population: the CPY had shown an open intention to establish its domination in Albania as a junior regional partner. Beyond that aspiration was Tito’s plan for a Balkan federation under his leadership. Tito nurtured his grandiose plan to set up a three-member Balkan federation with support from the last Comintern leader and Bulgarian communist dictator, Georgi Dimitrov. Albania was supposed to be one of the three federal units, and the possibility was left open of Greece entering the federation, if the communist-led guerrillas should emerge victorious in the civil war.⁵²

Enver Hoxha, albeit not always a reliable memoirist, claims that in summer 1946 Tito accepted his proposal that Kosovo and Metohija should be annexed to Albania in principle, but suggested that the time was not ripe yet, “because the Serbs would not understand us”. In the context of the plan for a Balkan federation, Tito reportedly said: “We have agreed on the creation of a Balkan federation. The new Yugoslavia can serve as an example and experience towards that goal. I am referring to this since we are discussing Kosovo. With

⁵⁰ D. T. Bataković, “Kosovo à l’époque titiste: entre nationalisme et communisme”, *Les Annales de l’autre Islam* 7 (2000), 205–224.

⁵¹ D.T. Bataković, *The Kosovo Chronicles*, 53–55.

⁵² D. T. Bataković, *Kosovo. Un conflit sans fin?*, 111–113. Cf. also Branko Petranović, “Kosovo in Yugoslav-Albanian Relations and the Project of a Balkan Federation, 1945–1948” in: Andrej Mitrović ed., *Serbs and Albanians in the 20th Century*, Academic Conferences, vol. LXI, Department of Historical Sciences, 20, (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1991), 407–410 (bilingual Serbian-English volume); Branko Petranović, *Balkanska federacija 1943–1948* (Belgrade: Zaslou, 1991), 167–169.

the creation of a Balkan federation, the question of Kosovo's annexation to Albania would be easily resolved within its framework."⁵³

That plans for ceding the Serbian autonomous region of Kosovo and Metohija to Albania were really made is evident from the report on talks conducted in Moscow in 1947, between Edvard Kardelj, Tito's chief adviser on constitutional and ideological matters, and Joseph Stalin. Reportedly, the former explicitly stated that Kosovo would be ceded to Albania once the Yugoslav-Albanian union was consolidated.⁵⁴ Because of Tito's plans for a Balkan federation and fears of a revolution in Albania — which might have ended in the victory of the faction inclined to union with Yugoslavia, the inflow of Albanian immigrants into Kosovo, Metohija and western Macedonia was not stopped even after relations with the Communist Party of Albania were broken in 1948. Thus, between 1948 and 1956 additional 40,000 Albanians took up permanent residence in Kosovo and Metohija.⁵⁵

Tito, faced with Stalin's reluctance, had to abandon the idea of a Balkan federation. The Cominform Resolution of 28 June 1948 led to Tito's radical break with the Soviet Union and its satellites, including Albania, and the beginning of his independent political course, tightly hemmed in by pro-Soviet regimes.⁵⁶ The threat of Soviet invasion prompted the Yugoslav leadership to initiate the process of centralization of power, and support for it was sought again among Serbian communist cadres. When the Soviet menace began gradually to diminish after Stalin's death in March 1953, J. B. Tito set out to carry out an extensive ideological reorganization, wherein the strengthening of the federal units was vital for him to maintain power within the changed *rapport des forces*

⁵³ Enver Hoxha, *Titistët: Shënime historike* (Tiranë: 8 Nentori, 1982), 260-261. In the book *Shënime mbi Kinen* (Tiranë 1981), Hoxha gives a different version of Tito's reply: "the Greater Serbian reaction could not comprehend a demand for the annexation of Kosovo and other parts of Yugoslavia to Albania" (*Zëri i popullit*, 17, May 1981). The official interpreter of these talks, Josip Gjerdja, a Yugoslav communist of Albanian descent, claimed that there was some talk about a Balkan federation, in which Greece would be included in the event of the victory of the communist movement, but that the annexation of Kosovo to Albania was not discussed (*Danas*, Belgrade, 3 March 1987).

⁵⁴ Further documentation available in: *Kosovo. Past and Present* (Belgrade: Review of International Affairs, 1989),

⁵⁵ Recent research, based on official, although incomplete federal documentation, has reduced the official number of immigrants from Albania, as many used Yugoslavia only as a transit towards Western countries: the unknown number of immigrants settled in the province in the same period and afterwards still remains undetermined (Bogumil Hrabak, "Albanski emigranti u Jugoslaviji", *Tokovi istorije* 1-2, Belgrade 1994, 77-104). However, the number of non-registered immigrants from Albania remained, as witnessed by local Serb and non-Albanian officials in Kosovo and Metohija, still very high, in particular after normalization of relations between Belgrade Tirana during the 1970s.

⁵⁶ The official documentation: *Livre blanc sur les procédés agressifs des gouvernements de l'URSS, de Pologne, de Tchécoslovaquie, de Hongrie, de Roumanie, de Bulgarie et d'Albanie envers la Yougoslavie* (Belgrade: Ministère des affaires étrangères, 1951).

in the Balkans. As a result, the autonomy of Kosovo and Metohija was additionally enhanced under the 1963 Constitution, upgrading the Autonomous Region into the second Autonomous Province within Serbia.⁵⁷

Tito and the Comintern Legacy

During the period of centralism in communist Yugoslavia (1945–1966), especially prominent after Tito's split with Stalin in 1948, Albania remained (until 1961) part of the Soviet bloc, which was openly hostile towards Yugoslavia. After Tito's split with the Cominform, Enver Hoxha's Stalinist regime was provided with a new ideological justification for Albania's nationalist claims to Kosovo. The Cold-War rivalries between 1948 and 1955 compelled J. B. Tito to continue to rely on Serb communists. Confident that Serbs would demonstrate defiance in face of the Soviet threat, Tito entrusted control over Kosovo and the rest of Yugoslavia's border mostly to the communist cadres of Serb and Montenegrin origin, as an ironclad guarantee of Yugoslavia's integrity. Thus the first two post-war decades of bureaucratic centralism were considered a necessary stage for the Yugoslav communist leadership to consolidate power and avoid the risky debate on the genocide perpetrated against the Serbs during the civil war in Yugoslavia, in particular by Croat, Albanian, Hungarian and Bulgarian fascist forces. In order to additionally challenge the unity of Yugoslavia, the Stalinist regime in Tirana —relying during the 1960s on Mao's China, after Tito's reconciliation with Moscow — continued with severe ideological attacks on Yugoslavia, claiming, in the pattern of inter-war Comintern, that Kosovo Albanians are still the victims of alleged "Greater Serbian hegemony", this time masked under the ideological patterns of the "Titoist clique".⁵⁸

The Soviet-style bureaucratic centralism in Yugoslavia was eventually abandoned in 1966. The process of decentralization was for the most part devised by Tito's main ideological advisor, Edvard Kardelj, a Slovenian communist theoretician and closet nationalist. The Constitution of 1974, originally designed to serve separate Slovenian interest, provided for a significant transfer of power to each of the six federal units. Through the model of national-communism shaped by Kardelj, the power previously vested in federal institutions came to reside in the ruling oligarchies of the republics.⁵⁹ Thus the Communist

⁵⁷ Steven L. Burg, *Conflict and Cohesion in Socialist Yugoslavia: Political Decision-Making since 1966* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 72-75.

⁵⁸ "La sauvage politique chauvine de la clique Titiste pour la dénationalisation des régions albanaises de Kossovo", article du journal "Zëri i Popullit" du 14 mars 1964 (Tirane: Éditions de l'État, Naim Frashëri, 1964); "La population albanaise de Yougoslavie ne se laisse ni tromper ni soumettre par la clique titiste" (Tirane: Naim Frashëri, 1967). See also Gabriel Jandot, *L'Albanie d'Enver Hoxha (1944-1985)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994).

⁵⁹ D. T. Bataković, "The Croats and Serbs: Nationalism and Liberalism (1967-1972)", *Dialogue*, 10, Paris 1995, 35-47.

Party *nomenklatura*, becoming sovereign in their respective republics, came to represent the majority nationality. Serbia, the only of six federal republic with two autonomous provinces, was an exception: under the 1974 Constitution, the provinces could use their veto power against the rest of Serbia. The whole process, which institutionalized *national-communism*, eventually led to the renewal of interethnic tensions within Yugoslavia's intricate mosaic of nations and confessions.⁶⁰

National-communism introduced majority rule for the majority nation in each of the six republics and two provinces of the federation. As a result, discrimination against small-in-numbers nations or national minorities within the boundaries of each republic or province continued, to a greater or lesser extent. That was the context in which the status of the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija was significantly upgraded by the constitutional amendments of 1968 and 1972, and finally defined by the 1974 Constitution: it gave Kosovo Albanians the main say in political life, from party authority to provincial administration, especially in the police, judiciary, economy and education areas.⁶¹

The Albanian-dominated socialist Assembly of Kosovo removed the term "Metohija" from the province's official name as early as 1968, for it sounded too Serbian and too Christian. It was a classical case of historical revisionism used as a tool to advance a political agenda in the present. The process involved repeated cases of discrimination against Kosovo Serbs throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, and eventually escalated into large-scale Albanian demonstrations in 1981. The Kosovo Serb communist *nomenklatura*, with few noble exceptions, accepted this policy of institutionalized discrimination and, rewarded for their collaboration with Albanian nationalists, left Kosovo forever to assume higher and more lucrative posts in Belgrade and elsewhere in central Serbia.⁶²

Briefly, the enhanced status of Kosovo and Metohija within Serbia was the last but fatal legacy of the declining Titoist system. Disagreement openly expressed by some Serb party officials (Dobrica Ćosić, Jovan Marjanović) as early as 1968, and the well-argued prediction of some eminent members of the academic community that the new constitutional arrangements would inevi-

⁶⁰ D. T. Bataković, "Nationalism and Communism: The Yugoslav Case", *Serbian Studies. Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 9, 1-2, 1995, 25-41.

⁶¹ See relevant legal documents in a bilingual Serbian-English edition, *Kosovo: Law and Politics. Kosovo in Normative Acts before and after 1974* (Belgrade: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 1998). Cf. also: *Studies on Kosova*, Arshi Pipa & Sami Repishti, eds., (Boulder & New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

⁶² D. T. Bataković, "Kosovo i Metohija: nacionalizam i komunizam", in *Balkan posle Drugog svetskog rata* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1996), 254-268. Cf. also D. T. Bataković "Kosovo-Metohija in the 20th Century: Nationalism and Communism", *Eurobalkans*, No 30-31, Athens 1998, 21-27.

tably lead to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, failed to prevent the centrifugal process, which culminated in the enactment of the Constitution of 1974.⁶³ The 1974 Constitution, which left no room for a non-violent dissolution of post-Titoist Yugoslavia, remained the country's ironclad legal framework after Tito's death in 1980.⁶⁴

Tito's Failed Reconciliation with Albania

After the reconciliation of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in 1955, and the purge of the centralists, mostly Serb, in 1966, Tito made a move towards rapprochement with communist Albania (1968–1971), the only neighbouring communist state challenging his authority, state unity and ideological model of socialist self-government, and he did it in an indirect way – by upgrading the status of Kosovo Albanians in spite of continuing upsurges of Albanian nationalism.

The policy of entrusting power in Kosovo to Albanians was exclusively endorsed by Tito, anxious to placate the growing Albanian nationalism in Kosovo. Being a renowned leader of the non-aligned movement and a high-ranking statesman on the international scene, Tito could not afford to have in his neighbourhood a small Stalinist Albania and her defiant dictator Enver Hoxha carrying on with violent ideological attacks on Yugoslavia, and thus challenging both her ideology and her state borders.⁶⁵ Despite Tirana's repeated demands for the dismemberment of the Yugoslav federation and unification of Kosovo with Albania, Tito was insistent on improving bilateral relations, using the Albanian minority as a bridge to accomplish détente and even some kind of ideological reconciliation in relations with Enver Hoxha. In late November 1968, on the occasion of Albania's Independence Day celebration, Kosovo Albanian demonstrators took to the streets, cursing Yugoslavia and praising Albania's leader Enver Hoxha. In Priština and two other towns in Kosovo, they

⁶³ Most prominently by Prof. Mihailo Djurić and a group of distinguished law professors and researchers from the Law School (*Pravni fakultet*) of Belgrade University: Mihailo Djurić, *Iskustvo razlike: suočavanje s vremenom* (Belgrade: Tersit, 1994). See also an excellent analysis in: Robert M. Hayden, "Constitutional Nationalism in Former Yugoslav Republics", *Slavic Review* 51:4 (1992).

⁶⁴ For more on Yugoslavia, see: Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *The Improbable Survivor. Yugoslavia and its Problems 1918–1988* (London: Hurst & Co, 1988); D. T. Bataković, *Yougoslavie. Nations, religions, idéologies*, 272–278.

⁶⁵ On post-war Albanian-Yugoslav relations: Milorad Komatina, *Enver Hodža i jugoslovensko-albanski odnosi* (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ, 1995), 135–145; Branko Komatina, *Jugoslovensko-albanski odnosi 1979–1983. Beleške i sećanja ambasadora* (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ, 1995). Useful overviews are available in: Nicolas J. Costa, *Albania. A European Enigma* (New York: East European Monographs, 1995), and Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians. A Modern History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1995). The latest study covering the Yugoslav-Albanian relations period between 1945 and 1961: Aleksandar Životić, *Jugoslavija, Albanija i velike sile (1945–1961)* (Belgrade: Arhipelag, INIS 2011)

clashed with the police. By order of Tito, the demonstrations were eventually crushed by federal army forces.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, only a few years later Tito allowed the establishment of closer cultural and scientific cooperation between Priština and Tirana in vain expectation that this rapprochement, which soon became a powerful instrument of Albania's strong ideological influence on Kosovo Albanians, would appease national discontent of the Yugoslav Albanian community.⁶⁷

The Kosovo Albanians interpreted the new Yugoslav party policy launched in 1968 not as an opportunity for furthering their national and cultural development, but rather as a long-awaited chance for ultimate historical revenge on the Serbs, still considered as the archenemies keeping "Albanian Kosovo" under Serbo-Yugoslav occupation.⁶⁸

Furthermore, from 1968 the ideological and national model embraced by the Albanians of Kosovo and Metohija became Enver Hoxha's Stalinist-type of rigid ethno-nationalism, promulgated at Priština University by imported textbooks and visiting professors from Tirana, and above all by numerous *Sigurimi* agents from Albania. They all professed a simplified nationalistic ideology imbued with the Stalinist hatred of the enemies and Albanian fanaticism, directed mainly against Serbs as the alleged usurpers of their ancestral homeland. The theory of the Albanians as directly descending from the oldest people in the Balkans, the Illyrians, and therefore the only genuine natives of Kosovo, became a simplified political program targeting the "Other", and thus leading directly to national discrimination: all non-Albanians living in Kosovo were considered as intruders on native Albanian soil.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ D. T. Bataković, "Kosovo and Metohija. Identity, Religion & Ideologies", in *Kosovo and Metohija. Living in the Enclave*, D. T. Bataković, ed. (Belgrade: Institute for Balkan Studies, SASA, 2007), 62-64.

⁶⁷ The most prominent Kosovo scholar, the Orientalist Dr Hasan Kaleshi, was among the first to condemn in the 1970s the propagation of ethnic hatred in Tirana- and Priština-published textbooks and related historical writings in Albanian. Dr Kaleshi, boycotted by the Kosovo Albanian intelligentsia, died a few years later under dubious circumstances. For more detail see: Hasan Kaleshi, "O seobama Srba sa Kosova krajem XVII i početkom XVIII veka, etničkim promenama i nekim drugim pitanjima iz istorije Kosova", *Obeležja* VI, 4, 1976; see also Miloš Mišović, *Ko je tražio republiku Kosovo* (Belgrade: Književne novine, 1987), 240-241, 346-347.

⁶⁸ The defiant Kosovo officials, both Serbs and ethnic Turks (e.g. Kadri Reufi), who dared denounce ethnic discrimination, were punished. In most cases, they were expelled from the Party (League of Communists). As we have seen, those who cooperated with the Albanian leadership on their new policy of replacing Serbs with Albanians in all important offices in Kosovo's provincial institutions were rewarded with high posts in federal institutions or diplomacy, and thus left Kosovo forever (cf. D. T. Bataković, *Kosovo Chronicles*, 70). The collection of selected documents from Tito's archive in Belgrade related to Kosovo in: Pero Simić, *Raspeto Kosovo. Dokumenti o Kosovu i Metohiji* (Belgrade: Novosti, 2006).

⁶⁹ D. T. Bataković, "The Serbo-Albanian Conflict: an Historical Perspective", in: *Kosovo/Kosova. Confrontation or Coexistence*, G. Dujizings, D. Janjić, Sh. Maliqi, eds., (Nijmegen: Peace Research Center 1998), 8-10.

Since the establishment of its autonomy in 1945, Kosovo and Metohija has never been a self-sustainable region. Able to cover only about a quarter of its expenditures, it was heavily dependent on the funding from the federal and Serbian coffers. The money provided by the Serbian and Yugoslav federal funds (up to million dollars a day in the early 1980s) was not used by the local Albanian *nomenklatura* for fostering economic development but rather for constructing their own state-like institutions, including a system of education. The high population growth rate of the Kosovo Albanian community was an additional, social, factor adding to the intolerant nationalism of the educated youth, whose mobility within Yugoslavia was quite low as a result of the lack of language skills. Growing social discontent and lack of employment turned into mounting national frustration. It had already been framed by textbooks imported from Albania, imbued with nationalist mythology and hatred of both Serbia and Yugoslavia, and unfailingly denouncing Serbs as the main instigators of every anti-Albanian project in the Balkans.

The Albanian-dominated Kosovo administration made every effort to provide sufficient number of local Albanian officials for all provincial institutions. What ensued as a direct consequence were various forms of administrative pressures, judicial discrimination, police harassment, and even occasional physical attacks on Serbs by local Albanians, which were encouraged by impunity arising from clannish and national solidarity of the ruling Albanian *nomenklatura*. Once the new party policy was tacitly endorsed by the federal leadership of Yugoslavia, the discrimination and harassment of the Kosovo Serbs by the Albanian extremists grew in intensity, leading to their forced migration from Kosovo to other parts of Serbia (Kraljevo, Kragujevac, Smederevo). The process unfolded silently, and although many high political and army officials were fully aware of it, few ever dared speak publicly.

During that silent process of forced Serb migration toward central Serbia after 1968, the expelled Kosovo Serbs' agricultural land holdings, if not sold to local Albanians, were officially allotted to immigrants from Albania. The causes of the inter-ethnic conflict were not only national but social as well: Kosovo and Metohija remained primarily a peasant environment with the Albanian community organized on the basis of horizontal links inherited from pre-modern tribal traditions, within a predominantly Islamic environment. Marked by the highest birth rate in Europe, the predominantly agrarian Muslim Albanian society in Kosovo needed more and more land for their steadily expanding families.⁷⁰ The extent of the demographic change in Kosovo is graspable from the fact that from the end of the Second World War in 1945 until J. B. Tito's death in 1980, the number of Albanians in Kosovo almost tripled as a combined result of high birth rates and the influx of the as yet undetermined

⁷⁰ D. T. Bataković, *The Kosovo Chronicles*, 28.

but undoubtedly large number of illegal immigrants from Albania, during the various phases of the Cold War.

The systematic Albanization of the provincial administration was followed by the same process in the local judicial and police systems. Serbian civil servants were systematically replaced by Albanian, whether competent or incompetent. This made the whole Serbian community not only vulnerable to various forms of discrimination and ethnically motivated pressure, but even unprotected by the law. The public institutions were completely controlled by Albanians, almost openly hostile to all Serbian-based cultural, religious and political organizations. Moreover, the introduction of strict ethnic quotas on all provincial levels, including the University of Priština, was the next step in the Albanization of the Province. The number of posts intended for Serbs did not depend on their professional skills, but on their official, often inaccurately presented, percentage within the Province's population.

As a result of this silent process of ethnic cleansing — not just tolerated, but even tacitly encouraged by the federal communist leadership — the Serb population in Kosovo and Metohija, despite a relatively high birth rate, was reduced dramatically by nearly a half within a few decades: from 23.6 percent according to the 1948 census to 13.2 percent according to the 1981 census. The Kosovo Montenegrins considered by Albanians as a branch of the Serb population, also decreased significantly: from 3.9 percent in 1948 to only 1.7 percent in 1981.⁷¹

The Kosovo Albanians' demand for Kosovo as a separate seventh republic within Yugoslavia with the legal right to self-determination, in March 1981, was the first step towards the projected unification with Albania. These demands echoed the well-known interwar communist resolutions, of both the Comintern and the CPY, on the status of Kosovo.

Conclusion

The Comintern or Comintern-inspired blueprint for resolving the national question in communist Yugoslavia, with its combined Austro-Marxist and Stalinist sources, shaped the destiny of communist Yugoslavia in the decades after Tito-Khrushchev reconciliation in 1955. The Comintern's blueprints outlasted various Cold War challenges, notably in the area of Yugoslav-Albanian relations. A showcase for Comintern-inspired solutions, the case of Kosovo and Metohija vividly demonstrates that old models survived undisputed and, therefore, quite destructive all through the Cold War era and until the end of Tito's rule in 1980.

⁷¹ Ruža Petrović & Marina Blagojević, *The Migration of Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo and Metohija. Results of the Survey Conducted in 1985–1986* (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1992). Cf. also Branislav Krstić, *Kosovo. Facing the Court of History* (New York: Humanity Books 2004), 131–145; D. T. Bataković, *Kosovo. Un conflit sans fin?*, 130–134.

Rinna Elina Kullaa

University of Jyväskylä

ORIGINS OF THE TITO-STALIN SPLIT WITHIN THE WIDER SET OF YUGOSLAV-SOVIET RELATIONS (1941–1948)

Abstract: The differences between Yugoslav and Soviet leaderships appeared gradually due to difference in perspective from 1941 onwards. The decision to part with the Soviets was a conscious one made by Yugoslav party leadership composed of Tito, Ranković, Kardelj and Djilas. The Yugoslavs simply refused to assume a subsidiary role in relation to the Soviet Union, one requiring Soviet surveillance of the Yugoslav military, and oversight of foreign policy. Tito's leadership were a hardened group of Party cadres from various ethnic and class backgrounds who survived the war by making high-risk military and political decisions. Having taken those heavy risks and won, most of them were ready to follow Tito in defying Stalin and Molotov in the spring of 1948.

Keywords: *Tito, Stalin, foreign policy, conflict, Cominform,*

On June 28, 1948, the Cominform announced the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the organization, and called for the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) to be replaced. The *Cominform Journal* of 1 July 1948 publicly cited the CPY's "incorrect line on the main questions of home and foreign policy, a line which is a departure from Marxism-Leninism" as the reason for the expulsion.¹ This document, which appeared within weeks in the languages of all of the Soviet bloc states, directly addresses the primary reason behind the Tito-Stalin split, Yugoslav disapproval of Soviet foreign policy couched in the rhetoric of Communist ideology.

The CPY was condemned for "beginning to identify the foreign policy of the Soviet Union with the foreign policy of imperialist powers," and in par-

¹ Stephen Clissold ed., *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union 1939-1973: A documentary survey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 202.

ticular for “defaming Soviet military experts”.² This the Yugoslavs did. While Tito and Stalin bickered over numerous issues between 1945 and 1948, the underlying, but often misunderstood, reason for the split was the Tito-leadership’s objection to Stalin’s post-war foreign policy. The Yugoslav leadership felt that Stalin was overly accommodating to the wartime Western allies, ready to grant them their sphere of influence in Western Europe, and that the Soviet Union was not ready to recognize the Yugoslav right to a “leading role among the East European Communist parties.” Moreover, Tito’s leadership was not willing to compromise its independence from the Soviet party, acquired during the war but now rejected by Soviet foreign policy in 1948.

The Cominform document publicly declared that the Soviet Union sought the replacement of the Central Committee of the CPY, starting with the removal of Tito, Milovan Djilas, Edvard Kardelj and Aleksandar Ranković. The document even lists the names of nominees to replace the “purely Turkish terrorist regime”.³ Sreten Žujović and Andrea Hebrang were therein characterized as “advocates of friendship between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.” Both men had in fact already been purged by Tito’s regime for their alleged “pro-Soviet views.”⁴

The Soviet leadership resorted to these extreme measures toward a fellow Communist state in the spring 1948 as a consequence of the long-standing refusal of Tito and his inner circle to accept Stalin’s foreign policy as it emerged in the second half of the Second World War. This paper analyses the origins of this rift and the Soviet response, culminating in the formal expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform by June 1948.

Already in January 1948, we see the Soviet response taking shape. Although neglected in Yugoslav accounts, a Soviet offer of a trade agreement during that same month was then withdrawn by February 1948. Contrary to both the original Yugoslav argument of Vladimir Dedijer and the more recent revisionist views Tito and his inner circle also saw the break coming.⁵ The Soviets offered a trade agreement to Yugoslavia in January 1948 as a political test of loyalty for the Tito-leadership. By then, the Kremlin had grown frus-

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 204.

⁴ Nada Kisić Kolanović, *Andrija Hebrang : iluzije i otrežnjenja* (Zagreb: Institut za Suvremenu Povijest, 1996). Considered by Tito not to be loyal to his authority, Hebrang was relieved of his duties as Federal Planning Commissioner on 8 January 1948, and placed under house arrest in April. On 7 May, he was arrested and subsequently tried on a series of fabricated charges such as collaboration with the Ustaša, working as a long time Soviet agent, and advocating a chauvinist policy against the Serbs.

⁵ Vladimir Dedijer, *The Battle Stalin Lost: Memoirs of Yugoslavia 1948-1953* (New York: Viking Press, 1970), 129; Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), 361; Ivo Banac, *With Stalin Against Tito: Cominformist Splits in Yugoslav Communism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988), 124.

trated with the Yugoslav leadership because of their assistance to the Greek Communists (greek abbreviation KKE) in the renewed civil war, their contention with the Western Allies, and their uncoordinated maneuvers to promote a Yugoslav-Bulgarian Balkan Federation.⁶ This political test of Tito in the form of an economic agreement parallels the Soviet attempt to consolidate political power over Finland through a similar Finnish-Soviet Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in February 1948. Similar treaties for “Friendship, Cooperation and Assistance” signed with Romania, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia were also supplemented in early 1948 with trade agreements. Moreover, the Yugoslav-Bulgarian cooperation treaty signed in Bled in September 1947, which Moscow had been deemed offensive to Soviet interests, and had also been titled a “Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance.” Tito and Kardelj seemed to have launched a competition over “friendship treaties” among states in the Soviet bloc. The leaderships of the Soviet and the Yugoslav parties were effectively competing for legitimacy through the signing of the friendship treaties.

The Finnish Foreign Ministry, unlike Tito and Kardelj, generally welcomed an opportunity to better relations with the Soviets by any means other than armed conflict. Finnish analysis emphasized that for the postwar Soviet Union, economic and cultural relations with territorially or politically bordering countries constituted political tests to secure their foreign policies. Finnish-Soviet negotiations in the spring of 1948 demonstrate that, whereas Yugoslavia – a Communist state under Tito’s leadership facing the Soviets only along a political border – was able to secure Yugoslav independence from Moscow’s political influence by refusal to cooperate in a prolonged conflict, Finland – a democratic republic located on the Soviet geographic border – had to negotiate a carefully configured political, security and economic package agreement for its independence.⁷

In both cases, postwar Stalinist foreign policy prioritized the closely linked goals of territorial security and economic gain. As the Tito-leadership failed to agree to a trade policy with the Soviet Union, by March of 1948 it had also failed the political test. The Kremlin moved swiftly to consolidate political power over Yugoslavia alternatively through the attempted replacement of the Yugoslav leadership.

⁶ James Frusetta, *Bulgaria’s Macedonia: nation-building and state-building, centralization and autonomy in Pirin Macedonia, 1903-1952* (Maryland: University of Maryland College Park, 2006), 304. Peter J. Stavrakis, *Moscow and Greek communism, 1944-1949* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1989).

⁷ Ulkoministeriö (Finnish Foreign Ministry Archive) UM: 12 L Venäjä 48/371Sala D 48 5.2.1948.89

Soviet Wartime Collaboration with Western Allies and Postwar Yugoslav Objections

Starting already in 1941, Tito and Stalin had continuously disagreed about the fundamental role and goals of the Partisan force's war efforts. Although issuing a directive via the Comintern on 22 June 1941 urging the CPY to organize resistance to the Nazi German dismemberment of Yugoslavia, the Soviet government proceeded to accredit royal Yugoslavia's King Peter II, in exile in London, as the state's highest representative. While wartime Soviet contacts with the royal Yugoslav government cast doubt on the political legitimacy of the Partisan resistance movement, Soviet military assistance to Tito was also not forthcoming. The Partisan command first informed the Soviets that they had prepared an airfield in Bosnia in order to receive Soviet supplies, of mortars, arms and ammunition as early as December 1941.⁸ Requests of troops, medical supplies, and military materials from the Comintern followed, in February and in March 1942. No such request was honored, even when a small Red Army mission finally arrived in 1944 and a realistic Soviet capacity to provide aid now existed.⁹

In official Comintern replies to Tito's requests for assistance in March 1942 and March 1943, the Soviets repeatedly advised Tito to cooperate with the non-Communist Yugoslav government in exile in London.¹⁰ In March 1942 for example, the Soviets characteristically congratulated the Partisans for their military successes while urging Tito to:

“take into account that the Soviet Union has treaty relations with the Yugoslav King and Government and that taking an open stand against these would create new difficulties in the joint war efforts and the relations between the Soviet Union on the one hand and Great Britain and America on the other. Do not view the issues of your fight from your own, national standpoint, but also from the international standpoint of the British—American—Soviet coalition.”¹¹

Moreover, the Soviets repeatedly encouraged the Partisans not to emphasize that they were fighting a civil war against the rival royalist Chetnik movement,

⁸ Vladimir Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito: Prilozi za biografiju* (Belgrade: Kultura, 1953), 345.

⁹ Logistically, the Soviet war effort in 1941 and early 1942 could hardly spare resources for outside aid. Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. The Soviet Union was unprepared for the attack; Stalin had sought to uphold the Nazi-Soviet Pact to the very last minute. Soviet defense efforts suffered heavy losses in 1941, and some in the Ukraine welcomed the Nazi soldiers as liberators. In November 1941 Nazi troops reached the outskirts of Leningrad. The first successful Soviet counteroffensive was launched in December 1941. 1942 was characterized by two German advances in the summer—to Stalingrad in the Volga region—and Russian winter recoveries. Under these circumstances it seemed impossible for Stalin to grant Tito much assistance until early 1943.

¹⁰ Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito*, 354, 369.

¹¹ Moša Pijade, *Priča o Sovjetskoj Pomoći za Dizanje Ustanka u Jugoslaviji* (Belgrade: Borba, 1950), 11.

which, like the exiled Yugoslav government, expected the return of monarchy to Yugoslavia.

The Comintern continued to remind Tito in March 1942, that “for reasons of [Soviet] policy...it is not opportune to emphasize that the struggle is mainly against the Chetniks. World public opinion must first and foremost be mobilized against the invaders; mentioning or unmasking the Chetniks is secondary.”¹² Tito protested in numerous telegrams to Stalin by openly arguing that the Soviet government’s policy was not helpful to the goals of international socialism. The Soviets informed the British Foreign Office on 21 December 1943 that the Soviet government wished to promote a partnership between the Yugoslav government in exile and the Anti-Fascist National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ). It was only in November 1944 after the joint Soviet-Partisan liberation of Belgrade that Stalin and Molotov expressed their full support for Partisan predominance over the London government, asking the London government’s representative, Ivan Šubašić to reconcile with Tito and cooperate in forming a Communist-led government.¹³

The Independent Yugoslav Foreign Policy 1945-1948

Following the end of the Second World War, Yugoslav foreign policy continued to contradict Stalin’s immediate postwar goals in Eastern Europe. Without sympathy for the Soviet inability to assist the Partisans during the war, the Yugoslav leadership around Tito adopted, semi-privately, adversarial attitudes towards the Soviets.¹⁴ In October 1944, Stalin had agreed with Winston Churchill in the Kremlin (in their now famous “percentages agreement”) that while Russia was to hold 90 percent predominance in Romania, Britain would have 90 percent in Greece in the postwar period. Hungary and Yugoslavia would be divided 50-50, and the Soviet Union would have 75 percent control in Bulgaria.¹⁵ Between October 1944 and January 1948, Stalin held up his end of the percentages agreement; but in the eyes of Tito and his leadership, the situation in Greece resembled the situation that the Partisans had experienced during the war. The Greek Communist Party (KKE) faced an adversary, the royal forces, that like the Yugoslav government in exile during the Second World War, enjoyed Allied support for its return to power. British troops had established that authority in December 1944 by putting down the Communist-led effort to seize control of Athens in what has been called the Second Round

¹² Ibid. 12.

¹³ Clissold, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union*, 159.

¹⁴ *Savez Komunista Jugoslavije. Centralni Komitet: Pisma CK KPJ* (Belgrade: Jugoslovenska Knjižnica, 1948).

¹⁵ Albert Reiss, “The Churchill-Stalin Secret ‘Percentages’ Agreement on the Balkans, Moscow, October 1944”, *American Historical Review*, 83, 1978, 368.

of the Greek Civil War.¹⁶ A temporary agreement in 1945 with the KKE leadership to disarm their wartime resistance movement (EAM/ELAS) broke down by the 1946 elections. Reconstructing EAM/ELAS as the Democratic Army of Greece (DAG) they launched the Third Round of the civil war, this time from the northern region bordering Yugoslavia.¹⁷ Without consulting the Soviet leadership and against their wishes, Tito supplied arms to the new force in the winter of 1946-1947.¹⁸ This Yugoslav aid also included the use of Yugoslav territory as sanctuary for DAG forces, as well as radio broadcasts of “Radio Free Greece” emanating from Belgrade.¹⁹

Yugoslav actions caused immediate difficulties for Stalin. The Truman administration was not convinced that the Yugoslavs had independently provided support without Moscow’s approval. This perception of Moscow’s intention to align Greece with the Soviet Union through the KKE triggered an American agreement to pick up the support for the royal government that the British could no longer continue. On 12 March 1947, President Truman requested Congress’s approval for military aid to Greece and Turkey, on the grounds that it would prevent Soviet takeover and not just Communist victory.²⁰ To complicate matters further, the KKE leadership itself had been directly asking the Soviets for military assistance. Between 1944 and 1946, the Soviet Union had been relatively inactive in guiding national Communist movements, preferring what the Yugoslavs then called ‘imperialistic agreements’ with the US and UK. The Yugoslav provision of more arms to the Greek Communists than even those promised by Moscow contributed to the Yugoslav argument that the Soviets had forsaken the international Communist cause.

Two key features in Yugoslav foreign policy between 1945 and 1948 underlined the growing conflict between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia’s ambitions to establish itself as the new regional power: plans for a Communist Balkan Federation and the Yugoslav leadership’s vocal anti-Western/ anti-capitalist rhetoric. Whether honoring the percentages agreement or not, the Western powers by the summer of 1947 had effectively withdrawn their support for internal opposition to the Communists’ Bulgarian Workers’ Party (BRP). Yet, it was not clear what the Soviet zone of influence over Bulgaria meant in prac-

¹⁶ John Iatrides, *Revolt in Athens: The Greek Communist ‘Second Round’ 1944-1945* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972).

¹⁷ Richard Clogg Ed., *Greece 1940-1949: Occupation, Resistance, Civil War: A Documentary History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 19-20.

¹⁸ C. M. Woodhouse, *The Struggle for Greece 1940-1949* (New York: Beekman-Esanu Press, 1976), 250-54, 262-65, 272-76, 284-85.

¹⁹ Nicholas Pappas, “The Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict and the Greek Civil War” in *At the Brink of War and Peace: The Tito-Stalin Split in a Historic Perspective*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (New York: Columbia University Press, East European Monographs, 1982), 222.

²⁰ Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov: *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War: from Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 127.

tice. Party leaders for example, interpreted alignment with the Soviet Union in major international questions as still offering them some autonomy in their relations with other Communist parties within the Soviet zone of influence.²¹

At the Szklarska Poreba meeting in August 1947, held to coordinate the activities of these parties under Soviet leadership in Eastern Europe, a new Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) with its headquarters in Belgrade was set up to direct this consolidation. Yet, it remained unclear to what extent inter-party contacts were to be regulated by Moscow. The mere choice of the Yugoslav capital as the location of the Cominform headquarters served as a public Soviet endorsement of Tito's leadership. At the conference the Yugoslavs were praised for their "revolutionary activism". The Bulgarian Communist leader Georgi Dimitrov interpreted Stalin's endorsement of the Yugoslavs' independent activism as primarily an endorsement of future autonomous initiatives of other East European party leaderships.²²

In response, Dimitrov began to cultivate closer contacts with Tito in 1947. In August 1947, Tito and Dimitrov signed the Bled Agreement—a treaty of alliance that focused on economic and cultural cooperation. Tito and Dimitrov discussed a possible future Balkan Federation, an idea first introduced by Stalin in 1944.²³ However, no specific agreement on the Federation was reached. Previous Soviet-sponsored discussions of a possible Balkan Federation originated from the controversy over the conflicting ambitions of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria in Macedonia after the Second World War. At the end of the war, Stalin had mentioned the federation to Tito as a possible solution to the Macedonian question but abandoned the idea a year later.

The ambitious Yugoslav leadership, especially Edvard Kardelj, considered the federation a realistic possibility.²⁴ But from the outset in 1944, the Yugoslav and Bulgarian representatives disagreed on its structure. An equal association of two states was deemed inappropriate by the Yugoslavs, as this would reduce the status of leading federal republics Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia. The Yugoslav proposal that Bulgaria would become a seventh constituent republic of Yugoslavia was not surprisingly unacceptable to the Bulgarian leadership. Moreover, such a configuration would have bolstered the Yugoslav position too much to have been accepted by Moscow and would have been resisted by Britain for fear that it would threaten Greek interests and the Mediterranean lifeline to the Suez Canal.

²¹ Vesselin Dimitrov, *Stalin's Cold War: Soviet Foreign Policy, Democracy and Communism in Bulgaria, 1941-1948* (Dissertation, London School of Economic, 2006), 235.

²² *Ibid.*, 237.

²³ Ivo Banac ed., *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov 1933-1949* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2003), 343 (Entry 23 November 1944).

²⁴ Edvard Kardelj, *Reminiscences: The struggle for recognition and independence: the new Yugoslavia, 1944-1957* (London: Blond & Briggs Press, 1982), 95.

In 1946 Stalin again flirted with the idea of a Yugoslav-Bulgarian federation but only if the Soviet Union were to be fully in charge of setting the terms and conducting the negotiations. The idea was abandoned for the second time in June 1946 due to lack of interest both in Belgrade and in Sofia. A shift in Bulgarian policy over the Macedonian question in July 1946 that allowed more concessions to Yugoslavia swiftly sparked a third attempt at the federation between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, discussions to which the Soviets were not party. The Bled Agreement of August 1947 called for the strengthening of economic ties, simplification of border controls, and the forgoing of significant war reparations from Bulgaria to Yugoslavia. It was agreed that Macedonia would not be ceded to Yugoslavia until the formation of a possible future federation.²⁵ Stalin felt that the Yugoslavs and Bulgarians had taken undue advantage of the independence he had extended to their parties. He was outraged that the agreement had been signed without Soviet consultation. Both the Yugoslav and the Bulgarian leadership were reprimanded by Moscow. Stalin immediately wrote to Tito and Dimitrov:

“The opinion of the Soviet government is that both governments have made a mistake, having made a treaty, moreover, of unlimited duration, ... The Soviet government believes that the impatience of these two governments has facilitated the actions of reactionary Anglo-American elements, giving them an additional excuse to intensify the military intervention in Greek and Turkish affairs against Yugoslavia and Bulgaria... The Soviet government must be given advance notice, as it cannot take responsibility for agreements of great importance in the area of foreign policy that are signed without consultation with the Soviet government.”²⁶

Only after the conclusion of the Bulgarian peace treaty on 15 September 1947 did the Soviets agree to the signing of a modified Bled Agreement in November 1947.

From the fall of 1947 and early 1948, an increasingly negative view of the Yugoslav leadership appeared in the reports originating from the Soviet embassy in Yugoslavia. Ambassador Anatoly Lavrentev identified an increase in Yugoslav “nationalist propaganda” and cited an overestimation of Partisan military credentials gained during the Second World War.²⁷ The reports criticized Tito’s self-aggrandizing speeches and considered him as challenging Stalin’s leading position. Through an agent in the Yugoslav Politburo, the Soviets learned that in January 1948 the Yugoslav leadership within the Central

²⁵ Dimitrov, *Stalin’s Cold War*, 238.

²⁶ Banac, ed., *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov*, 422 (Entry 12 August 1947).

²⁷ Leonid Gibianskii, “The Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict and the Soviet Bloc” in Gori, Francesca and Silvio Pons ed., *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 231. Russian Center for Conservation and Study of the Records of Modern History (Russian abbreviation is RTsKhIDNI), f 575, op. 1, d. 41, 1. 20-1

Committee continued to discuss their grievances toward the Soviets in private, as they had done in 1945.²⁸ The TsK VKP (b) Apparat (the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)) under Mikhail Suslov wrote secret analytical reports and critiques of four Communist party groups – Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia – where charges of nationalism and underestimation of the role of the USSR play a central role.²⁹ Denouncing the Yugoslavs served as an opportunity to reject all “national roads to socialism”.

On 17 January 1948, Dimitrov was interviewed by foreign journalists on his train returning from Romania following the signing of the Bulgarian-Romanian Treaty of Friendship, Collaboration and Mutual Assistance. He commented that a larger federation, stretching from Poland to Greece, was possible in the future.³⁰ Dimitrov listed as projected members of this future federation, “Bulgaria, Albania, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia and even Greece.”³¹ Dimitrov told the foreign journalists:

“When in yesterday’s speech I called these treaties alliances, I was not throwing out a chance word; I mean alliances, and we are allies. That is the sense applied to the treaties Bulgaria has signed with Albania, Yugoslavia and Romania, and it is the meaning of the treaties she will sign with Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. We are allies as we are allies de facto with the Soviet Union....”³²

Dimitrov went on to emphasize Moscow’s role in these projected proceedings. “The federation plans to cooperate with Russia on a large scale, and if possible would seek trade relations with the United States, Britain and France.”

Again, the US interpreted these independent Yugoslav and Bulgarian moves as being directed from Moscow. The *New York Times* speculated on 11 January 1948 that “one of the basic European aspects of Soviet foreign policy seems to be the encouragement of a federation of Balkan and Danubian states”.³³ The article reported Dimitrov’s listing of potential members as “at least Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Rumania – truly Balkans states – and Hungary, their Danubian neighbor [that] have Communist dictatorial governments in common”.³⁴ As evidence, the article cited the Soviet Union’s bilateral

²⁸ Ibid., 229. Norman Naimark, “Post-Soviet Russian Historiography on the Emergence of the Soviet Bloc” *Kritika*, 5, 3, 2004, 577.

²⁹ T.V. Volokitina, et al. *Moskva i Vostochnaia Evropa : stanovlenie politicheskikh rezhimov sovet-skogo tipa: 1949-1953* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2002), 787.

³⁰ “Dimitrov Foresees Federation in East: Even Greece is on list of nations for joint action ‘when time is ripe’” *The New York Times*, 18 January 1948, 9.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ “Russia Striving to Create Balkan Federation” *The New York Times*, 11 January 1948, 5.

³⁴ Ibid.

treaty of military assistance that existed with Yugoslavia, and noted that similar pacts were being drawn up with the four other countries. The *Times* considered it “logical to anticipate that the Soviet Union would like a federation system extending from Poland on the Baltic Sea to Greece in the Aegian, and including all intervening countries”.³⁵ From the perspective of *The Times*, these steps were natural, since “the lands affected already have common foreign policies, and all of them are coordinated by Moscow”.³⁶ Moscow’s disclaimer was not aided by the placement of two Yugoslav divisions of troops in Albania “to ward off the insurgency taking place in Greece” one week after Dimitrov’s statements.

On 24 January 1948, Stalin sent a harshly worded letter to Dimitrov:

“The part of your statement at the press conference in Romania concerning the federation or confederation of people’s democracies, including Greece, Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc., is viewed by Moscow friends as harmful, detrimental to the countries of the new democracy, and as facilitating the struggle of the Anglo-Americans against these countries.... We consider your statement about a customs union between countries having treaties of mutual assistance equally careless and harmful...It is hard to figure out what could have made you make such rash and injudicious statements at the press conference.”³⁷

On January 28, *Pravda* flatly denied any movement towards an East European federation as widely reported in the Western press.³⁸ Stalin quickly summoned both Dimitrov and Tito to the Kremlin. However, only Dimitrov made an appearance. The still defiant Tito sent Kardelj, accompanied by Djilas, in his place. At the meeting on February 10, Stalin insisted that Bulgaria and Yugoslavia were not to engage in provocations of the West at this time. In Stalin’s view, it was unlikely that the Greek insurgency would succeed in bringing about a Communist regime to power, and it was equally unlikely that the US and Britain would allow a Communist government in the Eastern Mediterranean.³⁹ Therefore Yugoslavia’s and Bulgaria’s persistent efforts to undermine the percentages agreement were futile and destructive. Stalin in no way accepted Dimitrov’s suggestion of a larger confederation, asking of Dimitrov, “What historic ties are there between Bulgaria and Romania? None! And we need not speak of Bulgaria nor Hungary nor Poland”.⁴⁰ Stalin accepted only the idea of a Soviet sponsored Balkan Federation between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, into which Albania could later enter, with the possibility of separate federations

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Banac, ed., *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov*, 435 (Entry 24 August 1948).

³⁸ “Pravda Rules Out An Eastern Union, Rebukes Dimitrov” *The New York Times*, 29 January 1948, 1.

³⁹ Djilas, *Rise and Fall*, 168-9. Dimitrov, *Stalin’s Cold War*, 240.

⁴⁰ Djilas, *Rise and Fall*, 165.

between Hungary and Romania and Bulgaria and Poland respectively. Neither Bulgaria, nor Yugoslavia were to have any part in these. In the meeting Molotov exalted, "Yugoslavia did not warn us and didn't even inform us about this decision [to send troops to Albania] until after the fact. We believe that this speaks of serious differences existing between us".⁴¹ The Yugoslavs withdrew their forces at once from Albania but were angered by the Soviet disapproval which quickly extended into wrangling over trade relations.

On February 12, Stalin asked both the Bulgarian and the Yugoslav regimes to sign declarations that they would consult the Soviet Union before undertaking foreign policy initiatives.⁴² While Dimitrov and the Bulgarian leadership were willing to accede to Soviet warnings, Tito and the Yugoslavs were not. By January 1948 there were several areas of disagreement between the Yugoslav leadership and the Soviets, including enduring disappointment at the Soviets' lack of wartime support and resentment of the hard Soviet terms, as noted below, in several "joint companies". However, the real conflict between Stalin and Tito underlying the dramatic turns of events between 1945 and 1948, was that the Yugoslav leader and his closest associates were not willing to let the Kremlin preside over their foreign relations. Not only was the Tito regime not willing to give up their independent ties with Bulgaria; they were eager to forge close independent ties with other Communist parties outside the Balkan border set by Moscow, extending for example to the Czechoslovak Communist Party. The Yugoslavs refused to abandon their anti-Western rhetoric and territorial claims in order to aid Soviet goals of non-conflictual relations with the West. Specifically, this meant that the Yugoslav regime was unwilling to give up its claim to Trieste in favor of Italy. For Stalin, Tito's giving up this Yugoslav claim would have aided Soviet bargaining with the West on German reparations and other issues.

The Yugoslav claim to Trieste that continued into the postwar period received initial Soviet support but soon became a position that challenged the early Cold War propaganda of accommodation in Stalin's foreign policy, just as identified in the Cominform expulsion letter. On 24 April 1945, Nazi Germany had surrendered Trieste to the Allies. Tito's Partisan units arrived at the port of Trieste ahead of Anzac units from New Zealand.⁴³ The US and Britain demanded that the Partisans withdraw from Trieste. On 9 June 1945 a compromise was reached and thereafter the border region of the Free Territory of Trieste (FTT) was administered in two zones, Zone A and Zone B. Trieste

⁴¹ Volokitina, et al., *Moskva i Vostochnaia Evropa*, 496.

⁴² Dimitrov, *Stalin's Cold War*, 240.

⁴³ John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a country*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 240; Bogdan C. Novak, *Trieste 1941-1954: The Ethnic, Political and Ideological Struggle* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970), 161.

and its route to Austria was placed in the Zone A administered by the Allies.⁴⁴ Included in Zone A was also Pula at the tip of the Istrian Peninsula. Zone B would be administered by Yugoslavia. In the summer 1946 a US proposal for a permanent solution would have placed Trieste in Italy and moved the common border even further east into Yugoslavia than previous Allied proposals.⁴⁵ This sent Tito reeling, and Yugoslav army units were moved forward to the border of Zone B. Yugoslav air force began to monitor American overflights with increasing hostility. They presented a list of a total of 172 unauthorized American flights over Yugoslav territory between July 16 and August 8, 1946. The Yugoslav air command forced an unauthorized American C-47 transport plane down in early August and shot down another one killing the entire crew on August 19.⁴⁶ Despite these incidents the Yugoslav government did not curtail its anti-Western rhetoric but rather reinforced it. On 20 March 1948, amidst the growing Soviet-Yugoslav contention, the American, British and French governments in the so-called "Tripartite Proposal" suggested that the whole Free Territory of Trieste would be placed under Italian sovereignty.⁴⁷ When the Tito's leadership would not nudge, the US government moved to release only \$30 million dollars from Yugoslav prewar gold reserves for 1948.⁴⁸

By early 1948 these independent actions, together with Tito's wartime record and his widespread popularity in the Communist-controlled Poland and Czechoslovakia, constituted a significant challenge for Stalin and the Kremlin.⁴⁹ The Soviets wished to maintain their preeminent leadership within the emerging Soviet bloc and sought actively from January 1948 to consolidate it.

Escalating Yugoslav-Soviet Differences, January-March 1948

Past scholarship on the Tito-Stalin split maintains, as noted above, that although the original Partisan leadership wanted to remain independent from the Soviets, it did not seek a split with the USSR. It was explained that it was Stalin who acted precipitously in expelling Yugoslavia from the Cominform.⁵⁰ Djilas's memoirs also argue for the unintentional nature of the break with the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 199.

⁴⁵ Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 241.

⁴⁶ Novak, *Trieste 1941-1954*, 257.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 281.

⁴⁸ Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 258.

⁴⁹ Volokitina, *Vostochnaia Evropa v dokumentakh rossiiskikh arkhivov: 1944-1953*, Vol. I, 1944-1948 (Moscow, Novosibirsk: Sibirskii khronograf, 1997-1998), 889. Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossiskoy Federatsii (AVP RF). F. 0138, Op. 29. p. 147. d. 10. l. 143-145.

⁵⁰ Adam Ulam, *Titoism and the Cominform* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952). Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (New York, New York: Harcourt, Bruce & World, 1962).

Soviet Union by describing the efforts of Kardelj, Ranković and himself to convince Tito of the senselessness of a clash with the Soviets.⁵¹ The Partisan leadership was not surprised by the split in March or in June. In fact, an escalating confrontation of problems with the Soviets had to have been predicted, if not sought, by the Yugoslav leadership since late January 1948.

By January 1948, the Tito-Kardelj-Djilas troika in the Office of President of the Republic was not willing to compromise on any of their accumulating differences with the Soviet Union. The personal correspondence of both Tito and Kardelj indicates that for both of them their position was based on a belief in their “earned” right to an independent but still Communist policy – a right earned by the party’s prewar consolidation under Tito and their struggle in the Second World War against the various Fascist forces without Soviet assistance. There were altogether six significant letters exchanged between Tito and Stalin or Molotov between March and June 1948.⁵² These show no disposition to compromise with the Soviets. For example, in their reply of 13 April 1948 to Stalin’s complaint over an anti-Soviet atmosphere in Yugoslavia on 27 March 1948 Tito stated that “no matter how much each of us loves the land of socialism, the USSR, he can, in no case love his country less, which is also developing socialism – in this concrete case FNRJ, for which so many thousands of its most progressive people fell” made the Yugoslav argument.⁵³

In fact, the decision to cease ready cooperation with Moscow in January 1948 is clear from the course of Yugoslav-Soviet trade negotiations. The Soviets had suggested to the Yugoslavs that these negotiations begin in Moscow in January 1948. Tito sent Djilas and Bogdan Crnobrnja, only Assistant Minister of Foreign Trade of Yugoslavia to Moscow for the talks. Seemingly indifferent to the outcome of these trade negotiations, Tito simultaneously provoked Moscow by dispatching the two divisions of Yugoslav troops to Albania. The decision to send troops across the border was not discussed in the Politburo. Djilas has suggested that by sending in these divisions, Tito was trying to ensure that a potential Yugoslav-Albanian unification would still be possible in the future.⁵⁴ However, it seems also possible within the context of the events in Moscow, that Tito was also asserting his superiority in the Balkans as he had done since 1945 with symbolic acts while also testing Moscow for its reaction. Dimitrov’s coincidental comments over the possible future of the Balkan Federation on January 11 added to the tension. In response to clear Soviet displeasure, Tito sent Kardelj to Moscow where he listened to Stalin’s rebuke on February 10. The Soviets an-

⁵¹ Milovan Djilas, “Tito and Stalin”, *Survey*, 23, 3, 75.

⁵² AJ, Chancellery of Marshal of Yugoslavia, (serbian abbreviation KMJ) I-3-b/655, 20 March 1948; AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/655, 27 March 1948; AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/655, 13 April 1948; AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/655, 4 May 1948; AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/655, 17 May 1948; AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/655, 22 May 1948.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

nounced a delay in the trade agreement on the same day. Djilas and Kardelj quickly departed from Moscow without an agreement. Crnobrnja remained in Moscow until March 3 at the behest of the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Trade. Crnobrnja took back with him the first draft of the Soviet Trade Agreement now being offered to the Yugoslavs again after the January-February delay. But despite a promise from Crnobrnja to the Yugoslav representative in Moscow, Vladimir Popović, that he would send back an official Yugoslav reply, such a reply was never drafted. Popović had become concerned over the lack of Yugoslav action to achieve a trade agreement even before Crnobrnja's arrival. Already in January, Popović had pleaded in an unusual, direct letter: "Pardon me, that I am engaging you on these questions, but all our previous urging towards the Ministry of Foreign Trade until today did not produce results. It is urgent, namely it is needed, that our Ministry informs us when we will complete the Soviet Trade Project Agreement."⁵⁵ On 12 February 1948 Popović repeated his complaint, this time to his regional section supervisor in the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry.⁵⁶ By mid-February, Popović had become thoroughly frustrated with being unable to determine the shape of trade relations with the Soviet Union, relations which were important for propaganda purposes as well as for the economy. Popović explained in his letter to the Ministry that this task was especially difficult because no such comprehensive agreement between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union had been concluded in the three years since the end of the Second World War. The frustrated tone of Popović's communication reappears in several of his February and March 1948 letters.⁵⁷ He had understood that his role as the Yugoslav representative was to seek a trade agreement with the Soviet Union. A trade agreement could guarantee commercial exchange with the East European states already establishing formal trade relations with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was the largest regional Communist ally of Yugoslavia, and since the Second World War it had continued expanding its influence and presence in neighbouring Eastern Europe. To reinforce his efforts, Popović wrote several memorandums on the promising content of Soviet trade agreements with Romania, Bulgaria and Poland.

Well beyond Popović's efforts, Crnobrnja's analysis of the Soviet proposal that he filed immediately upon his return did not favor the conclusion of the agreement on its economic terms. The Soviets had proposed a shipment protocol according to which Yugoslav exports would amount to \$57,5 million in value and Soviet imports to \$58,6 million.⁵⁸ Crnobrnja found crucial commodities to be pork, cement, caustic soda and dry plums. However, the

⁵⁵ AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/653, 33, 4 February - 3 April 1948.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/653, 33, 4 February-3 April 1948; 22 February 1948.

⁵⁸ AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/653,33, 4 February-3. April 1948.

Yugoslavs could not foresee favourable terms of trade with the Soviets on any of these goods:

“Pork we cannot conclude because the Soviets cannot give us this product; cement we cannot conclude because cement we can sell on the world market for 17-18 dollars per ton, and the Soviets will give us only something close to 11 dollars. In 1946 we could agree to this because the difference was smaller between 15 and 16 dollars.”⁵⁹

Moreover, Crnobrnja did not appreciate Soviet tactics: “We did not conclude an agreement on caustic soda because the Soviets offered too low price. In the world market Yugoslavia can get \$300, but the Soviets will only pay \$75, which is how much they pay for soda from Romania...”⁶⁰

Much more than being denied one-year trade agreement was at stake from the beginning of Stalin’s policy decision to offer the Yugoslavs these unfavorable terms. From January to March 1948 the Soviets were drafting more comprehensive trade agreements with East European states. One was also proposed for Finland. These were to serve as the first steps towards a formulation of a comprehensive Soviet economic and security bloc in Eastern Europe. The Soviet offer to the Yugoslavs worked within this framework of these treaties but also served as a political test to oblige the unruly Yugoslavs to accept unfavorable terms.

Despite arguments of economic necessity and the impending danger of a conflict with the Soviets, Tito was no longer in early 1948 seriously pursuing a trade agreement with the Soviet Union. The Yugoslav leadership in Belgrade had already regarded close relations with the Soviet Union with caution because Soviet technical experts attached to the several Yugoslav-Soviet joint companies formed in 1945 reported to Soviet military intelligence. In addition, there was the exploitative reputation quickly established by the several Joint Companies, obliging the Soviets to disband them by 1947.⁶¹ In his memoirs Kardelj explains that in early 1946 the Soviets (wishing to establish joint Soviet-Yugoslav companies) sent a delegation to Belgrade to establish cooperative companies for the navigation of the Danube and for civil air transport. Kardelj, studying similar Romanian and Hungarian agreements with the Soviets, was astonished to find that “no attempt had been made to conceal the obvious inequality, the brutal hegemony of the Russians. I did not know what to think. The agreements seemed politically stupid and legally absurd.”⁶² The Soviet terms offered to Yugoslavia for the joint companies were similar to those for Hungary and Romania. For example, the Soviet-Yugoslav Civil Air

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Dedijer, *The Battle Stalin Lost*, 73.

⁶² Edvard Kardelj, *Reminiscences*, 75.

Transport Company (JUSTA) had pressed unsuccessfully to maintain all air service between Yugoslavia and foreign countries.⁶³

As Yugoslavia adopted a strategy to delay the signing of its trade agreement with the USSR, the Soviets sought to limit Yugoslavia's ability to establish international protocols and privileges of independent statehood. The Kremlin, for example, agreed to Yugoslavia's request for the right to engage in flights over occupied Berlin only in principle. By insisting in March 1948 that the Yugoslavs sign an official agreement with Aeroflot before the privileges could take effect, the Soviets effectively denied the Yugoslav request.⁶⁴ Overall, the Soviets intentionally prolonged the signing of the discussed Agreement on Air Transport and Aviation Affairs that would have authorized overflights.⁶⁵

On 18 March 1948 Nikolai Bulganin, Moscow's Minister of Defence informed General Barskov, the Head of the Soviet Military Mission in Yugoslavia, that the Soviet government would abruptly and immediately withdraw all its military advisors and instructors from Yugoslavia because "they [we]re surrounded by hostility ... they [we]re not treated in a friendly fashion in Yugoslavia".⁶⁶ The following day the Soviet government called for the withdrawal of all civilian experts as well. Tito's leadership cried foul and claimed that they were "amazed and [could] not understand" why the Soviets would withdraw their military personnel without any discussion or prior complaint.⁶⁷

In fact, a new Soviet complaint was at hand, and it also concerned the economy. The Soviet commercial representative Lebedev had made inquiries to Yugoslav Assistant Minister Boris Kidrič about Yugoslav economic data. The Yugoslavs had simply refused to surrender any economic and industrial statistics to the Soviets. Instead, they referred the Soviet representatives to the highest level of the Central Committee. These referrals were diversionary tactics both to prevent further Soviet espionage and to hold off trade and economic cooperation with the Soviets.

The original Western analysis of the Tito-Stalin split suggested that the strains on the Soviet-Yugoslav relationship grew heavier in early 1948 because of dissension over a future Balkan Federation.⁶⁸ However, the exponential growth of Soviet frustration with Belgrade was also a result of Yugoslavia's tacit refusal to sign a Trade and Technical Assistance Agreement.⁶⁹ The trade agreement was a political test for the Yugoslavs, as noted above, but Stalin also

⁶³ Ibid., 77.

⁶⁴ AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/652, 46170, 10 March 1948.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/655, 20 March 1948, 16-24.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ulam, *Titoism and the Cominform*, 70.

⁶⁹ AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/653, 33, 4 February -3 April 1948.

sought secure and integrated Soviet influence in Eastern Europe, still needing resources to recover from the war and to compete with the West in the future. This agreement would have begun to link the Yugoslav economy to that of the Soviet Union to the latter's benefit. Through a trade agreement the Yugoslavs could begin making up for some of their previous political independence by contributing to the Soviet economy.

Tito raised the issue of a Trade and Technical Assistance Agreement in a letter to Molotov on 20 March 1948, following the Soviet withdrawal of its technical and civilian experts. These exchanges became an airing of old grievances that culminated in Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform on 28 June. Molotov left Popović in Moscow with no indication that the conflict could be resolved. Yugoslav representation there faced increasing difficulties itself from late March 1948. It did not receive even delayed replies to the simplest requests, including the licensing and transport of Yugoslav cars from Eastern Europe to Moscow for the delegation's use. The Soviets also refused to send the previously promised construction experts from the Soviet Union for the urgent task of starting construction on the huge housing project in the Yugoslav capital called New Belgrade. Popović concluded (and informed Belgrade) incredulously that not only the Soviet Foreign Ministry but also the entire Soviet governmental bureaucracy had clearly been instructed to complicate relations with Yugoslavia.⁷⁰

Summarizing the Split

Earlier work on the Tito-Stalin split was done largely in the absence of official Soviet documents. While Kardelj and Djilas provided first-hand accounts of the events from within Tito's immediate circle, both works function as biographies intended to deliver unambiguous political messages. In contrast, since the end of the Soviet Union work by Russian historians has focused narrowly on foreign policy documents from the archives. The so-called "let the documents speak" approach, described by Norman Naimark in his two essays on post-Soviet Russian historiography, has been applied to the Tito-Stalin split and presents facts emerging from archival party documents alone.⁷¹ Attempts to analyze Soviet goals and policy towards Yugoslavia beyond what is directly stated in these documents (now compiled into large Russian volumes on Eastern Europe) are less frequent. By limiting themselves to the details in the documents, Russian scholars attempt to minimize the ideological agendas that distorted scholarly work in the Soviet period. Only very broad positions rel-

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Norman Naimark "Cold War Studies and New Archival Materials on Stalin" *The Russian Review* 61, January 2002; Norman Naimark, "Post-Soviet, also see Sheila Fitzpatrick: "Politics as Practise: Thoughts on a New Soviet Political History" *Kritika* 5, 1, Winter 2004.

evant to Soviet engagement in Eastern Europe immediately after the war are developed in current Russian scholarship on the Tito-Stalin conflict. The collections of documents assembled by T.V. Volokitina et. al. join Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov's volume *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War* to argue that the forceful subjugation of East European governments was not Stalin's goal in the immediate postwar period.⁷²

The Tito-Stalin conflict is viewed as the result of failed Soviet attempts to contain Tito's aggressive regional territorial advances in the Balkans. According to the Volokitina volumes, Stalin feared that Eastern Europe might defy the Soviet Union if inspired by Western collusion with Yugoslavia. Documents published from the Soviet archives reveal an awareness that in many East European countries the public had not reacted well to the news of the expulsion of the CPY from the Cominform in June 1948.⁷³ The Volokitina studies on the split clearly describe Soviet strategy toward Yugoslavia as part of a broader plan for Eastern Europe illustrating the Soviet interpretation of the region's interconnectedness. By this view, Moscow's foreign policy vis-à-vis the West was pragmatic but the Communist political elites in Eastern Europe at this time pushed ahead to adopt the political systems under Soviet sponsorship that eventually became a burden to the Soviet Union. They were therefore also partially responsible for their adoption.⁷⁴

In contrast to Volokitina, the veteran Russian historian Vladimir Gibianskii repeatedly engaged with the Tito-Stalin split and insists that Soviet hegemony over the East European Communist parties had already been defined as a primary goal during the war.⁷⁵ Gibianskii also argues that, for the Yugoslav leadership, the Soviet Union was a "natural center" and its primary source of necessary political support during the postwar period.⁷⁶ The crux of Gibianskii's argument is that the Yugoslavs and the Soviets were close allies and partners "right down to the beginning of 1948".⁷⁷ While he concludes that the Soviet Union gave other East European countries even less favorable evaluations at this time, his sources nevertheless testify to a conflictual relationship between the Yugoslav and Soviet leaderships.

In addition to uncertainties about the background to the split, the opening of the Soviet archives has provided a broader perspective on Soviet foreign

⁷² T.V. Volokitina et. al., *Vostochnaia Evropa v dokumentakh*; T.V. Volokitina et. al., *Moskva i Vostochnaia Evropa*, 53.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 501.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷⁵ Leonid Gibianskii, "Sovetskii Soiuz i novaia Yugoslaviia, 1941-1947 gg.," in V. K. Volkov. (Moscow: Nauka, 1987) and Leonid Gibianskii Ed. *U istokov "sotsialisticheskogo sodruzhestva": SSSR i vostochnoevropskie strany v 1944-1949* (Moscow: Nauka, 1995).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

policy and Stalin's political circle.⁷⁸ Drawing on these documents and memoirs, A. S. Anikeev's 2002 study *Kak Tito ot Stalin Ushel* (How Tito Walked Away from Stalin) has concentrated on the triangular relations between Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and the United States in the early Cold War.⁷⁹ According to Anikeev, the Partisan leadership already made plans during the war for a future policy that would allow for Yugoslavia to play a leading role in the region. Anikeev strongly denies any surprise at the Tito-Stalin split or early pretense for Yugoslav obedience to Soviet leadership. He describes Tito as "arrogant" for interfering with the traditional hierarchical relations between Communist parties that were subjects to the Soviet party. Before the split, Anikeev argues that the Kremlin and Stalin had unwittingly acknowledged the Yugoslav claim for primacy by "entrusting" it with control over political leadership in Albania and allowed Tito to support the Greek Communist insurgency. Anikeev further argues that these privileges were not to be misinterpreted, as perhaps Tito did, to mean that Moscow was granting Yugoslavia a free hand in the Balkans. Anikeev maintains that the Yugoslav-American rapprochement followed the split largely as a consequence of necessity for Yugoslavia to overcome the economic blockade. These Russian historians today see an unfortunate causal relationship between postwar Soviet expansion into Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.⁸⁰

Against this background I argue that the Soviet justifications for the break with the Yugoslavs had been well established within the Stalin-Tito correspondence from mid-March onwards. Moreover, Tito, Djilas and Kardelj collectively decided upon Djilas's and Kardelj's return from Moscow in early February, to refuse a trade agreement. Surprise and disbelief as a response to the expulsion was nonetheless the official policy and rhetoric of the Tito-led regime.⁸¹ Yet, serious conflict with the Soviet Union was **neither sudden, unforeseen** by the Yugoslavs, nor unintended by the Soviets. The expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform was a Soviet attempt to replace the Yugoslav leadership with a more subservient one in order to consolidate the Soviet bloc in 1948. It was not, as has been for example suggested by Leonid Gibianskii, the incidental consequence of a rogue individual in the Balkan Section of the Soviet Foreign Ministry.⁸²

⁷⁸ A. I. Mikoian *Tak bylo: Razmyshleniia o minuvshem*, (Moscow: Vagrius, 1999) L. M. Kaganovich: *Pamiatnye zapiski rabocheho kommunisto-bol'shevika, profsouz'nogo, partiinogo i sovet'sko-gosudarstvennogo rabotnika* (Moscow: Vagrius, 1996).

⁷⁹ A.S. Anikeev, *Kak Tito ot Stalin Ushel: iugoslaviia, sssr I ssha v nachal'nyi period kholodnoi voiny 1945-1957* (Moscow: Institute for Slavonic Studies RAS, 2002).

⁸⁰ Alter Litvin and John Keep, *Stalinism: Russian and Western Views at the Turn of the Millennium* (London: Routledge, 2006,) 82.

⁸¹ Dedijer, *The Battle Stalin Lost*, 130-132.

⁸² Gibianskii, "The Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict", 231.

Relations between Tito and Stalin had been strained since 1941, as we have seen. Relations between the Yugoslav and Soviet Foreign Ministries in trying to establish protocol for diplomatic relations had been strained since 1945. Relations between economic representatives in Moscow and Belgrade had been frozen since early 1948. Although the Tito-Stalin correspondence in the spring of 1948 assumed the form of personal attacks, their collision course was not due to a simple conflict between powerful leaders. Although Tito became unsympathetic to Stalin personally, the Tito-Stalin split resulted from broader and more fundamental disagreements. The Yugoslavs simply refused to assume a subsidiary role in relation to the Soviet Union, one requiring Soviet surveillance of the Yugoslav military, and oversight of foreign policy. Yugoslav resistance to Soviet control interfered with Soviet goals of forming a unified security and military defence bloc, or buffer zone, in Eastern Europe. Their resistance also irritatingly, if less significantly, interfered with Soviet economic goals.

Illustratively, in response to Stalin's wild accusations against members of his inner circle, Tito's April 13 letter explained in very stark terms, to Stalin how Tito's domestic future did not depend on Soviet good will. Tito wrote that Yugoslav popular support for the Soviet Union, in a country of many Orthodox Christians, did not come naturally:

“Among many Soviet people there exists the mistaken idea that the sympathy of the broad masses in Yugoslavia towards the USSR came of itself, on the basis of some traditions which go back to the time of Tsarist Russia. This is not so.”⁸³

Tito had already warned Stalin in March that the support for the Soviet Union had to be earned. Now, his April letter elaborated “Love for the USSR did not come of itself. It was stubbornly inculcated into the masses of the Party and the people in general by the present leaders of the new Yugoslavia, including the first rank, the very ones so falsely accused in the letter”. Such comments reminded the Soviets that, in contrast to other East European countries, in Yugoslavia there was essentially no political opposition to the CPY. Tito also bragged about Yugoslavia's stature: “the great reputation of our Party, won not only in our country but in the whole world, on the basis of the results it has obtained, speaks for itself”. Moreover, Tito threatened Soviet authority by speaking about a larger Yugoslav role within the future Communist bloc: “we are also of the opinion that there are many specific aspects in the social transformation of Yugoslavia which can be of benefit to the revolutionary development in other countries, and are already being used... We are attempting to apply the best forms of work in the realization of socialism”. It is clear from these statements that Tito had, since early 1945, very little intention to subordinate the Yugoslav regime that they were forging to Soviet management. Collectively,

⁸³ Ibid.

Tito's leadership were a hardened group of Party cadres from various ethnic and class backgrounds who survived the war by making high-risk military and political decisions. Having taken those heavy risks and won, most of them were ready to follow Tito and Kardelj in defying Stalin and Molotov in the spring of 1948.

Ljubodrag Dimić
University of Belgrade

YUGOSLAV-SOVIET RELATIONS: THE VIEW OF THE WESTERN DIPLOMATS (1944-1946)

Abstract: The development of the Yugoslav –Soviet relations is analyzed in this paper on the basis of reports and views of Western Diplomats, mostly British. The evolution of the British views is due to the progression of the Partisan movement both on the battlefield and in International relations. Gradually the British Government had to accept the military and political victory of Tito's movement and to officially recognize the new communist Yugoslavia. The common Allied policy on Yugoslavia, confirmed during the meetings of leaders of UK, USA and USSR, and even in bilateral accords between Stalin and Churchill, ended in British analysis, in a complete Soviet victory. The incapacity of the British to foster enough forces to fight the establishment of communist rule in Yugoslavia forced them to use diplomacy that proved to be largely insufficient. The ideological concord between Yugoslav and Soviet communists led inexorably to the alignment of Yugoslavia with the USSR.

Keywords: *Stalin, Churchill, Tito, Yugoslavia, communist government*

After the victories of the Red Army at Stalingrad and Kursk and the successful operations of the Allies in North Africa, the question of opening a second front in Europe once again came to the fore. Thus the strategic and military importance of the Balkans increased and interest in the military movements which were there fighting against the occupiers intensified. Under those circumstances, the Western Allies, especially Great Britain, could no longer ignore the military strength of the National Liberation Movement in Yugoslavia (NOP). During the final years of the war, London became aware that it was no longer either the crucial or the only factor influencing the developments in the Balkans. The legitimacy of the Yugoslav government in exile, which had, regardless of all differences of opinion on the situation in Yugoslavia, nonetheless enforced British policy in the Balkans, was virtually extinct. Insufficient military activity and the defeat they suffered in spring of 1943 in head-to-head

confrontation with the forces of NOP meant that the Chetniks lost their status of a respectable military force, while collaboration with the occupying forces denied them the status of legitimate champions of the anti-fascist resistance movement and further discredited them in the eyes of the British. On the other hand, the social and national foundations that the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had rested upon were being erased every day, reflecting the fact that the process of revolutionary changes, which worried the British and threatened their interests in Yugoslavia, was well under way. Only one of the conflicting movements in Yugoslavia could respond affirmatively to the requests of the Allies for increased military involvement in the fight against enemy: the National Liberation Movement.¹

In the spring of 1943, faced with the military defeat of the Chetniks and the fact that the policy of “reconciliation” between the two antagonistic movements finally ended in utter failure, Great Britain was forced to redefine its political tactics in Yugoslavia.² London adopted the policy of “equal distance” (“equidistance” or “dual tracks”), which included the continuation of existing relationships with the Chetniks, but at the same time supported establishing and developing links with the National Liberation Movement. The first “official” contacts between the Supreme People’s Liberation Army Staff and the British command in the Middle East were established by the sending of the military mission led by captains Bill Stewart and Bill Deakin in May 1943, while the arrival of Fitzroy MacLaine’s mission in September 1943 marked the *de facto* recognition of the People’s Liberation Army of Yugoslavia.³ The formal recognition of the People’s Liberation Army came slightly later, and was reflected in the secret conclusion reached at the Tehran conference that the partisans be offered help in every possible way.⁴ This decision of the “Big Three” (Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill) meant that the People’s Liberation

¹ For further discussion, see: B. Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu 1939-1945* (Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, 1992); *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije (SSSR) 1941-1945. Dokumenti i materijali* (Belgrade: Savezni ministarstvo za inostrane poslove, 1996); B. Petranović i Sl. Nešović, *Jugoslavija u ujedinjeni narodi. Tematska zbirka dokumenata* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1985); B. Krizman i B. Petranović, *Jugoslovenske vlade u izbeglištvu 1941-1945*, Vol. I-II, (Belgrade, Zagreb: Arhiv Jugoslavije, Globus, 1981); B. Petranović i Sl. Nešović, *AVNOJ i revolucija. Tematska zbirka dokumenata* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1983); B. Petranović, *Revolucija i kontrarevolucija u Jugoslaviji (1941-1945)*, Vol. I-II, (Rad: Belgrade 1983); M. Stefanovski, *Srpska politička emigracija o preuredjenju Jugoslavije 1941-1943* (Narodna knjiga: Belgrade 1988).

² Petranović, *Srbija u*, 585.

³ For more information on the aforementioned missions, see: B. Dikin, *Bojovna planina* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1973); F. Maklejn, *Rat na Balkanu* (Belgrade, Zagreb: Arhiv Jugoslavije, Globus, 1980); Petranović, *Srbija u*, 579-583; D. Biber, *Tito - Churchill. Strogo tajno* (Belgrade, Zagreb: Arhiv Jugoslavije, Globus, 1981), 29-37; *Dokumenti o spoljnoj politici SFRJ 1941-1945* (Belgrade: Jugoslovenski pregled, 1986), 471-473.

⁴ *Ujedinjene nacije. Zbornik dokumenata* (Belgrade: Arhiv za pravne i društvene nauke, 1948), 28; Sl. Nešović, *Svet o nama*, Vol. II (Belgrade: Rad, 1983), 419-421; *AVNOJ i revolucija*, 168-169.

Army, after three years of strife, finally gained recognition as an equal military factor within the anti-fascist coalition. Shortly before that, the second session of the Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation (AVNOJ) of Yugoslavia had been held on 29-30 November 1943 in the town of Jajce. Decisions that were made on that occasion – they revoked the legitimacy of the Yugoslav royal government, suspended the monarchy, proclaimed the existence of the Yugoslav Federation, constituted AVNOJ as the highest organ of government, proclaimed the establishment of the National Committee of Liberation of Yugoslavia as the provisional government of Yugoslavia – testified convincingly about the power of NLM and addressed the degree of revolutionary changes in Yugoslavia, as well as the need for the movement to be legalized and internationally recognized.⁵

The formation of the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (NKOJ), and the establishment of a parallel government marked a qualitatively new historical situation in terms of representing Yugoslavia in the anti-fascist world. The official appearance of a new political entity led by Josip Broz Tito started an “open” process in which the revolution, while being carried out in a strategic environment, sought to gain international recognition. The first steps of conducting the official foreign policy of the National Committee (NKOJ) coincided with the time when the United Kingdom had to replace the policy of “equidistance” with a new foreign policy in Yugoslavia – “the policy of compromise”. This political tactic of London, which Moscow also espoused in December 1943, became the framework in which the People's Liberation Movement began its battle for international recognition.⁶

The developments within the Allied coalition, the information sent by the representatives of the military mission Bill Deakin and Fitzroy MacLaine and the reports of Ralph Stevenson, the British ambassador in Yugoslavia, directly influenced Winston Churchill and defined the outlines of the new British policy. This new political orientation, defined as the “policy of compromise”, was underpinned by several important factors – the altered relations within the anti-fascist coalition, the situation on the Yugoslav battlefield, the military power of the People's Liberation Army, the military weakness and political disrepute of the movement led by Dragoljub Mihailović and, most importantly, the need to protect British interests in post-war Yugoslavia. In these circumstances, the British began to see Mihailović as “a burden that could no longer be borne”. According to their assessment of the situation, their rejection of the movement led by D. Mihailović substantially strengthened the position of the monarch and of the moderate circles of bourgeois politicians which gathered around the Royal Government. In Churchill's view, the only way to prevent the victory of rigid communism in post-war Yugoslavia and to preserve the

⁵ AVNOJ i revolucija, 451-452.

⁶ Petranović, *Srbija u*, 587-588.

interests of the Crown and the bourgeoisie was to renounce Mihailović.⁷ The decisions of AVNOJ (which had deprived the Royal Government of its legitimacy, declared a Yugoslav Federation and established the Partisan government of the National Committee) persuaded Churchill that the new political tactic needed to be executed quickly. This belief was strengthened by the reports of F. MacLaine, which stated that “it could clearly be seen” from the current developments in Yugoslavia that “it is headed towards the establishment of an authoritarian regime and a system based on one party rule”, but also that Tito and the Yugoslav Partisan leadership were wise enough to avoid the excesses and violence that are usually associated with such regimes.⁸

The other aspect of the “policy of compromise” created and led by Churchill pertained to efforts for “mellowing” the Communists in Yugoslavia and forcing them to comply with “previous conditions” and grant concessions. For British politics, that meant building trust by political means, along with placing emphasis on military contribution and suppression of ideological orientation, and creating a foothold that could guarantee the protection of British interests in a potentially victorious movement. Churchill thought that if the CPY could be forced to renounce “leftist radicalism” and espouse “real politik”, a viable constitutional continuity of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia could be secured, while British interests in the Balkans would be guaranteed protection. In that aspect of the “policy of compromise”, Churchill was counting on the influence which Moscow enjoyed amongst Yugoslav Communists, but on the fact that the “revolution” needed to strengthen its foreign policy positions. In the process of “gathering” together moderate bourgeois forces and “mellow” communists, Moscow and London played separate parts.⁹ W. Churchill did not in fact appraise the situation in Yugoslavia in terms of Yugoslav-British relations, but rather through the prism of the relationship between Britain and the USSR, while Yugoslavia was simply a pawn in the politics of the great powers.¹⁰ He did not perceive the Yugoslav Communists as an independent political entity, but rather as a segment of the unified and monolithic world of Communism centred in Moscow. This approach, which ignored the interests and particularities of an authentic and autonomous revolution – as the development of events would go on to show – led him to misjudge Yugoslav reality,

⁷ On the 2 January 1944, Churchill wrote to Anthony Eaden, Foreign Minister of United Kingdom, that D. Mihailović represents „a stone around the neck of the young King, and that he has no chances until he gets rid of Mihailović“. V. Čerčil, *Memoari*, Vol. V (Belgrade: Tanjug, 1948), 449; Petranović, *Srbija u*, 591.

⁸ More on this: F. Maklejn, *Rat na Balkanu*; Biber, *Tito – Churchill*, 162-165.

⁹ Sovetsko – anglijskie otnosenia vo vremia Velikoi otecestvenoi vojni 1941-1945, vol. II (Moscow: Izdatelstvo policeskoi literaturi, 1983); Jugoslavija i ujedinjeni narodi, Belgrade 1985, 204-205.

¹⁰ Čerčil, *Memoari*, Vol. VI, 71.72r.

misinterpret the relations between Yugoslavia and USSR, and make erroneous decisions in the conduct of policy in the Balkans.

During the final years of the Second World War, Soviet Union continued to conduct “real politik” – being mindful of the balance of power within the coalition of anti-fascist forces, it supported Winston Churchill’s “policy of compromise”. The complexity of the Soviet position was reflected in the fact that the *real politik* of maintaining good relations within the Allied coalition demanded that the Soviet government work together with the British on resolving the Yugoslav question, despite divergent interests and the two different internal bases of support within the Partisan and the Chetnik movements respectively. In Moscow, the dominant opinion was that, considering the existing relations within the anti-fascist coalition, the adoption of the „policy of compromise” would open a real possibility for the National Liberation Movement to emerge victorious from the war and gain international recognition. The convenience of this situation was reflected in the fact that the USSR was able to help the National Liberation Movement without bringing any harm to its relations with Britain at that stage of the war.¹¹ In addition, this was also congruent with the ideological visions of Josef V. Stalin, who was convinced that the revolution could succeed only with the help of the USSR and the Red Army. Inconveniences were caused by the fact that the joint Allied policy had to be implemented by exerting pressure on Tito and forcing him to agree to various concessions.

For London, “the policy of compromise” was the result of the misjudgment that the Balkans didn’t have enough military force to prevent the victory of the Communist movement. At the same time, the existing circumstances forced Moscow to support and instruct the CPY through secret channels on how to keep its policy in tune with foreign policy interests if the USSR while publically defending the principles of consistent anti-fascism and affirming the international position of NOP in its struggle against fascist invaders. The fact that the NOP had demonstrated consistent and unwavering anti-fascism in its constant battles against the invader, which had from the very first day of war been seen as “the universal duty of Allied forces”, facilitated Moscow’s position and allowed for the Soviet support of NOP to be seen as completely legitimate.¹²

The arrival of the Soviet military mission to the People’s Liberation Army Supreme Headquarters in February 1944 further strengthened the position of new Yugoslavia, but caused worry for the British. The Soviet military aid, which had been expected to arrive ever since 1941, held great political significance. The British assessed the military mission which “entered into Tito’s headquarters” as “powerful”. They were convinced that following the establish-

¹¹ More on this in :*Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*.

¹² Ibid.

ment of military contacts “the Russians would immediately push for Yugoslavia with Communists and Tito at its helm and that they would discard any objections to that as “undemocratic”. The British officers associated the arrival of the Soviet military mission with what they perceived as a “recent Russian hostility towards us”. Expansion of military cooperation was also facilitated by the fact that a Yugoslav mission, headed by Velimir Terzic and Milovan Djilas, had been sent to the Soviet Union in April 1944.¹³

The existence of two parallel governments meant that the National Committee was unable to participate in international affairs and pursue its foreign policy position, so all international relations of the new Yugoslavia had to be conducted solely through Josip Broz Tito. Tito consulted Moscow before the beginning of, as well as during, the correspondence he established with V. Churchill in early 1944. Discussions with the British began only after he received approval from the USSR for that step. Negotiations concerning the international recognition of the new Yugoslavia were thus conducted in coordination with the Soviets. Concessions which during that process the British were forced to make were also aligned with the Soviet side. Yet, even though the relationship had been very dynamic, Josip Broz Tito directly addressed Stalin for the first time as late as summer 1944.¹⁴ From this letter, it is evident that he was distrustful of the British and the West, that he felt that the Soviet Union and the Red Army were a powerful patron, and that he was aware that the arrival of the Red Army in the Balkans brought closure to the realities of war in Yugoslavia, in which the NOP would go on to play an important role.

* * *

In seeking a compromise between the old, legitimate centre of authority (government in exile) and the new political entity (the National Committee), London and Moscow, despite all differences and suspicions, played together. Yet each of the forces sought to pursue an independent policy and put itself in an advantageous position. This process simultaneously took place on several levels and in several stages.

During the first half of the year 1944, the leadership of the National Liberation Movement, influenced by international circumstances and taking into account the international dimension of the Yugoslav revolution, was forced to accept “the policy of compromise”. At issue was the assessment, made under pressure from Moscow, that at this stage they should secure the achievements that the NOP had procured by then. Agreeing to conduct “real politik”, which

¹³ The National Archives (hereinafter TNA), Public Records Office, London, (hereinafter PRO), Foreign Office (hereinafter FO)-371/67347, Churchill to Eden 1 April 1944; Rappports of Velimira Terzić and Milovana Djilas see in: *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*, 386-505

¹⁴ *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*, 446-448

had previously been unknown to the Yugoslav Communists, meant a radical departure from the revolutionary course which AVNOJ – a symbol of revolutionary change – had represented. At the same time, under pressure from London and Moscow, the government of Prime Minister Bozidar Purić, in which Dragoljub Mihailović served as the Minister of Defense, was brought down in May 1944. The monarch was forced to “get rid of Purić” and to “refuse all contact with Mihailović”. The main objective of the British policy was to get Petar II Karadjordjević to agree to “form an interim government which Tito would not find odious”. In Churchill’s opinion, that was the only “faint hope” for building a bridge between Tito and the King. It was the British who decided to appoint Ivan Šubašić, the former Ban of the Croatian Banovina, as the new prime minister of the Royal Government. This “opened” the possibility for establishing first contact between the new president of the Royal Government and representatives of the National Committee. British politicians defined the time which would be needed for this meeting to happen a sort of “where he found himself after the assault on Drvar separation of the past from the present”. Trying to “mellow” Tito, Churchill asked him to give a chance to the government of Šubašić for the sake of the “common cause and our relationship with you” and to refrain from “publicly dismissing it as a potential future partner”.¹⁵

Churchill thought that Tito’s stay on the island of Vis, where he found himself after the assault on Drvar, provided an ideal opportunity for arranging talks with Šubašić. He believed that the British were finally dealt “a good hand of cards” and stressed that they now only had to “play it properly”. He requested that a meeting be organized urgently and noted that Tito “would not remain long in our friendly hands on Vis” and that “there was a danger that he could hurriedly leave”. For Churchill, the meeting between Tito and Šubašić was “a golden opportunity” to “reach an agreement for a united Yugoslavia”. At the same time, Churchill considered this the last chance to save “the unity of Yugoslavia” and salvage “what little hope remained for the return of King Peter to power”.¹⁶

In mid-June 1944, an agreement was reached on the island of Vis between the President of the National Committee of Liberation of Yugoslavia and President of the Royal Government (the first Tito-Šubašić agreement). The basic provisions of the agreement were as follows: the Royal Yugoslav government would be composed of “progressive democratic elements” which had

¹⁵ Archives of Yugoslavia (hereinafter AJ), CK KPJ – KI, 1944/16, 17; TNA, PRO, FO-371/67347, Churchill to Eden 28 March 1944, 1 April 1944; Churchill to Cadogan, 12 April 1944; Churchill’s note, 12 April 1944; Churchill’s message to Roosevelt 18 May 1944; Roosevelt to Churchill 18 May 1944; Tito to Churchill 21 May 1944; TNA, PRO, Prem. 3, 511/ 2, 12; J.B. Tito, *Govori i članci*, vol. 20 (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1970) 210-212; *Jugoslavija i ujedinjeni narodi*, 204, 211, 245-246.

¹⁶ TNA, PRO, FO-371/67347, Churchill to Eden 5 June 1944; War office to general Wilson; Churchill to War Office 10 June 1944.

not been discredited in the fight against the People's Liberation Movement; it would systematically offer help to the People's Liberation Army; the issue of monarchy and form of government would finally be resolved after the liberation of the country; the Royal Yugoslav government would acknowledge all achievements of the national liberation struggle carried out by AVNOJ; the People's Liberation Army and their condemnations of traitors "who had publicly or secretly collaborated with the enemy" would also be acknowledged; a call would be issued to the entire nation to join the ranks of the People's Liberation Army. These provisions constituted a direct blow to the movement of D. Mihailović, but also eliminated the old center of power embodied in Serbian bourgeoisie. On the island of Vis, it was decided that the establishment of a single government would be carried out as soon as the conditions allow it. The issue of the future form of governance was not discussed, out of international and domestic political considerations.¹⁷ Simultaneously, the negotiations between Tito and Šubašić meant that the decisions of AVNOJ had been significantly revised, because one of the negotiators was none other than the prime minister of the government in exile, which AVNOJ had previously stripped of its legitimacy and right to represent the peoples of Yugoslavia abroad. These changes in the political course of the NOP were justified by various advantages, such as obtaining the necessary Allied help in the closing military operations, international support over border issues, the legalization of the changes that took place during the war years and other matters. Accepting the "policy of compromise" entailed the adaptation and integration of the NOP into the framework of interests of the policy pursued by the great powers and suppression and abandonment of all initiatives that were characteristic of an authentic revolution that does not conform to the needs of Moscow and London.

In August 1944, with the approval of Moscow, Josip Broz Tito met with Winston Churchill in Naples. On that occasion, Churchill demanded that the Yugoslav Communists end the civil war and issue a "statement" confirming that they would not impose Communism nor directly influence the free expression of will of the people regarding the future government and legal system (regime) of Yugoslavia using armed forces.¹⁸ These attempts to impose "preconditions" and to extort concessions were carried out in accordance with London's judgment that the renewal of a strong, democratic and independent Yugoslavia was in the best British interest in the Balkans. In accordance with that and independently of the relations within the anti-fascist coalition, W.

¹⁷ TNA, PRO, FO, 371/67347, Churchill to Foreign Office, containing, a highly secret message of Stevenson from the island of Vis; S. Nešović, *Svet o nama*, Vol. III (Belgrade: Rad, 1983), 343-373.

¹⁸ Biber, *Tito – Churchill*, 274-282 (Proceedings of the talks between Churchill and Marshall Tito, 12 August 1944 and Proceedings of the Conference, Churchill – Tito); *Jugoslavija i Ujedinjeni narodi*, 255 (Churchill to Roosevelt about his meeting with Tito and Šubašić, 14 August 1944).

Churchill tried by all means to alienate the Yugoslav Communists from Moscow and rid them of their “international and dogmatic Communist” beliefs. In fall 1944, the British Prime Minister pointed out that in the Serbian part of Yugoslavia “200,000 Serbian households have strong anti-German sentiments, but are also firmly pro-Serbian... naturally, as landowners, they hold views which oppose the theory of Karl Marx.”¹⁹ Churchill’s attempts to procure some kind of special treatment and status for Serbia and to pit it against the National Liberation Movement were in fact meant to strengthen the British political foothold in the Balkans on the eve of his meeting with Stalin, which had been scheduled to take place in October 1944 in Moscow.²⁰ Even in the final years of the war, Churchill did not abandon his plans to unite all military forces in Yugoslavia.

But it was not only Churchill who tried, in accord with the Soviet Union, to secure his own interests in Yugoslavia during the final months of the war. In the second half of September 1944, Tito secretly flew to Moscow from Vis. That move took the British by surprise and provided another reason for the lasting distrust of London and Washington towards Tito. The meetings with Stalin revolved around two topics: the future military cooperation between the People’s Liberation Army and the Red Army on Yugoslav soil and the international status of the National Liberation Movement. Based on his agreement with Stalin, Tito accepted that Bulgarian units also take part in the battles for the liberation of Yugoslavia under the operational command of the Red Army. Josip Broz considered this consent, which had been extracted from him, to be a form of “Internationalist help” extended to the government of the Fatherland Front. It was also agreed that the Red Army would fictitiously request the approval of the National Committee for entry into the territory of Yugoslavia. Western analysts were aware that these meetings with Stalin, whose advice and suggestions were invariably accepted, would have a lasting impact on the socio-political processes in Yugoslavia and that they were in fact part of the political mechanism for adopting the Soviet model of development. At the same time, Tito’s stay in Moscow represented a *de facto* international recognition of the National Liberation Movement and the revolutionary change of government that had been carried out.²¹

¹⁹ Churchill used the same arguments in his speech in the House of Commons of the Westminster Parliament, 24 May 1944 see in: Biber, *Tito – Churchill*, 162-165.

²⁰ About the meeting in Moscow see the letter of Deputy Commissioner for Foreign Affairs of USSR, A.J. Vichinsky to Soviet ambassador in Great Britain, F.G. Gusev of 21 October 1944, in: *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*, 588.

²¹ Military Archives, Belgrade, (hereinafter, VA), NOR, K-26, 10-16/13, 10-21/13, 8-28/8, 10-39/13, 8-2/8; AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/101; V. Dedijer, *Dokumenti 1948*, Vol. I (Belgrade: Rad, 1979), 27-30; J.B. Tito, *Sabrana dela*, Vol. XXIV (Belgrade: Komunist, 1982), 18, 84 *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*, 527, 557, 579, 592- 593.

The fact that the Red Army had penetrated the borders of Yugoslavia did not only mean military assistance in the struggle for the final liberation of the country, but also signified the piercing of the “strategic environment” in which the national liberation struggle had been fought from the beginning of the war. In the letters addressed to J. V. Stalin and V. Molotov on July 5th 1944, in regard to the British policy Tito stressed that the People’s Liberation Movement was “in great need of your assistance for resolving the question of Serbia, which is very important for us because the ultimate success in the creation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia depends on it.” In addition, Josip Broz warily suggested the following: “If you think it opportune and necessary, I’m willing to go there in early August. But I would not want you to interpret this as immodesty on my part, but only as a sincere effort to resolve certain issues before the peace negotiations begin and form an opinion on them because that would, in my view, be in the interests of all Balkan countries and the Soviet Union”²². The visit to Moscow which he had intimated in the letter – and which would indeed take place a few months later, in September 1944 – was a way to, as some historians note, “brilliantly disrupt” the balance that the policy of compromise had brought.

In October 1944, two events of great importance for the circumstances in Yugoslavia occurred and almost merged into a single event. At a meeting held in Moscow on 18th of October 1944, the governments of the USSR and Great Britain “agreed” to “conduct a joint policy in Yugoslavia in order to rally all forces in the fight against the retreating Germans and in order to solve the internal problems of Yugoslav people by uniting the Yugoslav royal government and the National Liberation Movement”. In Moscow, it was agreed that Moscow and London would have equal influence in Yugoslavia.²³ This directly paved the way for a new agreement between Tito and Šubašić.²⁴ But just two days later, on the 20th of October 1944, it became clear that the British policy of equal political influence in Yugoslavia had suffered defeat. The Belgrade operation victory was a joint triumph of the Red Army and the People’s Liberation Movement in the struggle against fascism. This event meant that the Partisan movement had won a decisive battle for Serbia and defeated its primary enemy in the Yugoslav revolution – the Chetnik movement. A significant part of the collaborationist and quisling forces was defeated. The influence of the propaganda of the Serbian political emigree community was eliminated and thus the essence of the British policy, which had previously endured on the assumption

²² AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/566; *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*, 463-465.

²³ TNA, PRO, Prem. 3, 512/9, Eden to Sargent, regarding the agreement with Stalin on the common policy towards Yugoslavia, 11 October 1944; *Communiqué* about the British and Soviet talks in Moscow and their common policy towards Yugoslavia, 23 October 1944, in *Jugoslavija i ujedinjeni narodi*, 428.

²⁴ About the Belgrade agreement see: S. Nešović, *Svet o nama*, Vol. III, 535-547.

that Serbia was a stronghold of anti-communism, was stripped of any meaning. The Yugoslav Communists considered the red Army its main “class ally”. Therefore, its presence in Yugoslavia (although it lasted only several months) inevitably encouraged the political ambitions of Yugoslav Communists and encouraged their Bolshevistic views. The West overlooked the fact that in September 1944 the Red Army set foot in a country which had already established its own revolutionary rule, from the NOP to the AVNOJ, as well as that there were strong armed forces, raised without any outside help, willing to unconditionally sacrifice their lives for freedom. The main strongholds of feelings of independence of the NOP were the institutions of the new government and the national army.

On November 1st 1944, following the visit of Josip Broz Tito to the Soviet Union, the meeting between Stalin and Churchill in Moscow and the decisive battle for Serbia, the second meeting between Tito and Šubašić took place in Belgrade. The agreement they signed stipulated the international-legal continuity of Yugoslavia. After the war, the people would have an opportunity to decide what form of government would be implemented, but that would not have any impact on the formation of Democratic Federal Yugoslavia. In terms of international law, they would keep its previous status. King Peter II Karadjordjević remained banned from returning to the country. It was reasserted that his powers would be transferred to a royal regent in his absence. Šubašić and the West received guarantees from Tito that no kind of communist system would be implemented in Yugoslavia and that he would not impose the rule of a “party of the fellow-minded”, which was interpreted as an undisputed political gain. They also considered the statement “the monarchy is not an obstacle to Cooperation” to be an important concession, as well as the fact that Tito agreed that talks on crucial political issues be postponed until the end of the war. Assessing the importance of the second agreement between Tito and Šubašić, which they had themselves determined, the Soviet and British governments concluded that the “agreement is prudent”.²⁵

In early 1945, when Churchill announced that London and Moscow would conduct a “joint policy” in Yugoslavia, Washington found itself excluded and bitterly remarked that there was no need to “further delude ourselves” that the three major Allied powers “could act in Yugoslavia on an equal footing”. The American diplomats thought that, regardless of “the presence of Soviet forces and Tito’s evident communist inclinations”, neither the British nor the Soviets had shown any real interest in Yugoslav matters, but had treated this

²⁵ TNA, PRO, FO-371/48865, The Annex of Belgrade Agreement of Tito – Subašić about elections for the Constitutional Assembly; TNA, PRO, FO-371/48865, Tito’s response to Churchill’s message, 21 December 1944; S. Nešović, *Svet o nama*, Vol. III, 535-547; *Jugoslavija i ujedinjeni narodi*, 435; *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*, 605-606, 612, 614, 631, 643-644r; Petranović, *Srbija u*, 587, 611, 622-632, 649-651.

country as a playground for conducting their own policy in Eastern Europe. It was also stressed that “the Soviet government did not invest too much effort in finding out what the United States thought about the Yugoslav situation”. The attempts of the British “to keep up with the Russians” was also noted, as well as their willingness to include the USA in their unsuccessful policy so as to disguise “the actions of the British and Soviet forces in the Balkans and force the U.S. to share responsibility when the public finds out what the true circumstances in Yugoslavia are and which kind of governance the AVNOJ intends to implement”. The only policy for Yugoslavia that Washington considered correct was governed by the intent “to achieve the highest level of accord among Yugoslavs and ensure that those problems would not cause discord among the Allies.”²⁶

In February 1945, the participants of the Crimean Conference gave certain recommendations to the leadership of the Liberation Movement which stipulated that AVNOJ be expanded to include members of the national assembly of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from December 1938. The request to include them in the revolutionary assembly essentially meant recognition of the AVNOJ. The Allied leaders also requested that AVNOJ must be made up of members who had not discredited themselves by cooperating with the occupiers, which narrowed the maneuvering space of the bourgeois political forces. The British insisted on maintaining the constitutional continuity of Yugoslavia and thus it became the condition that had to be fulfilled in order to legalize revolutionary changes and eliminate the parallelism of governments²⁷. Accepting the great powers’ recommendations did not mean that they would necessarily be consistently implemented; it allowed for the possibility to “adapt” and “modify” the imposed solutions at a later stage, according to historical circumstances. This was in fact done in July 1945. Faced with a choice between two options – to accept the recommendation of the Crimean Conference in its entirety and include representatives elected in 1938 in the AVNOJ or to reject this “suggestion” and to fill the seats in the AVNOJ with delegates and representatives of various political parties and groups, the leadership of the Yugoslav Revolution opted to take the middle road.

The Provisional Government of the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia was established on 7 March 1945.²⁸ Its formation terminated the parallelism of governments which had previously been in place. For the Communists, the fact that bourgeois politicians participated in the provisional government did not mean that they would split their power with this bourgeois group. Tito

²⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, (hereinafter FRUS), 1945, vol. V, 1174, “The Interest of the US for the creation of the Government of Yugoslavia”, 7 January 1945; *Ibid.*, 1192-1194, “Memo by Canon, the Head of the Department for South Europe”, 29 January 1945.

²⁷ *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*, 683-687.

²⁸ *Jugoslavija i Ujedinjeni narodi*, 321-326; *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*, 698.

accepted London's suggestion that Milan Grol be included in the new government so that it would contain a prominent representative of Serbian bourgeoisie. The Soviets, in turn, considered Grol to be Serbian nationalist, supporter of the monarchy and a politician who would hamper the government's work. Tito considered the inclusion of a part of bourgeois politicians in government, especially the leader of the Democratic Party Milan Grol, to be a concession to the British, but also an opportunity for "breaking the bloc of Serbian reaction", as well as isolating and gaining control over his most influential political opponents. The final composition of the Provisional Government, in which the Communists held all key ministries, was the result of the Communist Party's own judgment and was not influenced by "consultation" with the USSR. Such "autonomous" behaviour of Yugoslav communists was criticized in Moscow.²⁹

The Declaration of the new government, issued on March 9th 1945, was also drawn up autonomously. In this document, the Government stated that Yugoslavia was not "an accidental creation, but a historical necessity" and "a vital need" of the Yugoslav peoples. Continuity with the policy conducted by the National Committee reflected their view that the Government should rest upon "the national democratic achievements of our peoples" formulated at the at the Second Session of AVNOJ. The situation in which the government found itself did not significantly reduce "the revolutionary-democratic sentiment" of the program. For the CPY, the situation created by the formation of the government was a temporary and passing phase in the development of the Yugoslav revolution, caused by pragmatic reasons of foreign policy and the nature of domestic politics. Moscow officials described the views expressed in the formal Declaration as "not entirely satisfactory" and "colourless" primarily because these views did not put enough emphasis on other the Slavonic countries and the USSR.³⁰

The Soviet side rejected the efforts of the Communist Party leadership to smooth over the misunderstandings about contents of the Declaration and the inclusion of Milan Grol in the government by sending a representative to Moscow. At the same time, at the meeting of the Politburo Central Committee of the Communist Party, it was stated that the lack of consultation with Moscow on such important issues was a mistake. In the message sent to the Soviet side it was stated that Milan Grol had been isolated and politically neutralized within the government. It was also stressed that "there is only one road for Yugoslavia to take: to continue with and under the guidance of the USSR. That is our opinion not only as communists but also as responsible statesmen."³¹

²⁹ *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*, 699-704

³⁰ *Jugoslavija i Ujedinjeni narodi*, 321-326; *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*, 699-704; TNA, PRO, CAB, 121/678.

³¹ AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/592, Message of the Central Committee of CPY to Stalin and Molotov 15 March 1945; *Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije*, 699-704.

While the West did not take notice of Tito's "independence" in the forming of the first government and in the drawing up of its manifest, during the last days of war they did pay special attention to all indications that a Yugoslav-Bulgarian pact could be formed.

On the same day the government was formed, the US Ambassador in Moscow Harriman expressed an unfavorable opinion about Yugoslavia and Bulgaria establishing closer ties. Several days later, on March 12th 1945, the Soviets assessed this opportunity as "very beneficial to our joint struggle against Hitler's Germany, as well as to future safekeeping of peace and security in Europe"³². Churchill's response to the perceived process of political, military and economic convergence of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, which could lead towards the formation of a kind of Balkan federation, was "that it certainly was not pleasant". Behind the intimation of a possible convergence if these countries, he saw Stalin's effort secure his own sphere of influence before the war had even ended. Western politicians and analysts failed to perceive Yugoslavia's independence in the realization of such a project.

Tito found himself in Moscow again in the spring of 1945. On that occasion, he signed the Agreement on Friendship, Mutual Assistance and Cooperation between the USSR and Yugoslavia on April 11th, 1945. This agreement was a cornerstone of future orientation of Yugoslav foreign policy. It rested on the principles affirmed by the Allied anti-fascist coalition, and was the basis on which the Soviet Union and the countries of „people's democracies" based their safety in post-war Europe. For Tito himself, embracing the USSR was a way to ensure "the free development of Yugoslav peoples" in the future, while the signed agreement was a foundation "for the peaceful building of our future, as well as the realization of the aspirations that all Yugoslav peoples "live in close friendship with the great Soviet people"³³.

Tito's stay in Moscow caught the West by surprise. On April 4th 1945, the British Ambassador Stevenson dramatically informed London that he had just been told that Tito would "tomorrow" travel to Moscow. The ambassador stressed that even the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Yugoslav Government "knows next to nothing about the purpose of the visit". In London, the visit was seen as a clear sign that Yugoslavia had decided to leave the "balance" established by "the policy of compromise" and to align itself with the USSR. The British felt that the visit was "political and military in character". At the same time, Churchill stated that "there is no use trying to compete with Moscow in

³² *FRUS*, 1945, Vol. V, 1204-1206, "Ambassador Harriman to the Secretary of State", 12 March 1945,

³³ LJ. Dimić, M. Milošević, Dj. Borozan, I.V. Bukharin eds., *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi 1945-1956* (Belgrade: Ministarstvo za spoljne poslove, 2010).

extending maximum help to Tito". He thought that Tito should in future be allowed to "rely principally on Moscow".³⁴

A few days later, on April 8th 1945, the U.S. Ambassador Harriman reported to Washington that Tito's visit to Moscow was "totally unexpected" for him as well. The experienced diplomat reported that there were not many arguments from which the purpose of the visit could be deduced. Analyzing available facts, Harriman emphasized that this was Tito's "first visit here as a foreign official" and that for Moscow it meant a "political demonstration" and a kind of recognition. In his opinion, the secrecy of Tito's arrival in Moscow reflected the "traditional belief of the Kremlin in the element of surprise as a diplomatic and political weapon". He assumed that the visit would end with a "formal announcement of the Russian-Yugoslav closeness and solidarity", but he was not certain whether this "demonstration" was the only purpose of the visit. Analyzing the current circumstances, Harriman concluded that the end of the war simply imposed a need for an "immediate consultation between the Soviet leaders and Tito" and the need to consider several urgent questions in regard to "Tito's foreign policy". The remark he directed to Washington – which said that Western diplomats much more easily read "what the Russians think and what they hope for" than Soviet satellite states – reflected the widespread Western belief that Tito and Yugoslavia were not independent political actors, but rather objects in the hands of Moscow's policy.³⁵

Analyzing the possible topics of conversation between Stalin and Tito, Harriman thought that the "very important issue" of Austrian Carinthia would be on top of the agenda. Reminding them that the Royal Government in exile had on several occasions raised the question of "post-war annexation of Austrian areas inhabited by Slovenes to Yugoslavia", he called the attention of Washington to the fact that Tito held the same view. Bearing in mind that the issue was not discussed in detail among the Allies, but also that "the Russian participation in future tripartite government" had been resolved, Harriman presumed that "Tito could do nothing about that without it having a direct impact on Russian interest". Therefore, he assumed that Tito "had still not managed to get firm consent from Moscow for the Yugoslav occupation of the territory" and that this could easily be one of the topics which he would discuss with Stalin. Hence he suggested to Washington that after breaking the German resistance in Austria the question of Carinthia's future be urgently clarified among the Allies.³⁶

³⁴ TNA, PRO, FO-371/48928, Stevenson to Foreign Office, 4 April 1945; TNA, PRO, CAB, 121/679, Churchill to Sargent 20 March 1945.

³⁵ *FRUS*, 1945, vol. V, 1215-1218, "Harriman to the Secretary of State", 8 April 1945.

³⁶ *FRUS*, 1945, Vol. V, 1215-1219, 1223-1224, "Ambassador Harriman's Telegrams", 8, 9, 13 April 1945.

Harriman speculated that another important topic of Tito's talks in Moscow could be concerned with the circumstances in Venetia Giulia. He drew the attention of Washington to the fact that the Allies had in mid-March 1945 informed Moscow that they intended to keep control over the entire Italian territory until peace could be established, but a response from the Soviet Government had yet to arrive. Therefore, he believed that Tito's "hands would be tied to address the issue until Moscow reaches a decision on the matter". In the opinion of the U.S. diplomat, the military developments in the area of Venetia Giulia, the intentions of the Allies to implement "martial law" there and prevent any "unilateral action" "undoubtedly intensified Tito's efforts to make a decision about this matter". The entire analysis recommended that the potential conflict in the Venezia Giulia, before it had even begun, be regarded not as an Italian-Yugoslav conflict, but in terms of the relationship between the West and the USSR.³⁷

Based on his analysis of the Soviet press, Harriman concluded that the Churchill-Stalin agreement of October 1944 was becoming increasingly unacceptable for Moscow and that the issue of a South Slav federation – made up of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Albania – may hence be one of the important issues discussed between Stalin and Tito. In his opinion, an alliance between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria – about which the Soviet Foreign Minister V. Molotov had "favourably spoken" in a letter dated March 10th 1945 – was a particularly topical issue. Harriman was particularly concerned about the attitude of Molotov, who said he found it "impossible to understand why we oppose this", as well as his willingness to continue talks between the Allies regarding the Yugoslav - Bulgarian in Moscow. He presumed that the Soviet government had still not reached a decision on the issue and concluded that Moscow sought to retain complete freedom in undertaking any future actions. Therefore, he assumed that, since the matter had not been discussed with the West any further, the government of the USSR could choose to interpret all this as "sufficient justification" to authorize Tito and Dimitrov "to proceed with the action". For Harriman, there was no doubt that the issue of the Balkan Federation "would be carefully considered" during Tito's visit to Moscow and that "the measures that will be discussed may mean more than mere confirmation that such a bilateral alliance would be established".³⁸

On April 9th 1945, Harriman found out from Vishinsky that the Yugoslav had requested that an alliance between themselves and the USSR be formed, not unlike the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of May 1942. Harriman noted that the purpose of the alliance was "struggle against aggression" and that, according to the information he received, it would not contradict the principles of "global organization". However, as far as Yugoslavia was concerned, he interpreted the

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

securing of safety as a confirmation of all the achievements attained during the war. Comparing the Yugoslav-Soviet treaty of April 11th 1945 with the agreement between the Soviets and Czechoslovakia, American analysts noted that it did not stipulate the principles of respecting each other's independence, sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. The provision by which both parties pledged to "take part ... in all international activities directed towards establishing peace and security and to fully contribute to the achievement these lofty goals" was considered to be particularly novel.³⁹

The signing of the agreement on April 11th 1945 was interpreted in the West as the abandonment of the "equilibrium" established through the "policy of compromise". Hence, the policy they led towards Tito underwent certain changes. Disappointed by the outcome of events, Churchill remarked with resignation that the Yugoslavs had "wholeheartedly thrown themselves into the arms of Russia". Under these circumstances, he was opposed to any British sacrifice "for the sake of playing a losing game". Churchill believed that the signing of the agreement caused big changes in their relations with the Yugoslav government. Consequently, he was not willing to continue "competing with the Russians for providing maximum aid to Marshall Tito". He contemplated establishing a diplomatic – perhaps even a military – front made up of the United Kingdom, the United States and Italy in order to defend "the disputed territories of the Adriatic". Yet, he was certain that "nothing could tear Yugoslavia away from Russia's grip" and that the matter should simply be let alone.⁴⁰ He felt that Tito should be left to alone "to fry" in the "hot frying pan of the Balkans".

But among the British public, different opinions could be found. One of the most influential opinions was expressed by Foreign Minister A. Eden who thought that Britain had invested too much to just leave everything to "Tito's and Russian plans". Since he was of the opinion that Yugoslavia stood "on the very rim of the area which holds utmost interest for instead of "withdrawing", he proposed that Britain find some foothold in Yugoslavia in order to "keep Tito on the right track". Hence, the British policy towards Yugoslavia in this period was a sort of mixture of Churchill's and Eden's views. Capable diplomats executed this policy in Belgrade.

The British also felt that the situation in Venetia Giulia had gotten more complex after April 11th 1945. They thought that the treaty with the Soviets would clearly define the status of this area and force the Yugoslavs to accept the "Allied military government in the whole area up to the border of 1941". Oth-

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ TNA, PRO, CAB, 121/678, Stevenson to Foreign Office, 13, 19 April 1945; TNA, PRO, CAB, 120/729, Churchill to Commander in Chief in Mediterranean 17 April 1945, and to Sargent od 20 April 1945.

erwise, they assessed, the Anglo-Americans could face either „conflict with Yugoslavia or accepting Yugoslav occupation of the whole area”.⁴¹

The West also took a more resolute stance towards the Yugoslav-Bulgarian pact. Ignoring Belgrade and Sofia, Washington demanded that its ambassador in Moscow inform the Soviet government that the U.S. administration would be willing to immediately hold a meeting to discuss adopting a united stance in regard to the pact. The USA was opposed to the Soviet view that the Yugoslav-Bulgarian pact would “contribute to maintaining peace and security in Europe”. They thought that the pact would be “a disturbing element in the political situation of Europe” and that the neighbouring countries would look upon it with “distrust and apprehension”.⁴²

In late April, the British Ambassador Stevenson reported from Belgrade that Tito’s impression was that his visit to Moscow “had gone very well”. The Ambassador placed special emphasis on the words of Josip Broz that it were only natural that historical ties between Russia and the Slavs, as well as the role played by the Red Army, would provide the government with an opportunity “to strengthen its relations with the USSR as much as possible”. Stevenson reported that Tito had, during the meeting, strongly emphasized that the treaty did not mean “that the Yugoslav policy focused exclusively on the Soviet Union”.⁴³ Even “British man” in the Yugoslav government, Ivan Šubašić, thought that the treaty did not mean that the Yugoslavian policy would be directed only towards the USSR. Stevenson informed London of his opinion that the foreign policy of Yugoslavia “needed be balanced” and that they should expect Yugoslavia to propose similar treaties to Britain and the United States in the nearest future”. Šubašić assessed that the international position of Yugoslavia was “very difficult” because the country occupied “an essentially important location in Europe”, from which it could significantly contribute to world peace, but only if it remained completely independent” and that therefore peace in Yugoslavia itself depends on strengthening its international position. Finally, the fact remains that at the meeting of the Politburo of CC CPY held on April 23rd 1944, Tito, having just returned from Moscow, had seemed very optimistic in regards to Yugoslav territorial claims against her neighbours.⁴⁴

In the speech he gave on June 10th 1945 at the extraordinary session of the Presidency of AVNOJ, Tito called the signing of the treaty the result of ancient aspirations of the nations “which had been reflected in 25-year-long struggle of the people”. He accused the anti-populist regimes of trying to “isolate Yugoslavia as much as possible from its true friends” and indicated that the Yugoslav government felt that its “first duty” was to protect the country from

⁴¹ TNA, PRO, CAB, 121/678, Stevensons Telegram, 19 April 1945.

⁴² *FRUS*, 1945, Vol. V, 1241-1242, 1244, “Ambassadors Harriman’s Telegrams”, 2, 9, July 1945.

⁴³ TNA, PRO, CAB, 121/678, Stevenson to Foreign Office 26 March 1945.

⁴⁴ TNA, PRO, CAB, 121/678, Ambassador Stevensons telegram od 13 March 1945.

similar “disasters” that prevent peaceful development and construction. He also stressed that the signing of the Treaty on Mutual Assistance, Friendship and Cooperation, as a right the Yugoslav peoples had acquired in the war, had not encountered any understanding from the West. Such conduct of countries which had, until yesterday, been allies to Yugoslavia, he described as an injustice that “cuts deeply into the very soul of our nation and is very difficult to forget”.⁴⁵

* * *

The end of the Second World War was at the same the beginning of a deep conflict between Yugoslavia and its former allies, Great Britain and the United States. This was a reflection of the cooling of relations within the anti-fascist coalition and was due to the fact that the West – denying it the status of an independent actor – began to look at Yugoslavia through “the prism of its relations with the USSR”. The Yugoslav foreign policy orientation, which had been centred around close political, ideological, military, economic and cultural cooperation with the Soviet Union, also meant that Yugoslavia was drifting away from the West with each passing day. In July 1945, writing about the political situation in London, the Yugoslav ambassador Lj. Leontić painted a very vivid picture of British politics to Tito: he remarked that he had come across two fact in that “philistine environment” – that even a “lackey with an outstretched hand looks down on the beggars from the Balkans and deeply hates everything that bears a resemblance to communism” and that the “Anglo-Saxons, apart from very rare exceptions, treat everything Slavonic with open distrust”. In that context, Leontić also wrote about British views of the Soviet Union, and its “imperialistic tendencies” towards the West and the South, “beyond us, across the Adriatic and the Mediterranean Sea, where the vital artery of their empire lies”. According to the Ambassador’s observations, politicians in the UK were “seized by the red fever” and with fear at the mere thought of a “revolution” that could undo the entire “legacy of their history and all the fruits of this latest victory”. Leontić thought that this “fear” was the cause for the “reservedness” and “hostility” of the British general public “not only towards us but also towards everyone who comes under the slightest shadow of doubt that they are under any influence of the Soviet Union”. These opinions, addressed to Tito, reflected the essence of the British opinion of Yugoslavia and its relationship with the USSR.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ J.B. Tito, *Govori i članci*, Vol. I (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1959), 291-293.

⁴⁶ Cited in: B. Petranović, *Jugoslavija, velike sile i balkanske zemlje* (Podgorica: Istorijски institut Crne Gore, 1994), 170-175.

The national interests and policies of Yugoslavia were completely ignored in the analyses of Western diplomats. The entire situation was considered solely in terms of the execution of Soviet expansionist policy in the Balkans and in Europe. Within this context, the West was particularly interested in the presence and activities of the Red Army in Yugoslavia. According to the assessment of the British embassy in Belgrade of July 1945, it was not to be expected that the Soviet would keep or strengthen their garrisons in Yugoslavia. This was explained by political as well as pragmatic reasons: Yugoslavia had its own army, which was capable of carrying out all military duties. Diplomats reported to London that Soviet officers were “responsible for training and equipping the Yugoslav Army” and that the army “was currently being transformed according to the model of the Red Army”. They named the “the Russian military mission” in Belgrade as the training coordinator. The British tried “by all means” to gather data on the distribution and movement of the Soviet forces in Yugoslavia, as well as their regrouping, demobilization and return to the Soviet Union. Diplomats emphasized that the Yugoslav generals were “completely pro-Soviet-oriented”, but also noticed that they were very “envious”. Identification of Yugoslav and Soviet foreign policy interests almost become an axiom in Western interpretations of Belgrade’s foreign policy actions.⁴⁷

In the reactions of the press and reports of diplomatic, military and intelligence services, Yugoslavia was treated as a “Soviet satellite state”; a country that supported the Soviet model of socialism; a Soviet exponent in the Mediterranean and Central Europe; a state that expanded Soviet influence and inflated several European crisis (the Trieste crisis, the civil war in Greece, the establishment of a Balkan federation ...). In the right-wing press of the West, Tito was branded a “Russian agent”, “Stalin’s man”, a puppet that the Kremlin had sent to Yugoslavia “to trigger a civil war and pave the way for a communist coup”. Such views already became dominant at the beginning of the Trieste crisis. In the American general public, the opinion that Tito “acted with the tacit approval of Stalin, perhaps even followed his express orders” became widespread. Regardless of their validity, Yugoslav demands were also labelled as “attempts of the USSR to extend its sphere of influence”.⁴⁸

At the same time, feeling that the end of the war and the victory over fascism would bring a major “regrouping of the powers”, the Yugoslav Communists also wondered who would “emerge stronger from the war and who would order the world”. However, for them there was no dilemma about which side they should join. They thought, writes Kardelj, that “the reaction seeks to strengthen its position and isolate and weaken the position of the Soviet

⁴⁷ TNA, PRO, FO, 371/48928, British Embassy in Belgrade to the War information Cabinet, 4 July 1945.

⁴⁸ More in: Petranović, *Jugoslavija, velike sile*, 147-201; TNA, PRO, FO, 371/48887, Report of British Embassy in Belgrade 6 August 1945.

Union". In these circumstances, Yugoslavia found itself in the group of "progressive, revolutionary, democratic states, with the Soviet Union – the homeland of socialism – at its helm" and at odds with England, America and other "imperialistic forces".⁴⁹

In September 1945, British and American attempts to engineer a change in Yugoslav foreign policy by pressuring Šubašić unsettled the Yugoslav side, as well as Soviet diplomats. Faced with this possibility, Moscow estimated that the resignation of Šubašić would aggravate the position of government of DFY within the country. When this did occur, already on October 19th 1945 the U.S. Government sent a note, via Ambassador Harriman, to the government of the Soviet Union, in which it demanded that the Allied powers reconsider their position on the recommendations for Allied governments issued at the Yalta Conference in terms of the Tito–Šubašić government. The USA felt that, if Šubašić and other ministers of bourgeois orientation resigned, the Yugoslav provisional government would lose credibility to finally execute the constitutional organization of the state and conduct free parliamentary elections. By contrast, the Soviet side supported the revolutionary government. In response to the aforementioned note, the Soviet government replied that there were "no grounds" for the Allied governments to "give any suggestions to the Yugoslav government" regarding the cooperation between Tito and Šubašić or concerning the delay of parliamentary elections which had already been scheduled.⁵⁰ This kind of response only encouraged suspicion that Belgrade and Moscow were acting together.

The reports sent by Ambassador Stevenson from Belgrade in early November could only partially dispel concerns among the British political circles. Reporting in early November 1945 about a meeting with Josip Broz, Stevenson particularly stressed that Tito agreed with Churchill's view that "if Yugoslavia does not keep a balance in foreign policy, it will not be able to play the role that the circumstances have conferred upon her in Europe". The Ambassador conveyed also Tito's words that "Yugoslavia firmly intends to remain independent and at the same time maintain the best possible relations with the West as well as the East". These "diplomatic" stances of Josip Broz Tito still fell short of the reality that was filled with political pressures, distrust and open hostility.⁵¹

Immediately after the elections took place, in which the Popular Front list received 90.48% of cast votes, the British ambassador in Belgrade informed London that the electoral victory had only confirmed an existing system of government "along with all its dictatorial tendencies". In contrast to American diplomats, Stevenson estimated that Tito could count on the support of the "majority of the people of Yugoslavia" and that it was not possible to find any

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi, 25-27; Sovjetsko – amerikanskije otnošenija*, Vol. I, 65-67.

⁵¹ TNA, PRO, FO, 371/48898, Stevenson to Foreign Office, 8 November 1945.

evidence that refuted that. He stated that there was no opposition at home or abroad from which an alternative government could be formed. He was not certain that the electoral success achieved would “encourage Tito” to alleviate some of the bans imposed on personal freedoms. He was acutely aware that the terror of OZNA had not subsided after the elections, and neither had the “monopoly of power of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia” been reduced. In his view, it “would have been futile for London to complain endlessly about interior Yugoslav organization”. He was convinced that “such a policy would not reflect the will of the United Kingdom and would not bring any useful benefit for the developments in Yugoslavia, although it would strengthen the politicians in exile, and would push Tito even further into the arms of the USSR”. Based on this reasons, Stevenson suggested to London that “the time has come to accept the position of Marshal Tito, and, without giving up our right to criticize, seek to restore normal and friendly relations with the Yugoslav government”. In his view, if Tito were to accept this policy, they could expect improvement in relations in the Balkans and solution of the Trieste issue. Otherwise, if Tito was to reject the offered hand of reconciliation and his regime remained as “il-liberal as before” the British would still have “freedom to act”.⁵²

The West described the elections in Yugoslavia as a “plebiscite” in which the voters could either vote in favour of the government or against it. Just before the election, the US and the UK warned Tito that, since the provisions for free elections stipulated by the agreement with Šubašić had not been met, the elected government would not enjoy their “affection”. After the election victory, the Western governments were forced to modify some of their positions. However, neither London nor Washington renounced their view that the methods used in the campaign were contrary to Western notions of freedom. London based its opinions on how to respond to Tito’s actions on the assessment that “the government has no alternative in sight, and there seems to be no way for us to weaken his position in the next few years without resorting to armed force”. The analyses of the British politicians showed that Britain should in the near future start preparing for normal cooperation with Yugoslavia or else “engage in petty bickering” which could not bring any beneficial result. At the same time, Washington was of the opinion that Tito’s regime should not be strengthened any further by extending “unlimited financial assistance”. For both, restoring relations with Yugoslavia did not mean stamping their “approval on the policy of the regime, the methods by which it assumed control or its failure to implement guarantees of personal liberty given to the people”.⁵³

⁵² TNA, PRO, FO, 371/48898, Stevenson to Foreign Office, 13 November 1945.

⁵³ TNA, PRO, FO, 371/ 48898, Stevenson to Foreign Office, 8 November 1945; Stevenson to Foreign Office, 13 November 1945; Sargent’s analysis of Yugoslav elections, 14 November 1945, State Department’s Note for Foreign Office, about elections in Yugoslavia, 14 November 1945; British

Following the elections in Yugoslavia, the British press received clear guidelines. These suggested that it should not call into question "Tito's right to widespread support among the people" and not forget the contribution of partisans in the war for the liberation of the country, but also that it should constantly draw attention to certain aspects of Tito's policies that were not in the spirit of the agreement at Yalta. The aim was to force the Yugoslav government to comply with the Tito – Šubašić agreement out of international considerations. As far as Britain's involvement in the Balkans was concerned, the "policy of compromise" still remained in place.⁵⁴

Moscow and Belgrade considered this type of "pressure" to be an attempt of the imperialist powers to take advantage of the transitional period "in order to grab a greater portion of the spoils". The possibility of expanding "the system of intervention and provocation" had not been ruled out. For this purpose, the ambassador of Yugoslavia to the Soviet Union V. Popovic pointed out that the Soviets were "additionally consolidating the power of the Red Army" in order to prevent the West from establishing its "lordship over the world". The victory of the electoral list of the Popular Front in Yugoslavia was received in Moscow as an utter fiasco of the "international reaction". Moscow considered it particularly important that Yugoslavia's foreign policy had played a significant role in the electoral campaign. Victory in the elections also meant that the foreign policy course Tito had pursued received the stamp of approval. In December 1945, the Soviet Ambassador I.V. Sadčikov informed Molotov that the Yugoslav Communists "felt safer" in the field of foreign policy after the elections and that they see the declaration of the Republic as a "decisive victory in the struggle to confirm the foreign policy existence of the new Yugoslavia". Sadčikov also noted that Tito associated his electoral victory with "the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, which had actively supported the new Yugoslavia". The Ambassador cited the report of historian Vasa Cubrilovic, which stated that until recently "the foreign policies of the Soviets and the Western powers intersected on Yugoslav territory" but that it could now be said "that the struggle had ended with victory of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia". Based on the conduct of Allied diplomats, the Soviet ambassador concluded that their governments had resigned themselves to the political changes in Yugoslavia. For these reasons, Moscow advised Josip Broz Tito via the Yugoslav Ambas-

Embassy in Washington to Foreign Office, 17 November 1945, Cambel's analysis of political situation in Yugoslavia, 21 November 1945; *FRUS*, 1945, Vol. V, 1288-1291, "Harriman to Secretary of State", 19 November 1945, "Memo of the Acting head of the South Europe Department, S. Revera, for Secretary of State", 24 November 1945; AJ, CK SKJ, IX, 119/I-4-a; AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/602.

⁵⁴ TNA, PRO, FO, 371/48898, Foreign Office to British Embassy in Belgrade 17 November 1945.

sador Popovic “to take as much advantage as possible of the current favorable situation in the spheres of both politics and economy”.⁵⁵

Through its diplomatic representatives in Moscow, the Yugoslav government tried to keep itself informed of Soviet opinions on major issues of foreign policy.⁵⁶ Considering that they were politically and ideologically like-minded, there is no doubt that there was an overt intention to attune Yugoslav foreign policy to that of the USSR. Ambassador V. Popovic and his colleagues therefore often paid visits to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the contacts between Soviet diplomats in Belgrade and Yugoslav politicians were no less intense. This strengthened the impression of the West that the USSR and Yugoslavia conducted a joint policy on all major issues in the field of international relations. However, contents of the talks between the Soviets and Yugoslav diplomats show that the Yugoslav side merely informed their interlocutors of the diplomatic actions it had already made much more often than it asked their advice on what it should do in certain circumstances. This was the case even with extremely important issues, such as the Yugoslav claims to parts of the Austrian territory, set forth in the memorandum of Carinthia: the government of the Soviet Union was informed of this only after the memorandum had already been sent to the governments of the United States and Great Britain.⁵⁷ While the West denied Yugoslavia its independence in conducting foreign and domestic policy, in Moscow they “apologized” in detail for not being fully acquainted with the situation in that country and its political moves.

A constant preoccupation of London concerning Yugoslav-Soviet relations seemed to be the question “how strongly, after the dissolution of the Comintern, Moscow controlled the Yugoslav Communist Party?” Trying to answer this question as accurately as possible, Ambassador Stevenson informed his superiors that there was “no evidence” that the Yugoslav Communist Party received orders from Moscow. Pointing out the conspiratorial conduct of the Yugoslav Party leadership, he felt that Moscow’s orders could be communicated through “special channels” and through “trustworthy people”. Stevenson also presumed that the Popular Front also “received inspiration from Moscow”. In his view, acting in accordance with the “general orders of Moscow”, declaratively “softened” the party’s control of the Popular Front, but had also secretly intensified surveillance of its members. As an explanation for the rigidity of the Communist Party expressed toward the Popular Front, he emphasized the

⁵⁵ *Sovetskij faktor u Vostočnoj Evropi 1944-1953*, Vol. I, (1944-1948), Moscow 2002, 338-339; *Vostočnaja Evropa v dokumentah rossijskih arhivov 1944-1953*, Vol. I (1944-1948), (Moscow, Novosibirsk: The Institute of Slavonic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, 1998), 330-335; *Jugoslovensko – sovjetski odnosi*, 30, 38-39, 44-49, 55-59.

⁵⁶ From the reports one can conclude that the Yugoslav representatives had frequent contacts with Soviets diplomats such as Molotov and Dekanezov.

⁵⁷ AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/611; *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi*, 41, 44-48.

influence of certain executives “who had previously been to Moscow”. More confidently, the Ambassador made the assumption that Moscow had ordered the Yugoslav and Bulgarian management “not be hasty” in matters of Balkan integrations and to hide their intentions “behind a smokescreen”. In the Stevenson’s opinion, it was unlikely that the Soviet Embassy in Belgrade “issued orders to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia... except insofar as the recommendations of the Russian government sent to the Yugoslav government have influence”. He thought it more likely that any orders received from Moscow were passed on to the relevant group of officials by an auxiliary Russian organization. He was particularly referring to the Russian Trade Mission, Society for Fostering Cultural Relations and the Panslavonic Board. He was certain that the Russian Trade Mission had other goals besides trade, among which was “serving here as the middleman between Moscow and the Communist Party”. According to Stevenson’s information and speculation, similar intermediary tasks were performed by the Panslavonic Board. He noted in his reports that this institution “had taken the place of the Comintern” and that the regional Communist Parties were being advised through it. He also thought the Russian military mission to be a possible channel of influence and control over the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. In his analyses, Stevenson also placed emphasis on Soviet military and civilian experts. He pointed out that the Soviets still had their aircrafts in Belgrade and that it would be easy for someone to arrive or depart “without attracting attention”, but he did not have any reliable information on whether “any special envoys had arrived to Belgrade in this way” or if the Yugoslavs had departed for Moscow. Stevenson assumed that other Yugoslav officials besides Tito had travelled to Moscow to obtain “advice and orders”. One of his observations was “that there was no Yugoslav similar to Torres in France or Dimitrov in Bulgaria” because “all the leading Communists had been in the country during the German attack”. Stevenson also reported that Tito had been in Russia during the October Revolution and during the period following his imprisonment. He presumed that Kardelj had been in Moscow after 1933. He noted that Djilas had accompanied Tito in his visits to the USSR and remarked that his “hidden influence exceeded his official responsibilities”. He thought the reason for this was “Russian support” and assumed that it had been Djilas who “established one of the most influential links between Moscow and Belgrade”.⁵⁸ Essentially, these assumptions meant that the Western diplomats, faced with the high degree of secrecy of the Yugoslav Communist Party, knew very little about the Yugoslav-Soviet relations.

In 1946, the internal developments in Yugoslavia and the fact that it had become even closer to the Soviet Union were equal sources of anxiety for the West. Adoption of the Soviet model of development could be seen in many spheres of social and state life. The Yugoslav Communist Party adopted the

⁵⁸ TNA, PRO, FO, 421/331, Stevenson to Bevin, 13 November 1945.

organizational forms of action following the example of the Bolshevik party. In the political sphere, all forms of political pluralism were quickly suppressed and so the one-party monolithic model ruled supreme. The political opposition, which had been imposed by the West as part of the policy of compromise and to which the CPY had agreed purely out of international considerations, was not allowed to institutionally organize itself. Government intervention in the economy was conducted according to the Soviet model. The Soviet model of agriculture was also becoming dominant. The Yugoslav regime was criticized for suppressing political and religious freedoms, repression, political trials, and one-party omnipotence. Under these circumstances, the Western nations looked at Yugoslavia through the prism of their relations with the Soviet Union. Just as they had done during the war, they denied Yugoslavia the status of an “independent entity” and considered it to be a part of the Soviet bloc.

In the first half of 1946, British diplomats informed Bevin, the Prime Minister of Royal Government that Yugoslavia was to all means and purposes a “one-party state, built on the foundation of the national liberation movement in which the Communist Party holds sway”. Ralph Stevenson particularly stressed that the government in Yugoslavia relied on the example of the USSR in everything. The British Ambassador noted that the regime had not reached the level of corruption “which had been endemic in the pre-war regimes.” Yet, he stated that the government of Josip Broz Tito was not constrained by “democratic consideration” or “bourgeois prejudices” about the rights and freedoms of individuals. The resistance coming from different backgrounds (religious organizations, the opposition, the peasantry ...) did register, and Stephenson noted that it was not clear whether the “Communist minority”, faced with the influence of “traditional alternatives”, especially the Roman Catholic Church and “anti-centralist forces in Yugoslavia”, would “manage to maintain its monopoly of power”. The power of the regime, in his opinion, rested on the reputation and tradition of resisting the occupying forces and was embodied in the military. He concluded that the military personnel held communist views and added that their political training had been “hurried and superficial, while the sommon soldiers had been drafted from ranks of the peasantry”. The Ambassador assessed that “the regime was progressing in the direction of an orthodox communist society as quickly as its lack of capacity and lack of trained and reliable staff would allow it”. He considered especially important the observation that the country was unable to produce everything it needed and therefore had to ask for foreign aid. Based on all these observtions, he concluded that “the stability of the country under the present circumstances could not be guaranteed”.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ More in: TNA, PRO, FO, 421/331, Stevenson to Bevin, 24 January 1946, Britis Embassy's in Belgrade telegram 21 January 1946, Annex to the rapport of Stevenson to Bevin, 19 February 1946; Stevenson to Bevin, 22 March 1946; TNA, PRO, CAB, 212/679, Stevenson to Foreign Office,

The new British ambassador in Belgrade Charles Peak continued to report with as much attention and emphasis on the relations of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union as his predecessor. Reporting on the trial of Cardinal Stepinac, Peak concluded that the showdown with the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) had been undertaken under orders from Moscow. In his view, Moscow had chosen Yugoslavia as the location where it would “test the power of the Catholic Church outside the Soviet Union”. Peak cited the following arguments this hypothesis: dishonourable conduct of the Roman Catholic Church in the war, the fact that it had fewer members in comparison to the the Roman Catholic Church in Poland and the collective mentality of the Croatian people. Peak thought the confrontation with the Roman Catholic Church and with Aloysius Stepinac had at the same time been an attack on Croatian nationalism.⁶⁰

In 1946, several important issues continued to be matters of dispute between Yugoslavia and the West in the field of foreign policy and hence were the main topics of diplomatic correspondence. Among them, of particular significance was the conflict over Trieste and northwest borders of Yugoslavia – the readiness of the West to resort to armed force over the issue almost sparked a new war. Not only did this dispute ignore national and state interests of Yugoslavia, but it was also seen as denial of its sovereignty and independence. The revision of Yugoslav borders was not only a matter of bilateral dispute between Yugoslavia and Italy. It was a matter of a profound conflict of interest between the USSR and the Western powers, which had interpreted the issue of Trieste as the ideological penetration of the enemy as far as the northernmost point in the Adriatic, drawing closer to Italy, implementation of “expansionist plans”, a kind of provocation and “testing” the resolve of the West. The civil war in Greece, in which Yugoslavia was directly involved, created yet another serious crisis, this time on the South border of the country. Greece was the only Balkan country the U.S. had planned to keep out of the Soviet “ideological bloc” in order to stop the spreading of communism on the shores of the Adriatic and the Near East, so its location directly led to a conflict with Yugoslavia.⁶¹

In the spring of 1946, the West also “gambled” with the issue of a Yugoslav federation with Bulgaria. At the same time, in talks with Soviet rep-

12 January 1946, British Ambassador in Rome to Foreign Office, 25 January 1946, Stevenson to Foreign Office od 22 March 1946.

⁶⁰ TNA, PRO, FO, 421/331, Peake to Bevin, 14 October 1946.

⁶¹ TNA, PRO, FO, 421/331, Stevenson to Bevin, 13 April 1946, British Embassy in Belgrade to Foreign Office 18 June 1946; TNA, PRO, FO, 800/552, Foreign office to UK Delegation at the Conference of Foreign Ministers, British Ambassador in Rome to Foreign Office, 11 June 1946; *Jugoslovensko – sovjetski odnosi*, 82-85, From Molotov’s Diary on talks with Kardelj and Djilas, 4 May 1945; *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi*, 96-98, From Lavrentiev Diary on talks with Kardelj 16 April 1946; AJ, KMJ, I-1/7, Note by Koča Popović on his meeting with Stalin in Kremlin and in Dacha, 27 May 1946; *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi*, 106-110, Note on tlaks between Tito and Stalin, 27 May 1946.

representatives, Tito “quite decisively” stated that a federation was very unlikely for two reasons: Bulgaria was “still officially a monarchy” and the influence of the Communist Party in Bulgaria was “much weaker than in Yugoslavia”. In addition, Tito saw two groups of unresolved issues in relations with Bulgaria – the territorial issue, and the issue of compensation of war damages. Based on the “Serbian stance”, he was not willing to grant territorial concessions to Bulgaria regarding the Caribrod region. He was reserved about Bulgarian proposals about a treaty of friendship. He asked Moscow to give its opinion on the matter.⁶²

In late May, Tito found himself once again in Moscow. The main topics of his talks with Stalin were the following: resolving the issue of Trieste, economic cooperation between Yugoslavia and the USSR, military relations between the two countries, the situation in Albania, the establishment of the federation with Bulgaria and the relationship between the “people’s democracies”. The West could only speculate about the topics of the talks.⁶³

Tito’s visit to Moscow and the new escalation of the conflict concerning Trieste and the civil war in Greece again bought the attention of the West to Yugoslav-Soviet relations. In June 1946, the British observed “Russian military vehicles and troops” behind the Yugoslav units. That same month, the British diplomats in Belgrade informed London that the situation of the issue of Trieste was “difficult to estimate” because Yugoslavia “was not a free agent and its actions were not a reflection of the Yugoslav policy, but that of the Soviet Union”. In their view, it was not possible to determine “the extent to which a given action was actually a game or a bluff by someone else”. The British thought that the atmosphere in Belgrade was “tense” because of Trieste, as well as because of the developments on the border with Greece. “In the South”, they registered “activities on the roads and in telecommunications”, “the flow of Soviet material and possibly a small number of Soviet soldiers heading towards Albania”, an increase in the numbers of the Soviet military mission and establishment of contact “between the Russians and the Greek National Liberation Front”. In their opinion, there was a real possibility of a “coordinated and forceful action or assistance of Yugoslavia in order to solve the Greek and Italian problems in favor of Soviet policy.” The Western allies were concerned about the Soviet Union’s stance on the issue of the Yugoslav-Italian border, put forward in early May 1946, which was based on the thesis that the Venezia Giulia must be seen as “a single organism, and Trieste as its head which can not be cut off from the body”.⁶⁴

⁶² *Sovjetski faktor u Vostočnoj Evropi* Vol. I, 280-283; *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi*, 89-90.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 106-116, 122-123.

⁶⁴ TNA, PRO, FO, 800/522, British Embassy in Rome to Foreign Office, 11 June 1946 i 2 July 1946, Sargent to Bevin, 3 July 1946; PRO, FO, 421/331, British Embassy in Belgrade to Foreign Office, 18 June 1946.

Among the Western diplomatic circles, there had been speculation that Trieste could become a topic of disagreement between Yugoslavia and the USSR. In this context, they analyzed the view of the Italian Communists (Palmiro Togliatti) that Trieste needed to remain in Italy, as well as the “public responses” of the Yugoslav side which rejected this view. According to the analysis of French diplomats, if Trieste were to be given to Yugoslavia, this would mean that the Soviet penetration into Italy could be stopped via the Italian Communists. These estimates were based on the assumption that was in the long-term more important to the Soviets than Yugoslavia.⁶⁵ At the same time, the Soviet side regularly informed Ambassador Popovic about the resolute attitude of the West in terms of Trieste and its surroundings belonging to Italy and advised the Yugoslav side to “raise a campaign and prepare the public opinion for a just solution of the issue”. However, time would show that these doubts were not unfounded. Trieste did in fact become the “point of contention” between the Yugoslav and Italian Communists. By supporting Yugoslavia on the issue of Trieste, the Soviets risked weakening the position the Italian Communist Party – the strongest communist party in the Western world. Leading Italian Communists issued statements about “the Italian identity of Trieste”, but at the same time, they acknowledged the crimes of the fascists and the monarchists and therefore advocated reaching an agreement with Yugoslavia. After his November 1946 visit to Belgrade, Togliatti gave a statement in which he called for a solution to the question of Trieste on the basis of autonomy under the sovereignty of Italy, and on the basis of a democratic status of Trieste, which would be guaranteed by both countries. Yugoslavia consulted with Moscow on all aspects of the Trieste crisis. About his cooperation with Molotov on the question of Trieste, E. Kardelj said the following: “We agreed on the compromises and concessions when it became impossible to further insist on previous statements. I think that the peoples of Yugoslavia should be grateful to the Soviet Union and other socialist countries for their intensive help”. Finally, forced by Moscow’s suggestions and pressure, Yugoslavia agreed to the provisions of the peace treaty with Italy, which were finally defined during the session of the Council of Ministers held in New York from November 4th to December 2nd 1946. It was assessed that the West would otherwise keep its troops on Italian territory, which was not in the interests of the USSR, while the safety of the northwest borders of Yugoslavia would be destabilized and the position of the Italian communists endangered.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi*, 82-85, 96-98, 106-116, 130-132, 138-145; *Sovetsko-amerikanske odnošenija*, Vol. I , 223-226, 267-285, 335-339, 346-348; TNA, PRO, FO, 421/331, Stevenson to Bevin, 13 April 1946; TNA, PRO, FO, 371/ 48898, British Embassy in Belgrade to Foreign Office, 18 June 1946; PRO, FO, 800/522, Foreign office to UK Delegation at the Conference of Foreign Ministers, 13 May 1946, British Embassy in Rome to Foreign Office, 11 June 1946, Telegram from Trieste to Foreign Office, 2 June 1946, Sargent to Bevin, 3 July 1946, Telegram from UK Delega-

In the matter of resolving the issue of its borders with Austria in Carinthia, Yugoslavia stood alone. From the very beginning, the Western countries were opposed to Yugoslav demands for the annexation of Carinthia. The Soviet Union did not provide the expected support. On the eve of signing the peace treaty, Soviet diplomats, having in mind that the Western countries were strongly opposed to any change in Austria's borders, advised Yugoslavia not to raise this issue. Furthermore, in their opinion, there was no serious political movement in Carinthia that rooted for its annexation to Yugoslavia.⁶⁷

In regards to the civil war in Greece, the Soviets were not of the opinion that a victory could be achieved. In this matter Stalin remained faithful to the international agreements on the division of spheres of interest. Accordingly, the Soviet intervention in the civil war in Greece was carried out exclusively via Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania. For Yugoslav diplomacy, this was a warning sign that "deeper meddling" into the agreement could provoke a reaction of the West. The "distancing" of Soviet diplomacy intimated that Yugoslavia could not count on Soviet support if it came to odds with the West in the issue of civil war in Greece. Western propaganda also raised the question of an independent state of Macedonia, which would be composed of territories that belonged to Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Greece.⁶⁸

While the West exerted political pressure on Yugoslavia and, after their political failure, sought "through various concessions and refunds" to "penetrate into Yugoslav economy", the Soviet side paid special attention to "the possibility of establishing broad Soviet-Yugoslav economic cooperation, bearing in mind the development of trade and the establishment of joint companies". In Moscow and Belgrade, as well as in the analytical circles of the West, there was a consciousness that "Yugoslavia could not build and develop its economy by itself".⁶⁹ As the Yugoslav party leadership did not want to fall under the economic influence of Great Britain and the United States, the only option for economic development was closer cooperation with the Soviet Union. Hence, applications and requests for economic aid during 1946 tended to receive more understanding on the Soviet side. Considering the Soviet Union first and foremost an economic factor, the Yugoslav leaders believed that with its help they

tion in Paris to Foreign Office, 1 September 1946; AJ, CK SKJ, IX, 119/I-16; AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/647; State Archive (hereinafter DA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia, (hereinafter MSP RS), PA, 1947, f.IV/547; *FRUS*, 1946, Vol. V, 915, 942-943, 948; B. Petranović, *Jugoslavija, velike sile*, 143-146, 159-165.

⁶⁷ TNA, PRO, FO, 421/311, Stevenson to Bevinu; AJ, CK SKJ, IX, 119/I-16, V. Popović's message on the talks with Molotov, Mikoian and their aides, 4 February 1947; Petranović, *Jugoslavija, velike sile*, 165-169.

⁶⁸ TNA, PRO, FO 371/66895, British Embassy in Stockholm to Foreign Office, 5.2.1847; TNA, PRO, FO, 371/67458, Aide- memoire of British Embassy in Washington, 21.7.1947; TNA, PRO, CAB, 121/679, Stevenson to Foreign Office 22 February 1946.

⁶⁹ *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi*, 76-78, 80-81, 134-137.

would manage to change the economic foundations of the Yugoslav society. This was the purpose of frequent talks which J. B. Tito, E. Kardelj and A. Hebrang held with Soviet diplomats in Belgrade. The Yugoslav trade delegation, which had been dispatched to Moscow, also played an important role. Tito's stay in the Soviet Union marked the beginning of consultations on the "issues of economic cooperation on a larger scale". According to the estimates of Belgrade, the economic relations the Soviet Union had in 1946 established with Yugoslavia and the countries of people's democracy were more than a "purely commercial exchange of goods" and included the participation of Soviet capital in these economies by establishing mixed stock companies, providing technical assistance, exchange of experts, provision of commodity loans and more.⁷⁰

The importance of economic cooperation between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union did not escape the attention of Western analysts. In a telegram dated February 22nd 1946, George Kennan predicted that, regardless of the official position USSR, Soviet policy turned toward economic autarchy of the Soviet Union and neighboring countries "people's democracies" under its influence. A year later, on August 7th 1947, Kennan reported from Belgrade to Washington that the economic connection between the USSR and the countries of "people's democracies" was essentially a reaction to the Marshall Plan. Calling the whole doctrine of establishing economic links in the socialist world "Molotov Plan", Kennan considered this an attempt that hampered the rebuilding of Europe and paved the way for its more permanent division. Kennan gave special attention to the analysis of Yugoslav economic relations and remarked that they were based on long-term economic agreements, cooperation and mutual assistance when it came to the Soviet Union and one-sided trade agreements when it came to Western countries. Kennan noticed that, before the Marshall Plan had been announced, the Yugoslav trade policy had been dominated by two trends – the development and strengthening of economic relations with the Soviet bloc through full economic cooperation, and the establishment of tentative and less important economic agreements with the West, which they did not adhere to. In his opinion, contracts that Yugoslavia made with the countries of "people's democracies" allowed for political, cultural and military cooperation and broad economic cooperation, including the establishment of joint companies and joint economic projects." This was, according to him, a way to establish an integrated regional community under full Russian control. Kennan also noticed that the pace of economic cooperation among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe suddenly intensified from January 1947.

⁷⁰ *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi*, 103-105, 106-116, 119-123, 166-171, 198-200; DA, MSP RS, PA, 1946, f-iv, 1881; DA, MSP RS, PA, 1947, f-IV, 1407, 1481, 1492, 1547; DA, MSP RS, PA, 1947, F-107, 274031; AJ CK SK, IX, 119/i-16; AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/639.

All this suggested that the Western nations had not put aside their prejudice against Yugoslavia: they still saw it only through the prism of their own relationship with the Soviet Union. Just as they had done during the war, they still denied Yugoslavia the role of an “independent entity” and considered it to be part of the Soviet bloc.

Bojan Dimitrijević

Institute for Contemporary History

Belgrade

YUGOSLAV-SOVIET MILITARY RELATIONS 1945-1948

Abstract: The Yugoslav-Soviet cooperation in military matters developed from the visit of Tito to USSR in September 1944. Red Army entered Yugoslavia and helped the Partisans to conquer Serbia. The ideological ties and the glorifying of the Red Army continued neglecting the exactions of Soviet soldiers over civil populations. The military aid of URSS was considerable, since even before the end of the war 7 divisions were equipped, but only two were operational. The Air Force was created exclusively on the basis of Soviet aid. The Soviet instructors were present from the battalion up to the General Staff and the Ministry of Defense. The delivering of the Soviet material was continuous as well as the training of Yugoslav officers and NCO's both in Yugoslavia and in Soviet Union. Nevertheless, even before the Tito-Stalin split the difference were evident. The Yugoslav desire to build a strong and well equipped army was seen with out-right suspicion by the Soviets since they were of the opinion that the defense of the world communism should be the task of Red Army only.

Keywords: *Soviet military aid, schooling of Yugoslav military personnel in the USSR, armaments, Red Army*

The pre-war orientation towards Moscow of the Yugoslav Communists rose, during the war, to the level of identification with the Red Army. In their victorious enthusiasm, during the period of the establishment of basic state organs and institutions for the new society, the identification spread to all its structures. In 1941, they joined the war against the invaders in response to a signal from Moscow and ended it as a part of the global anti-fascist bloc based on military cooperation with the Red Army. Therefore the role of the USSR also symbolizes the beginning and the end of the revolutionary process in Yugoslavia 1941-1945.

Arrival of the Red Army in Yugoslavia in 1944

The Soviets facilitated the rise to power of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia by their arrival in Yugoslavia in September 1944. Their armed assistance was crucial in conquering strategically important Serbia, and enabled the transition from guerrilla warfare to proper military organization. Because of what they represented, the Soviets were welcomed with utmost joy by their Partisan allies, as well as the people of Serbia, who in their arrival saw the end of war and occupation. However, in many places the welcoming of “Russian brethren” – as the Serbs used to call the Soviet army – would turn into a complete surprise. Already on the Danube and in Eastern Serbia, the encounter with the Soviets, for many Partisans, turned out to be a meeting with unexpected occurrences: theft, harassing of women, breaking into homes and all other buildings considered worth looting, etc.¹ Instances from Belgrade and especially Vojvodina confirmed criminal conduct of the Soviet liberators. While liberators did not discriminate according to nationality, there are many testimonies that women of German nationality were particularly targeted by Soviet soldiers in Banat, Bačka and everywhere else their villages were attacked. There were cases of gang rape, rape in front of the victim’s family, while the age of the victim bore no importance to the violators. Some of the offended women later committed suicide. Raids on cellars abundant with wine and other alcoholic beverages spurred the Soviet soldiers into action. Records show 1219 cases of rape, 359 attempted rapes, 111 cases of rape followed by murder, 248 cases of rape followed by attempted murder and 1204 cases of attempted robbery in which violations were committed by Soviet soldiers and officers.²

This kind of behavior of the Soviet troops in Serbia and later in Vojvodina couldn’t escape the notice of the highest echelons of Yugoslav Communists. Milovan Djilas (who at the same time wrote words of praise for their army) testifies to the negative resonance which the behavior of Soviet troops had, and says: “After the liberation of Belgrade, Soviet soldiers, including officers, did not behave properly. There was rape, robbery, even murder. This was successfully used by the opposition, which we used to call the reaction. We had not yet consolidated our rule. We imagined the Soviet army as orderly, bearing certain ideals by which we lived. Tito called General Korneyev, the head of the Soviet Military Mission, to draw his attention to this. I was present, as well as Kardelj and Ranković. Kardelj said something. Ranković, as usual, kept silent. I said that the conduct of Soviet officers was creating great difficulties for us. The reaction, as well as the public, was comparing Soviet officers and soldiers with

¹ “The undervaluing of our peoples’ struggle by the Soviet Communist Party could also be felt during the encounter with the Red Army,” *Za pobedu*, 56, 11 September 1949.

² Zoran Janjetović, *Between Hitler and Tito, the disappearance of the Vojvodina Germans* (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2000), 207-210; Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi prilozii za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita*, Vol. I, (Zagreb: Mladost, 1980), 410-411.

the English. Korneyev blushed and became angry. He protested because, in his opinion, this meant we were insulting the Red Army. This then grew into a big scandal, so even Stalin protested.”³

Despite the reality of the behavior of the Soviet troops in the field, numerous incidents and Soviet arrogance towards their allies, the Red Army was presented to Tito’s Partisans and the censored Yugoslav public in a completely different light, both in those days and up until 1949. Public glorification of the Eastern ally originated from top-ranking Yugoslav communists: this is how Tito described the Soviet army on its anniversary in February 1945:

“It is different from other armies in every respect. For red soldiers, peacetime service in the Red Army isn’t comprised of barracks, military drills, various harassments and nuisances, as is the service in the bourgeois armies, at which their own servicemen look upon with so much hatred and contempt ... Service in the Red Army is an honor for every citizen.” It is “truly the people’s school”, and from it “emerge citizens, aware forgers of the new society, forgers of socialism.” Tito sees it as an army “of the enslaved and the oppressed... No army in Europe, no army in the world, not even all of them together, were able to stop the bloody fascist invaders.” The Partisan leader was explaining “why it was invincible”, and that’s because it was “armed with the latest weapons in use today ... it was a monolithic entity, held together by firm camaraderie, one shared idea, the idea of defending the sacred socialist soil.”⁴ “Where did the power and invincibility of the Red Army stem from?” wondered Djilas rhetorically, and then answered his own question: “From the fact that the Red Army does not seek to enslave other nations, but to help the liberation of the enslaved peoples...” To summarize, a connection between the two armies was established: between the army of Yugoslav communists and that of their Soviet tutors and role models.⁵ With these and similar words, the Yugoslav military and Party leadership influenced the casting of incidents and quarrels into oblivion. Instead, obtainment of victory and the alliance of arms bred awe among the Yugoslav Partisans. “The mastery of the Red Army as a model for our army,” was stressed, and that “we find ourselves in very favorable conditions to achieve this, to learn from the Red Army the mastery of modern warfare in all its forms”.⁶

A significant part of the Partisan Army, especially its leadership, welcomed the arrival of the Soviets as the fulfillment of their perennial struggle. Undoubtedly, the Cominform hardliners were partly recruited from this section of the Partisan Army and their party a few years later.

³ Momčilo Djorgović, *Djilas vernik i jeretik*, (Belgrade: Napredak, 1989), 169.

⁴ O *Crvenoj armiji*, (Novi Sad: Budućnost, 1945), 3-11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 13, 18-19.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 18-21.

The Expansion of Soviet Influence

In the unusual climate that prevailed in post-war Yugoslavia, especially within its army, a notion of fully justified orientation toward the sovietization of life and practices in the Yugoslav Army (JA) was created, as well as peacetime structuring that completely relied on the Soviet army. Simultaneously with educating Yugoslav personnel in the USSR, Yugoslavia widely used Soviet experts in its army and other institutions and agencies, primarily in the fields of planning and industry. The original concept of adopting the Soviet experience was, however, being abandoned in cases when, since it was schematized, it could not be implemented in practice, as example of the reorganization of the Army after the war shows. Soviet experts assisted the planning, organization of scientific work, the setting up the basis for studying the Russian language, etc.⁷

The Red Army was immediately presented to the Yugoslav military public as the model for creating the new Yugoslav Army. Soviet instructors in the Yugoslav army made a positive contribution to the acceptance and mastering the use of Soviet weapons, while the first contingents of Yugoslav officers and cadets were sent to the Soviet Union for military education. Soviet influence was also visible in the first attempts to standardize the formation framework of the Yugoslav Army (equipment, arming of personnel, size and number of units). The first formation frameworks of the Yugoslav Army were made in March 1945 under the influence of the Soviet Army formation and military doctrine.

Simultaneously with the Soviet deliveries of armaments to the Partisan Army, which started in late 1944, the Soviet instructors also began to arrive. At least 117 Soviet instructors were assigned to the First Proletarian and 12th Partisan Corps, followed by the headquarters of Serbia, Macedonia and Vojvodina, a couple of artillery units, schools and military bases, as well as the Artillery Division of Supreme Headquarters in late 1944 and early 1945. The instructors in question were artillery and communication instructors.⁸ Various situations and circumstances are likely to have influenced the Supreme Commander of the Yugoslav Army to issue an order on July 10th 1945 on the stance toward the Soviet military instructors and advisors.⁹ The trend of reliance on the Soviets was most prominent in the Air Force, mostly because of

⁷ Branko Petranović, *Jugoslavija na razmedju (1945-1950)* (Podgorica: Crnogorska akademija nauka i umjetnosti, 1998), 459-460.

⁸ Nikola B. Popović, *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi u drugom svetskom ratu* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1988), 230.

⁹ Archives of the Institute for Military History (hereinafter AVII), fond NOB, k. 21, 1, 44. We found the same orders in the artillery brigade of the 39th division, dated 20 July 1945, for behavior towards the "Russian" army officers who were appointed instructors in this brigade. *Ibid.*, k. 1288, 3, 12.

technological and organizational orientation toward the USSR. During the engagement of the Soviet air force group “Vitruk” on the Srem front, the system of “doubling”, which provided training for the Yugoslav pilots, was established. Each position held by a Soviet, from the level of command to that of the pilot, was doubled by a Yugoslav, which was the fastest way of providing combat training and taking over of complete air force units. However, in the post-war period, the process of setting up the Soviet instructors or advisors on various levels of command of the Army and the Air Force was a sort of continuation of the war-time “doubling”, but with an entirely different purpose. That way, under the pretence of instructors, the Soviets were allowed complete control. This specific phenomenon of Sovietization undoubtedly requires more in-depth description and explanation.¹⁰

It is evident that the Soviets had their own people within the command structure of all military branches within the management of the General Staff and the Ministry of Defense, as well as teams attached to the army commands and the military educational facilities and advisors to the lower-level units of the Yugoslav Army. It is also clear that in some cases they even gave orders and acted as commanders on their respective levels. Using their authority and the great respect the Soviet enjoyed in Yugoslavia, they literally took over the command, led the process of training, shooting, organization, often with the help of several Yugoslav officers, who often identified themselves with the legends surrounding them. Misunderstandings and incidents between the experts and the Yugoslav people and agencies did occur, but their publicity was lost, they were glossed over and were discussed only internally at the higher levels, or in contact with the respective representatives of the Soviet leadership. There was also a good deal of misunderstanding about the way they were paid, their working conditions, housing, and similar issues.¹¹

In numerous other cases, members of the Yugoslav Army collaborated with their counterparts from the Soviet Army. Yugoslav Railways participated in both the organization and the carrying out of transport of the Red Army units by trains. In 1945, all military transportation was carried out free of charge. For the purposes of the Red Army, one or two trains carrying fuel from Romania arrived every day in Zrenjanin and Pančevo. The fuel was repackaged and sent on to various places in Hungary and Austria.¹² In May 1945, Tito sent

¹⁰ Božo Lazarević, *Sistem obuke dubljanjem-Titova ideja, Jugoslovensko ratno vazduplovstvo u Narodnooslobodilačkom ratu, Materijal sa simpozijuma*, Beograd 1981. 179-183; Boris Koščak, *Fenomen "Dubljinstva", Za pobjedu i slobodu, Vazduhoplovstvo u strategiji NOR-a*, Beograd 1986, 296-298.

¹¹ Petranović, *Jugoslavija*, 460.

¹² “Razvoj OS SFRJ”, 9-3, *Pozadina*, 1988, 15.

an appeal to Stalin, asking that the Soviet engineering units take part in the reconstruction of main Yugoslav railroads.¹³

Reconstruction of the Pančevo Bridge gave impetus to relations between the Yugoslavs and the Soviets. In October 1945, a team of Red Army engineers with Lieutenant General Golovko arrived in Yugoslavia, together with all the necessary equipment. Three weeks ahead of schedule, in early November 1946, the reconstruction of the bridge was completed and it was made ready for the formal handover that took place on November 29th 1946 in the presence of highest-ranking Yugoslav leadership, with Tito at the helm, and Soviet representatives led by the Ambassador Lavrentiev. On Tito's suggestion, the bridge was named "The Red Army Bridge."¹⁴

Immediately after the end of the war, extensive work began on clearing the rivers of mines, which had been laid either by the retreating Germans or by the Allies, with the purpose of impeding traffic and the withdrawal of German forces from the lower Danube. The de-mining lasted until the end of 1950. De-mining of the Sava River was partly carried out in the summer of 1945. It was carried out by the Soviet Danube Flotilla and, to a lesser extent, the Yugoslav flotilla and it was completed by the August 23rd 1945.¹⁵

Without a doubt, one of the important ways of creating the sense of connection with the great Eastern ally was propaganda. Pointing out the prevalence of "Soviet themes", Nikola B. Popović has found that in Yugoslav society and Partisan politics and propaganda, the Soviet Union held the most prominent position. Both the Partisan policy and propaganda concerning the Soviet Union, and later that of the Army, were based on the following principles:

- The USSR carries the main burden of the entire war.
- The USSR waging the war for the salvation of humanity from fascism and barbarism.
- The USSR brings freedom to enslaved peoples.
- The USSR is the model state, the state of happiness and prosperity.
- The USSR is the main and only true ally of the Partisan movement in Yugoslavia.¹⁶

Constant references and analogies with the Soviet Army can be found in the Yugoslav Army press and other written sources. Tito's soldiers were called

¹³ AVII, k.17a, f-4, 7.

¹⁴ Although, according to an article in the newspaper *Front* in January 1946, the bridge should have been named the Bridge of Marsal Tito or, the Pančevo bridge was completed before a certain deadline, the *National Army*, 9 November 1946, 5; On the anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic the Pančevo bridge was officially opened for traffic. *Ibid.*, 30 November 1946, 2.

¹⁵ Boško Antić, *Rečna ratna flotila NOVJ* (Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, 1991), 148-157.

¹⁶ N. Popović, *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi*, 306.

to emulate the Soviet role models, or were placed side by side with them in inspired texts: "As in the Soviet Army, our activists-agitators are teaching and educating all of our soldiers about the heroic figures of the greatest sons of our peoples and the heroic Soviet Union. There is not one of us who did not read the novels *Volokolamsk Highway*, *How the Steel Was Tempered*, *People With a Clear Conscience* and others..."¹⁷ From the end of 1945, the trend of translating Soviet scientific literature, as well as rulebooks and manuals began. It was the time of glorification of Stalin, the USSR and the entirety of Soviet experiences and achievements. However, in contrast to the other Eastern European armies sometimes even forcibly dominated by the Soviets, facilitated by the fact that many of them had either been on the defeated side or had weak local resistance movements, in the Yugoslav army, from day one, the parallels were drawn with own experiences and fighting tradition of the 1941-1945 partisan movement.

Soviet Military Assistance

Under the agreement which was arranged by Tito in September 1944 in Moscow, the Soviets accepted the obligation to rearm twelve of his divisions. The Soviet aid arrived in late 1944 and the 1st, 5th, 6th, 16th, 21st, 23rd, 25th, 36th, 42nd, 45th and 48th Divisions were rearmed. These were, based on the names they bore, primarily Serbian, Vojvodinian and Macedonian. In January 1945, the Yugoslavs asked for arms for another ten divisions, as well as for two Albanian ones which were located in Yugoslavia. However, the aid arrived in stages, so when the Srem front offensive began, 10 divisions had already been rearmed, while 5 were in the process of rearming.¹⁸ However, problems arose in supplying ammunition. During the breaking of the front, only two out of seven artillery brigades had ammunition at their disposal and at the later stage, the ammunition was sufficient for only one battalion per brigade. Therefore, the Yugoslavs were continually urging both Moscow and Marshal Tolbukhin, the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, to renew or stabilize deliveries of ammunition. On May 13th, Tito sent an appeal to Stalin, asking for acceleration of the delivery of the promised quantities of arms and other materials, as well as assistance in military personnel.¹⁹

During the 1944-1945 war operations, the USSR supplied the Partisan Army with large quantities of weapons. In summary, the aid is represented in the following numbers: rifles: 96.515 (for comparison: the Western Allies: 137.092), pistols/revolvers: 20.528 (1.626), light machine guns and machine guns: 68.423 (15.837), anti-tank rifles: 3.797 (1.256), mortars of various cali-

¹⁷ *Narodni vojnik*, 1, 15 July 1948.

¹⁸ AVII, NOB, k. 17a, 1-6; *Ibid.*, 4-4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, k. 17a, 5-3; *Ibid.*, k. 57-2, 11, 39 (list of material delivered between 10 February and 10 August 1945).

bers: 3.364 (2.684), anti-tank guns: 170, field guns: 895 (388), tanks and combat vehicles: 65 (107), aircrafts: 421 (61), radio communication systems: 1329 (-) and so on... The relatively continuous influx of Soviet aid, which continued in the period immediately after the end of the war, makes it difficult to assess, down to every single piece of equipment, the amount of Soviet military aid in those days.²⁰ The Yugoslavs, however, continuously insisted on various deliveries – in May 1945 alone they asked for ammunition, fuel, engineering equipment, tanks...²¹ A particularly noteworthy form of aid was the delivery of two air force divisions and one air force base to the Partisans, in accordance to the agreement of November 15th 1944. During the first few months of 1945, the Partisan airmen were trained simultaneously with taking part in combat operations conducted by themselves and the Soviets. These forces were handed over to the Yugoslavs only after the end of the war, around May 13th, when the Soviet airmen left the country.²²

A particular form of Soviet military aid was the forming of units of Yugoslavs in the USSR, which were later sent back to Yugoslavia. In November 1943, an independent unit, consisting mainly of Croatian deserters or prisoners of war, members of various units sent to the Eastern Front from the Independent State of Croatia, was formed in the USSR. They “voluntarily” joined the squad, primarily to get out of the prison camps, provide themselves with better living conditions, manage to recuperate and return home. The discipline of these men was very poor, and in 1944 a separate political operation was undertaken in order to make the unit more army-like, in accordance with its expected purpose in Yugoslavia.²³ In 1944, this unit was converted to the 1st Yugoslav Brigade led by Colonel Marko Mesić. This unit made its combat début in Serbia, and its activities earned it a bad reputation.²⁴ In November 1944, the next unit was formed in the USSR – the (2nd) Tank Brigade. Formed by combining personnel from the Soviet Union and those who had arrived from Yugoslavia, the brigade was transferred to Yugoslavia, but not before the spring

²⁰ A comprehensive document which the Yugoslav Military Mission in Moscow forwarded to Ministry of National Defence of DFJ on 3 September 1945 gives the total number of equipment and arms which were delivered between 10 February and 10 August 1945. The list is comprised of 701 items. Among other things, there are: 19.237 + 37.036 carbines, 1.262 mortars, 84 105mm (German-made) howitzers, 18.071.230 7,62mm (pistol) rounds, 21.743.266 (rifle) rounds, 173.230 82mm mines, 38.455 50mm mines, 13.666 120 mm mines, 282.189 hand grenades, 65 (T-34) tanks, 385 planes, 93 trucks and cars, 2.552 tons of B-73 gasoline, 254 tons of B-70 aviation fuel, 6.493 tons of car petrol, 3.849 tons of diesel fuel, 45.000 soldiers' uniforms, 7.300 officers' uniforms, etc.. NB. Popović, *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi*, 206, AVII, K. 57-2, reg. no. 24.

²¹ AVII, k. 57-3, f-19, 21; Ibid., 22; Ibid., k. 17,9, 12; Ibid., k.17a, f-5, 2; Ibid., 57-2, f-10, 30.

²² AVII, k. 1450, 10 (various documents). Božo Lazarević, *Sistem obuke dubliranjem-Titova ideja*, 179-183; P. Pejčić, 42. *vazduhoplovna jurišna divizija*, (Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, 1991).

²³ N. Popović, *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi*, 240-242.

²⁴ AVII, NOB, k. 791 A, 792, 792A. (Documents of the 1st Yugoslav brigade).

of 1945. It took part in the breakthrough of the Srem front, in fighting over Zagreb, and during the escalation of the Trieste crisis of May-June 1945.²⁵

In June 1945, the 2nd Yugoslav Assault Regiment returned from training in the USSR with 40 Il-2 Sturmovik assault planes²⁶. The next significant boost for the Air Force arrived on September 14th. That day, the 1st Yugoslav "Istrebitel'nyi aviatsionnyi polk" landed at Zemun airport with 40 Yak-3 fighters, which was considered the best Soviet fighter of the recent war. The arrival of these regiments was important because it also marked the return of a large group of airmen from training in the USSR, who were soon switched from their duties in the regiments to a number of other prominent places in the command of the fledgling Air Force. In the spirit of the whole orientation of the Yugoslav Army at that time, this group of airmen was expected to take a leading role in the Air Force.²⁷ In the following years, most of them did just that, but, truth be told, it should be mentioned that some of the airmen who arrived with these groups were associated with the Soviet intelligence structures and would become infamous for their defections and other subversive activities after 1948.²⁸

After the war, the following armaments were delivered to the ground forces of the Yugoslav Army: the infantry received small arms, machine guns, mortars and equipment; anti-aircraft artillery received 37-85mm caliber guns; the artillery received 76mm, 122mm and 152mm guns and howitzers; armored units received T-34 tanks and SU-76 self-propelled guns; followed by the variety of equipment for the communications units, engineering units, other branches and military industry. We did not identify the data concerning the frequency of deliveries except that, in March 1946, a full set of equipment for furnishing a single (5th) tank brigade of 66 tanks arrived in Yugoslavia.²⁹ A survey of the armaments delivered by the USSR to the Yugoslav Army during the post-war period testifies on how crucial that support was in many aspects and for many branches of Tito's army:³⁰

²⁵ Ibid., k. 264, f-4; The brigade was composed of 872 men, 65 T-34 tanks, 3 armored cars, 130 trucks, 12 motorcycles and was filled triple artillery quantities of ammunition and fuel, as well as a significant quantity of other ammunition, fuel, and food.. Manojlo Babić, *Oklopne jedinice u NOR-u*, Belgrade 1969, 285-313.

²⁶ AVII NOB, k. 57-2, f-8, 5.

²⁷ Jovan Stojić, "Na svetlim tradicijama 254. lovačkog puka", *Glasnik RV i PVO*, 3, 1978; Predrag Pejičić, *Tito među vazduhoplovcima*, (Zagreb: Spektar, 1979), 38-39; Milan Micevski i Bojan Dimitrijević, "Jakovljević Jak-3", *Aeromagazin*, 1. 10. 1990, 20; Ibid., "Priča o 117. lovačkom puku - Gardijski lovci", *Aeroplan*, 1, 1991, 20.

²⁸ Jovan Stojić, "Na svetlim tradicijama,," ; Milan Micevski i Bojan Dimitrijević, "Beg u Austriju", *Aerosvet* 19. 3. 1992, 40-41.

²⁹ Archives of Yugoslavia (AJ), f.507, A CK SKJ, III -16.

³⁰ "Razvoj OS SFRJ 1945-1985", Vol. 17, *Naoružanje i opremanje*, Belgrade 1988, 46-47 (The list does not include motor vehicles. Also, torpedo boats type 123bis specified in the list were never included into the weaponry of the JRM).

Type	Pieces delivered	Ammunition for the type	Other
PPsh 7,62mm submachine gun	71.257	61 million	
M-44 7,62mm carbine	54.792	158 million	
PT 14,5mm rifle	617	320.000	
PA 12,7mm machinegun	93	680.000	Another 1,2 million bullets for the aircraft gun
82mm mortar	420		
120mm mortar	233		
M-39/37mm anti-aircraft gun	292	992.000	
M-39/85mm anti-aircraft gun	220	148.000	
M-37/45mm anti-tank gun	235	98.000	
ZIS-2,3/76mm gun	823		
Howitzer M-38/122mm	220	56.400	
M-31/37122mm gun	92	13.500	
M-37/152 mm cannon - howitzer	20	5.100	
T-34 tank	425		
SU-76, 76mm self-propelled gun	52		
Various radio systems	972		RSB-F, BUHTA BRIZ, REM, etc
Telephone exchanges	334		
Radio systems	2221		RAF, RBM5, RBN
Protective masks	156.262		
Mobile chemical laboratories	40		
Flame throwers	30		
Mine detectors	300		
Reciprocating saws	4		
Various boats	900		
Floating bridges N-2P, DLP	5		
Aircraft engines	173		VK-105, PF-2, AM38F, M-11D
Aircraft bombs	3.400		50.100 kg
KM1U boats	6		
Torpedo boats	12		
TK 45cm torpedoes	18		

Spare motors	6		
Various mines	8.750		
Aluminium nitrate	3.345t		
Gunpowder	909t		
Duraluminium	25t		
Rolled aluminum products	20t		
Yak-1 fighter plane *	103	1945	82 planes were entered into the register of JRV
Yak-3 fighter plane	71	1945	3 during the war
Yak-7 fighter plane	1	1945	During the war
Yak-9T fighter plane UYak	15+18	1945	
Yak-9P fighter plane	40	1948	
Il-2 assault plane and U-II2 trainer	Approximately 200	1945	
Pe-2 bomber and UPe-2 trainer	64+9	1945	
Li-2 transport	11	1945	
Shche-2 transport	6	1945	
Po-2 trainer	120	1945	
UT2/UT2M trainer	45	1945, 1947	

* Museum of the Yugoslav Air Force, post-war records, aircraft register

The Navy was left without any supplies. Because of its peculiarity, the aviation gives us an example of how the deliveries were made and which problems were associated with the Soviet armaments and equipment. Even at that time, the Yugoslav Air Force came to the conclusion that the problem of delivery of spare parts, ammunition, fuel and other equipment is being increasingly felt with each passing day. This may have been due to Soviet negligence, as well as due to the fact that they had other priorities: Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Soviet occupation forces in Germany and Austria. However, the shortcomings and delays of deliveries in late 1947 and early 1948 were undoubtedly influenced by the increasing Soviet resentment for the Yugoslavs. In addition to the lack of agreement on deliveries, disputes emerged over the Yugoslav independent projects which the Soviets regarded with unconcealed resentment.³¹

³¹ Zlatko Rendulić, *Avioni domaće konstrukcije posle Drugog svetskog rata* (Belgrade: Lola institut, 1996), 16; Čuvari našeg neba (Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački zavod), 254.

Training of the Yugoslav Staff

A particularly important form of transferring the Soviet influence to the Yugoslav Army was the systematic training of Yugoslav military personnel in Soviet military schools and colleges. During the process of training, military press did not publish a single review or report on their training. However, the breakdown of the

Yugoslav-Soviet relations showed the readers all the negative aspects of the training experience of Yugoslav students and this topic was constantly present in the army press from 1949 to 1952. At the outset of the training and education process, however, Yugoslav expectations of what they would find in Soviet academies were more than idealistic.

As early as 1944, there were Yugoslavs who opted for Tito's movement at the Soviet universities, as well as partisan groups which hailed from different sides (Italy, the Middle East) that had arrived to the USSR for training. The most numerous were the airmen. By the end of 1944 there were about 600 of these airmen, spread throughout the academies in Grozny, Krasnodar, Engels and Vnukovo. It was not until September 1944 that both the Yugoslav and the Soviet side became aware of the profile of the personnel, the problems and the amounts of required specialties. In October 1944, two aviation regiments were formed out of the present personnel – mainly youths. In April 1945, a further 1.122 Yugoslavs were sent to the same schools and to others in Armarov, Khar'kov, Leningrad, Lipetsk or Moscow. These cadets were taught and trained in either fighter, assault, bomber or transport aviation. Also, personnel were trained in technical, meteorological, the rear and other services, while a few select officers were sent for further education. Other squads of airmen (bombers in Engels) were not formed as separate units and arrived in Yugoslavia in 1946-1947. In March 1945, the Yugoslav plans anticipated the sending of 1.300 members of the Yugoslav Army to the USSR to be trained as aviation specialists. The idea was for the most part realized, as 1.060 people were sent to 13 Soviet academies by May 6th. About 200 of them had been designated for pilots; the others were designated for a variety of technical duties. The intensity of this cooperation is best illustrated by the fact that, until the 1948 Resolution of the Informbiro, in total 2.307 airmen had completed their training in the USSR.³²

Beside the airmen, in late 1944, the first batch of around thirty Tito's officers arrived in the USSR to be trained at the NKVD training facilities, together with fifteen men who entered the Military Academy. During April and May 1945, 190 future heads of cavalry, tank units, engineering, artillery, and aviation technical service arrived in Moscow, to be sent to various education

³² AVII, NOB, 57-2, 7, 15/1. Stevan Roglić, "Radjanje našeg RV i PVO", *Glasnik RV i PVO*, 2, 1972, 21-26. Several lists of trainees the Yugoslav army sent to the USSR in 1945 have been preserved: *Ibid.*, k-57/3, f-15, 14; *Ibid.*, 19, *Ibid.*, 30; *Ibid.*, 1228, f-4,4.

centers. Sending of Yugoslavs to naval schools was also considered in 1945, but it seems that by the summer of 1945 (and later?), not one out of the designated couple of dozen was sent.³³ After the end of the war, boys aged 8 to 12 were sent to the USSR. They are known as “suvorovians”. About 90 of them had graduated from the Suvorov military schools in Voronezh, Kalinin, Stavropol and Novocheerkassk.³⁴

After several delays, a group of top-ranking military commanders of the Yugoslav Army was sent for two-year studies at the “Voroshilov” General Staff Academy on March 15th 1946. Initially, it was decided that the studies would start on the 1st of October 1945. The group consisted of the most prominent Partisan commanders: Generals Arso Jovanović, who on September 15th 1945 transferred the powers of the Chief of General Staff to Koča Popović; Peko Dapčević, Radovan Vukanović, Dušan Kveder, Božo Božović, Milutin Morača, Djoko Jovanić, Mate Jerković, Danilo Lekić, Colonels Sredoje Urošević, Moma Djurić and others.³⁵

According to Yugoslav sources, 1,696 members of Tito’s army (467 officers, 225 NCOs, 974 soldiers) were sent for training in the USSR in 1945. Out of those, 620 were educated for the purposes of infantry, 188 for artillery, 18 for anti-aircraft artillery, 45 for the artillery technical service, 116 for communications, 59 as tank crewmen, 37 for cavalry, 410 for the Air Force, 21 for the Navy, 73 for the Medical Corps and 49 for the military-political professions. In addition to that, there were 760 non-commissioned officers, as well as Air Force (634) and Navy (126) privates in the USSR.³⁶ One Soviet source states that in April 1945 3.126 members of the Yugoslav Army were enlisted in their schools. The general characteristics of the majority of Partisan-Yugoslav Army trainees and officers who went to the Soviet Union for studies and advanced training were poor education and little foreknowledge, which made the teaching process difficult. As a result, Soviet authorities recommended adopting a stricter criterion with selection and asked for permission to decide on the school and the curriculum for the trainee, regardless of the candidate’s rank.³⁷ The problem of the large number of cadets who were returned to Yugoslavia in the summer and fall of 1945 due to various health issues was rather surprising. Records of about 200 of these cases were preserved in the documents.³⁸ Another problem the Yugoslav military authorities faced was the substantial number of marriages between Yugoslav cadets and Soviet women. By the end

³³ AVII, NOB, 57-2, 7, 1-2.

³⁴ *Narodni vojnik*, 56, 25. 9. 1949.

³⁵ AVII, NOB, 57-2, 11, 39 (list); Ivan Matović, “Tragom sudbine Arsa R. Jovanovića”, *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski sukob 1948. godine*, (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1999), 183-184.

³⁶ “Razvoj OS SFRJ 1945-1985”, Vol. 10, *Vojno školstvo JNA*, Belgrade 1986, 73-75.

³⁷ N. Popović, *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi*, 229-230.

³⁸ AVII, k-57A, f-7, 23; *Ibid.*, 57-2, f-7, 23; *Ibid.*, f-8,11 i 28; *Ibid.*, f-9, 32 i 38;

of the summer, the question of solving the problem of citizenship of these women and their future status if they were to accompany their husbands back to Yugoslavia imposed itself.³⁹

On December 26th 1945, at the meeting of the Communist Party Politburo, Boris Zihlerl, the Yugoslav Party representative in Moscow, submitted a report concerning the Yugoslav military cadets in training in the Soviet Union. This report provides an excellent overview of the issue of education of the Yugoslav military personnel during this period. It pointed out the following problems: many students showed poor results, many were getting sick – out of the 400 students who were ill, 60 were dismissed and another 70 were still ailing. The composition of the student body was “diverse,” which was to say that some of them used to serve in (from the Partisan point of view) enemy armies. The problem were those who came to the Soviet Union “with illusions,” – they would become demoralized and would send requests to be returned home. Non-commissioned officers were poorly paid, while officers received 700 rubles. Other than that, the learning conditions were satisfactory. Those who hadn’t served with the partisans achieved good results. Divisions among students appeared together with cases of the “Partisan Thessaloniki syndrome”. Vinko Vinterhalter also mentioned that the selection of the cadets who were sent to the USSR “had not been carried out as well as it should have been”. Among the students were Partisan veterans who found the studying difficult, as well as others who were not with the Partisans, had a degree, but were labeled as politically “unreliable.”⁴⁰ Boris Zihlerl suggested that “politically strong people, who won’t be demoralized by the first mundane difficulties they come across, but would rather understand the level of sacrifice that the Soviet Union undertook during the war, and will thus be content with what little they have”⁴¹ should be sent to Moscow.

Training in the Soviet Union faced the Yugoslav trainees with their first challenges. As Milija Stanišić, at the time the General Political Commissar of the Air Force, noted: “Our comrades who went to the Soviet Union found themselves in a situation where the idyllic image they had of the Soviet Union was instantly shattered.”⁴² The first disappointment came during the journey through Romania, but the real shock was to follow after entering the USSR. What Tito’s cadets were about to see and experience was beyond their wildest dreams. At least that’s what they thought.

³⁹ Ibid., 57-2, f-10, 8.

⁴⁰ AJ, F 507, CK SKJ, III, 12.

⁴¹ I. Matović, *Tragom sudbine*, 184.

⁴² Stanišić Milija, “Strategijski aspekti stvaranja i razvoja ratnog vazduhoplovstva, *Jugoslovensko ratno vazduplovstvo u Narodnooslobodilačkom ratu, Materijal sa simpozijuma*, Belgrade 1981, 175, Božo Lazarević, *Sistem obuke dubliranjem-Titova ideja*, 179-183.

The Crucial Year of 1948

From early 1948, the Yugoslav Army felt that the problem with the deliveries of spare parts, ammunition, fuel and other equipment was getting bigger with each passing day. In the years following the resolution, the military press published proof of the fact that the Yugoslav Army had been neglected when it came to deliveries from the Soviet Union. The Yugoslavs used to mention delayed or never delivered rubber molds for aircraft tires, aircraft fabric and tank trucks for transporting aviation fuel.⁴³ In addition to the disagreements over deliveries there were also disputes over some Yugoslav projects which the Soviets looked upon with undisguised resentment. The plan to develop a light training aircraft is one of the illustrative examples.⁴⁴ The Soviets especially opposed the development of the Yugoslav Navy: "Various advisors, together with the most liable of Soviet officials, are of the opinion that we do not need a strong combative, and especially not a merchant navy, as our trade would be exclusively oriented toward Eastern European countries. From that point of view, even during the period of the so-called normal relations, they didn't provide us with any assistance in strengthening our navy. On the contrary, they hindered our efforts, covertly at first and blatantly later on. For a quite a while, they were taking their time over the agreed delivery of torpedo boats and other materials, so much so that the delivery never happened. And those trifles we did manage to buy from them were of little use. For example, we bought four minesweepers with automobile engines that can hardly fit into a ship. These minesweepers were shipped with faulty engines and to this day (September 1950), we did not manage to get them to work."⁴⁵ The Soviets did not realize that they had "infiltrated" an army, which had an authentic foundation for peacetime development, despite the extraordinary level of (both desired and imposed) Sovietization. Pre-war military history and partisan experience influenced the development of the Yugoslav Army differently in a different manner to the one the Soviet advisors expected. Their typical single-mindedness had trouble accepting Yugoslav initiative. The unique way in which Tito's army was created was, in itself, a problem for the Soviets.

In early 1948, a Yugoslav Army delegation traveled to Moscow to agree future deliveries and technical assistance. Leading this delegation were Djilas, Koča Popović, Mijalko Todorović and Tempo. The Yugoslavs had ambitious plans – worth 21 billion – for arming and development of the military industry, primarily shipbuilding. This was later reduced to 12 billion, 3.5 of which

⁴³ "These last ten units were delivered in November 1947, with the promise that they would be new and unused. However, when they arrived, it turned out those were in fact used, repaired and repainted petrol tanks, although they were sold as new. Despite the sabotage by the Soviet Union, we have mastered the production of airplane tires." *Krila Armije*, 70, 11 January 1950.

⁴⁴ Z. Rendulić, *Avioni domaće konstrukcije*, 16; *Čuvari našeg neba*, 254.

⁴⁵ *Narodna armija*, 12 September 1950.

were dedicated to the industry and over 9 to the acquisition of armaments. Stalin agreed to help the Yugoslav shipbuilding, but not in the way the Yugoslav planners had expected. They answered the Yugoslav requests by asking “and why are we here?” The Soviets expressed the opinion that the Yugoslav Army should be smaller. “Why do you need a strong army?” was the question the suspicious Soviet leaders used to answer the Yugoslav requests with. Bulganin openly told the Yugoslav delegation “your army is terribly large.” They were concerned about whether the Yugoslav people could carry the burden of maintaining such an army. In this particularly gloomy atmosphere, the negotiations were prolonged, only to end without any concrete agreement being made concerning most of the issues. An Air Force Commander, General Ulepič, later wrote that, on that occasion, the Yugoslavs had also requested the delivery of jet aircrafts.⁴⁶ The Soviets were probably particularly irritated by the Yugoslav push for jet airplanes, because, at the time, they were themselves struggling to develop their first jet fighter. Ulepič testifies that, at the Moscow talks, the request for jet aircrafts put forth by the Yugoslav Air Force was answered by the Soviet Defense Minister who said, “Let it roar over Belgrade”. However, nothing came out of the promised jets. Something completely different was about to “start roaring” pretty soon – a conflict. On Tito’s request the delegation returned home.

At the meeting of the Politburo on 1 March 1948, Tito remarked that the relations with the Soviet Union had come to “a dead-end.” In particular, this was caused by the problem over the deployment of a Yugoslav division in Albania. Tito said that he had made a mistake of not informing the Soviets beforehand, and that Lavrentiev should be told that the Yugoslav Army will not send a division to Albania. According to him, Stalin felt that deployment of the division would give the Americans reason for some sort of attack. It seems like the Soviet opposition wasn’t entirely understandable to the Yugoslav leadership, due to the fact that no problems were experienced during 1947, when the Air Force Fighter Regiment was based in Albania. In the context of the impending conflict, Tito’s conclusion that the Soviets “did not want to meet our requirements concerning the arming of our forces”⁴⁷ draws a lot of attention. An unsigned report, probably written by Tito, tells that the Soviets had changed their outlook on the Yugoslav Army: “I oppose such attitude. We must have a strong army, as it is the guarantee of independence.” Exposition by Koča Popović and Mijalko Todorović further confirms that the goal of the Yugoslav Army was to get substantial funding from the Soviet Union to provide for the equipment. Contrary to the Yugoslavs, the Soviets saw these plans for the development of the military industry as unrealistic. That led Mijalko

⁴⁶ Z. Ulepič, “*Posleratni razvoj Jugoslovenskog ratnog vazduhoplovstva i protivvazdusne odbrane*”, *Glasnik RV i PVO*, 2, 1972. 38.

⁴⁷ AJ, F. 507, CK SKJ III-32.

Todorović to say that “no aid can be expected” from the Soviets in this field. The Soviet viewpoint was that Yugoslavia did not need a strong army – there already existed the Soviet Army. The leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia relied on the notion that the country’s independence hinges on the defensive potentials of its army and military industry, the foundations of which had already been set in the “Five Year Plan”. Although it did rely on armaments obtained from the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia did not renounce the building of its own military industry, including the construction of the navy, as the basis of its independence.⁴⁸

The real surprise came on March 18th 1948, when the chief Soviet military adviser, General (O.) Barskov, informed the Yugoslav military and political leadership that he had received a dispatch from the Soviet Minister of Defense Bulganin, which contained orders by the Soviet leadership that all Soviet military advisors who are “surrounded by inhospitality and enmity” are to leave Yugoslavia immediately.⁴⁹ This was followed by the series of political occurrences which were kept secret from even the innermost circles of the leadership. In 1948, the ties between the USSR and its satellite states started to irreversibly tear themselves apart.

Two Perspectives of the Place and Role of the Yugoslav Army

If there had been no conflict of 1948, the Yugoslav armed forces would have probably joined the Warsaw Pact when it was formed in 1955. A sense of belonging to the same military bloc with the Soviets had already existed during the period of good relations, as many indicators in the military press and preserved documents show. Speaking at the first celebratory function of the Army Day on December 22nd 1947, Tito said: “We need to look up to our great ally, the invincible, heroic Soviet army, the army which had been our mentor and great benefactor throughout our superhuman struggle... We need to look up to the celebrated traditions of our own and the Soviet Army.” He then pointed out that “we are no longer separated from our great ally, the Soviet Union.”⁵⁰ In one of his previous speeches, he rejected accusations that his country was “a mere satellite state,” and said “yes, Yugoslavia and the other Eastern countries follow the Soviet Union, but they follow it because they know that it won’t jeopardize their independence.” Describing in fragments the parades of “fraternal armies” (Soviet, Czechoslovakian, Polish, Bulgarian, Albanian), called “On Guard for Peace,” the *Front* magazine wrote in May (sic) 1948: “Like granite rocks, armies of the new democracies, led by the Soviet Army, are standing guard for world peace. Their awareness, experience, sound training, state-of-the-art weapons

⁴⁸ B. Petranović, *Ibid.*, 458-459.

⁴⁹ *Kampanja protiv FNRJ 1948-1958*, October 1958, 13-14.

⁵⁰ Josip Broz Tito, *Govori i članci*, Vol. IV, (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1959), 219.

and brotherhood in arms forged in the struggle against fascism, make these armies an impenetrable bulwark guarding the democratic legacy of the Great Liberation War. They are a sure guarantee that the enemies of peace and the imperialistic warmongers can not succeed in their dark plans.”⁵¹

After the conflict emerged, the Yugoslav military and party leadership pointed out that the disagreements with the Soviet Union had been constant occurrences in interstate cooperation between these armies. Speaking to the members of the Army garrison in Macedonia in the summer of 1949, Tito talked about the strength of the army and the Soviet criticism regarding this issue. This statement validated Soviet suspicions over the wave of Yugoslav requests for weapons and constant support of a large army. “During the first years, they shouted at us for having an army five hundred thousand strong, because, they said, the war is now over and there’s no need for it. But we know, comrades, that many wars end only for new ones to begin.”⁵² On occasion of the tenth anniversary of the formation of the First Proletarian Brigade and the Yugoslav Army, on 23 December 1951, Tito commented on a statement made by the Chief of General Staff, Koča Popović, about the formation of the First Proletarian Brigade in 1941. “He said that the event had a profound political significance because that was the moment when we clashed with the Soviet leaders who reprimanded us for creating ‘some proletarian brigade’ and asked us why would we do that. You should not think, comrades, that they did not know what was going on. They knew because these people are clever for their own sake and not ours. That’s exactly why they wanted to stop what we were doing. But we were also clever, for our own sake, and we didn’t let them stop us and leave us undone... If you follow our correspondence with them, you will see that, every time we were at a crossroads, we never allowed ourselves to be derailed, so that we end up in the gutter and they end up in charge. Not during the People’s Liberation War, or afterward”.⁵³ By this transfer of the current political context to the past, Tito summed up the behavior of the Yugoslav Communist leadership and its relationship with the Soviet Union. It turns out that the Partisan Yugoslav Army had been in a state of latent disagreement with its older Soviet brother ever since its creation.

⁵¹ *Front*, 69, May 1948, 2.

⁵² J. B. Tito, *Govori i članci*, 261.

⁵³ J. B. Tito, *Govori i članci*, 382.

Momcilo Pavlović,
Institute for Contemporary History
Belgrade

ALBANIA BETWEEN TITO AND STALIN

Abstract: The article analyzes the Albanian question in the context of overall foreign relations between the Balkan countries and the USSR in the immediate post-war setting. Here the emerging disagreements between Yugoslav and Albanian leadership are seen as a consequence of mutually opposed policies that were fueled by repeated arbitrations from Moscow.

Keywords: *Tito, Enver Hoxha, Stalin, Balkan federation, Cominform*

Complex triangular relations between Josef Stalin, Josip Broz ‘Tito’ and Enver Hoxha should be seen in the light of bilateral relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia, Yugoslavia and Albania, and Albania and the USSR, as well as in the light of relations between the Communist parties of those states. Relations should be analyzed also in the context of initiatives to launch a Balkan Federation, as well as in the context of civil war in Greece and general relations between the superpowers. All these factors influenced relations between Albania and Yugoslavia and contributed to the sudden collapse of “fraternal” relations between their Communist parties.¹

¹ This paper is based on archival material from following funds of the Archives of Yugoslavia (hereinafter AJ): N° 507, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and its bodies such as, the Commission for international relations of CPY and Commission for Minorities; and the Chancellery of the Marshal of Yugoslavia 1945-1953 (hereinafter KMJ). In writing the paper we used also the following literature: V. Dedijer, *Jugoslovensko-albanski odnosi 1938-1948* (Belgrade: Borba, 1949); I. Vuković, *Autonomaštvo i separatizam na Kosovu*, (Belgrade: Nova knjiga, 1985); R. Rajović, *Autonomija Kosova: istorijsko-pravna studija* (Belgrade: Ekonomika, 1985); *Kosovo – prošlost i sadašnjost* (Belgrade: Međunarodna politika, 1989); B. Božović, M. Vavić, *Surova vremena na Kosovu i Metohiji, Kvislinzi i kolaboracija u Dugom svetskom ratu* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1991); B. Petranović, “Kosovo u jugoslovensko-albanskim odnosima i projekat balkanske federacije 1945-1948”, in *Srbi i Albanci u 20. veku* (Belgrade: SASA, 1991); M. Pavlović, “Kosovo između Jugoslavije i Albanije 1944-1948. godine”, *Zbor-*

If the Yugoslav Communists saw Moscow as the centre of the universe, the source of hope and inspirations, the Albanian Communists perceived Belgrade in similar terms initially. For them road to Moscow passed through Belgrade. If in Yugoslavia Stalin, beside Tito, was elevated as an unmatched leader and an idol, so was besides Hoxha, Tito in Albania. "For us, Tito was Stalin, and more than Stalin", wrote Hoxha.² At public places in Yugoslavia, Stalin's photo was placed alongside with Tito's; in Albania Tito's was placed next to Hoxha's. With the Yugoslav removal of Stalin's, came Albanian removal of the picture of Tito. Whatever USSR was doing to Yugoslavia under the motto of mutual cooperation and proletarian internationalism, Yugoslavia was doing to Albania in the name of ideological, political, economical and cultural aid. The Yugoslavs were copying the Soviet constitution and laws, modeling the state and economy according to Soviet example, and the Albanians were following Yugoslav solutions. Ideology and practice of Communism arrived to Albania through the Communist Party of Yugoslavia whose members were sent to Albania as councilors and instructors.³

Yugoslav-Albanian and Albanian-Soviet relations

Relations between the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) and the Communist Party of Albania (CPA) were established during the Second World War and in the immediate post-war period. They grew and had a new meaning when both parties came to power in their respective countries. Euphoria was spread through phrases of the fraternal alliance "sealed with blood" and indestructible friendship. Everyday problems were camouflaged with the vague ideological phraseology of Marxism. This was a period of an ideological honeymoon in relations between the two states.

Initially Yugoslav Communists were offering ideological, economical, political, military and cultural assistance to Albania even beyond their limits. Help in rebuilding the infrastructure and to organize food supplies to an abundant extent, even though this was the time of scarcity in Yugoslavia as well. Agreement on economical cooperation was signed on 1 July 1946, and the Treaty on harmonization of economical plans, customs and currency on 27 November 1946. They were followed with the creation of mixed Yugoslav-Albanian ventures, made after the model of Soviet-Yugoslav plans. Mutual cooperation encompassed medical and military assistance, as well as help in school-

nik Filozofskog fakulteta u Prištini, 1992, 185-191; M. Pavlović, "Kosovo i Metohija i Albanci (Šiptari) u Srbiji i Jugoslaviji 1944-1948", *Istorija 20. veka*, 2, 1998, 153-162; *Kosovo i Metohija u velikoalbanskim planovima 1878-2000* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2001).

² E. Hodža, *Titoisti*, Beograd, 1982, 258

³ Dedijer, *Jugoslovensko-albanski odnosi*, 7-49; Nikola Gaćeša, "Privredni odnosi Jugoslavije i Albanije 1945-1948", in *Stanovništvo slovenskog porijekla u Albaniji*, (Titograd: Istorijski institut SR Crne Gore, 1991), 991-1035.

ing and rebuilding the academia. Although this assistance is well researched, it should be noted that authors from Yugoslavia tended to exacerbate, whereas Albanian authors tend to diminish it, or present it repeatedly and solely as a tool of Belgrade imperialism. In reality, the assistance was aimed to bring the two states closer and to integrate their economies in order to set the stage for political unification of the two countries in the future envisaged Balkan federation. At least such was the rationale for the policies at that time.⁴

While those relations flourished, Soviet-Albanian relations in the post-war period were on a rather low level. The Soviets were present in the country through a military mission, which grew to a diplomatic outpost during 1945. The Soviet representatives were discouraging Albanian attempts to establish direct connections and were referring them to Belgrade. Hoxha wrote afterwards that the Soviets were getting to know Albania “by whatever Tito, Kardelj, Djilas and others were telling – that is through the Yugoslav eyes.” He was convinced that Tito is closely collaborating with Stalin. “Therefore, we thought at the time that Stalin would agree upon whatever we decide with Tito, and that we would hear Stalin’s opinions and advices from Tito’s mouth”.

Although the Soviets were declining to intervene in “fraternal” relations, they were well informed, particularly about minor disagreements between the Albanian and the Yugoslav leaderships. Not only did Soviet intelligence and instructors, but also representatives in Tirana and Belgrade (Chuvahin and Sadchikov) post detailed reports on this topic. This was also reflected in the conversation between Tito and Stalin in June 1946 in Moscow, during which Stalin asked in details about Albania and its leadership and fractions among the CPA. He revealed to Tito that Albanians aimed to send a delegation in Moscow, but he would discourage them until he would inquire about the opinion from the Yugoslavs.

In April 1947, while receiving the official and the unofficial head of Yugoslav diplomacy S. Simić and E. Kardelj together with the Yugoslav ambassador to Moscow V. Popović, Stalin again asked for details about Yugoslav-Albanian relations and about Hoxha in particular. He surprised Kardelj with the claim that Hoxha “was making complaints about the Yugoslav political advisers in the Albanian army, which are weakening the discipline.” Kardelj replied, “For us this is new,” and “they did not tell us anything.” Stalin inquired about Hoxha; he was interested in his reliability and firmness, worried if he “will be with us until the end.” Kardelj replied that Hoxha is reliable and beloved by the people, but he lacks the Marxist-Leninist education. Kardelj also singled out Koçi Xoxe as the best within Albanian leadership, although also lacking education. Molotov concurred.⁵

⁴ Ibid., 1001-1002

⁵ M. Pavlović, “Dokument koji ne odseca glavu: Istina o Kardeljevom obećanju Staljunu da će Jugoslavija pokloniti Kosovo Albaniji”, *Borba*, 12-13. avgust 1989.

Later in February 1948 Stalin became even more direct accusing the Yugoslav leadership of pushing for the construction of a federation with Albania without consulting the Soviet Union and accusing Yugoslavs for pursuing policies which could jeopardize overall situation in the Balkans. Stalin urged the postponing the formation of such a federation and pushed Yugoslavs to concentrate on a union with Bulgaria as a first step instead.⁶

Hoxha's fears and his misunderstandings

Behind the façade of cordial cooperation between the Yugoslavs and the Albanians lay a disturbing distrust and discontent on the part of Albanian leadership chaired by Hoxha. This manifested in different misunderstandings which were kept away from the public. Hoxha perceived both the Yugoslav help and the perspective of unification with Yugoslavia as a treat to his own position within the party filled with pro-Yugoslav leaders. These included Koçi Xoxe, N. Spiru and K. Temelko. Only in retrospect Hoxha rationalized this fear as a concern for Albanian independence. The final goal of Titoists, wrote Hoxha in the work of same title, was the complete conquest of Albania. He mentioned that this goal was openly proclaimed in 1948 by the head of the Yugoslav military mission V. Stojnić at the Plenum in Berat. Hoxha repeatedly maintained that Yugoslav's sought to "subjugate and misuse" Albanians through the program of cooperation. As late as 1948 he discovered "nationalism and chauvinism" behind Tito's proletarian internationalism and behind his Communism Hoxha saw "revisionism of theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism, and his true face of anti-Marxist, chauvinist and agent of imperialists".

However, the more correct background for such accusations lay in Hoxha's fear of removal from power. He stated, "my total removal was the goal of the Yugoslavs ... Yugoslav leadership wanted to eliminate me already in Berat," as he was increasingly criticized from his closest collaborators whom afterwards he described as Yugoslav spies. He expressed fear for his own safety as concern for the Albanian party, state and the people. He sought support within CPA rank-and-file and among the Soviet representatives in Albania by conveying further the details from Yugoslav-Albanian negotiations. He was repeatedly inviting Soviet advisors to Albanian military, which caused increasing Yugoslav suspicions.

Occasional misunderstandings were removed through political action, but the underlying mistrust remained. The treaties regarding economical harmonization were delayed as Yugoslav leadership was informed on a cleavage within the Albanian party. One side was lead by Xoxe arguing for cooperation with Yugoslavia, and the other by Hoxha who was against it. Part of the Albanian leadership was expressing doubts about the nature of such agreements

⁶ Branko Petranović, *Balkanska federacija 1943-1948* (Šabac: Zaslona, 1991), 198-200.

and voicing its possible harm to the Albanian economy. Such suspicion was not without ground. The telegram of J. Djerdja to Tito shows that he “was told from well informed source that the leadership expresses doubts about Yugoslavia’s capability to fulfill the taken obligations ... Trade between our two countries seems to confirm such skeptical views of ignorant and saboteurs, as our import from Albania is lately greatly exceeding our export”. On the other hand, Hoxha had to take into account the opinion of other leading figures in CPA, particularly S. Maleshove, who was highly ranked in the party until May 1947. K. Xoxe concluded that until his removal, Maleshova was holding the entire situation in Albania in his hands: “He was the best among the Communists as he had lived and learned in Russia”. Maleshova thought that cooperation with Yugoslavia is supposed to be at the same level as cooperation with Western powers, particularly with the United States and Great Britain, in order to secure the recognition of Albanian government. After his removal a number of leaders argued for sidetracking Yugoslavia and developing immediate relations between Albania and the USSR.

Members of the opposition also had their own views regarding cooperation. They were led by Professor Djerdj Kokoshi. He thought that the existence of Albania as a national state cannot be maintained through solely relying on Yugoslavia and the Eastern bloc, but has to have a foothold in support of Great Britain and United States.

Scattered across the world, Albanian émigré population feared close relations between the Yugoslav and Albanian leaderships. M. Frasheri, leader of the Balli Kombetar, wrote to the Secretary General of United Nations *Trygve Lie* in April 1946, urging the international community to intervene against the possible entrance of Albania into a federation with Yugoslavia and denounced the signed treaty of economical assistance as “spreading of Yugoslav power over entire Albania.” In addition to him, other leading Albanian émigrés also thought that Yugoslavia holds the fate of Albania, guarantees its independence, but also nourishes pretensions to integrate it into the federation.

Hoxha establishes contacts with Moscow

All the above mentioned factors contributed to Hoxha’s attempts to establish direct relations with the USSR in order to achieve a break from Yugoslav assistance which he perceived as a pressure. He was seeking direct contact with Moscow through Soviet representatives in Albania. First such action occurred in May 1947 when during the visit of the Albanian delegation to Moscow. This delegation was headed by N. Spiro and its goal was establishing economic and cultural relations, as well as assessing the possibilities for Hoxha’s visit. As the Yugoslavs were not informed of those steps they reacted by provoking an incident. The Yugoslav ambassador to Moscow, Popović, requested an explanation from his Albanian colleague, and consequently conveyed a protest to the Alba-

nian government. In this protest it was stated that “such visits are undermining the achieved agreements with Yugoslavia”. The Yugoslavs maintained that on this level of integration all the economic arrangements with third countries are supposed to be agreed upon in mutual consultations prior to such agreements. The Protest disturbed Hoxha, who conveyed his opinions to S. Zlatić the Yugoslav special representative. The incident was finished finally with the telegram of the CPY Central Committee which assessed that “if information are truthful, the ambassador did not act properly”.⁷

In July 1947 Hoxha visited Stalin and together they signed a trade agreement which included a modest loan to Albania, as well as assistance for building a factory of agricultural machines. Hoxha also requested for military instructors, but Stalin allegedly diverted this request to Yugoslavia. Senior Albanian leader T. Jakova immediately proceeded to inform the Yugoslav leadership of this development, but was not received by Tito. “The visit of our delegation to Yugoslavia”, wrote Hoxha afterwards “would serve as a strong catalyst to reveal all the dirt hidden by the Belgrade revisionists in our mutual relations.”

Although Stalin was directing Hoxha towards cooperation with Yugoslavia, he undoubtedly gained impressions that he enjoys the trust of the Soviet leadership. After this visit, the Albanian press was filled with the texts favoring the USSR and visibly avoiding any mention of the importance of the Yugoslav help. The reports of the Yugoslav representative in Tirana were squaring with these tendencies and causing the doubt of Yugoslav leadership over the frankness of Albanian side. This took place regardless of assurances given by the Soviets. The Yugoslavs noted that Tito’s photo was absent at the celebration of 30 years of October revolution in Albanian General Staff, as well as the absence of his pictures at some of the factories. S. Zlatić wrote from Tirana that it has become clear after Hoxha’s return from Moscow that “the Albanian line is leaning towards direct connection with the USSR”. This makes unclear the role of the economic arrangement with Yugoslavia. He also wrote about the tendency of downplaying the role of Yugoslavia in the economical recovery of Albania, as the treaty with Yugoslavia was mentioned neither in Albanian One Year Plan nor in the Five Year Plan. However, he also stressed the failures of the Yugoslav side such as the plans for a railroad from Durëes to Elbasan (“where we made a poor impression”), lack of technicians for joint venture for exploitation of oil, delays in building planned factories, and incomplete shipments (such as the one of 40,000 military blouses without trousers).⁸

On the other hand Hoxha appeared still favorably disposed toward Yugoslavia in his speeches during his tours around the country and on the pos-

⁷ AJ, 507/IX, Albanija, I-1/135, The rapport of Sava Zlatić to CC of CPY, 12 August 1947.

⁸ AJ, 507/IX Albanija, I-1/142 i 143, Information on yugoslav-albanian relations from 1 August 1947. The message from the Legation of Yugoslavia in Tirana about Stalin’s statement to Hoxha on realtions between three countires from 27 August 1947.

sibilities of cooperation. At one meeting of the Bureau of Central Committee of Albania he even proposed Tito to be elected as a chairman of the Albanian Communist Party, but such maneuvers were just masking the realities of the growing cleavage. Niko Opar, pro-Yugoslav Secretary General of the Albanian Government described the situation to the Yugoslav envoy after his removal from the Albanian Agitprop as ‘utterly confused and disoriented in its foreign policy.’ He maintained that Albanian officials are “not aware that Yugoslavia is an objective precondition for existence of new Albania,” and that population was not explained the importance of tight cooperation with Yugoslavia, let alone the future unification.

Stalin and the Yugoslav policy in Albania

In such an atmosphere economic and other relations between the two countries continued. Yugoslav budget for 1948 envisaged 3 billion dinars deficit for readjustment of economical relations with Albania, with only 1 billion income. This sum equaled to 48.13% of the Albanian budget, and this loan was supposed to serve Albania for acquiring the machines, installations, transportation means, investments and other necessities. Plans for economical federation were once more brought into the limelight.

Military cooperation was also strengthened. It was already on high level, as revealed during the visit of senior representatives of Yugoslav army to Tito who reported on the conditions in the Albanian army. Serious negotiations started in order to improve conditions in the Albanian military and to strengthen Albania in the light of possible problems on the border with Greece. In the beginning of 1948 Aleksandr Ranković asked and Hoxha agreed that “in the light of the possibility of Greek monarcho-fascists, supported by America, to make provocations on the Albanian border ... to declare sector of Korçë our military base for accommodation of one division in order to organize a joint defense”. In Tirana, Yugoslav military representative General Kuprešanin, Zlatić and others held a meeting with Hoxha to set up a military cooperation for building strategic roads, bridges and depots.⁹ Although Hoxha agreed at first, after consultations with Soviet advisers he informed Yugoslav side about a decision to postpone the plans until he could receive the opinion of the Soviet government. The Soviet side reproached the Yugoslavs for sending the troops in Albania without consulting the Moscow with which it is tied through agreements on mutual aid and friendship. Djilas reported from Moscow to Tito that Stalin advised that some form of Albanian independence should be maintained, as well as is supporting Hoxha himself in order to suppress the

⁹ AJ, 507/IX, Albanija, III-1/129. The rapport on major problems of Albanian army of 11 January 1947; AJ, 507/IX, Albanija, I-1/135, The rapport of Sava Zlatić to CC of CPY of 16 December 1947.

rumors that the Yugoslav aim is to subjugate the Albanians. In February 1948 Ranković informed Djilas that upon Stalin's decision, the plan to create Korçë base was abandoned. Stalin did not dare to challenge the Western powers, and was also frustrated with bringing up of the issue of the Balkan federation in the same period. In February he said to Djilas that he has nothing against Yugoslavs "swallowing Albania," but also accused Yugoslavs for planning to endorse Albania into federations without consulting the USSR, and expressed concerns that such actions are provoking serious complications in the Balkans. Stalin suggested that there is no reason to push for a federal arrangement, and again insisted that the plans for a federation with Bulgaria be preferred in turn. He thought that unification with Albanian should be done as a second stage in a process through the proclamation of the Albanian national assembly: "step-by-step and not suddenly, with the boot on the neck". Instead of sending troops Stalin suggested the gradual strengthening of the Albanian army, "and if they are attacked, Albanian assembly can call upon Yugoslavs." The Yugoslav action in Albania were in fact spoiling other Stalin's plans and jeopardizing his general relations with Great Britain and United States. Therefore, one could sense the gathering of forthcoming storm in his assessment of the situation.¹⁰

Tito's attitudes towards relations with Albania

In the economic sphere relations between Albania and Yugoslavia begun to resume. Shipments were still dispatched to Albania, even of products which were scarce in Yugoslavia, such as wheat. At the same time reports on hostility against Yugoslav technicians and advisors multiplied. Yugoslavs were unhappy with the general treatment of the Yugoslav aid program, and particularly with the growing engagement of Soviet experts and instructors in economic and military structures of Albania. "We give the money, and they rule", exclaimed Tito at the Politburo session in November 1947. Tito concluded that relations with Albania are not satisfying and are further deteriorating, as they lack sincerity, and are not in the spirit of brotherhood and unity. However, until April 1948 Tito was confident that "Albania should be held on tightly as we have invested much in the country and it has importance for us ... We have the right to control what Albanians do, which treaties they make... Albania has to honor its responsibilities, and if it wants to have the contracts of its own, it has to coordinate." spoke Tito at the March 1 Politburo session. Tito attempted to retain influence in Albania due to its geopolitical position and the amount of investments from the Yugoslav side.¹¹

¹⁰ AJ, 507/IX, Albanija, I-1/143, The message from the Legacy in Tirana about Stalin's statement to Hoxha on relations of the three countries of 21 August 1947; see also Hodza, *Titoisti*, 258-260.

¹¹ Zapisnici sa sednice Politburoa centralnog komiteta KPJ (11. jun 1945 - 7. jul 1948), Beograd, 1995, str.221-247.

In April there was an exchange of letters between Tito and Hoxha in which the responsibility for deterioration of relations was shifted from one to another. At that time, Hoxha must have already known about the criticism of Yugoslav policies from Moscow. As the reasons to withdraw the military instructors, Tito offered “the lack of trust from your side about a sincerity of our intentions in Albania. Secondly, you give token recognitions towards the sacrifices Yugoslavia made to rebuild Albania, but in reality you act to the contrary. Therefore it is clear that we cannot agree to help Albania at the expense of our own people, without seeing any improvement of our relations. Quite on the contrary, we see deterioration without our fault. Third, it seems we were looking at our mutual relations with more idealism, rather than realistically and now they contradict reality’. Tito therefore argued for questioning of the entire cooperation and setting it on new bases. With this exchange of letters one of the stages in Yugoslav-Albanian relations came to an end.¹²

Conflict between Yugoslavia and the USSR, that is between Stalin and Tito, was materialized firstly at the territory of Albania. Stalin was well informed about Yugoslav policies in this country, and was determined to put a stop to Yugoslav ideological and political expansionism in the Balkans. The joint action of the Cominform was supposed to be the tool of this device. It is difficult to assess the extent of Hoxha’s role in creating accusations against Tito that appeared from Moscow. Though Albania was not a Cominform member, and Hoxha claimed its absence was a consequence of Yugoslav insistence. He called a secret meeting in Bucharest with Vishinski and Dej in order to strengthen the indictment against Tito with his evidence. He used this opportunity to smear his former friends and to turn his country towards almighty Stalin. Tito and the Yugoslav leadership could do nothing but conclude that entire policy of Yugoslav government towards Albania was a mistake.

¹² AJ, KMJ, I-3-b/38, Hoxha letter to Tito of 18, 21 April 1948; AJ, 507/IX, Albanija, I-174, Tito’s letter to Hoxha of 22 April 1948; AJ, 507/IX, Albanija, I-175, Hoxha letter to Tito of 23 May 1948; The letter of Politburo of CC CPY to Politburo of Ccof CPA of 31 May 1948.

Anatoly Anikeev

The Institute of Slavonic Studies

Russian Academy of Sciences

Moscow

THE IDEA FOR A BALKAN FEDERATION: THE CIVIL WAR IN GREECE AND SOVIET-YUGOSLAV CONFLICT 1949

Abstract: The Soviet pressure on Yugoslavia increased considerably in 1949. On one hand, the Soviets tried to use the Civil War in Greece in order to create an independent Macedonian state, closely affiliated with Bulgaria, with the objective to further encircle Yugoslavia. This attempt failed after the Greek communists suffered defeat, which was in part due to the fact that Yugoslavia withheld them its support. The series of fabricated trials of supposed Yugoslav allies amongst the leaderships of countries of the Soviet bloc was another means to exert pressure on Yugoslavia, but it was also a way to impose firmer control on the Communist parties of Yugoslavia's neighbors in order to prevent any kind of collaboration with CPY. The Soviet campaign of 1949 was fruitless: Yugoslavia survived the economic blockade by establishing economic relations with the West, which in turn helped it survive the Soviet pressure.

Keywords: *Yugoslavia, USSR, campaign, pressure, 1949, Civil War in Greece, fabricated trials*

The resolution of the Cominform adopted in late July 1948 in Bucharest represented a watershed in the relations between USSR and its satellite states – the countries of “people’s democracy” – as well as with Yugoslavia. Almost immediately, the approval of this document became mandatory for the Communist parties of all other countries. Calls of the Yugoslav leadership for equal rights in dialogue and a search for a compromise in the inter-party conflict were rejected by the Kremlin, which on principle demanded unquestioning submission in all hierarchical relations it was engaged in.

The whole complex of interrelations of Yugoslavia with the countries of the Soviet bloc, both on party level and in the field of state relations, gradually started to degrade and joint plans in economics as well as in foreign policy

were abandoned. Thus, Yugoslavia's interest in the creation of a joint Balkan federation with Bulgaria, which had already been discussed in 1944-45, waned as well. By 1948, only the Bulgarian side continued to actively develop the idea of a bilateral or – in case of a favorable situation emerging in the Balkans – of a multilateral federation. Sofia needed this both as a way out from isolation and as a means of strengthening its status as a state that “had paid” its dues as a recent Nazi ally. In addition, a close federation with Yugoslavia would have allowed Bulgaria to revitalize its economy sooner. On their part, the Yugoslavs did not refuse to discuss the possibility of a federation during negotiations held in Bled in the summer of 1947 that led to a bilateral agreement on friendship and cooperation, but always stressed that this was a question for the future.¹ In the course of a visit of the Yugoslav delegation headed by Tito to Bulgaria to sign the agreement (it was signed on November 27 in Evksinograd), the issue of creating a federation was discussed further and it was agreed to continue the talks on practical aspects of the matter in the nearest future.²

It is known that already in the summer of 1947 Stalin condemned the Bulgarians and Yugoslavs for excessive activity and haste in signing bilateral agreements, citing the complexity of the international situation and the position of Western powers which were still opposed to a close alliance between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. The Soviet leader returned to this problem again in the course of the discussions with Yugoslav and Bulgarian delegations held in Moscow in January-February 1948. As was the case six months ago, Stalin feared that the plans of the Balkan party leaderships would provoke a negative reaction from the United States, which had become actively involved in Balkan affairs after the adoption of the Truman Doctrine. He criticized Dimitrov for his public discussions of the idea of a federation and stressed the absence of historical ties between countries that, in the opinion of the Bulgarian leader, were supposed to join the federative union. He also believed that these plans could incite the West to create its own bloc. Finally, he concluded that no federation could be viable without a union with the USSR.³ In addition, the Kremlin was at that time developing its own plans for a confrontation with the West on the issue of the Berlin blockade and it did not want any additional complications on the South-Eastern flank. After criticizing Dimitrov's idea about large federative unions, Stalin suddenly called for the urgent creation of a Bulgarian-Yugoslav federation. The sudden change in Stalin's position, in view of his

¹ P. Dragišić, *Jugoslovensko-bugarski odnosi 1944-1949* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2007), 136-137

² D. Michev, *Makedonskiiat vāpros i bālgaro-iugoslavskite otnosheniia. 9 septemvri 1944 – 1949* (Sofia: University “St Kliment Ohridski” Press, 1994), 327.

³ E. Kardelj, who was present during Stalin's speech, could not understand whether the Soviet leader spoke on this subject seriously or with irony - E. Kardelj, *Borba za priznanje i nezavisnost nove Jugoslavije 1944-1957. Sećanja* (Beograd, Radnička štampa 1980), 113.

previous arguments, caused bewilderment of the Yugoslav participants during the negotiations held in Moscow. E. Kardelj spoke of Yugoslavia's negative attitude to this problem under the existing conditions; time would be needed for this idea to ripen. In response to Stalin's question, Dimitrov enthusiastically spoke in favor of creating the federation and thus remained consistent with his previous statements. Kardelj repeated the counterarguments he had already evoked in 1945, namely that the peoples of Yugoslavia (read: CPY leadership) would never agree to a two-member federation formula, but would demand a federation comprised of seven equal partners – this was unacceptable for the Bulgarians and it also seemed unacceptable for Stalin. Thus, Kardelj tried to object that in any case it would first be necessary to take steps toward a two-member federation, but the process would take a long time. Stalin, however, interrupted him and spoke of the necessity to urgently create new relations “as soon as tomorrow”.⁴ Stalin must have taken seriously the information about plans for a military interference by the West in Albania in order to overthrow Hoxha's regime. At that time, this issue was being considered in London and Washington as a response to the support the Soviet satellite states offered the partisans in Greece.⁵ In view of these developments, a federation could have proved an efficient tool for assisting Tirana. At the same time, Stalin did not want to provoke the Americans any further and raised the question of the need to withdraw Yugoslav troops from Albania. It can also be suggested that by that time he had already been informed about the discussions regarding future interaction with Moscow, which were taking place in the innermost circle of the Yugoslav leadership, and that he was also aware of certain critical statements regarding some aspects of this interaction, as well as that he then decided to use this problem to intensify pressure on the Yugoslavs. In addition, the Soviet leader was actually afraid that talks on the formation of a federation within the Soviet bloc could urge the United States and its allies to retaliatory actions and the creation of their own anti-Soviet coalition.

Large federations and special federative relations among satellite states, if created without the USSR's participation, could have made it difficult for the Soviet leadership to set up a bloc of countries of “people's democracy” in the future. Without a federation, each country of this bloc was susceptible to Moscow's pressure and manipulations, including implementation of various anti-Western plans during the maturing Cold War.

After the Moscow negotiations of 1948, Belgrade's interest in the union with Bulgaria completely disappeared, mainly because Tito and his circle came to the conclusion that the Bulgarian communists were under Moscow's total command and that a union with Sofia could mean another form of control

⁴ E. Kardelj. *Borba*, 114-115.

⁵ N. Bethell *The Great Betrayal. The Untold Story of Kim Philby's Biggest Coup* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984), 5.

over Yugoslavia and, as a result, full dependence on Soviet policy. According to Kardelj, the Yugoslav leadership had already come to this conclusion during the negotiations in Moscow.⁶ The final decision was made after the delegation returned to Belgrade, at the plenum of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY CC Politburo) held on March 1; the idea of an immediate federation with Bulgaria was found unacceptable.⁷ It is significant that the discussions of this issue took place on the eve of the emerging conflict with Moscow, just as Stalin and his circle opened the first chapter of the conflict by attempting to influence both the Bulgarians and the Yugoslavs in accordance with their general plans. It is quite possible that the Yugoslavs were correct in their opinion when they regarded Moscow's activity in connection with the federation as an attempt to gain additional tools of control over the CPY and Yugoslavia.

As an interested party, the Bulgarians returned to the question of the federation in the spring of 1948, when Dimitrov informed an Albanian envoy in Sofia that a final decision on the issue of the federation could be adopted by the respective parliaments of Bulgaria, Albania and Yugoslavia in June 1948. In the autumn of the same year, following the July resolution of the Cominform, the resolutions of the 16th plenum of the Central committee of the Bulgarian Communist party (CPB) stressed that "the federation of southern Slavs and potential accession of Pirin Macedonia" could become a reality "only if Macedonia remained true to the socialist and democratic front"⁸ It was a painful issue for the Bulgarians that the Yugoslavs persistently attempted to pursue a policy of Macedonization of the local, mostly Bulgarian, population in Pirin Macedonia, with the help of the intelligentsia sent from Vardar Macedonia. At the 5th CPB congress, Dimitrov stated that the Yugoslavs advanced the idea of turning the Pirin region into an autonomous region with the aim of incorporating it into the FNRF, regardless of the arrangements for creating a federation.⁹

Thus, in the spring of 1948, the issue of creating a Balkan federation was removed by Yugoslav initiative from the agenda and the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict, which emerged shortly thereafter, solved the issue once and for all. Meanwhile, the Soviet leadership and the leaders of the Greek Communist party attempted to rehabilitate the project in the beginning of 1949 in connection with the problems of the civil war in Greece.

⁶ Kardelj, *Borba*, 118.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 120; See also: Petranović, *Balkanska federacija, 1943-1948*, (Šabac: Zaslona, 1991), 200-201.

⁸ Archiv Vneshney Politiki Rossiyskoy Federacii (hereinafter AVP RF), F.074, Op.37, D.46, P.147, 100-102.

⁹ Ts. Dragoycheva, *Makedoniya ne povod dlya vrazdy, a factor dobrososedstva i sotrudnichestva*, (Sofia: Press 1979), 98.

In the spring and summer of 1948, the Kremlin tried through diplomatic channels to ascertain on what conditions Athens and its supporters, the United States and Great Britain, would be willing to accept a compromise with the Partisans in order to put a stop to armed conflict in the country.¹⁰ In February, at a meeting with the Yugoslavs and the Bulgarians, the main sponsors of the Greek Communists (supported by Soviet financial assistance), Stalin spoke of the necessity to end the rebellion in Greece. The main reason for this was his fear of an open American interference in the Balkans, which was actually discussed in Washington in the spring of 1948, after the Partisan Interim democratic government of Greece (IDGG) was formed in December 1947 in the mountains in the north of Greece and even sought recognition. D. Maclean, a well-known Soviet spy and a member of the “Cambridge Five”, became aware of these plans while he served as the second secretary of the British embassy in Washington and passed on the details to Lubianka. Moscow could also have taken into consideration the fact that, after the Cominform passed the resolution, Belgrade could withdraw its support to Greek communists. Behind the scenes of the negotiations with Athens, the Soviet diplomats tried to somehow solve the issue of cessation of hostilities, but their efforts proved unsuccessful. Furthermore, the CPG leaders convinced the Kremlin of their ability to win against the “monarchists-fascists”. In his conversation with Kardelj on the future of the civil war in Greece in February 1948, Stalin said that he had doubts about the victory of Greek communists, considering the importance of Western presence in the country. Stalin then spoke of China where Communists, whose victory he doubted, were in a position to win, taking that as an example and concluded: “As you can see, even I can be wrong. God willing, it will be the same with Greece.”¹¹

In July-August 1948, Greek government troops undertook an offensive in the region of Grammos-Vici, where strong bases of partisans were located. As a result of these furious fights, a significant part of the region was temporarily liberated and several divisions of rebels were forced to relocate to Albania and Yugoslavia, as observed by the UN Balkan commission.¹² In September, battles continued in the central part of Aegean Macedonia, in the region of Vici where, according to the Greek press, partisans from a special Kakova camp in Yugoslavia had arrived. About 7000 Partisans, Aegean Macedonians-Slavs (in official terminology – Slavomacedonians) arrived, but many of them refused to fight on behalf of the CPG, because they were supporters of Macedonians, Keraminkiyev and Pashaliev, who had been removed from the leadership of the Greek party.¹³

¹⁰ *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1948*, Vol. IV, Washington, 1974, 115-117.

¹¹ Kardelj, *Borba*, 116-117.

¹² AVP RF, F.84, Op.31, D.18, P. 32, 171, 188, 191-228.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 240

The problematic attitude of the Greek Macedonians, who by that time comprised more than half of the Democratic Army of Greece (DAG), became an increasingly serious issue for the ruling echelons of the CPG. It is known that the leaders of Greek Communist Party had until then continually ignored their autonomist claims within the party for tactical reasons, fearing the opposition would accuse them of separatism. But the situation changed and “Slavomacedonians” became the main reserve of the Partisans’ army.¹⁴ At the 4th CPG meeting held in late June 1948, Aegean Macedonians’ contribution to the revolutionary fight was noted.¹⁵ This decision marked the beginning of the CPG leadership’s struggle for extended mobilization of this national minority in the DAG since all military operations were almost exclusively taking place in the northern regions of Greece, in Aegean Macedonia. The party leaders had to rely on slogans which were designed to awaken their national feelings in order to get the Macedonians to become actively involved in armed struggle. Thus, at the 5th meeting of the National Liberation Front, a slogan in the form of a call for a union of all Macedonians was issued in late January 1949. After several days, Party Secretary General N. Zahariadis proposed a resolution which stated that the second congress of the National Liberation Front (hereinafter NLF) should in March proclaim the “unification of all Macedonian people into a single independent and equal state within the people’s democratic federation of Balkan peoples”.¹⁶ At that meeting, the Central Council of NLF was expanded to five members in order to include two Macedonians: Rakovski and Mitrevski. Soon, a special Macedonian battalion was set up. At the second NLF congress, which took place on 25-26 March, delegates from Bulgaria and Pirin Macedonia were present (see information of Rodionov from Athens on Tito’s intrigues in Macedonia). On March 27, the Communist Party of Aegean Macedonia (CPAM) was created as one of the steps for establishing an independent communist Macedonian state. Meanwhile, the Congress spoke no longer about the creation of such a state within a Balkan federation, but about self-determination of Macedonian people. However, in June this slogan already came under Zahariadis’s criticism.¹⁷ Apparently, CPG Secretary General’s directive of the spring of 1949 for full mobilization of Macedonians based on the slogans of self-determination was, as Rakovski correctly points

¹⁴ Using this slogan, which was meant to inspire the establishment of an independent Macedonian state, N. Zahariadis managed to bring into the struggle not only Aegean Macedonians, but also their congeners in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania and Turkey. According to American data, by the spring of 1949, they made a force of nearly 14 thousand people. – H. Jones, “A New Kind of War”: *American Global Strategy and the Truman Doctrine in Greece*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 200-201.

¹⁵ Peter J. Stavrakis, *Moscow and the Greek Communism, 1944-1949*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 173.

¹⁶ P. Rakovski, *KP na Grtsiya i Makedonsite* (Skopje: Makedonska kniga, 1990), 158.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 159-162



Three historical regions of Macedonia

out, nothing but monstrous demagoguery and a tactical maneuver aimed at exerting moral and political pressure on the Macedonians.¹⁸ It is possible to suggest that CPG Secretary General's maneuvers were also connected with Kremlin's attempts to find an acceptable way out of the hopeless armed conflict with Athens, both for itself and Greek communists.¹⁹

In April-May, within the UN framework, A. Gromyko carried out a series of secret negotiations in New York on the Greek issue with American diplomats J. Rask and G. McNeil, while Trygve Lie, Secretary General of the

¹⁸ Ibid., 163

¹⁹ The information of the first secretary of the Soviet embassy in Yugoslavia A. Zubov of 10 August 1949 presented, among other things, an analysis of an article about the Balkan federation by M. Pijade published in March 1949. The analysis stated that the intention of this article, much like "the entire propaganda of Tito's clique on this issue", was to "strengthen the provocative movement in Aegean Macedonia against the Greek communist party, to break the united front of the struggle of the Greek people and to shift the blame on the Bulgarian communist party and Informburo". The information suggests that this position of FNRJ – presenting the actions of the USSR and its allies towards Belgrade as a means of intimidation – managed to demoralize some parts of DAG in Aegean Macedonia. The Soviet diplomat wrote: "Now, in NR Macedonia there are many fighters in the Greek people's liberation army, which is comprised mainly of Aegean Macedonians, whom the Yugoslavs use for hard labor and prevent from returning to Greece". – AVP RF, F. 084, Op.37, D.10, P.143, 6.

United Nations, served as mediator. The agenda proposed for discussion was based on CPG's old calls for a ceasefire, universal amnesty and new elections in which the communists would take part. Gromyko stressed that this could be the first step. The Americans, on their part, stated that if the Soviet side indeed wanted peace in Greece, then the discussion should be moved to another level and the participation of the Greek government should be guaranteed. They also drew the Soviet diplomat's attention to the fact that the Albanian and Bulgarian support to the Greek communists would have to be terminated in order to improve the situation. However, for the CPG and its armed divisions, which were fully dependent on external support, this option would have meant immediate collapse. In his counter proposal, Gromyko requested that the Soviets be allowed to participate together with the Western powers in the commission for observation of elections in Greece and in controlling its northern borders. He also demanded that foreign troops be withdrawn and Western support to the Greek government terminated. Obviously, the American participants in the negotiations could not take the Soviet proposals seriously, even more so because the Greeks were absent from the negotiations. They tried to understand the reasons for Soviet maneuvering over Greece and assumed that all this might be part of Moscow's geostrategic plan to ensure it would get a "green light" in Asia if it managed to stabilize the situation in Europe. During the second phase of the negotiations, in late May and early June, DAG resumed offensive, most likely acting on Moscow's directive, in order to show its willingness to continue military actions and demonstrate that the Soviet proposals (which were in fact envisaged by the CPG) were not a sign of weakness of Greek communists.²⁰ E. Bevin, the British Minister of Foreign Affairs, advised American diplomatst to view negotiations with Gromyko in the perspective of the new situation in the Balkans and to try to make Kremlin stop its "political and economic pressure on Tito" and thereby allow him to normalize relations with the West. Western politicians finally regarded the May negotiations in New York and the USSR's maneuvers as an attempt "to delay the collapse of the Greek revolution" and convinced them of the need to continue their struggle against the Partisans until a final victory could be achieved. They had also taken into account the change of the Yugoslav position on the Greek question.²¹

It is possible that Moscow understood that it would be necessary to end the war, but at the same time avoid losing face as well as a full defeat of the Partisans, and hence advised the CPG leaders to create power positions on the

²⁰ B. Kondis, "The Termination of the Greek Civil War: its International Implications", *Balkan Studies*, 29, 2, 1988, 303-304. In late April and first half of May, while Gromyko held meetings with the Americans in New York, fights in the region of Grammos came to a standstill. Partisans turned to defensive tactics and started building defensive fortification. It was also observed that around 500 DAG fighters returned to the front from Albanian hospitals. – AVP RF, F.84, Op. 32, D.15, P.33a, 65-68.

²¹ E. Barker, *The British between the super Powers, 1943-1950*, (London: Macmillan, 1983), 165.

eve of the Soviet negotiations with Americans in the UN and to strengthen the DAG by supplying it with additional troops and conducting a series of offensive military operations. It is not improbable that Moscow counselors participated in the development of the Macedonian scenario as well. Its implementation, as Moscow and leaders of the Greek party believed, would have ensured a dignified end to a long-standing conflict in Greece. If they had succeeded in establishing the so-called “independent” Macedonian state attached to the Soviet bloc, which would have certainly formed allied, even federative, relations with Bulgaria, that development might have become a permanent threat to the integrity of federative Yugoslavia.

The year of 1949 was a turning point both in the relations of Yugoslavia with the USSR and the countries of the people’s democracies and their relations with the West. Moscow exerted unprecedented pressure on Belgrade from all directions. The economic ties of the USSR and its satellite states to the FNRJ were minimized, thus forcing the Yugoslavs to make the difficult decision to establish economic exchanges with the West. Yugoslavia was not invited to the Moscow meeting at which the organization of the Council of Economic Mutual Assistance (CEMA) was discussed. In a note dated January 1, 1949, Belgrade informed the Soviet side that its absence from the meeting could not be justified by the existence of abnormal relations among member-states of the Council and Yugoslavia. Moreover, had Yugoslavia been invited to participate in the meeting, the invitation would have assisted in “creating opportunities for resolving the current differences between FNRJ and member-states of the Council of Economic Mutual Assistance”.²² This note was sent to all “people’s democracies” countries. In March, the Soviet government proposed to the FNRJ that their joint companies for air and river transportation, “Juspad” and “Justa”, be dissolved.²³

In the information prepared by the Secretariat of the Cominform in the summer of 1949 on the occasion of the anniversary of the first resolution on Yugoslavia, it was recommended to use CEMA to “strengthen economic sanctions toward the government clique of Yugoslavia by obstructing all attempts of the governments of some countries of people’s democracies to assist Yugoslavia by supplying it with equipment and raw materials”.²⁴

Stalin understood that the virus of “Titoism” was extremely dangerous and destructive for the Soviet bloc and developed a mechanism for eliminating potential supporters of this “Trotskyite heresy” inside the Communist parties of the countries of “people’s democracy”. He activated the complex machinery of terror that had been created during the “purges” of 1930s. In spring and

²² AVP RF, F.0144, Op.33, D.2, P.134, 1-3.

²³ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁴ Rossiiskiy Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial’no-Politicheskoy Istorii (hereinafter RGASPI), F.575, Op.1, D.80, 103-106.

summer, Moscow picked those who, in Stalin's opinion, were most likely to be champions of this evil and, with the assistance of counselors from Lubianka, the trials that ended in autumn with capital sentences of T. Kostov in Bulgaria, K. Xoxe in Albania and L. Rajk in Hungary soon began. Far-fetched accusations against these communists were created on the basis of every day materials, often based on events from their experience as clandestine revolutionaries. Tsola Dragoycheva, a well-known Bulgarian Communist who was at the time the minister of post and telegraph, brought the pernicious information against her party comrade to the Soviet ambassador, M. Bodrov, a month after the plenum of BCP CC held in June 1949, when Kostov was expelled from the Central Committee as well as from the party. In mid-July, when Kostov was already under investigation, she paid a visit to the Soviet ambassador in Sofia, M. Bodrov, which could be explained by her aspiration to ward off any possible accusations against herself that might have appeared while the trial was being prepared. Dragoycheva told the ambassador that during her entire work in the party she had always treated T. Kostov with wariness. Furthermore, according to Dragoycheva, there had been moments that "today demand attention of investigators who interrogate Kostov". Dragoycheva's information was meant for investigators from Soviet security agencies, general Schwartzman (Chernov) and Likhachev, who were sent to Bulgaria after T. Kostov was arrested on June 20, 1949. They were to execute the order of the Minister of State Security issued personally by Stalin and to obtain Kostov's testimonies revealing, as USSR's minister of state security V. Abakumov wrote, "his criminal ties with Tito's group". The "criminal" moments mentioned by Dragoycheva in the biography of the disgraced Bulgarian Communist consisted of actual facts mixed in with her guesswork and quite possibly lies, and were written on four pages that were sent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to CC of CPSU.²⁵

As a rule, the "cases" against "Trotskyites", Tito's supporters, were organized in Moscow according to the same scenario. Various documents would be procured that were composed of the so-called "material" regarding a specific party leader, who during the years of his party and state career, by virtue of office, repeatedly had contacts with the Yugoslav leaders of different ranks. Then, "the case" would be set up so as to demonstrate the "compromising evidence" and would subsequently be sent to the highest party instances of a given country, along with accumulated additional facts of "treachery" of the party leader in question in favor of "Tito's Trotskyites" and would finally be turned over to the investigative authorities. In Albania, such a figure was K. Xoxe, who was accused of Trotskyism in late March 1949 at a trial based on a fabricated case of a Yugoslav spy organization that had supposedly attempted to arrange his

²⁵ AVP RF, F.084, Op.38, D.10, P.151, 1-6. See also: *Vostochnaya Evropa v dokumentakh rossiyskikh arkhivov. 1944-1953*, Vol. II (Moscow, Novosibirsk: The Institute of Slavonic Studies RAS, 1998), 185-186.

escape to Yugoslavia.²⁶ In May-June, he was pronounced “the most dangerous conspirator of the Trotskyite agents of Tito’s clique in Albania, who tried to carry out a *coup d’état* and tear Albania away from the anti-imperialist and democratic camp”. He was accused of trying to use the state security, since he had headed this service, to carry out a pro-Yugoslav policy.²⁷ The annual report prepared in the spring of 1948 by the Soviet ambassador in Tirana, D. Chuvakhin, contained an accusation against K. Xoxe. He supposedly used materials obtained from a Yugoslav representative at the Albanian Workers’ Party CC, S. Zlatić, to remove N. Spiro (Moscow thought his suicide bore a “trace” of Yugoslav involvement) as his potential competitor in party leadership²⁸. The aim of these trials was not only intimidation of the party elites of Moscow’s satellite states and of the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist party, but also aspiration to indicate the right “anti-revisionist” course to be followed by all Communist parties in the countries of “people’s democracy” as well as by the global Communist movement in its entirety.²⁹

Testimonies wrested from the victims in the course of investigation were used to defame Yugoslavia and to present its leaders as organizers of anti-Soviet actions undermining the Soviet Union. In September, Kremlin undertook a new, extremely cynical attack against Yugoslav leadership based on materials entirely fabricated by Soviet and Hungarian authorities for the process of L. Rajk. Moscow had started to prepare this trial already in the summer of 1948, when M. Rakosi was summoned to the Soviet capital and was informed about certain “suspicions” against the most popular Hungarian party figure. L. Rajk, as head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, had repeatedly met his Yugoslav colleague, A. Ranković, and this was now being used as the basis for the accusation against him. Main counselor of the Ministry of State Security, General F. Belkin, sent two apparatchiks, General Likhachev and Makarov, to prepare and observe the show trial. The group of counselors gradually expanded to include 40 persons, apparently because the process had a special significance for Stalin. Its materials served as the basis on which the Soviet Union broke the 1945 Treaty on friendship and cooperation with Yugoslavia. This was followed by synchronous actions of other members of the Soviet bloc. After the arrest of Rajk and his alleged accomplices in late May, he confessed after being subjected to coercive methods, but he did so mainly out of a Stalinist sense of party duty.

²⁶ AVP RF, F. 067, Op. 17, D. 56, P.118, 30.

²⁷ Ibid., D.55, P. 118, 36-38.

²⁸ Ibid., F. 16 b, D. 56, P.117a, 153.

²⁹ In this regard, the information of the head of Informburo secretariat L. Baranov, prepared for the anniversary of the first Resolution of this international, inter-party organization, i.e. in June 1949, was typical. This extensive document reflects Kremlin’s main directives on Tito’s “Trotskyite clique”, as well as a set of measures to be undertaken by the communist parties of fraternal countries for the purpose of fighting against this heresy in Yugoslavia and preventing it from spreading within our own ranks. – RGASPI, F.575, Op. 37, D.14, P.143, 97-125.

The then minister of internal affairs J. Kadar visited Rajk in prison and asked him to serve the party cause and plead guilty because this would enable the trial to demonstrate that Tito was an agent of imperialism. The entire Politburo knew, Kadar told him, that he was innocent, but he nonetheless asked him to sacrifice himself for the sake of the party. A sentence, even a capital sentence, would be passed as a cover-up, while he and his family would receive a new life under new names in the Soviet Union. In his concluding speech at the show trial, the state prosecutor said that this trial held international significance and that not only Rajk and his accomplices were in the prisoner's box. Their foreign masters, imperialist conspirators from Belgrade and Washington, were there with them. The plot that Tito and his clique had planned in Hungary and which was supposed to be carried out by Rajk's espionage group could not be considered outside the context of global plans of the American imperialists.³⁰

Moscow, acting in all directions, embarked on organizing a Communist opposition alternative to CPY both outside Yugoslavia and inside the country. The Cominform secretariat advised the Yugoslavs who supported the resolution on the situation in CPY, adopted in the summer of 1948, to establish a permanent center for coordinating Yugoslav political emigration. It also considered it necessary to set up a radio station for Yugoslav communists to broadcast in Yugoslavia so as to improve communication with the FNRJ and receive necessary materials.³¹ In the summer of 1949, an anti-Yugoslav campaign unfolded in Moscow, which was connected with the arrest in Yugoslavia of former Russian White-Guard émigré whom the authorities accused of espionage in favor of USSR.³²

In its foreign policy, Moscow refused to comply with the agreement on mutual foreign political consultation it had imposed on Yugoslavia. It withdrew its support to Yugoslavia on the issue of its contested territories with Austria and Italy. In February, the Yugoslav ambassador in Moscow, K. Mrazović, tried to obtain consultations with the deputy minister of foreign affairs, A. Vyshinskiy, regarding the issue of the FNRJ's politics in relation to Austria. He wanted to know whether Yugoslavia should demand annexation of the entire Carinthia or only of the region where the hydropower plant was located on the Drave River, and afterwards grant it autonomy. Several days later, at another meeting, he asked the Soviet diplomat again for advice, but he was once again told that these issues were entirely in the competence of the Yugoslav government which was free to do what it deemed necessary.³³ In the Soviet response

³⁰ K. Andriu, O. Gordiyevskiy, *KGB. Istoriya vneshnepoliticheskikh operatsiy ot Lenina do Gorbacheva* (Moscow: Nota Bene, 1992), 415-418. For Soviet materials on Rajk's case see: *Vostochnaya Evropa v dokumentakh rossiyskikh arkhivov*, Vol. II, 64-67, 179-181, 231-233.

³¹ RGASPI, F. 575, Op.1, D.80, 103 - 106.

³² AVP RF, F. 144, Op.9, D.1, P.19, 17-18; Op.9b, D.8, P. 29, 1-11.

³³ AVP RF, F. 0144, Op.33, D.7, P.134, 1-2.

to the Yugoslav note of August 30, containing accusations that Moscow did not support Belgrade's demands regarding the Yugoslav-Austrian border, Yugoslavs were presented as responsible. It was said that the Yugoslav government "artificially insisted on all these problems connected with Slovenian Carinthia at ministerial meetings to please the fiercest imperialistic circles of England, USA and France, which are interested in maintaining an anti-Soviet mood and military hysteria". Furthermore, the authors of the note accused the Yugoslav government of positioning itself as "a foe and an opponent of Soviet Union, an agent of foreign imperialistic circles".³⁴

The entirety of Soviet "measures" against Yugoslavia, which Stalin thought would break Tito's resistance, led to opposite results. The Yugoslav leaders in their polemics with Moscow on issues of bilateral state relations in official notes (but not, as we have seen, in private contacts between diplomats – A.A.) moved away from ideological arguments, while the Soviet side insisted on them, and defended its positions by using formulas of international law and relying on principles and provisions of UN documents. The Yugoslav note of August 23 (in July-August, the Soviet side accused the Yugoslav side of having illegally subjected Soviet citizens, former Russian White-Guard émigrés, to repressions) stated that the Yugoslav government pursued its foreign policy "in accordance with the independence and sovereignty of the country, in accordance with progressive principles of peace and cooperation of peoples and states on the basis of equal rights and mutual respect, in accordance with international treaties and commitments that were and remain the well-known acts of FNRJ Government". The authors of the document stressed that "the peoples and government of the FNRJ will not abandon these principles under any conditions or outside pressure".³⁵ In the protest note of October 1 on the issue of the 1945 Treaty on friendship and cooperation between the two countries, which the Soviet Union had denounced, the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed that "by such politics and actions toward FNRJ, the government of the USSR breaks international principles of the UN Charter".³⁶

The Western support of Tito's position was an absolutely unique event. The USA and its allies saw "Titoism", this new factor within the Soviet bloc, as an opportunity for its further disintegration. It can be argued that Western economic assistance, agreed upon at the turn of 1948-1949, along with statements of leading Western politicians on the readiness to seriously take aggression against Belgrade, had a crucial effect on the ability of the Yugoslav leadership to counteract Kremlin and assure Yugoslavia's survival in general during that critical period.³⁷ The Western powers, but first and foremost the United

³⁴ AVP RF, F.144, Op.9, D.1, P.19, 34-49.

³⁵ AVP RF, F.144, Op. 9, D.4, P.19, 90-91.

³⁶ Ibid., 107.

³⁷ FRUS. 1949, Vol. II, Washington, 1975, 245.

States, abandoned the principle of cautious support for Tito and assisted in promoting FNRJ's candidacy for the post of a nonpermanent member of the UN Security Council in the autumn of 1949 against active Soviet resistance.³⁸

In 1949, Tito and his associates already had to reconsider and relinquish certain previously unshakable ideological postulates in order to denounce Stalin's revision of Marxism. They had refused to continue their support to the Greek partisans, stating that CPG had taken an anti-Yugoslav position in the conflict and they started seeking interaction with alternative Communist movements. When they found themselves in isolation, the leaders of the Communist party of Yugoslavia faced a dilemma: what left-inclined political formations could become their new allies and on what conditions. Rather quickly, Tito and his closest circle decided in favor of rapprochement with socialists. Some sources indicate that the Americans prompted their move toward socialist parties, in particular those in Asia, but it is more probable that the socialists themselves (especially European socialists) were willing to cooperate with CPY and other quasi-democratic political organizations in Yugoslavia.³⁹

By the end of 1949, after the adoption of the second Cominform resolution "Yugoslav Communist party in the hands of spies and murderers", FNRJ found itself in complete and hostile isolation from the East. It is possible to argue that its salvation was, in addition to above mentioned factors, due to its geographical position, i.e. the fact that it shared borders with the Western world. Had it been located inside the Soviet bloc, the outcome of the "struggle" between Tito and Stalin would have been predetermined. Economic blockage and military invasion would have been inevitable.

In August, the long-standing civil war in Greece ended with the defeat of Communists and their paramilitary forces. Already in summer, when the Yugoslav leadership announced the closure of the border with Greece for partisans, N. Zahariadis hastened to accuse Belgrade of treacherous politics so as to lay guilt upon CPY for the risky undertakings of the Greek Communist party, which enjoyed active support from Moscow and the countries of the Soviet bloc. It was not a coincidence that the telegram of the first secretary of the Soviet embassy in Belgrade, A. Zubov, was in tune with the statements of the CPG Secretary General. Tito's statements in Pula were regarded as a "logical result of the treacherous politics of Yugoslav leaders regarding the Greek question". The Soviet diplomat noted that the border was completely closed for Greek democrats but "remains open for traitors of the Greek people who act in alliance with Yugoslav authorities and Anglo-American imperialists,

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 246-253.

³⁹ FNRJ ambassador to Delhi, J. Vilfan, informed Belgrade that the Americans encouraged Indian socialists to establish more active contacts with the Yugoslavs, – *Diplomatski arhiv Saveznog ministarstva za inostrane poslove* – (hereinafter DASMIP). *Politička archiva (PA)/ 1952, Indija, f. 34, 412-414.*

who bring demoralization to the ranks of democratic troops”. The unnamed “traitors of the Greek people” mentioned in the telegram were undoubtedly DAG fighters, Aegean Macedonians who had refused to approve Cominform’s resolution and the decision of the 5th plenum of CPG CC, as well as certain ethnic Greeks in the leadership of the Greek Communist party who took the same position. When further describing the Yugoslav politics on this issue, Zubov noted that its “treacherous nature” had become more revealing during the second half of 1949, which is evident in “the slowdown of assistance to the Greek liberation movement, bad attitude to wounded Partisans in Yugoslav hospitals”, attempts to “detain fighters of the liberation army after their recovery in their territory, to abet Macedonians in Aegean Macedonia to emigrate to Yugoslavia, to cause difficulties for normal work of “Free Greece” radio station, etc.” He believed that one of the reasons of this Yugoslav position was the duplicity of the leaders of the Greek Communist party, who did not condemn publicly the treachery of CPY in the summer of 1948 but neither did state their “solidarity with Tito and his henchmen”. In Zubov’s opinion, the 5th plenum of the CPG CC was the turning point that condemned “emerging opportunistic tendencies of some leaders of the Communist party of Greece” and outlined the course of “a resolute struggle against monarchist-fascists and foreign interventionists”.⁴⁰ It is evident that the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict had had an undoubted influence upon the outcome of the so-called civil war in Greece and assisted its speedy end. This was also made possible by the persistent efforts of Western diplomacy, which relied upon economic tools to convince Belgrade of the necessity to abandon its support of Greek communists.

Thus, the policy of the Kremlin toward Yugoslavia in 1949 did not bring the desired results. The set of used methods, including involvement of satellite states in the struggle against “Tito’s heresy”, proved ineffective. Belgrade did not yield to Soviet pressure and was able to overcome the economic blockade by relying on Western assistance which also allowed its foreign policy to enter the international arena more actively. In general, it can be suggested that the model of Yugoslavian socialism, which emerged as a result of the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict, if viewed in perspective, was only a kind of a quasi-liberal version of the Soviet model where its basic characteristics, such as one-party dictatorship and the consequent lack of true democracy, proved to be suspended for many years.

⁴⁰ AVP RF, F.084, Reg.37, C.10, F.143, 60-62.

Andrey Edemskii

The Institute of Slavonic Studies

Russian Academy of Sciences

Moscow

THE ROLE OF MILOVAN DJILAS IN SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS, 1944–1954

Abstract: The activity of Milovan Djilas during the period 1944–1954 was at the core of Yugoslav-Soviet party relations. He was a member of the first Yugoslav delegation that went to Moscow in 1944 and as such he had on two occasions met Stalin. Thus, his activities were closely followed by Soviet military and diplomatic representatives in Belgrade. His outspoken views on issues such as, the incidents provoked by the Soviet Army in Yugoslavia, the Soviet-Yugoslav relations, Albania, Yugoslav foreign policy, were duly noted by Soviet observers. He was accordingly considered, along with Tito, Kardelj and Ranković, a member of the Yugoslavia's ruling circle. His views largely influenced the Yugoslav-Soviet relations and were considered characteristic for the state of the affairs between the two parties. He was a staunch defender of the Yugoslav party's cause, and as such was the object of the harsh Soviet attacks after the Tito–Stalin split of 1948. On the other hand his articles of the fall of 1953, which questioned the CPY course of action, asking for more democracy, in a peculiar way helped the reestablishing of relations between Belgrade and Moscow. The unequivocal condemnation of Djilas and his views, by Tito and CPY paved the way for an ideological reconciliation with the Soviets.

Keywords: *Yugoslav-Soviet party relations, Milovan Djilas, Tito, Staljin, CPY, CPSU*

Examining Milovan Djilas's role in Soviet-Yugoslav relations presents two specific obstacles for researchers. First, despite the availability of newly-declassified records, many archival documents still remain inaccessible to researchers. They include sources that contain materials regarding Milovan Djilas housed in the former archives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union¹ (CPSU) Central Committee—now the Russian State Archive of Social-Political History (Rossiyskiy gosudarstvenniy arhiv social'no-politicheskoy istorii - RGASPI) and

¹ My gratitude goes to Professor LaGretia Copp of Miami University of Ohio for her editorial assistance

the Russian State Archive of the Newest History (Rossiyskiy gosudarstvenniy arhiv noveyshey istorii - RGANI)—as well as documents of the Secretariat of the CPSU Central Committee and the personal records of Mikhail Suslov, Petr Pospelov, Boris Ponomarev, and others. Future access to these sources will undoubtedly complement and will possibly even change the current representation of Djilas and his role in Soviet-Yugoslav relations in the second half of the twentieth century. In the meantime, in this author's opinion, it is still necessary to explore this topic, without waiting for the declassification of these documents, using both the documentary sources that became available in Russia at the beginning of the 1990s as well as previous materials that now require rethinking as the "historical distance" that separates us from these past events continues to widen. On the other hand, the real significance of the role that Djilas played in the period under consideration can become clearer only after conducting relevant biographical studies based on archival collections dealing with activities of Edvard Kardelj, Aleksandar Ranković, Andrija Hebrang, Sreten Žujović, Moša Pijade, Boris Kidrič, and others. A full reconstruction of events pertaining to the period will be possible only after their biographies have been written, without any complacency and bias.

This essay examines several periods of Milovan Djilas's activities in connection with Soviet-Yugoslav relations: Second World War, from the arrival of the Soviet military mission to Yugoslavia until the spring of 1945; the events of spring 1945 until the end of 1947; the period of Soviet-Yugoslav conflict between 1948 and 1953.² It pays special attention to the events between the spring of 1953 and June 1954. The key event in the final period was the merciless criticism of Djilas by the Yugoslav elite resulting in his removal from all party and state leadership positions in January 1954. "The Djilas case," as it was commonly called, was followed by the Soviet proposal of reconciliation in a letter from the CPSU Central Committee to the Yugoslav leadership in June 1954.

Without a doubt, the role of Djilas was not a decisive element in Soviet-Yugoslav relations during any of these periods. As a member of Josip Broz Tito's intimate circle, Djilas undoubtedly executed all his chief's orders and did not try to play an independent role. However, the traits of Djilas's character—his disposition to romanticism, his hot temper, his sincerity, etc.—left a distinctive mark on Soviet-Yugoslav relations during the decade under examination.

The All Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks (Vsesoyuznaya kommunisticheskaya partiya bol'shevikov (VKP(b) changed its name to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1952. The terms used in the essay will reflect this change.

² The description of Djilas's activities in the 1940-s is based on the research by Soviet and Russian historians L.Ya. Gibianskiy, Yu.S. Girenko, and I.V. Bukharkin, and Serbian historian Nikola B. Popović, who have thoroughly studied Soviet-Yugoslav relations during this decade. However, since the article is based on the new data from Soviet and Yugoslav archives, the author assumes full responsibility for his assessment of Djilas work.

War Period: February 1944 – May 1945

Although Djilas's first significant contact with Soviet representatives occurred during the Soviet military mission to Yugoslavia, headed by General Ivan Korneyev, in late February 1944, his name was already known to some members of the Soviet leadership due to his published writings. On 12 February 1944, Tito had sent the Kremlin a telegram containing an article by "Milovan Djilas, political commentator, member of the Supreme Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army and Partisan Units of Yugoslavia." This article discussed the execution of Poles in Katyn and ascribed the atrocity to German Nazis. The Soviet leadership encouraged the popularization of Djilas's article and, by doing so, its author.³ A month later, Tito informed Moscow about the first issue of the *New Yugoslavia* journal in which another article by Djilas, "The State of Our Liberation Movement after the Moscow and Tehran Conferences," had been published.⁴

After the arrival of the Soviet military mission, Djilas was in constant contact with its officers and responded to their recommendations. Vasilij Sakharov, the mission officer, specifically mentioned Djilas in his 22 March report to Moscow. During the Soviet-Yugoslav discussions, Sakharov had commented on the insufficient popularity of pan-Slavism in Yugoslavia. Djilas and Koča Popović had agreed that this was a problem. Djilas in particular had remarked that the "Serbs and Montenegrins had strong Slavonic feelings", and agreed that the necessary to expand these sentiments in the rest of Yugoslavia was of political importance. He had promised to look into the issue.⁵

Djilas was also the first member of the Yugoslav military mission to arrive in the Soviet Union on 12 April 1944. Veljko Vlahović, who drew up the mission's personnel list, provided the following information: "Lieutenant General Milovan Djilas. Born in 1914. Montenegrin. Political Commentator. Member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia since 1932. Member of the Supreme Headquarters of People's Liberation Army. Member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia Central Committee."⁶ Obviously, the Soviets saw Djilas, along with his colleague Antun Augustinčić, as a significant political figure.

³ Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy arhiv socialno-politicheskoy istoriyi (hereinafter – RGASPI), collection 89, inventory 2, file 1369, 67-69. Top secret. Deciphered telegram from Yugoslavia, 12 February 1944, Inc.213, "Free Yugoslavia" article about German crimes in Katyn.

⁴ RGASPI, collection 82, inventory 2, file 1369, 85. Deciphered telegram from Yugoslavia, No. 419, 12 March 1944.

⁵ Arhiv vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federaciyi (hereinafter – AVP RF), collection 06, inventory 6, folder 58, file 798, 5. NKGB, 1st department. 22 March 1944. 1, 1, 4088. Head of the first department of NKGB of the USSR, Fitin to comrade Dekanozov, NKID USSR.

⁶ RGASPI, collection 82, inventory 2, file 1369, 15, The Composition of the Military Mission of the National Committee of Liberation of Yugoslavia.

Djilas undoubtedly played a leading role during his three months with the Yugoslav military mission because he was the only member of the eleven-person mission who spoke Russian. During his stay in the Soviet Union, Djilas attempted to influence the Soviet leadership's views on Yugoslav events at every available opportunity. He spoke with Yugoslav Ambassador Stanoje Simić, People's Commissariat Officer Georgy Zhukov, Head of Red Army General Headquarters Vladimir Antonov, and Foreign Secretary Vyacheslav Molotov to name just a few. More importantly, he was the first high-ranking representative of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) to be received by Stalin twice during Second World War: at the end of May and on 4 June 1944. His trip to the Second Ukrainian front, where he was received by Commander-in-Chief Ivan Konev, also raised Djilas's authority among the members of Tito's circle.

Throughout the Yugoslav delegation's stay, Djilas demonstrated a complete loyalty to Tito and a consistent readiness to execute his orders. During the first days of the mission, Ambassador Simić forwarded a request by Augustinčić and Djilas to publish flyers and brochures stating that "at present Marshall Tito personally participates in the direction of the military operations of the partisans."⁷ They were to be printed in Serbian and would later be dropped into Serbian regions. Djilas also strongly and repeatedly tried to attain and to expedite Moscow's recognition of the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (NOVJ).⁸ As a result of his zeal to fulfill Tito's order "to clarify the issue of the recognition of the Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia," Molotov stated that the Soviet Union had "taken preparatory measures for such a step."⁹ Once Djilas had received the desired Soviet response, he subtly signaled to Molotov that Tito relied solely on the support of the Soviet Union and described the British as unreliable allies.¹⁰

Djilas's two meetings with Stalin were extremely important to Soviet-Yugoslav relations, especially the second one.¹¹ This extraordinary meeting took place on 4 June 1944, several weeks after Hitler's attempted seizure of Yugoslav partisan leaders during Operation Knight's Move. At this meeting, Stalin passed on confidential information concerning Britain's possible plans for the Balkans, which entailed the elimination of the NOVJ. The British schemes also included a number of recommendations relating to the secrecy of the partisans' main headquarters and to the restriction of Western military

⁷ AVP RF, collection 0144, inventory 28, folder 114, file 4, 49. From Zorin's diary. The reception of the Yugoslav ambassador Simić, 19 April 1944.

⁸ *Vostochnaya Evropa v dokumentah rossiyskikh arhivov, 1944-1953*, Vol. I, 1944-1948, Doc. 2, (Moscow, Novosibirsk: The Institute of Slavonic StudiesRAS, 1997), 28-35.

⁹ *Otnosheniia Rossii (SSSR) s Iugoslaviei, 1941-1945 gg.: Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow: Terra, 1998), 239.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹¹ Soviet records of the conversations between Djilas and Stalin are still closed to researchers.

missions to the NOVJ. It is possible that the failed Operation Knight's Move, coupled with Soviet intelligence data regarding British policies toward Tito, compelled the Soviet leader to talk personally to Djilas.¹² To thwart the British, Stalin proposed that Tito "consider a temporary and fabricated" course of relations with King Peter II "to give the impression of acquiescence to the king's masters [Britain] and, by doing so, make these masters stop causing damage to the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia." Stalin also thought it necessary to develop this cooperation in order to "strengthen Tito's support in Yugoslavia and specifically in Serbia."¹³

The post-war political system of Yugoslavia was the subject of a conversation between Djilas and Ambassador Simić as well. Simić, a Serbian patriot, criticized the NOVJ for the absence of "clear programs regarding the fate of all the component parts of the future federative Yugoslavia. He believed it necessary to "clarify" the program of the National Committee on the Serbian question and to "declare the right of autonomy for all parts of the country with Serbian elements if the National Committee [did] not think it was possible to unite all Serbian territories into one federative unit."¹⁴ Djilas did not respond to the Serb's suggestions and, in his conversation with Molotov, noted that "Simić had certain overly Serbian attitudes."¹⁵

Three other events occurred during Djilas's stay in the Soviet Union. One was his adulatory article about Tito as a man and commander, published in the Soviet journal *War and the Working Class* in early June. Another, recorded by Djilas, was General Milan Terzić's severe reaction when Soviet personnel serving the Yugoslav delegation offered the special benefits reserved for

¹² It was noted that despite Churchill's statement, Tito's military possibilities "would be used" but he "would not be supported in strengthening his role as the political leader of Yugoslavia. Until recently, the English were forced to yield to the Russians on a number of issues, Italian, Greek, Yugoslav in particular, since the military successes were on the Russians' side, but now the situation has changed: the initiative is in the hands of the allies, and that is why English politics in relation to the USSR on the Balkan issues in particular will be more firm." It also said that "The English decided not to let Russians into the south of the Danube even if they would have to use force. The English believe that it is they who will decide the Yugoslav issue." See: *Organi gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti Sovetskogo Soyuza v Velikoi otechestvennoi voine. Vpered na Zapad. 1 yanvaria – 30 iyunia 1944 g.*, Vol. V, Book 1, Doc. 1892 (Moscow: Rus, 2007), 488.

¹³ The Soviet version of this meeting testifies that Djilas had a ready tongue when "he expressed his doubts about the possibility of such cooperation but would speak to Tito about this." RGAS-PI, collection 82, inventory 2, file 1370, 79-80. Alekseyev to Korneyev [between 11 or 12 June 1944].

¹⁴ AVP RF, collection 06, inventory 6, folder 58, file 795, 46-47. From Zorin's diary. Classified. 26 April 1944. Reception of the Yugoslav ambassador Simić, 25 April 1944.

¹⁵ *Vostochnaya Evropa v dokumentah rossiyskikh arhivov, 1944-1953*, Vol. I, 1944-1948, Doc. 2, 34.

foreign diplomats in Moscow.¹⁶ Finally, Djilas handed over a number of materials to the Soviet foreign ministry from the CPY's military archive, including materials about the Chetnik leader, Draža Mihailović.¹⁷

As a result of his long visit to the Soviet Union and his meetings with Stalin, Djilas developed a reputation as an active and trustworthy person. He began transmit priority information, which connected him even further to Tito and demonstrated his abilities to execute confidential orders of various kinds.¹⁸ The fact that Djilas preferred to inform Tito directly rather than through the Soviet military mission could be a testimony both of his distrust of foreign information channels in particular and to wireless communication in general and also to his modesty and unwillingness to bother his Soviet comrades. Moreover, Djilas's enormous workload and the frequently changing political and military circumstances left little time for regular reports to Tito.

Djilas could also be uncompromising and outspoken. He openly demonstrated this polemic aspect of his character to the Soviets during the acrimonious discussions between Moscow and Belgrade regarding the behavior of Soviet officers and soldiers in liberated Serbia. Tito called a meeting with the head of the Soviet military mission to Yugoslavia on the night of 25 October 1944 in connection to the uncivilized acts perpetrated by members of the Red Army on the Yugoslav population and on the NOVJ. Yugoslav leaders presented a number of complaints, including rape and pillage, to General Korneyev.¹⁹ Djilas noted that such crimes were being committed by "our opponents" and

¹⁶ This incident was described by Simić: "When they found out that they could receive "limited books" (limitnyue knizhki) for provision at the diplomatic shop, General Terzić announced to Simić with indignation that he had not asked for any books, that they did not need anything, and that they were quite satisfied with what they had received from the Red Army House." AVP RF, collection 0144, collection 28, folder 114, file 4, 48. From V.Zorin's diary. The reception of the Yugoslav ambassador Simić, 9 April 1944.

¹⁷ The Political Archive of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs got an order to accept the military-political archive of the Supreme Headquarters of the NOVJ and to start processing it, probably for preparing accusations against Mihailović and the Chetniks due to their cooperation with fascists. *Otnosheniia Rossii*, Doc. 297, 235. In the autumn of 1944, before his return to Yugoslavia, Pijade expressed his wish to return the archive, which had been brought to Moscow by Djilas, to Belgrade (AVP RF, collection 0144, folder 114, file 8, 156.) According to the notes made by Ranković on a letter from R. Primorac, the head of the Yugoslav military mission to the USSR in February 1946, which were later discovered by Nikola B. Popović, a prominent researcher of Soviet-Yugoslav relations in the second half of 1980s: "Djido took with him when he went to Moscow for the first time. 1. All dispatches between us and Moscow. 2. The Chetnik archive (three sacks) that Moshka [Pijade] returned to the country. 3. Something from the archive of the Supreme headquarters." N. Popović, *Jugoslovensko-Sovjetski odnosi u Drugom svetskom ratu* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1988), 125, footnote 55.

¹⁸ In one particular instance, Djilas carried home two hundred thousand dollars in cash after Stalin approved a loan of ten million dollars to the NOVJ. *Otnosheniia Rossii*, Doc. No. 311, 247-249.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 585, footnote 940.

then contrasted Soviet behavior to that of the British military officers in Yugoslavia, who did not behave in such a manner. Korneyev forwarded the statements of Tito, Djilas, and others to the Soviet leadership and reported that “Tito complained as chairman of the National Committee and as the commander-in-chief but also as a communist.”²⁰

Djilas’s critical remarks made him the target of Stalin’s letter to Tito on 31 October. “There is a black sheep in every family, and it would be strange to insult the entire family because of one black sheep,” Stalin wrote, “If Red Army soldiers find out that Djilas and his comrades consider English officers in higher moral terms than Soviet officers, they would howl from such an undeserved offense.”²¹ Djilas composed a written response to Stalin attempting to clarify his position and reduce the severity of his previous words, but the letter was never sent.²² Later, he wrote a prominent article praising Stalin that was published in *Borba* on Stalin’s birthday, 21 December 1944.²³ The incident was finally smoothed over the next April when Djilas was deliberately added to the Yugoslav delegation that visited Moscow in order to sign the “friendship treaty” between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. After Stalin discussed the incident at one of the informal receptions, Djilas considered the matter closed.²⁴

Postwar: 1945-1947

By the spring of 1945, although Moscow considered Djilas a principal player in the Yugoslav leadership,²⁵ the Soviets appeared unconcerned about his do-

²⁰ Korneyev to Molotov. Telegram 47170, 29 October 1944 (Manuscript archive of Vladimir K. Volkov). Tito later sent Stalin a letter with his interpretation. *Otnosheniia Rossii*, Doc. 474, 361-362.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Doc. 476, 363.

²² “The manners of English officers in relation to our officers in Italy and Yugoslavia are better than the behavior of Soviet officers here. Undoubtedly, the English have ulterior motives for this. And the enemy will use this if Soviet commanders do not treat us as friends and allies.” *Ibid.*, 585, footnote 940.

²³ The article was translated in its entirety into Russian, with a note mentioning its publication in a “Belgrade communist newspaper,” and reported to the Soviet leadership at the beginning of January 1945.

²⁴ M. Djilas, *Razgovori sa Staljinom* (Beograd: Književne novine, 1990), 59-60, 73; *Dokumenti o spoljnoj politici Socijalisticke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije 1941-1945*, Vol. II (Beograd: Jugoslovenski pregled, 1989), 297; AJBT-KMJ. I-3-b/571; AJ. F.507. 1944/610. See also.: G.M. Adibekov, A. Di B’iadzho, L.Ia. Gibianskii, F. Gori, S. Pons, eds., *Soveshchaniia Kominforma, 1947, 1948, 1949: Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1998), 466, footnote 38.

²⁵ According to the biographical information about the CPY Central Committee that was among the documents prepared for the Soviet leadership, Djilas was considered fourth in importance after Tito, Kardelj, and Ranković, and he was followed by Leskošek, Hebrang, Pijade, and Žujović: “Milovan Djilas, or Mirko, Velko, CPY CC Secretary of Propaganda. Born in 1911 in Kolashin, Montenegro. Finished 8 grades of gymnasium, then studied at the philosophical faculty in Bel-

mestic activities. Nonetheless, the fact that he was responsible for Montenegro made him knowledgeable about the state of affairs in Albania; at a session of CPY Central Committee Politburo on 11 June 1945, he had reported on both.²⁶ It was thus clear to the Soviets that Djilas was one of the main actors in the creation of the Republic of Montenegro in the “second” Yugoslavia. The Soviet Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Ivan Sadchikov, believed that the recognition of Montenegro as an independent federal unit “was a little artificial.” When he tried to obtain clarification in regard to what national features the Montenegrin leadership “plans to take into account and to develop in the process of national construction,” the ambassador “did not receive an intelligible answer.” The prime minister of Montenegro, Blažo Jovanović, recommended “addressing Djilas [who is] an expert on this topic.”²⁷

There are only a few declassified documents that detail Djilas’s conversations with Soviet diplomats in relation to Montenegro and Albania and to the future development of this region of the Balkans. However, it is well-known that he was quite willing to meet with them and discuss various issues. During one such conversation in December 1945, after the election of the Yugoslav Assembly and the declaration of the Federative People’s Republic of Yugoslavia (FNRJ), Djilas implied that the British and Americans had played a strong game in Yugoslavia against the Soviets. Milan Grol and other Yugoslav “reactionaries” had been used in an attempt to win this game, but they had sustained a diplomatic defeat by failing to disrupt the elections, the meeting of the Assembly’s, and the declaration of the FNRJ.²⁸

Djilas was closely involved in intra-party debates as well as the development of Yugoslavia’s relations with Russia. On April 1946, the Politburo of

grade for three years. Writer. Accepted to the party in 1932. In 1932, he was a member of Komso-mol leadership of Belgrade University. In 1933, he was sentenced to three years of imprisonment and served in Backe. In 1937, he was a member of the Belgrade City Committee, the regional committee and the regional committee of the Serbian Communist Party. In 1938, member of the CPY CC appointed by comrade Tito; elected as a member of the CPY CC Politburo at the Fifth all-Yugoslav conference in 1940. Former member of the Supreme Headquarters of NOVJ i PJ. Editor of the popular *Borba* – the CPY CC’s party organ. Theoretically and politically well-advanced Member of the Presidium of anti-fascist national liberation Veće [Parliament] of Yugoslavia. He is Minister for Montenegrin affairs in the new Yugoslav government formed by Marshal Tito on 7 March 1945.” (RGASPI, collection 5, inventory 10, file 777, 210).

²⁶ As a result of this report, the Politburo of the CPY Central Committee decided to arm the Albanian divisions under the command of the Fifth Army in order to help them arm their other divisions and placed Djilas in charge of sending the arms “as soon as possible.” It also accepted the Albanian Central Committee’s offer to engage in regular consultations on important issues. Branko Petranović, *Zapisnici sa sednica Politbiroa Centralnog komiteta KPJ (11. jun 1945 - 7. jul 1948)* (Beograd: Arhiv Jugoslavije, Službeni list SRJ, 1995), 66-67.

²⁷ AVP RF, collection 0144, inventory 29, folder 117, file 28. USSR Ambassador to Yugoslavia Sadchikov to Lavrishchev, 23 July 1945.

²⁸ AVP RF, collection 0144, inventory 29, folder 117, file 28, 139-145. Published in *Vostochnaya Evropa*, 330-335.

the CPY Central Committee discussed the consequences of Hebrang's unsuccessful attempts to strengthen his position in the Yugoslav leadership and to achieve closer economic ties with the Soviet Union. Djilas firmly sided with Tito and criticized both Hebrang and Žujović.²⁹ Djilas, along with Simić, Sava Kosanović, Aleš Bebler, and Marko Ristić, later took part in consultations with Molotov in Paris on 4 May 1946. Although Djilas participated in the meeting, the Soviet documents indicate that he refrained from active participation, giving Kardelj the opportunity to talk almost exclusively with Molotov.³⁰

Djilas's firm support of Tito's policies and Yugoslav interests did not seem to hinder his standing with the Soviet leadership at this time. According to the Yugoslav transcripts of the meeting between Stalin and the Yugoslav delegation headed by Tito on 27 May 1946, the Soviet leader twice asked about the personalities of the Yugoslav political elite. First, he asked sarcastically about his "friends" Ivan Šubašić and Milan Grol, and then, without any irony, about Kardelj and Djilas, indicating his high esteem for the latter.³¹

On the eve of the First Cominform meeting in September 1947, Soviet observers still considered Djilas one of the foremost party and state leaders. One of the briefing papers prepared in Moscow on the CPY stated that all key issues on state governance were decided by a close circle that included Tito, Kardelj, Ranković, and Djilas.³² The Soviet leadership gave a positive appraisal of the overall conduct of the Yugoslav delegation, with special reference to the speeches on the organizational work of the CPY and the People's Front given by Kardelj and Djilas at the first meeting of the Informburo in Poland in September 1947. Andrei Zhdanov and Gregorij Malenkov noted that the Yugoslavs had "adopted the experience of the Soviet Union in everything" and that the speeches of Kardelj and Djilas had produced a positive impression.³³

Djilas gave a brief but substantial speech at the Cominform meeting on 25 September, when the CPY reported on its activity during recent years. He was also active in the discussions regarding Zhdanov's speech and his criticisms of the French Communist Party. Djilas concurred that the French communists "had incorrectly interpreted Soviet foreign policy" during the war and

²⁹ Hebrang had counted on the support of Kardelj, Žujović, and Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo. See: Petranović, *Zapisnici sa sednica Politbiroa*, 150.

³⁰ AVP RF, collection 06, inventory 8, file 945, 1-3. Minutes of the conversation between Minister Molotov and the Yugoslav delegation headed by the deputy Chairman of the FNRJ Ministers' Council, E. Kardelj, 4 May 1946, Paris, USSR embassy.

³¹ This was mentioned only in Yugoslav transcripts of the meeting (*Historical archive*, 2, Moscow, 1993, 24-27), and was not reflected in the Soviet notes (*Ibid.*, 21-22). The fact that Stalin did not ask about Hebrang could mean that he did not intend to discuss the internal relations of Yugoslav leadership.

³² *Vostochnaya Evropa*, Vol. I, Doc. 240, 706.

³³ *Soveshchaniia Kominforma*, 322-323.

contrasted them unfavorably with the Yugoslav and Greek communists, who “had fought the English” even though they had been the Soviets’ allies.³⁴

Djilas also made a good impression upon Malenkov and Zhdanov at a behind-the-scenes meeting, when they discussed the organization and location of the Informburo. Djilas and Kardelj demonstrated that, unlike the members of the Czechoslovak delegation, they could make decisions on the spot, and that “their opinion concerning Belgrade [could] be considered as final without additional consultations with Tito.”³⁵ It was Djilas who proposed Belgrade as a location for the Informburo at the tenth meeting on 27 September.³⁶

Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict: 1948-1953

Previous research has shown that members of the Soviet embassy in Belgrade, specifically the Soviet ambassador and the military attaché, Georgiy Sidorovich, were collecting and sending materials to Moscow discrediting the Yugoslav leadership.³⁷ Due to the increasingly tense atmosphere, Stalin asked to see Djilas to discuss the disagreement that had arisen between Moscow and Belgrade in relation to the situation in Albania.³⁸ When Djilas arrived in Moscow as part of the Yugoslav delegation to discuss the issue of Soviet arms delivery to the Yugoslav army, he used his good relations with Stalin to skillfully lobby for Yugoslav interests. By the end of his first day in Moscow, he had not only ironed out differences in relation to Albania, but he was also confident that he would be able to assist a separate Yugoslav trade delegation in reaching an economic agreement with the Soviets. Stalin assisted Djilas in setting up meetings with the Soviet Defense Minister, Nikolai Bulganin, and the Soviet Vice-Premier and Foreign Trade Minister, **Anastas** Mikoyan, in pursuing this objective.

However, the negotiations that were initially perceived as successful by the Yugoslav side³⁹ dragged on because they were conducted against the backdrop of the Kremlin’s strong discontent with Yugoslav decisions regarding the Balkans. Two issues in particular were contentious. The first concern involved Georgi Dimitrov’s statement about a possible federation or confederation of Balkan and Danubian countries that would include Poland, Czechoslovakia,

³⁴ Ibid., 172-178.

³⁵ Ibid., 326.

³⁶ Ibid., 231.

³⁷ I.V. Bukharkin, L.Ya. Gibianski, “Pervye shagi konflikta”, *Rabochiy klass i sovremenniy mir*, 5, 1990.

³⁸ L. Ya. Gibianski, “U nachala konflikta: Balkanskiy uzel”, *Politicheskiy issledovaniya*, 2, 1991, 179.

³⁹ Djilas, inspired by Stalin’s promises at the meeting of 17 January, was extremely optimistic about the course of the negotiations. L. Gibianski, “A Call to Moscow”, *Politicheskiy issledovaniya*, 1, 1991, 204.

and Greece. The second issue involved the claims of the Soviet Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Anatoliy Lavrentiev, that the Yugoslav leadership planned on sending divisions into Albania without consulting the Soviet military. Djilas's lobbying talents were not enough to smooth over these problems. This could be because few within the Soviet leadership shared Stalin's high regard for Djilas. Soviet transcripts reveal that Mikoyan addressed him only as "Mr. Djilas,"⁴⁰ while Bulganin avoided meeting with the Yugoslav delegation entirely. Djilas was forced to report a stalemate of the whole negotiation process in his telegram to Tito on 11 February 1948.⁴¹

The resolution of the many military, economic, and geopolitical issues concerning the Balkans required complex negotiations between Moscow, Belgrade, and Sofia. Djilas's responsibilities in Montenegro and within the Yugoslav leadership presupposed his participation in these meetings; however, he and others played nominal roles and were mainly observers. It was Stalin and the Soviet leadership who dominated the discussions and dictated the correct line of conduct to be taken in the Balkans.

Although Djilas was the principal source of information on the content and details of the Moscow meetings, it was Tito's opinion that shaped Yugoslav views on Soviet-Yugoslav relations during this period. Tito's outlook on this subject could be seen during a meeting of the Yugoslav leadership on 19 February 1948. One of the first items on the meeting's agenda was Yugoslav relations with the Soviet Union, and Djilas read his report "On the Meeting in Moscow." Based on Tito's introductory remarks and additional comments, it is reasonable to assume that Djilas's report included not only a description of the trilateral meeting but most likely a general characterization of the whole complex of Soviet-Yugoslav problems as well. This supposition is supported by Tito's statement on the issue of economic relations with the Soviet Union. After Djilas had made his presentation, Tito downplayed the various differences between Belgrade and Moscow on foreign policy issues, saying that "there were no serious differences. Our foreign policy line remains the same."⁴²

Although researchers have not yet reached a consensus regarding the contents of the report prepared by Djilas,⁴³ his critical and unyielding char-

⁴⁰ AVP RF, collection 06, inventory 10, folder 19, file 211, 1-2. Transcripts of the conversation of the minister of external trade of the USSR, A. Mikoyan with CPY CC Politburo member Djilas, 3 February 1948.

⁴¹ AJ KMJ, I-3-b/651.

⁴² Petranović, *Zapisnici sa sednica Politbiroa*, Doc. 34, 234.

⁴³ During the course of his research in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Russian researcher L. Gibianski found "an extensive manuscript report by Djilas" written "for a close circle of the Yugoslav ruling elite immediately after the delegation's return to Belgrade" in the Archives of J. B. Tito. (AJBT, KMJ I-3-b/651, I. 33-40.) The document was written "not only from memory but also based on notes that Djilas had made at the meeting in the Kremlin on 10 February 1948." (L. Gibianski, « K istorii sovsotsko-yugoslavskogo konflikta 1948-1953 gg.: sekretnaya sovsotsko-yu-

acter was obvious in his discussions with Soviet representatives. After the 19 February meeting, it was Djilas who questioned the Soviet ambassador as to why Tito's speech at the Second Congress of the Yugoslav People's Front had not been published in the Soviet Union, suggesting that the Soviets held different views on several of the subjects in the speech.⁴⁴ Although the minutes of the meeting on 1 March do not paint a detailed picture of this discussion, it appears that Djilas had become critical of the Soviet leadership. He spoke both on Dimitrov's reaction to the February trilateral consultations with Stalin and on of Albania, adding that Moscow was "not informed about the activities of Yugoslav army" in this country. Overall, Djilas presented a harsh characterization of his stay in Moscow: "On many issues they did not respond. They do not want to publish materials about our country." He also mentioned their differing opinion on the organization of the armies in the people's democracies. In describing the actions of the Soviet leaders, Djilas stated that they are "pursuing a course to make us dependent upon them." He was also outspoken in regard to a federation of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria: "We should be more active toward Bulgaria. I do not think that the Russians will restrict themselves to economic pressure on our country." Djilas saw some significant, latent reasons for the disparity between Belgrade and Moscow on the "issue of whether socialism will develop freely or by way of the expansion of the USSR."⁴⁵

Several of the opinions expressed in the aforementioned meeting, which were subsequently communicated to Moscow by the Soviet ambassador in Belgrade, were bound to create outrage within the Soviet leadership. Djilas's

goslavsko-bolgarskaya vstrecha v Moskve 19 fevralia 1948 g.," *Sovetskoye slavianovedenie*, 3, 1991, 19.) Gibianski believes that when V. Dedjer, who was Tito's official biographer in the early 1950s, described the Soviet-Bulgarian-Yugoslav meeting in the Kremlin on 10 February 1948, he did so without acknowledgements to the original source. He "simply borrowed the text from Djilas's report, removed the quotation marks from substantial parts, and freely edited them." As a result, the Kremlin meeting "was represented in a relatively rough outline with a significant shift in emphasis from that recorded by Djilas." (Ibid., 19.) Dedjer himself referred to "Djilas's extensive written report that ended with the words that Stalin nourishes trust in relation to the whole Central Committee and "first of all in relation to comrade Tito." V. Dedjer, *Veliki buntovnik Milovan Djilas: Prilozi za biografiju* (Beograd : Prosveta, 1991), 329. Dedjer believed that it was this document that made Tito very cautious in the process of de-Stalinization and caused him to end his speech at the Fifth Congress of CPY in July 1948 with the words, "Long live comrade Stalin! Long live Soviet Union!" (Ibid., 239-230).

⁴⁴ AVP RF, collection 0144, inventory 32, folder 128, file 8, 107. Previous historiography has suggested that Djilas was familiar with the Soviet ambassador's critical telegram in relation to Tito's speech. (L. Gibianski, "Ot pervogo ko vtoromu soveschaniyu Kominforma", in *Soveshchaniia Kominforma*, 362). Djilas had certainly known about the situation. The Department of Balkan Countries at the Soviet foreign ministry, with the permission of Deputy Minister Valerian Zorin in the early March, asked the state political publishing house to include Tito's speech in the forthcoming Russian collection of his articles and speeches.

⁴⁵ Petranović, *Zapisnici sa sednica Politbiroa*, Doc. 34, 239. Meeting of Political Bureau CC CPY, 19 February 1948.

vague speculations about the limits of Soviet “pressure” and phrases such as “we liberated ourselves on our own, the Red Army did not liberate us” were enough to confirm the reliability of the Soviet embassy’s intelligence. Djilas’s statement that “the USSR would continue to influence Yugoslavia more and more since it is the strongest center of ideological resistance” demonstrated to the Soviets that Yugoslav actions were not the fruit of some misunderstandings but a conscious policy. Moscow undoubtedly interpreted Djilas’s assertion that “the Cominform is a takeover of other parties” and similar remarks concerning Yugoslavia’s economic dependence on the USSR in the same way.⁴⁶

On 7 March, Molotov authorized Lavrentiev to express the gratitude of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks (VKP(b)) to Žujović for the “good deed” he had done “by exposing the ostensible friends of the Soviet Union in the Yugoslav Central Committee.”⁴⁷ This information was spread widely among the Soviet Union’s highest ranks as coming from “a trusted person.” In particular, Stalin’s assistant, Aleksander Poskrebyshev, sent the information to the Moscow Committee of the VKP(b) in order “to familiarize the leadership with relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia.”⁴⁸

During the period when the conflict between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia was still embryonic, Djilas’s actions did nothing to lessen the growing tensions between Moscow and Belgrade. On the contrary, they advanced the maturing conflict toward a new stage. His actions in Budapest, at the centenary of the Hungarian Revolution on 14 March 1948, produced negative Soviet comments. Georgiy Pushkin, the Soviet envoy to Hungary, noted in a dispatch to Molotov that Djilas “did not approach our delegation at all,” “did not greet anyone from our delegation,” and in his speech “clearly overestimated the role of the Yugoslavs’ liberation struggle” and “intentionally stressed the Balkan and Central European countries when speaking about cooperation and friendship among peoples.”⁴⁹

The information received from Žujović gave the Soviet leadership an opportunity to review all of the previous negative evaluations of Yugoslav actions in Albania and elsewhere. Facts and opinions that had required cautious interpretation in the past were no longer subject to requalification or Yugoslav

⁴⁶ The message was accompanied by the following notation, although it is unclear whether it was added by Žujović or the ambassador: “the fact that all who were present at the meeting in one way or another supported Tito speaks to the profound changes that have taken and are still taking place in the CC itself in relation of the Soviet Union. (from manuscript archive of a corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences Vladimir K. Volkov)

⁴⁷ Yu. Girenko, *Stalin-Tito* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo političeskoii literaturi, 1991), 347-350.

⁴⁸ From the manuscript archive of a corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences Vladimir K. Volkov.

⁴⁹ *Vostochnaya Evropa*, Vol. I, 283, 873.

clarifications. A memorandum concerning the situation in Albania, written by a reliable member of the Yugoslav Central Committee, was distributed among Soviet leaders on 10 March 1948. It stated that “my opinion about the abnormal Yugoslav attitude toward Albania had been formed on conversations with leading figures of the Albanian Communist Party (ACP) and with some Soviet comrades working in Albania as well as on my own personal observations.”⁵⁰ It is possible to argue that similar documents altered Moscow’s earlier positive attitude toward Djilas who, as a Montenegrin leader, had been closely connected to the development of the situation in Albania.

Another report from Žujović reinforced the increasingly accusatory information against Yugoslavia that Moscow was receiving through its military channels. On 17 March, Bulganin dispatched the negative intelligence that had been previously gathered by the Soviet ambassador and the military attaché in Belgrade to all Soviet leaders.⁵¹ It is possible that the proposal by the Soviet ambassador to criticize the Yugoslavs’ party line also reappeared at the same time. It was within this uneasy atmosphere that Suslov received a report from the Foreign Policy Division of the ACP Central Committee entitled “On the Anti-Marxist Mindset of the Yugoslav Communist Party’s Leadership on the Issues of Foreign and Domestic Politics.” It concluded that “the leaders of the Yugoslav Communist Party are not Marxists.” The material indicated that Djilas’s statements, like those of other CPY leaders, had been causing Soviet irritation since 1947. Djilas’s offending behavior included his articles, “On the Future of Yugoslavia’s Development” and “On Current Tasks of the Party,” published in *Borba* that year. The Soviets called his suggestion to “divide Austria,” which he had made directly to the Austrian Communist Party, non-Marxist. His statement that the Yugoslav peoples had utilized the Red Army during the war and had used the Soviet Union for strengthening Yugoslavia’s role in international relations evoked particular annoyance. The Soviets were also displeased with his comment that “the Red Army facilitated Yugoslavia’s liberation in 1944.”⁵² All of Djilas’s previous writings now came under the scrutiny of Soviet observers.

A letter signed by Stalin and Molotov, dated 27 March 1948, attacked the Yugoslav leaders on several fronts. They were castigated for the use of the opportunist theories of Eduard Bernstein, Georg Heinrich von Vollmar, and Nikolai Bukharin on the subject of the peaceful incorporation of capitalist elements into socialism. The letter also contained vague hidden threats referring to “questionable Marxists such as Djilas, Vukmanović, Kidrić, Ranković,

⁵⁰ RGASPI, collection 77, inventory 4, file 58, 40-46.

⁵¹ RGASPI, collection 77, inventory 4, file 58, 47. See also I. Buharkin and L. Gibianskii, “Pervye shagi konflikta”, 160-163.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 792, 799-787.

and others” and to “the extremely instructive political career of Trotsky.”⁵³ In addition to accusations that “Yugoslav military leaders were engaged in the defamation of Soviet military commissars and in efforts to discredit the Soviet Army,” it mentioned Djilas’s well-known statement at a CPY Central Committee meeting “that Soviet officers were morally lower than officers of the English army.”⁵⁴

Djilas’s also played an important role at the plenary session of the CPY Central Committee in April 1948.⁵⁵ Žujović was the only person who disagreed with Tito’s course of conduct in regards to Soviet-Yugoslav relations. He stated that “our economic possibilities and theoretical theses on the development of communism will be left hanging in the air if we do not coordinate our economy with the Soviet Union.” Žujović’s position was criticized by all participants of the meeting. Tito said that “no one has the right to love his country [Yugoslavia] less than the USSR.” Djilas, who seconded this criticism, labeled Žujović and Hebrang “Soviet agents” and noted that “those who pass information to the Soviet Union are enemies” and that “collaboration with USSR intelligence is incompatible with the membership in the party.”⁵⁶

Žujović’s diary, which he handed over to the Soviet ambassador in Belgrade for safekeeping before his arrest, was translated into Russian and distributed among Soviet leaders by Suslov on 15 May 1948.⁵⁷ According to Žujović’s description of the 1 March meeting, which is more detailed than the “message from the trusted person” sent by the Soviet embassy at the beginning of March, it became clear that Tito’s views were the most crucial in the formation of Yugoslav judgments concerning the Soviet Union and its leadership. Tito reminded the meeting’s participants of the Soviet Union’s refusal to sign an economic treaty as well as its unwillingness to help in the development of Yugoslavia’s iron and steel industry. Tito had expressed his belief that “the Russians deal with us in order to make us dependent upon them and turn us into their economic appendage.” He had also criticized the preemptive actions of the Soviets in Czechoslovakia in February 1948: “They say that we did not ask them, but they do not ask us either. They did not ask us about Czechoslovakia.

⁵³ Gibianski, “Ot pervogo ko vtoromu soveschaniyu Kominforma”, 365; Girenko Yu., *Stalin-Tito*, 360-362.

⁵⁴ Gibianski L., “Sekretnaya sovetsko-yugoslavskaya perepiska 1948 g”, *Voprosi istoriyi*, 4-5. 1992, 127.

⁵⁵ Yu. Girenko, *Stalin-Tito*, 362-364.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 367.

⁵⁷ Suslov sent them to Stalin, Molotov, and Zhdanov, noting that they “make up the greater part of the archive that Žujović recently handed over to Soviet ambassador Lavrentiev for safekeeping.” See: RGASPI, collection 77, inventory 4, file 58, 123.

Zorin's trip to Prague was a bad act; the imperialists can take advantage of that."⁵⁸

Žujović's report not only demonstrated the wide breach between Belgrade and Moscow, but also underlined Djilas's position. It repeated his statements "about the possibility of developing socialism in a country outside of the Soviet Union," and his mocking observation that "Žujović believes that he has 200 million backing him." These and other comments could only intensify Moscow's negative perception of Djilas.

Moscow recorded all of these statements as well as the opinions expressed about Djilas by representatives of the other East European communist parties. In particular, a Politburo member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Poland, József Revai, made the following remarks on the CPY leadership, its anti-Soviet views, and its attitudes:

This is nothing else but Trotskyism with the only difference being that Yugoslav Trotskyists have their own state.... [T]here are also some materials from the Yugoslav ambassador in Hungary, Lazar Brankov, which show that the party organizations of some Yugoslav republics are working to form a position against the current CPY CC leadership, however, many party members have been confused by the influence of Tito, Djilas, and others who are national heroes of the country.⁵⁹

On 3 June 1948, the chief editor of the *Rude pravo* newspaper, V. Novy, observed that "in one conversation Djilas had stated that Yugoslavia had been liberated by Yugoslavs, that the Soviet Union was played out, that the future belonged to Yugoslavia, and that the banner of Lenin and world revolution was now in the Yugoslavs' hands."⁶⁰

On 21 June 1948, Zhdanov presented his report, "On the Situation in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia," at the second meeting of the Informburo. Djilas was mentioned together with the Yugoslav leaders who had "adopted the wrong course on issues of foreign and domestic policy and that represented a departure from Marxism-Leninism." The Central Committee of the VKP(b) took the initiative in exposing this "wrong course for which comrades Tito, Kardelj, Djilas, and Ranković were responsible."⁶¹

Djilas's name was also mentioned in the closed talks between Zhdanov, Malenkov, and Suslov that were reported in detail to Stalin. During the meeting with the Hungarian delegation on 20 June, Mátyás Rákosi reported that when Djilas "was once in Bulgaria he had instructed and taught Bulgarians on theoretical issues" and that he was "undoubtedly an alien and suspicious person." Djilas's name was also mentioned in reports from the meeting. On

⁵⁸ Ibid., 125-132.

⁵⁹ *Vostochnaya Evropa*, Vol. I, Doc. 283, 873.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Doc. 288, 890.

⁶¹ Ibid., 407-408.

22 June, during the discussion of Zhdanov's speech, Rudolf Slansky recounted the "adventurist advice that Djilas had given to Czechoslovakia to "take the Prague's Kremlin by assault and arrest Beneš" and gave other examples of the Yugoslav's arrogant attitude toward the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. According to Slansky, Djilas had "promised to send a regiment of Yugoslav partisans to support the Czechoslovaks."⁶²

The Soviet-Yugoslav conflict finally manifested itself openly after the Second Cominform's resolution expelling the CPY was published on 28 June. Djilas played a vital role in the CPY's reaction to this event. He prepared the CPY Central Committee's official response, and its draft was ready by 29 June.⁶³ The Yugoslav leadership decided against attacking the Soviet position but instead opted for a reasoned response that addressed its various accusations with factual arguments. Both the Cominform's resolution and the CPY's response were published in *Borba* on 30 June.⁶⁴

The conflict escalated to an irreversible level after the murder of General Arso Jovanović. The 8 September 1948 issue of *Pravda* carried his obituary as well as an article written under pseudonym by "Tseka" titled "Where is Tito's National Group in Yugoslavia Leading?" Both pieces reflected Soviet displeasure with the CPY. Suddenly the psychological barriers that had restrained the Yugoslav leadership from responding publicly to Soviet attacks disappeared.⁶⁵ Djilas was one of the first to take action with a three-part article in *Borba* that ran in early October. This article, titled "On the Improbable and Unfair Accusations against Our Party and Country," contained a muted critique of Stalin. After its publication, Djilas assumed the role of the principal public critic of the Soviet Union and the Soviet system, and in return, all of his statements and actions, whether or not they concerned the Soviet Union, became a target of Soviet criticism. Thus, Moscow interpreted Djilas's speech on issues of contemporary propaganda at the second plenary session of the CPY Central Committee in January 1949 as "a wildly furious attack on those Yugoslav communists who," as he said, "believe that at present our main and almost singular goal is the struggle against imperialism."⁶⁶

The preparatory work for the Lázló Rajk trial in Hungary provided further fuel for the Soviet-Yugoslav conflagration. On 11 July 1949, M. Farkas triumphantly reported to the Cominform secretariat that "Rajk has finally

⁶² Ibid., 482, 487, 496.

⁶³ Branko Petranović, Momčilo Zečević eds., *Jugoslavija 1918-1988: tematska zbirka dokumenata* (Beograd: Rad, 1988), 930-934.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 930.

⁶⁵ The exception to this policy was the CPY's written response to the Second Cominform's resolution of 29 June.

⁶⁶ RGASPI, collection 82, inventory 2, file 1375, 140. Vidasov's information "Self-exposure of Tito's Trotskyist clique."

begun to provide evidence... We assume that Tito, Djilas, and Ranković are spies recruited in Spain and France, and Rajk had ties with them.” Additional materials from the indictment and the trial only consolidated this opinion. Yugoslavia took the opportunity to counter Soviet allegations at the United Nations’ Fourth General Assembly in November 1949. Djilas, as a member of Yugoslav delegation, spoke on 15 November and condemned the Rajk trial and the “slandorous accusation” that labeled a number of Yugoslavia’s high ranking military officers and diplomats as Gestapo agents. From this forum’s podium, he also criticized the report of the Soviet representative Andrei Vyshinski .

Soviet observers continued to monitor Djilas’s actions. According to Pavel Yudin in his speech at the third Cominform meeting, Djilas’s address at the United Nations “tried in every way to prove that it is not imperialists who warmonger against the USSR, but it is the USSR which is ostensibly preparing a new war.”⁶⁷ In the resolution of the Cominform meeting entitled “The Yugoslav Communist Party Under the Power of Murderers and Spies,” Djilas was considered the fourth man in the Yugoslav “the spy clique” after Tito, Ranković, and Kardelj.⁶⁸

The Yugoslav leadership continued to intensify its anti-Soviet stance. At a meeting with students on 18 April 1950, Djilas stated that “the Soviet Union’s state domination of production had turned into a state monopoly over the society.”⁶⁹ In the autumn of 1950, when the Yugoslav leadership moved its polemics with Moscow onto the theoretical level in order to completely repudiate the Soviet Union’s attacks, Djilas toughened his judgments of the Soviet regime even more. He came to the conclusion that one should speak about the situation in the Soviet Union not as a crisis of socialism but as a form of state capitalism managed by a “hierarchically- differentiated caste of bureaucrats.”⁷⁰ Djilas’s articles, speeches, and lectures on this topic were published in 1950 in a separate brochure, *Contemporary Themes*, in which he gave a more consistent and thorough analysis of the Soviet system and called for the continuation of the “creative adaptation of Marxism-Leninism to Yugoslav conditions.”⁷¹

Soviet documents naturally interpreted Djilas’s articles and statements in a negative way and stressed the inconsistency in the views of “Tito’s theoretician.” Thus, the Political Report of the Soviet embassy in Yugoslavia for the second quarter of 1951 stated that Djilas’s “new crazy articles” showed “the

⁶⁷ *Soveshchaniia Kominforma*, 656-657.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 704.

⁶⁹ M. Djilas, *Pad Nove klase. Povijest o samorazaranju komunizma* (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ 1994), 112-127.

⁷⁰ M. Djilas, *Savremene teme*, Belgrade, 1951, 18-20.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 45; Djilas later stated that the differences between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union had been more significant than those between the Soviet Union and the West. M. Djilas, *Vlast i pobuna* (Belgrade, Književne novine, 1991), 222.

state of stagnation and internal corruption of Tito's 'communist party,' the massive passivity of its members, and their secession from the party." The report gave the example of Djilas's article, "Thoughts on Various Issues," which spoke out against "the freedom of opinions" that Djilas had supported at the beginning of the year.⁷²

At the Congress of the VKP(b) in November 1952, Malenkov's report repeated the charges against Yugoslavia that had been registered at the Informburo meeting. The authors of this text placed Yugoslavia, along with Greece and Turkey, within the ranks of countries that "had already turned into American colonies. While Yugoslav rulers, all those Titos, Kardeljs, Rankovićs, Djilases, Pijades and others have long turned into American agents fulfilling espionage and subversive tasks for their American 'bosses' against the USSR and the People's Democratic countries."⁷³

After Stalin's Death: March 1953 – January 1954

The Yugoslav leadership paid especially close attention to the events unfolding in Moscow immediately after Stalin's death. During one meeting with some of the CPY leadership, Djilas specifically remarked on the shift of personnel within the Soviet leadership. He interpreted this reshuffling as an "anti-Stalin coup" that demonstrated the Soviets' reassessment of the resolutions at the recent VKP(b) congress. Djilas incorrectly predicted that Molotov would head the government and that Malenkov would not become the prime minister.⁷⁴

According to the sources now available, Moscow at that time displayed no comparable interest in the balance of power within Yugoslav ruling circles. Instead, the Soviets continued to emphasize the failure of Belgrade's strategy of uncompromising confrontation.⁷⁵ They pointed to articles such as the one by Kardelj praising Yugoslavia's continued resistance to Soviet pressure since 1948 and to Tito's remarks on Soviet-Yugoslav relations as evidence of this policy.

Although Djilas continued to publish extensively during the first half of 1953—no doubt with Soviet observers in mind—he was not yet an important element in post-Stalin Soviet-Yugoslav relations.⁷⁶ The only article to elicit Soviet comment was his article "Ideological Wars" published widely in Yugoslav

⁷² RGASPI, collection 82, inventory 2, file 1374,184-185.

⁷³ Summary report of the Central committee of VKP(b) to the 19th Party congress. Report of the Secretary of VKP(b) CC by comrade Malenkov. *Pravda*, 6 October 1952, 3.

⁷⁴ Dedijer, *Veliki buntovnik Milovan Djilas*, 297.

⁷⁵ This is indicated in the materials of the Soviet military attaché to Stockholm, Igor Chumak, that were first found by Vladimir Volkov in late 1990s.. See: A.B; Edemskii, *Ot konflikta k normalizaciji. Sovjetsko-yugoslavskie otnosheniya v 1953-1956godah*, (Moscow: Institut for slavonic stuides RAS, 2008), 70-71, 141.

⁷⁶ For more details on Djilas's articles in that period see: Stanić Veljko, "Milovan Djilas, 1953-54: Izmedju revolucije i slobode," *Tokovi istorije*, 3-4, 2008, 251-264.

media, in which Djilas remarked on the similarities of the ideologies of the West and the Soviet Union: “the communist and socialist ideas of the Soviet Union [were] neither better nor worse in comparison to the ideas of any expansionist imperial power.”⁷⁷ The Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) dismissed this piece as a vague repetition of Yugoslav propaganda texts from the early 1950s. In addition, neither Beria nor Malenkov considered Djilas when, at the end of June 1953, they attempted to reestablish ties with Tito. Moreover, he was not mentioned during the speeches at the CPSU Central Committee’s plenary session in early July denouncing Beria and calling for his arrest.

The Yugoslav leadership responded cautiously to the news of Beria’s removal. Djilas, like the rest of his comrades, awaited Tito’s response, which took more than a week to formulate. In the meantime, Djilas, in his speech at Bijelo-Polje on 13 July, was completely silent on the subject.⁷⁸ According to the diary of Vladimir Dedjier, it was not until 15 July that the Yugoslav leaders finally responded, declaring Beria’s removal a “progressive” development. Djilas, who agreed, proposed to write a long article on the subject because “there was no point in waiting any longer.”⁷⁹

Soviet observers once more took note of Djilas in August 1953. Djilas’s articles in the recently-launched Yugoslav journal, *Nova Misao*, which had previously caught the attention of Yugoslav political elites, now came under the scrutiny of the new Soviet Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Vasiliy Valkov. In his conversations with Yugoslav officials, he voiced strong discontent with Djilas’s article, “The Beginning of the End and the Beginning,” published in the August issue of this journal and re-printed in the popular Belgrade newspaper, *Politika*, on 23 and 24 August.⁸⁰

Soviet awareness of Djilas’s activities continued into the fall. Although at this time Moscow, unlike the West, attached little importance to Yugoslavia’s election campaign, it was very interested in the events that led to anti-Western demonstrations and protests near Trieste in October. Djilas, who was quite active during this period, uttered far harsher statements regarding the problems of the post-Stalinist Soviet Union than did Tito. On 26 October, *Borba* published Djilas’s Titograd speeches in which he referred to “new relations

⁷⁷ AVP RF, collection Komitet Informacii (hereinafter KI) 1953, inventory 1, file 129, 150.

⁷⁸ Tito held this position for some time. On August 1953, when an Associated Press correspondent asked him whether “recent events in Russia, including Beria’s removal, show some changes of the imperialist policy of the Soviet Union,” the Yugoslav leader replied, “... the question of Beria is a purely internal issue for the Soviet Union” J.B. Tito, *Govori i članci*, Vol; VIII (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1959), 179.

⁷⁹ V. Dedjier, *Izguhljena bitka Josifa Visarionoviča Staljina* (Beograd: Prosveta, 1978), 547.

⁸⁰ T. V. Volotkina ed., *Sovetskiy faktor v Vostochnoy Evrope 1944-1953*, Vol. II (Moscow: Rosspen, 1999), 814-815. See a summary of this article in: Stanić Veljko, “Milovan Djilas”, 1953-54, 258-259.

with the USSR.” Stressing “the new spirit within the souls and consciousness of the Yugoslavs,” Djilas called “the statements of those... who speak of a return to pre-1948 relations” ridiculous. At the heart of Djilas’s remarks was his belief that the resumption of former “friendly” relations was impossible because in the eyes of the Soviets the Yugoslavs did not possess equal rights and therefore no real friendship was possible.⁸¹ In another speech, Djilas spoke about the poor prospects for normalization: “if the USSR had not pursued an aggressive policy toward us or our friends [Greece and Turkey], and if it had taken the customary route for the peaceful resolution of disputes, [then] both economic and political relations would have been possible.” At the same time, Djilas insisted that his firm stance toward the Soviets should not be mistaken for sympathetic leanings toward the West. He made it clear that while Yugoslavia was ready to defend its interests, it would not carry out the objectives of others, especially the West, even for money.⁸²

On the other hand, Djilas’s views on the differences between Soviet and Yugoslav social systems were slightly more accommodating. He believed that “the Soviet order is different from ours, that the differences cannot be discounted,” and that “disagreements on matters of principle are inevitable.” However, he did not think that these differences would, on their own, preclude relations between the two countries: “it is not necessary to have similar domestic conditions in order to have normal interstate relations.” These remarks notwithstanding, Djilas did not soften his stance toward the Soviets. He followed them with the observation that “on the question of Trieste, the Soviet Union was and still is against us” and by insisting that Yugoslavia would “not pursue either a pro-Soviet or any other course apart from [its] own.”⁸³

We do not yet have evidence of the Soviet elite’s reactions to Djilas’s speeches and articles in the fall of 1953. In any event, it is more than likely that the arrest of Beria had signaled a temporary halt to further discussions over Moscow’s relations with Belgrade. In addition, because of a significant turnover of personnel, the Soviet embassy was providing scant information about Yugoslav developments. I. Kozin, the correspondent for the Soviet news agency, TASS, had arrived in Belgrade at the beginning of September and was still adapting, and a new military attaché was appointed in December 1953.

⁸¹ Djilas’s speech was published on the front and fourth page of *Borba*. The subtitle, “Yugoslavs’ belief in a possibility of equal cooperation with Western powers has been shaken,” was printed in a larger font than the others. The article was noticed by diplomats of the Soviet bloc. See: Archives of the Central Committee of Czechoslovakian Communist Party, Fond. 02/2, Sv.9, Ar.j, 11:bod10.

⁸² *Borba*, 26 October 1953.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

“The Djilas Case” and its aftermaths: January–June 1954

Was there a connection between Djilas’s removal from office in January 1954 and the Soviet Union’s offer to normalize relations with Yugoslavia five months later? The answer to this question requires a close examination of the available documentation. In early 1954, Ambassador Valkov, who had paid little attention to Djilas’s writings, alerted Moscow to Yugoslavia’s interest in resuming economic relations with the Soviet Union and the People’s Democracies. He believed that the Yugoslavs would “have to take the initiative in one way or another” due to their worsening economic conditions, the contraction of their trade, and the problem of their balance of payments. Valkov, who supported the idea because he thought it would strengthen the Soviet position in Yugoslavia, proposed that he “cautiously probe the Yugoslavs’ position on this issue” with either the Yugoslav foreign secretary or one of his deputies.⁸⁴ It is unlikely that Valkov would have dared to make such an offer had he not had the support of some members of the Soviet leadership. Thus, Valkov’s dispatch demonstrates two things: despite Beria’s arrest, there was still a desire among some Soviet leaders to continue a further normalization of relations with Yugoslavia; and this inclination occurred before, and independently of, “the Djilas case.” Nonetheless, the events surrounding Djilas in January 1954 would ultimately postpone the normalization of Soviet-Yugoslav relations for several months.

Valkov’s telegram arrived at the MFA in Moscow almost simultaneously with information of Radio “Freedom” on text of “Union or Party?”—an article published by Djilas in *Borba* on 4 January. Soviet diplomats mentioned that this Radio’s report depicted Djilas as a Yugoslav leader who “expressed doubt as to whether Stalin’s party discipline had been necessary during the previous period.” Soviet diplomats also got to know that another Belgrade-based correspondent underlined Djilas’s references to Yugoslavia’s gradual loss of “party character” and its “withdrawal from a Leninist party and state.”⁸⁵ Soviet leaders received an unabridged copy of Djilas articles in *Borba* and official reaction of Yugoslav leaders on them, with short delay which has been needed to translate them into Russian.⁸⁶

Soviet leaders were shocked by the Yugoslav reaction to Djilas’s string of critical articles in *Borba* and to his dramatic fall. At first, Soviet foreign policy officials simply studied the information arriving from Belgrade, much of which was vague and without context, and adopted a wait-and-see attitude. The Soviet press, following this example, remained silent on Yugoslav events, awaiting directions from the Kremlin. It was obvious that the equilibrium within the Yugoslav leadership, which had weathered the hardships of war and of Soviet

⁸⁴ AVP RF, collection KI. 1953-55, inventory 3, folder 772, file 1422, 5.

⁸⁵ AVP RF, collection KI. 1953-55, inventory 3, folder 772, file 1422, 5

⁸⁶ In more details see at: A. B. Edemskiy, *Ot konfliktu k normalizaciji*, 184-187.

pressure, was now seriously unbalanced, but it was unclear what effect this change would have on Soviet-Yugoslav relations.

On 10 January 1954, the CPY Central Committee published a formal disavowal of Djilas's articles in *Borba*. It stated that Djilas's opinions, especially those expressed in "The Anomaly of Morality," were completely his own and "at their core, contradict the opinions of all the other members of the [CPY] Executive Committee."⁸⁷ One day later, Soviet leaders received a full translation of this statement, which was classified as "top secret."⁸⁸ On 12 January, TASS correspondent Kozin sent Moscow an article by Boris Zihlerl, a Slovenian member of the CPY Central Committee, entitled "Our Public Aims and the Role of Communists in the Struggle for Their Implementation," which was an attempt to present the "correct interpretation" of the issues discussed in Djilas's articles.⁸⁹

Kozin did not send his own analysis of events to Moscow until 15 January. This long-awaited report contained little that was new and simply upheld the anti-Yugoslav spirit that was fashionable in Moscow at the time. For example, quotations marks were placed around the term "The League of Communists of Yugoslavia" to denote Soviet skepticism about the party's communist nature. Kozin also observed that although Djilas had been publishing articles in *Borba* on "the issues of Yugoslav social development" and on "the role of the Soviet communists in Yugoslavia" since the beginning of October 1953, the negative "Yugoslav responses had appeared only at the end of December and the beginning of January 1954." According to Kozin, the initial critiques of Djilas's articles had been "written in a cautious manner by secondary figures," who, "with few exceptions, had mainly approved of Djilas's statements." Even after the CPY Central Committee's disavowal of Djilas's articles, Kozin had seen "no reaction from leading Yugoslav figures."⁹⁰ The obvious implication of this analysis was that until recently the highest echelons of power in Yugoslavia had probably supported, or at least had not completely rejected, Djilas's well-publicized views. That same day, TASS published Djilas's article on the decline of communist sentiment among the Yugoslav elite from the January issue of *Nova Misao*. The article ended with three questions: "Why? What to

⁸⁷ *Borba*, 11 January 1954, 3.

⁸⁸ The CPY's statement was published in "The Bulletin of TASS's foreign information" (No.27). Only thirty-one copies for top Soviet bureaucrats were made. RGANI, collection 5, inventory 28, file 240,1-2. The Executive Committee of the Central Committee of "the League of Communists of Yugoslavia" about Djilas's recent articles. Belgrade, 10 January (TASS).

⁸⁹ Kozin also sent the *Borba* material and Djilas's recent articles to Moscow on 12 January. The Zihlerl article was summarized in "The Bulletin of TASS's foreign information" (No.34). RGANI, collection 5, inventory 28, file 240,12-13.

⁹⁰ AVP RF, collection KI. 1953-55, inventory 3, folder 772, file 1422, 16, 19. 15 January 1954. TASS. Classifiefile Page 89-0 – 93-0. "Yugoslav press about Djilas' articles". Belgrade, 14 January. TASS.

do? Where?”⁹¹ Kozin’s evaluation thus exemplified the Soviets’ initial caution toward “the Djilas case.”

Not all foreign observers were as circumspect as the Soviet MFA in their speculations over the fate of Djilas after the public denunciation of his articles by the CPY Central Committee. The Italian press suggested three possible outcomes of “the Djilas case”: either the party would condemn Djilas for the articles in which he had called for free discussion and criticism, thereby openly acknowledging that there was no place for these in Yugoslav democracy; or Djilas, despite falling into disgrace, would retain his position as the President of the People’s Assembly, thus confirming the possibility of maintaining a high-ranking state position without party support; or Djilas would recant his views in exchange for the preservation of his position within the Yugoslav leadership. If the third option prevailed, Djilas’s “self-criticism” would in all likelihood allow him to speak about “the return of Yugoslav socialism to eastern methods but not [about] concessions to democracy.” Experts at the MFA analyzed these Italian comments as well as the reaction of foreign media elsewhere and warily concluded that the events in Belgrade testified to “significant disagreements among the party leadership of Yugoslavia.”⁹²

The CPY Central Committee stripped Djilas of his party position, but not his party membership, at its plenary session on 16 January. Two days later, the Yugoslav ambassador to Moscow, Dobrivoje Vidić, briefly mentioned “the Djilas case” during a conversation with the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Andrey Gromyko, who noted in his diary that Vidić acted “as if ... he did not want to expand on that topic.”⁹³

Foreign Minister Molotov attempted to draw more information from Vidić during their meeting on 21 January.⁹⁴ Ill at ease, the Yugoslav ambassador downplayed his earlier comments, explaining that “he had not meant to bring up the problem” in any official capacity but only to ask if Gromyko had heard about “the Djilas case.” Molotov, responding in the same fash-

⁹¹ RGANI, collection 5, inventory 28, file 240, 19-34.

⁹² AVP RF, collection KI, 1953-55, inventory 3, folder 772, file 1422, 5. BRK about the statement of the Executive Committee of the CC of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, London, transatlantic broadcasting in English, 10 January 1954.

⁹³ The contents of this conversation were first cited in A. S. Anikeev, *Kak Tito ot Stalina ushel. Jugoslavija, SSSR i SSha v nachal’nyi period ‘holodnoi voiny’ (1945-1957)* (Moscow: Institute for Slavonic Studies RAS, 2002) 257.

⁹⁴ AVP RF, collection 3, inventory 66, file 965, 109-110. Malenkov stated that “the Presidium of the Central Committee directed Molotov to meet with the Yugoslav ambassador after we received certain information and data about the willingness of Yugoslav leaders to establish contact with the Soviet government.” According to Malenkov, Molotov was instructed to “talk to the ambassador of Yugoslavia, to assess the Yugoslavs’ moods, and let the ambassador know about our positive attitude towards the rapprochement between the USSR and Yugoslavia”. RGASPI, collection 2, inventory 1, file 180, 177. CPSU CC plenary session. July 1955. Stenographic summary.

ion, remarked “informally” on Moscow’s interest in the Djilas question and in Yugoslav events stemming from it. Molotov also reminded Vidić that “... Djilas had been keen on the West and had shown great hostility in relation to the Soviet Union,” and that he surmised that the “measures taken in relation to Djilas would facilitate the mending of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.” The ambassador, recognizing the message behind the minister’s bluntness, gave a vague but diplomatic reply: “As a representative of Yugoslavia... I want to thank Molotov for his words.” Vidić, undoubtedly with some reluctance, decided to elaborate on this response: “[T]he Djilas question has been considered in the most serious way. We did not like Djilas’s ideas or the course of development that he had proposed for Yugoslavia. This is why his ideas were unambiguously and resolutely condemned by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia.” These comments notwithstanding, the ambassador never demonstrated that he shared the minister’s suggestion of a possible rapprochement.

During the remainder of their conversation, Vidić and Molotov continued to spar over communist ideology and Yugoslavia’s road to development. The ambassador claimed that “Yugoslav communists have always been Marxists,” that “they have never thought in any other way,” and that they “have never tried to take another path.” The Soviet minister’s conciliatory rejoinder—“the more Marxists there are, the better it will be”—was followed by a direct challenge: Did Vidić consider Djilas, who was a leading Yugoslav theoretician, a “Marxist”? The ambassador candidly responded that “even in the Soviet Union, there were people who had once been considered Marxists but then, during the course of the struggle, had shown that they were not.” The fencing ended in a draw. Molotov, who had decided not to contradict Vidić, admitted that “such cases had occurred in the Soviet Union.”⁹⁵

At the end of the meeting, Vidić promised to “inform his government immediately” about their conversation. Molotov, who was well aware of the delicacy of the issue, responded that “Vidić had the right to do so” and that

⁹⁵ Molotov had a right to be concerned. Malenkov and Khrushchev used these transcripts against Molotov at a July 1955 session of the CPSU Central Committee. Malenkov’s judiciously-edited version gave the impression that Molotov had only spoken to Vidić about ideology and Marxism. Khrushchev then commented, “It is possible and it is necessary to have friendly conversation with the Yugoslav ambassador but not to push him away with a more than cool conversation.” Malenkov went even further and condemned Molotov saying, “Is this any way to fulfill the CC’s assignment to assess the moods of Yugoslavia? Is it a fulfillment of the CC’s directive to allow the Yugoslavs to know that we are for rapprochement with Yugoslavia? It is obvious that Comrade Molotov simply did not want to fulfill the CC’s assignment.” According to Malenkov, “Comrade Molotov met the Yugoslav ambassador and, as we know now, in accordance with his views on the Yugoslav question and diverging from the position of the CC Presidium, dampened the Yugoslavs’ desire for rapprochement due to his chilly reception, and then reported to the Central Committee that it was a no go with the ambassador” (Ibid., 177-178. Shorthand record).

“he believed he was in [Vidić’s] debt.” Molotov’s final remarks implied that anything he had said during the course of their “informal” discussion reflected his personal opinion and not the views the Soviet government. This seemingly innocuous phrase testified not only to Molotov’s apprehension that the Yugoslavs might use his words for propaganda purposes but also to the minister’s distrust of his colleagues on the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee. Molotov, who was scheduled to leave for the Berlin Conference within a few days, was too experienced not to realize that his colleagues might use this opportunity to critique his activities at the forthcoming session of the Presidium. Thus, in an effort to dot all his proverbial “i’s,” Molotov made sure that the transcripts of the Vidić meeting would show no more than a prudent form of behavior on his part.

Vidić’s meeting with Molotov did not contribute to any significant progress in the normalization of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. The Yugoslav embassy in Moscow had spent the first weeks of January analyzing Soviet-Yugoslav relations, and the final draft of their conclusions, “Major Observations on the USSR’s Internal and Foreign Policy,” had been completed the day of Vidić’s and Molotov’s conversation.⁹⁶ The next day, the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry rejected a series of proposals submitted by the Soviet ambassador.

It was President Tito who, in his report to the Yugoslav Federal Assembly on 29 January 1954, outlined the conditions under which Yugoslavia would conduct a further normalization of relations with the Soviet Union. In the foreign policy section of his report, which detailed the federal government’s activities for the year 1953, Tito stated that “the situation at the borders is now more acceptable” because of the current state of a “partial” normalization with the Soviet bloc countries. However, Tito admitted, “[S]ome Eastern European countries do not display a readiness for [further] normalization.”⁹⁷

The first, semi-official Soviet evaluation of “the Djilas case” appeared in the Bucharest edition of the Cominform newspaper, *For Lasting Peace, For People’s Democracy!*⁹⁸ Previous historiography suggests that the Cominform propagandists had found it difficult to formulate a response to Djilas’s re-

⁹⁶ Državni arhiv Sekretarijata inostranih poslova (further –DASIP), PA. 1954, F.-85, D-3-4709, 20/54, 21 January 1954 Osnovne teze o unutrašnjoj i spoljnoj politici SSSR-a (D. Vidić).

⁹⁷ Josip Broz Tito, *Govori i članci*, Vol. IX (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1959), 71-72.

⁹⁸ The renown Croatian historian Darko Bekić noted that this article demonstrated “that post-Stalinist leaders still had not adopted the policy of normalization of relations with Yugoslavia, or more exactly, that internal differences on this issue had not been overcome yet” (Darko Bekić, *Jugoslavija u hladnom ratu. Odnosi s velikim silama 1949-1955* (Zagreb. Globus, 1990), 580.

moval.⁹⁹ Its approval could mean openly supporting Tito and the CPY Central Committee for the first time in years, while its silence could mean a missed opportunity and could possibly create confusion among the supporters of the international communist movement. It was also risky to “intercede” for Djilas, given his previous role as chief critic of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies. The only safe option for the Cominform was to continue its general criticism of the Yugoslav leadership.

The Cominform’s article, “The Djilas ‘Case’ and the Yugoslav Reality,” called Djilas’s public censure of the Yugoslav ruling elite the inevitable exposure of the characteristics of contemporary Yugoslavia: the bureaucratization of the party and state apparatus from top to bottom, the lawlessness, the compulsory assembly of the population at official meetings, the moral decay, and the intrigues within the ruling elite. The article enumerated the many theoretical works that Djilas had published in recent years and stressed their “intentionally vague titles,” such as “The General and the Particular,” “Subjective Forces,” “New Ideas,” and “Union and Party.” But the authors also rebuked Djilas because he had “avoided... calling a spade a spade [and had taken] refuge in demagogic circumlocutions on the subject of ‘socialist democracy’ as was usual for Titoists.” They also noted:

[T]he essence of his ‘new ideas’ could be summarized as follows: it is high time to acknowledge the revival of the capitalist order of industrial decentralization, the dissolution of peasant cooperatives, the return of the land to kulaks and landowners in Yugoslavia, the growing influence of foreign capital in the country; it is high time to introduce a multi-party system similar to Western European countries and to openly legitimize the Yugoslavs’ conversion into imperialist bourgeoisie.¹⁰⁰

The article’s authors were equally harsh in their interpretation of the CPY Central Committee’s denunciation and removal of Djilas. According to them, Djilas’s articles had created confusion within the Yugoslav leadership not because he had expressed opinions contrary to party elites, whose politics had led to the liquidation of the Yugoslav peoples’ democratic gains and the loss of their national independence, but because Djilas had “revealed what Yugoslav leaders cherished in secret, spoken of only among themselves, and withheld from the people.” They had “decided to sacrifice Djilas” in order “to preserve their ‘socialist’ disguise.”

The article’s conclusions echoed the bitterest language of the conflict between the Cominform and Yugoslavia in 1948: “The Djilas case testifies, first of all, to the fact that Yugoslavia’s ruling clique is in a deep internal crisis connected to the process of the dissolution of the so-called “League of Com-

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ *Za prochniy mir, za narodnuyu demokratiyu*, Bucharest, 5, 29 January 1954, 4.

munists.” And, like previous evaluations, the article questioned the political stability in Yugoslavia:

Many activists from the highest echelons of the CPY, who were devoted to ‘the old ideas,’ increasingly and openly expressed dissatisfaction with the situation in ‘the League.’ Under these circumstances, the leaders of ‘the League’ started discussions on ‘the Djilas case’ within its principal organizations in order to direct this dissatisfaction to their best advantage and to consolidate confidence.¹⁰¹

The Cominform’s accusations mirrored those that had been formed within the Soviet MFA during the preceding year. Soviet diplomats believed that Djilas’s articles had been essentially “official” statements and represented an “open rejection of Marxist-Leninist ideas.” In the Soviet ministry’s estimation, the Yugoslav leadership had turned its collective back on Djilas only after the January 1954 publication of his pamphlet, “The Anatomy of a Moral,” in which he had “characterized the ruling elite of Yugoslavia as a closed caste of unprincipled and plodding careerists who had laid their hands on power.” In the opinion of the MFA, Djilas’s central thesis “about the need to liquidate the CPY” was a “logical consequence and a direct expression of the CPY’s serious ideological decay” and had inadvertently exposed “the real political situation in the country and especially in the CPY.”¹⁰² Of course, the ministry’s harsh assessments were for internal consumption only.¹⁰³

Notwithstanding the strident responses of the Cominform and others in the Soviet camp, the Soviet leadership’s measured reaction to the dramatic change at the highest levels of Yugoslav leadership laid the groundwork for the normalization of its relations with Belgrade. Soviet observers were able to interpret the removal of Djilas and his unacceptable views from the party and state leadership as an obvious indicator that Tito and his devoted followers planned to preserve the supremacy of the party apparatus and its monopolistic position in Yugoslavia.

February 1, 1954 willing to develop relations between the two countries, Valkov informed the Soviet MFA that he has intention to come back to his thoughts of early January when he will be meeting with the Yugoslav Deputy Foreign Minister, Ales Bebler, on 10 February in order “to ascertain

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² AVP RF, collection 021, inventory 8a, folder 11, file 114, 42. Information of December 1954, “On the Internal Political Situation of Yugoslavia.”

¹⁰³ In his report to Belgrade, Ambassador Vidić, quoting an influential correspondent for France-Presse, who was also known in diplomatic circles in Soviet capital as Russian agent, interpreted this article as a clear signal from Moscow to Belgrade to “come back”, see: *Opšti politički izveštaj* (D. Vidić). *Ambasada FNRJ u Moskvi. Pov.br.33. 22 February 1954.* in Radoica Luburić ed., *Pomirenje Jugoslavije i SSSR-a: 1953-1955, tematska zbirka dokumenata* (Podgorica : Istorijski institut Crne Gore, 1999), Doc. 11, 270.

the real reasons for the Yugoslavs' negative attitude to some of our offers." The ambassador also wanted to address the renewal of cultural ties in general and the renewal of publication exchanges between Soviet and Yugoslav research institutions in particular.¹⁰⁴

The Soviet MFA favored a more measured pace toward Yugoslavia than advocated by Valkov. In its draft instructions for the ambassador, it proposed a policy of gradual progress in the sphere of bilateral cultural and scientific contacts but rejected the pursuit of economic initiatives. Valkov was advised to inform Bebler "that the cessation of negotiations on air routes by the Yugoslavs, their unwillingness to establish an exchange of hydrogeographic publications, and other facts contradict the statements of Yugoslav state leaders about their desire to normalize relations with the USSR." In addition, the MFA draft specified that the conversation should not be of a conventionally diplomatic nature, advising that Valkov's demeanor should be one of persistent determination. The ambassador was to state that the "Yugoslavs' hints as to 'the insufficient level' of Soviet-Yugoslav relations required explanation since the Yugoslav side, according to the facts, had not adequately expressed a real desire for an improvement of their relations with the USSR." He was then instructed to determine "if there was anything new in the Yugoslavs' position on this issue." It is reasonable to assume that this last instruction, singled out in a separate paragraph, was of special importance after recent talks on "the Djilas case" between Molotov and Vidić in Moscow.

The second set of instructions dealt with the Soviet Union's policy regarding the development of economic relations with Yugoslavia. Valkov was instructed not to take the initiative on this issue because it would not be "expedient," and if Belber introduced the subject, he was to "let the Yugoslav side understand that the resumption and development of Soviet-Yugoslav trade was conditional on the payment of Yugoslavia's debt to the Soviet Union."¹⁰⁵ These lines revealed the resolute position of the Soviets, which was opposed to resuming economic ties without a debt agreement.

Because the MFA's recommendations required the approval of the CPSU Central Committee, its draft proposal, "On the Resumption of Economic Relations and Cultural Ties between the USSR and Yugoslavia" appeared as the eighth item on the Presidium's agenda of 8 February 1954. However, the proposal did not receive a substantial discussion. Instead, the Presidium spent the

¹⁰⁴ AVP RF, collection 3, inventory 66, file 965, 118-119. Valkov, Cipher telegram, Belgrade, 1 February 1954.

¹⁰⁵ AVP RF, collection 021, inventory 8, inventory 6, file 162, 3. Along with the draft of the resolution of the Central Committee Presidium titled "Draft of Instructions to the USSR's Ambassador to Yugoslavia," Zorin also presented notes "From the note of the USSR Ambassador to Yugoslavia Valkov, 4 January 1954" and Valkov's cipher telegram from Belgrade of 1 February 1954. AFP RF, collection 3, inventory 66, file 965, 112-119.

majority of the session debating the second agenda item, the reorganization of the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs.¹⁰⁶ There was some exchange of opinion on the Yugoslav question,¹⁰⁷ and a working committee was created to present recommendations within five days. The committee included two MFA deputy ministers, Valerian Zorin and Vladimir Kuznetsov, and Mikhail Suslov, none of whom took their “assignment” lightly. This was especially true once the diplomatic aspect was downgraded and a significant party character was attached to the issue. Thus, the materials were moved from the folder labeled “Yugoslavia. Political-Economic Relations” to one designated “On the Situation of the CP of Yugoslavia,”¹⁰⁸ and Central Committee Secretary, Nikita Khrushchev, took responsibility for the finished product of the committee. In all probability, Khrushchev took personal control of the “Yugoslav question” because it involved the internal workings of the CPY leadership and because the recent disavowal of Djilas opened the door to a resumption of former relations. It was also an opportunity to promote the ethnic as well as ideological solidarity of the two regimes, a project that could not be rushed.

It took the committee several weeks, not the allotted five days, to finish its task. One possible reason for the holdup was the sheer volume of material that had to be reviewed by the committee. The Yugoslav dossier contained not only the draft instructions to Ambassador Valkov but information from “the Djilas case” as well, including Russian translations of Djilas’s recent articles and of Tito’s and Djilas’s speeches at the Yugoslav communist Central Committee’s plenary sessions in January.¹⁰⁹ More information continued to arrive as the working committee began its assignment.¹¹⁰ The commission completed its findings, drafted a resolution on the Yugoslav question, and submitted these to the Soviet leadership on 25 February 1954.¹¹¹ The final results of the committee had one significant omission; they did not contain any materials on “the Djilas case.”

¹⁰⁶ There was a consensus among Soviet leaders on Ivan Serov’s candidacy, but they could not agree on the issue of his deputies. Malenkov zealously promoted Konstanin Lunev and rejected Alexander Panyushkin, whereas Bulganin supported Ivan Ilyichev. See: *Presidium Tsk KPSS. 1954-1964* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), Doc. No 1, Meeting held on 8 February 1954, 19-24.

¹⁰⁷ In contrast to the usual recordkeeping practices for the decisions made by the Soviet leadership, the 8 February proceedings were not registered on the same day but on 10 February 1954. See: AP RF, collection 3, inventory 66, file 911, P50/VII, 10 February 1954.

¹⁰⁸ AP RF, collection 3, inventory 66, FILE 911, 4. P50/VII, February 8, 1954. To comrades Khrushchev, Suslov, Zorin, Kuznetsov (MFA). The file was titled “3-66-911 Yugoslavia. Political-economic relations” started on 27 July 1953.

¹⁰⁹ RGANI, collection 5, inventory 28, file 240, 43, 151..

¹¹⁰ The Soviet leadership did not receive the material “Western media response to the Cominform’s article, ‘The Djilas ‘Case’ and the Yugoslav Reality,’” 12 February 1954. RGANI, collection 5, inventory 28, file 240, 36-42.

¹¹¹ For a analysis of both the information and the recommendations prepared for the Soviet leadership see: Edemskii, *From Conflict to Normalization, 199-204, 280.*

Problems continued plaguing the committee when the Soviet Presidium delayed the discussion on Yugoslavia for another two months and its findings became more incomplete and outdated as time passed. In early March, Soviet leaders received the full text of Tito's five-hour address to foreign journalists, in which the Yugoslav leader referred to the current state of Soviet-Yugoslav relations and the need to "continue further normalization." He specifically mentioned the detrimental effects of the Cominform's article, "The Djilas Case and the Yugoslav Reality," on these relations and noted "they should not reproach us if we reply in the same way."¹¹² In addition, contact between Soviet and Yugoslav diplomats, which had been absent since 1948, began to increase during these months.

The reason for this subsequent delay might be found by looking at the intersection of "the Djilas case," Soviet perceptions of Yugoslavia, and Nikita Khrushchev's political ambitions. Djilas's most recent articles had been particularly worrying to many Soviet leaders because they advanced his criticism of the social organization established in Yugoslavia after 1945. Djilas's words could easily have strengthened the belief among some in the Soviet camp of Tito's subordination to the West as well as heighten their fears of the possible liberalization of Yugoslavia's political system and of the CPY's loss of exclusive power. Thus, a threatening precedent could be set for all the countries within the socialist camp.

As these anxieties were fomenting, Khrushchev was attempting to use the CPSU Central Committee to seize control of all the leading positions in the Soviet Union and to repulse the bureaucratic forces that had gained influence during the years of rapid scientific-technical progress after Second World War. Khrushchev skillfully used, and possibly encouraged, the prolonged delay in the discussion of Soviet-Yugoslav relations to strengthen his own political position vis-à-vis his principal competitors in the party. Molotov, as head of the Soviet MFA, was especially vulnerable. Khrushchev and others could, and did, use the Yugoslav question as evidence of the MFA's unsuccessful policies and as a way of minimizing Molotov's growing influence.

The Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee finally took up the commission's draft resolution during its plenary session of 4 May, under the agenda item "On the Attitude Toward Yugoslavia."¹¹³ Members criticized the recommendations for not taking into account the processes developing in the CPY after "the Djilas case," the events connected with Tito's speeches in February and March, and the rather candid discussions of Soviet-Yugoslav relations among diplomats in Moscow, Belgrade, and Sofia during the spring. As a result, the Presidium decided to reject the commission's recommenda-

¹¹² Ibid., 208-209.

¹¹³ AP RF, collection 3, inventory 66, file 965, 120. An excerpt from the Minutes of No. 63 session of the Presidium of CPSU CC of 4 May 1954. On the attitude toward Yugoslavia.

tions and asked for an amended draft in five days. The Presidium also made significant changes to the composition of the commission. Kuznetsov, one of Molotov's two deputies, was replaced by Petr Pospelov, the secretary of the CPSU Central Committee responsible for propaganda and ideology, thereby reducing the MFA's influence. Khrushchev, although no longer officially in charge, continued, as the Central Committee Secretary, to exercise a decisive influence on the commission and on the discussions during the Presidium sessions.

The new commission completed its assignment on time, but the discussion of the new draft resolution and its accompanying documents was postponed until 20 May. One of the principal changes was the inclusion of a detailed analysis of Soviet policy on "the Yugoslav question" as well as a suggestion, made sometime during mid-May, to send a CPSU Central Committee representative to Belgrade in order to directly negotiate with CPY Central Committee representatives.¹¹⁴ It is clear that many of the former ideas supported by the MFA had been rejected and replaced by new ones. Although there is no available evidence of the source of these new policies, it appears likely, given the reshuffling of the personnel on the commission, that they probably came directly from Pospelov or were based on his interpretation of the policies discussed by the Presidium on 4 May.

In its 18 May note, "On the Attitude toward Yugoslavia," the commission maintained that the rupture of relations with Yugoslavia had been erroneous.¹¹⁵ It acknowledged the need to criticize the actions and policies of the Yugoslav leadership, but it also stated that the problems between the two parties in 1948 had not required a complete break. The rupture had "made it difficult for the USSR to influence the communists and people of Yugoslavia and thus made it easier for Tito's clique to pursue a demagogical nationalist course." The commission also assigned equal responsibility to Beria and Djilas for the worsening of Soviet-Yugoslav relations, which had led to the present split.¹¹⁶ The text ended with two recommendations: "1. To approve the text of the telegram to the Soviet ambassador to Yugoslavia. 2. To consider the possibility, in case of a positive response from the CPY's leadership to the CPSU CC's proposals, of sending a CPSU CC representative for negotiations with the CPY leadership."¹¹⁷ The commission drafted the new directives for Ambassador Valkov, which instructed him to personally propose to Tito a face-to-face meeting between Central Committee representatives of both parties.

¹¹⁴ AP RF, collection 3, inventory 66, file 911, 133—140. Inc. 2131. Note (M.Suslov,Pospelov, V.Zorin) "On the Attitude toward Yugoslavia," 18 May 1954.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 137-138.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 140.

The working commission also developed corresponding guidelines for the CPSU Central Committee representative and urged the Presidium to approve them.¹¹⁸

The content of these recommendations gradually changed during the last week of May. The working committee's documents in the days immediately preceding the meeting of the Presidium on 31 May still referred to possible negotiations between CPY and CPSU Central Committee representatives. Even the resolution of the Presidium from 27 May preserved the recommendations on negotiation guidelines. However, the actual documents submitted by the commission for the plenary session on 31 May did not mention sending CPSU representatives to Belgrade nor did they contain negotiation directives. Instead of negotiations, the committee papers now recommended that the CPSU Central Committee send a formal letter to the KJP Central Committee regarding the reestablishment of relations.

It is difficult to determine the exact cause of this change in policy. Although Molotov had been absent during the discussions of the Yugoslav question—an obvious sign of Khrushchev's growing power in the party—his fears on the subject had been sent to the committee and were included in the official documents. He believed that the Yugoslav leadership could easily leak information about renewed negotiations and that the West would likely see Soviet overtures as a sign of weakness. His position had to have had some effect on this decision. Another factor to consider was the views held by the communist parties of the Soviet Union's allies. They had been closely associated with the adoption of the Cominform's 1948 resolutions, and Khrushchev did not want to provoke a conflict with them just as he was starting to consolidate his leadership over these fraternal parties.

It could even be said that the Yugoslav question assisted Khrushchev in his process of consolidation. During the May discussions on Yugoslavia, the Presidium had felt the need to consult with the other communist parties. This came at an opportune time for Khrushchev in his effort to gain allies. The instinct to withdraw from a direct meeting with the Yugoslav Central Committee representatives may have been the result of a feeling of complacency on Khrushchev's part. The party secretary may have been lulled by the celebrations of the three hundred years of Pereyaslav Rada, by Ukraine's reunion with Russia, and by the final transfer of the Crimea to Ukraine that went unnoticed at that time.

It would also be reasonable to assume that Khrushchev and his supporters wanted to avoid any direct analogy between the proposed negotiations and Beria's overtures to Yugoslavia eleven months earlier. While it is highly unlikely that Khrushchev feared he would suffer a similar fate, the specter of Beria no doubt restrained him when it came to pursuing any di-

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 143-146. Appendix No.3 Draft of directive guidelines.

rect action in Yugoslavia's direction. Although the letter device that he chose might prove less effective than formal negotiations, it would definitely be a safer political alternative. The obstinate Yugoslav leadership could more easily reject a secret meeting with a CPSU Central Committee representative than a letter.

Despite very limited access to the documents in Russian archives and the inability of researchers to study the relevant personal papers of the secretaries of the CPSU Central Committee, it is still possible to suggest that the evolution of Yugoslav ideology, as reflected in Tito's speeches, presented the CPSU leaders with an additional incentive to reconsider their attitude toward Yugoslavia. Djilas's removal and the rejection of his ideas by the CPY leadership gave the CPSU Central Committee reason to believe there would be a gradual change in Yugoslav policy.

The plausibility of these assumptions was confirmed by the content of Tito's speeches before party forums during the first months of 1954: the "dying-out" of the party was now presented as a long-term but not an immediate prospect. Tito also defended the party cadre bureaucracy, stressed the need to increase the percentage of workers among the CPY ranks, and underlined the importance of democratic centralism. According to the information gathered by Cominform officials at the end of May 1954, the Yugoslav leadership had become increasingly sympathetic to Djilas's critics and displayed a marked willingness in all party organizations to combat Djilas's beliefs. The CPY had arrested and had jailed a significant number of Djilas's supporters after "the Djilas case," and "during the days preceding [Djilas's] removal, many in Yugoslavia expected a coup." As for the Belgrade jails, the "Titoists" had increased their patrols two or three times and had armed security guards with tommy guns.¹¹⁹

* * *

After Tito's entourage removed Djilas from his high-ranking political position in January 1954, he occupied a largely symbolic role within the Yugoslav opposition, which, until the 1980s, existed largely in the minds of the ruling circles of the Yugoslav and Soviet communist elite. The scale of Djilas's personality, the strength of his character, and his foresight into Yugoslav social problems—as well as the self-awareness among communists of the utopian social project he and they defended—made Djilas a possible alternative in case of the weakening of the one-party monopoly. This fact was not lost on Soviet leaders who realized the similarity of both regimes. Therefore, the response of Yugoslav leaders to Djilas became, in the eyes of Moscow, "a litmus test" of

¹¹⁹ RGANI, collection 5, inventory 28, file 239, 14-15.

their common interests. In this regard, all the repressions inflicted upon Djilas after January 1954 not only strengthened Tito's rule but also created a positive atmosphere for the burgeoning rapprochement between the Soviet and Yugoslav regimes late 1954 - first half of 1956.

Dragan Bogetić

Institute for Contemporary History

Belgrade

CONFLICT WITH THE COMINFORM AND SHAPING OF A NEW YUGOSLAV FOREIGN POLICY ORIENTATION

Abstract: The Yugoslav-Soviet conflict of 1948 served as the catalyst to a shift in Yugoslav foreign policy which led to the country's gradual incorporation into the Western defense system. Tactical opening towards the West secured substantial economic and military assistance which helped recover the economy from the brink of disaster. It elevated the country's military capacity and enabled Yugoslavia to resist economic and military pressure from the group of Cominform countries.

Keywords: *Tito, Stalin, Yugoslavia, Soviet Union, Cominform, United States, NATO, independence, conflict.*

The year 1948, the most dramatic one in Yugoslav post-war history, stands out as a true watershed marking new challenges in relations with the Great Powers, but also new experiences in conducting international relations. That year, renounced by the West and the East alike, Yugoslavia was facing general isolation and economic blockade, growingly becoming an absurd, anachronistic political laboratory of the Cold War. Following a logic of its own, Yugoslavia had denied universality of the rule of mutual dependence of domestic and foreign policies. In order to preserve its socialist regime, it eventually aligned with the Western powers of the opposite ideological leaning. At the same time, the USSR and the group of socialist countries became its main enemy.

This article strives to shed some light on this entangled web of conflicts between political ideology and pragmatism and to explain, to the degree possible, the form and content of the new political strategy forced upon Tito and his collaborators by the logic of conflict with their former role model and protector – the Soviet Union.

Yugoslavia entered into the post-war as a socialist country led by the Communist Party (CPY) firmly aligned with the Soviet Union. Tito and his followers established a regime based on personal experience gained during the long period as an illegal party followed by wartime. Adopting the Soviet style of government, adherent to the legacy of the Marxist-Leninist theory, Yugoslav communists were bursting with self-confidence, maintaining that they had decisively contributed to the victorious outcome of the socialist revolution in Yugoslavia rather than the Soviet army.

Compared with the other communist parties of Eastern Europe, the CPY was far stronger, more unified, successful and influential in its country. Still, Yugoslavia was the most loyal ally of Moscow in every respect. It enforced the Soviet model without question, enjoying the reputation of the truest satellite in the camp, occasionally even being “more Catholic than the Pope”. On the other hand, the Soviet Union held Yugoslavia in great esteem and Stalin favored it over the other countries of Eastern Europe. Yugoslavia was “second only to the USSR”, leader in building socialism in the belt of the satellite countries. Endless fascination of Yugoslav communists with the policies of the USSR, as well as the energetic Soviet support to Yugoslavia, could be explained chiefly by the mutual dependence of the two countries. The international position of Yugoslavia and the stability of the regime rested upon support from the Soviet Union, while the key strategic interest of the USSR – the strengthening of the socialist camp – depended on the strength of socialist Yugoslavia. The country was seen from Moscow as the cornerstone of Soviet foreign policy and a bulwark against penetration of the West into the Balkans.¹

Tito secured Soviet support in the fight for recognition and strengthening of the international position of a “New Yugoslavia” as early as September 1944, during his first official visit to Moscow. Alliance and tight cooperation between the two states and parties was confirmed during the second of Tito’s visits to Moscow (April 1945). Its terms were codified in the Treaty of Friendship, Mutual Aid and Cooperation between Yugoslavia and USSR.² *De facto* bloc of socialist countries under Soviet control emerged with the signing of similar treaties between the USSR and other Eastern European states in 1945, 1946 and 1947. Similar treaties were also concluded between those individual states. The importance attributed to Yugoslavia in this constellation was symbolized by choosing Belgrade as the centre of a newly formed association of European Communist parties – the Cominform. At the first meeting of this association in September 1947, it was the Yugoslav communists who were given the most prominent role in denouncing deviations in the West-European

¹ Leonid Gibianski, “Sovjetsko-jugoslovenski sukob 1948: Istoriografske verzije i novi arhivski izvori” in *Jugoslavija v Hladni vojni* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2004).

² Phyllis Auty, “Yugoslavia’s international relations (1945–1965)” in *Contemporary Yugoslavia. Twenty Years of Socialist Experiment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 155–157, 160.

communist movement. They were able to point to their own experience as an example of best practice for socialist transformation. A telling reward for the Yugoslav Communists was the choice of Belgrade not only for the seat of the Cominform, but also for the centre of its journal: “For Lasting Peace – for People’s Democracy”!³

Tito was pleased with such elevated position of Yugoslavia amongst East European states, and therefore did not question its subordinate position in relation to the Soviet Union. However, he expected Yugoslavia to be a privileged satellite, and some of West-European authors portrayed him as a ruler with ambitions to become “an independent viceroy of Southeastern Europe” under Soviet supervision.⁴ Aspiring to secure a leading role for Yugoslavia amongst the socialist states and the communist movement in the Balkans, Tito never envisaged a strategy which would endanger state and party subordination to Moscow. Acting as the Soviets’ “right hand”, Yugoslavia strived to contribute to the strengthening of the international role of the socialist camp and to the realization of Soviet global strategy. However, Tito’s strategy presupposed an ongoing and developing partnership between Yugoslavia and the USSR, through a certain division of labor. As Tito’s aspirations grew, so did Stalin’s suspicions. Still, in the first post-war years, Stalin did not react to the Yugoslav moves which were diverging from the line of Soviet foreign policy. There were no serious reactions from Moscow regarding the territorial pretensions of Yugoslavia towards Austria and Italy, although they could have strained relations between the USSR and the West. Similarly, Yugoslavia’s independent policy of supporting the Partisan movement in Greece, and its position regarding the Palestinian question, which both differed from that of the Soviet Union, caused no friction. Squabbles over the conduct of the Red Army during the final war operations in Yugoslavia, and that of the Soviet experts in the post-war period, did not jeopardize close Yugoslav-Soviet relations.⁵ However, Yugoslav aspirations toward the leading role among the socialist countries of the Balkans led to serious complications between Belgrade and Moscow. At first, Stalin was indifferent to the issue of a Balkan federation in which Yugoslavia would play a key role. What he considered unforgivable was the manner in which Tito handled the issue. His failure to inform the Soviet leadership and eagerness to conduct constant consultations with Bulgaria and Albania was a manifestation of defiance to hegemonic aspirations of the Kremlin. Tito’s poli-

³ Čedomir Štrbac, *Jugoslavija i odnosi medju socijalističkim zemljama* (Belgrade: Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, 1974).

⁴ Dennison Rusinow, *The Yugoslav Experiment 1948–1974* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1977), 23.

⁵ Desimir Tošić and I. Joksimović, “Tito i Hruščov – dvojica revizionista”, in 1948. *Jugoslavija i Kominform. Pedeset godina kasnije* (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ, 1998), 203–207; Phyllis Auty, “Yugoslavia’s International relations”, 161.

cies were challenging the sacrosanct role of Stalin in the socialist camp. In this context, relations abruptly declined in the second half of 1947 and beginning of 1948, when the communist leaderships of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania were taking steps towards creating a federation without consulting Stalin.⁶

The moment it became clear that coming to terms with the Soviet Union was not possible without the political elimination of Tito, the leader of the Yugoslav communists was faced with only two options:

- either to continue to copy all solutions coming from the USSR, and thus indirectly admit the gravity of the charges Moscow made against his conduct in the light of both Marxist-Leninist theory and its application in contemporary Yugoslav reality.
- or, to try to show that the roots of Stalinist foreign policy and its attack on Yugoslavia were embedded in deformed domestic relations in the USSR and Stalin's hegemonic aspirations.⁷

In the absence of a third solution, it did not take long for Tito to resolve the dilemma. Switching from a defensive position to an ideological attack, Yugoslav communists started believing that resistance to Stalin was possible only through a thorough negation of the Soviet bureaucratic system, which was exported to Eastern Europe. A showdown with Stalinism was leading far and beyond criticism of deformations of the Soviet system, towards building an alternative socialism free of such deviations.⁸

The Yugoslav quest for a democratic alternative to the Soviet bureaucratic model resulted in a concept of social self-management. Realization of the Marxist ideal of withering away of the state and the creation of a classless society governed by the working people was stressed through a new maxim: "Power to the people, factories to the workers, and land to the peasants". The new formula was promoted in order to secure the support of the people and to demonstrate the advantages of the Yugoslav model of socialism as compared to the Stalinist one.

The conflict of 1948 highlighted the necessity of achieving unity of the party and the country and contributed to an ever stronger emphasis on "Yugoslavdom" by Tito and his followers. The roots of the Yugoslav identity were dug out from the past culture and tradition of the South Slavs. Glorifying nineteenth-century figures such as Ljudevit Gaj, Petar Petrović Njegoš, Dositej Obradović, Josip Juraj Štrosmajer, Svetozar Marković, Frano Supilo became commonplace. Tito still insisted on the doctrine of "proletarian internationalism" but, by giving it a new meaning, it was to be understood primarily as

⁶ Leonid Gibianski, "Sovjetsko-jugoslovenski sukob", 40-41.

⁷ Ričard Krempton, *Balkan posle Drugog svetskog rata*, (Belgrade: Clio, 2003), 164-168.

⁸ Dušan Bilandžić, *Historija Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1985), 164-165, 168-169; Zdenko Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji 1945-1991. Od zajedništva do razlaza* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, Školska knjiga, 2006).

loyalty to Yugoslavia, and secondarily as loyalty towards the Soviet Union and workers' movement.⁹

Such a course was taken at the 6th Party Congress in Zagreb in November 1952, and was formally adopted in 1953 through the promulgation of the Constitutional Law. In order to underline the change in the political system, the CPY changed its name to the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. Its Politburo became the Executive Committee. It was concluded that the model of a monolithic, disciplined and hierarchical party was outdated and became an obstacle to the development of democratic socialism. Power was to be transferred to companies and municipalities where decisions would be discussed by the people who had immediate stakes. The realization of the decisions was to be entrusted to the delegates who would present them in the higher political bodies. The introduction of immediate democracy in municipalities and companies was supposed to lessen the importance of political decisions made in political centers. The expectation was that such a reform would strengthen Yugoslavdom and loyalty to the state.¹⁰

The Constitutional Law defined Yugoslavia as a community in which the logic of self-management suppressed the national question. "Working people" rather than nations of the several republics became the bearers of sovereignty. The emphasis was on a single Yugoslav working class which was supposed to be an avant-garde of the "working people", and a factor of unification of all Yugoslav peoples and republics. The Constitutional Law abolished the Council of Peoples – the Assembly Chamber taking care of interests of republics and provinces. It was replaced with the Council of Producers, which was yet another expression of the tendency to redirect sovereignty from nations to the "working people". In a similar spirit, the right to self-determination including secession, provided by the Article 1 of the 1946 Constitution, was abolished.¹¹

The introduction of self-management in all segments of the political system and the emphasis on the role of the working man in the decision making process gave certainty to the state leadership that national sentiments and nationalistic tendencies would eventually be overcome. Slogans about a "glorious future" propagated by the LCY became a priority which would unite the Yugoslav people into a lasting community without coercion. Therefore, the sovereignty of the republics became less relevant and dependent on the sovereignty of "working people" and loyalty to the Yugoslav community as a whole.¹²

⁹ Dragan Bogetić, "Nacionalno pitanje i socijalistička Jugoslavija", *Istorija 20. veka*, 1-2, 1999, 41-77.

¹⁰ *Šesti kongres Komunističke partije Jugoslavije (Saveza komunista Jugoslavije)*, 2-7. novembra 1952, *Stenografske beleške* (Belgrade: Kultura, 1952); Jovan Djordjević, *Ustavno pravo* (Belgrade: Savremena administracija, 1975), 101.

¹¹ Aleksandar Fira, *Ustavno pravo. Prvi deo* (Belgrade: Privredni pregled, 1979), 174-180.

¹² Jovan Djordjević, *Ustavno pravo*, 100-101; 126-127.

However, much as those internal solutions were ambitious and coordinated within the Party, they could not be realized without significant political, military and financial support of the countries which were openly expressing enormous animosity towards communism. Upon the news of the Yugoslav conflict with the Cominform, the Western powers initially reacted with suspicion. Considering it a passing clash within a family, if not a quarrel simulated to deceive the Western public, they kept their distance, looking out closely for any hint that could shed some light on the true background of this unexpected turn.¹³ After the decision of the Yugoslav leadership to internationalize the conflict with the Cominform before the General Assembly of United Nations, the West started slowly to change its policy towards Yugoslavia. In Belgrade, as well as in Western capitals, there prevailed awareness that it was in mutual interest to suppress ideological animosities in order to secure successful deterrence of the common enemy – the USSR.¹⁴ Therefore, in the early 1950s Yugoslavia was radically changing its foreign political orientation. Overnight, yesterday's close friends and role models became hated enemies and enemies became allies and important economic partners. Yugoslavia's sudden shift towards the West was a phenomenon unparalleled in the Cold War. In the divided Europe, there was not a single case of a communist state cooperating solely with the states of opposite ideological and political orientation.¹⁵

Pragmatic reasons were at the bottom of this paradox – the need of both sides to secure as wide mutual cooperation as possible. Western interest for developing cooperation was an outcome of the strategy of containment and countering of Soviet global influence. Through financial and military support to Yugoslavia at least two goals were achieved – the amputation of the communist country which had an important geopolitical position lessened the power of the socialist camp, and the successful secession of Yugoslavia set the example which could encourage similar developments in the Soviet sphere. A crack appeared in the monolith of the communist movement – generated exactly by a former member of its core.¹⁶

Yugoslav interest in tightening the economic and military relationship with the West grew out of necessity – there was no other way to maintain independence and resist the pressure from the USSR and Eastern European countries. A complete break of economic relations with these countries had

¹³ Lorejn Lis, *Održavanje Tita na površini. SAD, Jugoslavija i Hladni rat* (Belgrade: BMG, 2003).

¹⁴ The National Archives (TNA), Foreign Office (FO) 371, 88, 228. Review of Events in Yugoslavia in 1949; "Attitude of the United States Toward the Yugoslav-Cominform Dispute; Efforts to Provide Economic Assistance to Yugoslavia" in *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1949, Eastern Europe, The Soviet Union*, Vol. V, 873/4.

¹⁵ Džon Gedis, *Hladni rat* (Belgrade: Clio, 2003), 249.

¹⁶ TNA, FO 371, 88 228. Annual Political Report for Yugoslavia; Volter Laker, *Istorija Evrope 1945–1992* (Belgrade: Clio, 1999), 209–210; Ričard Krempton, *Balkan posle*, 170–173; Phyllis Auty, "Yugoslavia's International relations", 170–171.

brought the economic system of Yugoslavia to the verge of falling apart, as it was already heavily shaken by the wartime destruction. Substantial financial, economical and military help from the West enabled Yugoslavia to avoid this catastrophe and increase the military readiness of its army.¹⁷ New elements in foreign policy would have remained vague without the achievement of those goals. During the first years of its conflict with the Cominform Yugoslavia received more than 600 million dollars from the US, Great Britain and France through the system of Tripartite Aid alone. One should add the American food aid of more than one million tons of wheat, which was equal to one third of the entire Yugoslav output.¹⁸

Yugoslav negotiations with Western powers about military aid were conducted in deep secrecy. The Yugoslav leadership was very concerned about the reaction this military connection with the Western states against the centre of world's communism might arouse among the Party's rank-and-file and followers. There was also a concern that such orientation would be an open challenge which might provoke the USSR to intervene. Western powers, on the other hand, had a problem with their own public, still not ready to understand the support of their governments to a communist state.¹⁹

In order to ease the burden of such bad publicity, an agreement was concluded between the United States, Great Britain and France to provide assistance on a tripartite basis. As early as October 1950 a tripartite military committee to help Yugoslavia was formed from the general staff officers and experts of the three countries. This body created a blueprint for modalities of military assistance to Yugoslavia both in peace and in case of a potential conflict.²⁰

However, despite the mutual interest in developing and advancing military cooperation, the process was accompanied by visible disagreement, which cast doubt on the final outcome. The basic problem resulted from the different initial assumptions of the two sides. Yugoslav leadership attempted to turn cooperation into as wide program of military support as possible, including clear guarantees from Western powers in case of aggression of the Soviet Union. The US and its allies, on the other hand, saw military cooperation as a form of broadening NATO's defense strategy and sought to actively involve Yugoslavia in the overall strategic plans of defense of the West. The differences came to

¹⁷ State Archives of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (hereinafter DASMIP), PA, 1955, strictly confidential, f-3, 332.

¹⁸ Dragan Bogetić, *Jugoslavija i Zapad 1952–1955. Jugoslovensko približavanje NATO-u* (Belgrade: Službeni list, 2000).

¹⁹ "The Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic Missions", Washington, September 3, 1948, *FRUS, 1948, Eastern Europe, The Soviet Union*, Vol. IV, 1105–1106; "The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Yugoslavia", *FRUS, 1949, Eastern Europe, The Soviet Union*, Vol. V, 873–874.

²⁰ "Editorial Note", *FRUS, 1950, Central and Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union*, Vol. IV, 1482–3.

prominence during the initial phases of negotiations in 1949 and 1950, and sharpened in the following years, when Yugoslavia received substantial quantities of military equipment and lavish financial aid from the US.²¹

Another problem which burdened the cooperation between Yugoslavia and the West was the Western demand that the nature of the Yugoslav economic system and investment programs should change. Western powers were interested in channeling their aid towards economic justifiability and efficiency rather than towards meeting the military, strategic, social and economic needs and goals of the Yugoslavs. Their priority was restructuring of the Yugoslav economy from a focus on heavy industry to consumer goods and food industries.²² The idea was to goad Yugoslavia towards an export-oriented economy capable of paying its own debts, but also open for foreign goods and capital.²³

Such concept of development for the Yugoslavs meant moderation of an overly ambitious investment program, whose goal was the creation of a self-sufficient economy, with an emphasis on the heavy and military industries. The Yugoslav leadership, committed to the idea of autarchic economic development, was building a closed economy. It was expected to be able to produce everything on its own and to make exports only occasionally, on the directive of the party elite. Such concept was viable only through a speedy industrialization dependent on the import of goods, loans, humanitarian aid, foods and weapons from the West. Yugoslavia was therefore forced to export to the West, which was the only way to repay the loans and obtain raw materials. Its economy was therefore constantly falling into an antinomy between the revolutionary ideal and pragmatic imperatives of development. This antinomy burdened the cooperation with Western states and resulted in inadequate economic arrangements.²⁴

Pursuing the policy of close cooperation with the West, but also seeking to avoid involvement in the operational plans of NATO, the Yugoslav leadership found an optimal solution in the creation of military alliance with two Balkan states which were important members of the Western defense system – Greece and Turkey. Through such compromise, Yugoslavia showed a measure of cooperativeness towards the Western countries whose help it expected.²⁵

²¹ Darko Bekić, *Jugoslavija u Hladnom ratu* (Zagreb: Globus, 1988); Dragan Bogetić, “Vojna saradnja Jugoslavije i SAD”, *Istorija 20. veka*, 1-2, 1993, 117-122.

²² TNA, FO 371, 102 156; *Ibid.*, 102 208; DASMIP, 1962, strictly confidential, f-4, 60; *Ibid.*, PA, f-14, 141 and 282; *Ibid.*, f-19. 1523. *Aide-Memoire Vlada SAD*, Ujedinjenog Kraljevstva i Francuske o pružanju ekonomske pomoći Jugoslaviji, 10. July 1952.

²³ Ljubiša Adamović, Džon Lempi, Rasel Priket, *Američko-jugoslovenski ekonomski odnosi posle Drugog svetskog rata* (Belgrade: Radnička štampa, 1990).

²⁴ Dragan Bogetić, *Jugoslavija i Zapad 1952–1955*, 14-16.

²⁵ *Balkanski pakt 1953/1954, Zbornik dokumenata* (Belgrade: Vojnoistorijski institut, 2005), 131-132.

Tripartite cooperation of Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia was launched through a set of bilateral contacts of military delegations at the highest level, as well as through the exchange of visits of parliamentary delegations. The talks were held in 1952 and early 1953, at the peak of the dramatic conflict between the USSR and Yugoslavia. This was also a time of sharp polarization in the world, which narrowed the room for maneuver for the non-committed states, turning them into powerless passive observers.²⁶ This was particularly the case in Europe and in the Balkans. With Greece and Turkey joining NATO, Yugoslavia practically remained alone to face the military might of the Soviet Union and Cominform countries and politically isolated from the process of economic and political integration of Western Europe.

Although all the three states showed considerable desire to develop regional military cooperation, there were also considerable limitations, resulting from their different international positions and political systems. One set of issues burdening relations among the new allies concerned the unsettled Trieste issue, which generated a serious crisis in relations between Yugoslavia and Italy. Being members of NATO, Greece and Turkey had obligations towards Italy as its allies, and therefore needed its at least in-principle consent to their military alliance with Yugoslavia.²⁷

Another troublesome question for the Yugoslav leadership was the troublesome relationship with the Soviet Union, that exposed Yugoslavia to a possible military intervention of the Eastern European states. Yugoslav leadership maintained that the Balkan Pact would ensure greater military and political security at its restless eastern borders, while making it possible to avoid direct integration into the Western defense system.²⁸ After the death of Stalin and the lessening of the immediate danger, the Yugoslav leadership began to lose interest in the military alliance with Greece and Turkey. It vested hopes in the possibility of normalizing relations with the USSR and the Eastern European states. As the USSR disapproved of the Balkan Alliance – considering it directly opposed to the socialist states – the Yugoslav position on Balkan security changed.²⁹ A third issue concerned Yugoslavia's obligations towards NATO resulting from its membership of the Balkan Alliance alongside two NATO member states. The fear of being absorbed into the Western group of states, which could endanger the country's social and political system, and the Communist Party's monopoly

²⁶ DASMIP, 1952, strictly confidential, 1952, f-6, 192; 869; DASMIP, 1953, strictly confidential, f-69/I, 41 275, 41 557 and 41 935.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 41 275; *Ibid.*, PA, f-81, 410 689.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, strictly confidential, 1952, f-6, 192.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, f-69/I, 48 385 and 418 070; *Ibid.*, f-69/II, 418 620, Izveštaj SSIP-a o Konferenciji triju ministara u Atini.

on power were blocking relations among the Balkan allies.³⁰ A fourth, but not the least important set of issues, was linked with the political implications of the Balkan Pact for Yugoslavia's military and economic cooperation with the Western powers. At the time of its conclusion, Yugoslavia received lavish economic and military aid from the West. The transition to new loan mechanisms for the Western aid to Yugoslavia coincided with the erosion of its relations with Balkan allies and reduction of the alliance to a legal fiction.

Although the new economic mechanisms were not directly dependent on the vitality of the Balkan Alliance, Yugoslavia's (in)compatibility with the NATO defense strategy had an impact on its relations with the Western powers.³¹ The future of the alliance between Turkey, Greece and Yugoslavia depended on the ability to brush aside the differences and to stress favorable elements of cooperation. The military treaty was preceded by sets of institutional arrangements which came to be known as the Balkan Alliance.³²

The position of Yugoslavia regarding NATO influenced the outlook of cooperation between the three states which was framed in Ankara on February 29, 1953. The three sides agreed on putting aside all military clauses except for the most general ones.³³ This stage of institutionalization of military cooperation reflected a compromise which was supposed to allow military aspects of the treaty to be developed gradually.³⁴ Such a solution was made operational during the conference of ministers of the three Balkans states held at Villa Bled (6–9 August, 1954), where a twenty-year treaty of alliance, political cooperation and mutual support between Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia was signed. Symbolically binding their hands together, the representatives of the signatory states expressed readiness to defend each other's independence and territorial integrity with a united power of 1.5 million soldiers of their seventy divisions. Still, the relevance of the alliance remained questionable, both at the time of its making and afterwards.³⁵

Through concluding the treaty with Greece and Turkey, Yugoslavia strengthened its negotiating position in its political, economic and military negotiations with the West. The creation of the Balkan Alliance through two separate treaties, of 1953 and 1954, was an indirect way of integrating Yugosla-

³⁰ Ibid., *Balkanski savez*, 1954, f-69/II, 418 660; Ibid., f-70/I, 418 552; Ibid., 1954, strictly confidential, f-4, 447.

³¹ S. Vukmanović Tempo, *Revolucija koja teče*, Vol. II (Belgrade: Komunist, 1971), 203, 208 and 209; Ljubiša Adamović, Džon Lempi, Rasel Priket, *Američko-jugoslovenski*, 49–56; DASMIP, PA, 1955, *Jugoslavija*, f-32, 18 980, *Ekonomski odnosi FNRJ sa inostranstvom*.

³² Dragan Bogetić, "Članstvo Jugoslavije u Balkanskom savezu i NATO pakt", *Istorija 20.veka*, 1-2, 1991, 65–90.

³³ The treaty was ratified on March 23, 1953, and was registered with the United Nations on May 29, 1953. (*Jugoslovenska revija za međunarodno pravo*, 1, 142.)

³⁴ DASMIP, strictly confidential, *Balkanski savez*, f-70/I. 418 456..

³⁵ *Spoljnopolitička dokumentacija*, 19, 1954, 531.

via into the Western defense system. This led to a new constellation of forces through domination of NATO across Southern Europe. Militarily powerful and located at the strategically critical geographical point, Yugoslavia could play the role of one of the pillars of defense of the West.

Although the benefits of cooperation with the West were evident, Tito and his associates were not satisfied with the role they were forced to take on in the divided international community. A beneficiary of Western programs of economic and military aid, Yugoslavia was in effect also institutionally integrated into the Western defense system through the Balkan Pact. Further responsibilities and involvement in this direction could infringe on national independence and lead to the gradual deterioration of the regime. Therefore, Belgrade rejoiced at the news of the new Soviet regime's readiness to normalize relations with Yugoslavia. This shift in Soviet foreign policy after Stalin's death was evolving gradually alongside with a certain degree of democratization of Soviet society.³⁶

However, Yugoslavia's rapprochement with the USSR was not its final goal, but rather a tactical element of a new foreign policy strategy. This strategy was based on three courses of action: closer cooperation with the West, normalization of relations with the USSR, and moving closer to the newly formed states of Africa and Asia.³⁷ In this period, Yugoslav leadership gradually framed the necessity of gathering the non-committed countries into a wide international association, which could potentially evolve into an important international factor, able to resist the pressure from both blocs. For Yugoslavia, this was the only way to ease the precarious position of sitting on the fence between East and West. Through engaging in a unified front of non-committed countries, Yugoslavia hoped to ensure a firmer base of support and to set the stage for its triumphant return to Europe taking a roundabout route of enormous scope – cooperation with states of Africa and Asia. Following the experiments in close collaboration with the East and an alliance with the West, the pendulum of Yugoslav foreign policy thus reached equilibrium through opening itself widely towards the global South.

³⁶ Tvrtko Jakovina, *Socijalizam na američkoj pšenici*, (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2002); Phyllis Auty, "Yugoslavia's International relations", 172-174.

³⁷ Darko Bekić, *Jugoslavija u hladnom ratu*, 735; Dragan Bogetić, *Nova strategija spoljne politike Jugoslavije 1956–1961* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2006), 27-28.

Milan Terzic

The Institute for Strategic Research

Belgrade

PRESERVATION OF IDEOLOGICAL IDENTITY: THE NORMALIZATION OF SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS AFTER STALIN'S DEATH

Abstract: This paper stresses the ideological similarity of the Communist movement in Yugoslavia with that of the Soviet Union, despite the conflict which occurred between the states in 1948, which was followed by the normalization of relations after Stalin's death. The paper is based on archival research and secondary literature.

Keywords: *Tito, Stalin, conflict, Yugoslavia, USSR, normalization of relations*

The Period of Close Cooperation

Josip Broz Tito, whose name emerged during the Second World War, was an unknown person in the interwar period except among the innermost circles of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. It was during the Second World War that his name gained wider recognition; he became a leader of the anti-fascist movement in Yugoslavia and significantly contributed to Allied war efforts.¹

¹ For further information on the Second World War in Yugoslavia, see: Radoje Knežević, *Knjiga o Draži*, Vol. I, 1941-1943 (Windsor: Srpska narodna odbrana, 1956), Vol. II, 1944-1946 (London: Oslobođenje, 1969); Ivan Avakumović, *Mihailović prema nemačkim dokumentima* (London: Savez Oslobođenje, 1969); Walter Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović and the Allies 1941-1945* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1973); Kosta St. Pavlović, *Ženidba kralja Petra Drugog* (London: Naše delo, 1975); Radoje Pajović, *Kontrarevolucija u Crnoj Gori* (Cetinje: Istorijski institut Crne Gore, 1977); Djoko Slijepčević, *Jugoslavija uoči i za vreme Drugog svetskog rata* (München: Iskra, 1978); Jovan Marjanović, *Draža Mihailović između Britanaca i Nemaca* (Zagreb, Belgrade: Globus, Narodna knjiga, 1979); Jozo Tomašević, *Četnici u Drugom svjetskom ratu 1941-1945* (Zagreb: Sveučilišna naklada Liber, 1979); Milan Borković, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji*, Vol. I-II, (Belgrade: Sloboda, 1979); Zvonimir Vučković, *Sećanja iz rata*, (London: Naše delo, 1980); Nedjeljko Plečaš, *Ratne godine 1941-1945* (Columbus Ohio: Kosovo Pub. Co., 1983); *Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o NOR*, Vol. XIV, 1-4 (Belgrade: Vojnoistorijski institut, 1981-1985), Mark C. Weeler, *Britain and The War of Yugoslavia 1940-1943* (New York: Boulder, East European Monographs,

Within the Yugoslav framework, the foundations of his rise to political and military prominence were the fact that he had been institutionally appointed as the head of government (National Committee of Liberation of Yugoslavia – NKOJ), which was formed in November 1943 in Jajce, as well as the fact that he was the only member of the communist movement in Yugoslavia who held the rank of Marshall. All this was carried out under the auspices of their ideological ally from the East – the Soviet Union.²

In particular, it was Tito's meetings with two of the leaders of the great anti-Hitler coalition – Churchill and Stalin – that exalted his name and increased his authority.³ His first meeting with Churchill took place in Italy in August 1944, during the period when Britain was pushing for the creation of a unified Yugoslav government composed of the National Committee and the Royal Government, which had enjoyed British patronage. The second meeting, this time with Stalin, occurred in Moscow in September 1944, after Tito's secret departure from Vis during the night of September 18-19. The British were outraged by this meeting. Tito received ideological support from Stalin, but not his unreserved support for the movement which he led, because the Soviet leader, out of certain international considerations, called for a compromise.⁴ At the time of this meeting, Stalin was at the height of his fame and power as the leader of the Red Army that defeated Hitler, whose capitulation was expected imminently. Tito asked for international support to carry out a change of government in Yugoslavia, and was at the time full of admiration and respect for Stalin. In Kremlin, he was considered their closest communist ally. He would

1985); Fikreta Jelić-Butić, *Četnici u Hrvatskoj 1941-1945* (Zagreb: Globus, 1986); Dušan Lukač, *Treći Rajh i zemlje jugoistočne Evrope*, Vol. III, 1941-1945 (Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački zavod, 1987); Zvonko Vučković, *Od otpora do građanskog rata* (Belgrade: Čiča, 1990); Devid Martin, *Rodoljub ili izdajnik? Slučaj djenerala Mihailovića* (Belgrade: Čiča, 1990); Milan Ristović, *Nemački „novi poredak” i Jugoistočna Evropa 1940/41-1944/45* (Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, 1991); Branko Petranović, Ljiljana Marković, *Zapisnici NKOJ-a i Privremene vlade DFJ: 1943-1945* (Belgrade: Memorijalni centar “Josip Broz Tito”, 1991); Branko Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu 1939-1945* (Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, 1992); Dragoljub Živojinović, *Vatikan, katolička crkva i jugoslovenska vlast 1941-1958* (Belgrade: Prosveta, Tersit, 1994); Milan Matić, *Ravnogorska ideja u štampi i propagandi* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1995); Kosta Nikolić, Milan Vesović, *Ujedinjene srpske zamlje. Ravnogorski nacionalni program* (Belgrade: Vreme knjige, 1996); Vojislav Pavlović, *Od monarhije do republike, SAD i Jugoslavija 1941-1945* (Belgrade: Clio, 1998); Branko Petranović, *Strategija Draže Mihailovića 1941-1945* (Belgrade: Centar za savremenu istoriju jugoistočne Evrope, 2000); Kosta Nikolić, *Istorija ravnogorskog pokreta 1941-1945*, Vol. I-III (Belgrade: Srpska reč, 2000); Aleksej J. Timofejev, *Rusi u Drugi svetski rat u Jugoslaviji: uticaj SSSR-a i ruske emigracije na događaje u Jugoslaviji 1941-1945* (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2011).

² Petranović, Marković, *Zapisnici NKOJ-a; Odnosi Jugoslavije i Rusije (SSSR): 1941-1945: dokumenti i materijali* (Belgrade: Savezno ministarstvo za inostrane poslove, 1996).

³ Velebit Vladimir, *Sjećanja* (Zagreb: Globus, 1983).

⁴ Archives of Yugoslavia, (hereinafter AJ), Chancellery of Marshal of Yugoslavia (hereinafter KMJ), I-3-b, Military Mission of SSSR.

meet with Stalin twice more: in April 1945 in Moscow, when the Yugoslav-Soviet Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation was signed, and in 1946, during Tito's visit to the USSR.

On December 21 1941 in Rudo, the Yugoslav leader dedicated the establishment of the First Proletarian Brigade to Stalin as a birthday gift. However, he would later have no qualms about moving the commemoration date (Armed Forces Day) to the following day, December 22nd, the date when the first combat action had been carried out. And the plans for founding a Balkan Federation, both during and after the war, should be viewed in light of Communist internationalism, and also Tito's personal ambition to become the head of a large Balkan federation.⁵

Finding themselves at odds with the Western countries after the war (the Trieste crisis and the civil war in Greece), Yugoslavia and its leader turned to the USSR and Stalin. This would provide another opportunity for Tito to see the pragmatic side of Soviet politics: mindful of international considerations, the Soviets would not grant their support to the belligerent plans of the Yugoslav leader, whom the West regarded as a faithful servant of the communist East. Tito's belligerency was expressed in the resoluteness with which he held on to Yugoslav views concerning Trieste, after two American aircrafts were brought down over Slovenia in 1946. The sending of Yugoslav forces to Albania to help Greek rebels, without informing the USSR, provides another example.

Their ideological affinity was beyond question, since the development of the Yugoslav leader had been heavily influenced by Stalin's global communist cult.⁶ The Yugoslav communist movement saw the USSR as its role model and the social ideal after which it should strive. The Yugoslav personnel were nurtured and developed in this spirit. However, when it comes to the Yugoslav leader, J. B. Tito – who held in his hands all the essential functions of the army, the party and international relations⁷ – we should always take into account his political pragmatism, which would become evident in his relationship with Stalin, as well as in the subsequent *Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation*, the essence of our story in this paper. As early as 1943, the leader of the British Military Mission, Fitzroy McLean, noted that independence was one of his personal traits, and later wrote in his memoir: “Will he emerge from these difficult and turbulent years completely unchanged? Will he obey the dictates and the opinions of the Soviets, as he had done in the past? I had noticed the independence

⁵ Branko Petranović, *Balkanska federacija 1943-1948* (Šabac: Zaslona, 1991).

⁶ *Medjunarodni okrugli sto Tito – Staljin*, zbornik radova (Belgrade: Arhiv Srbije i Crne Gore, 2006).

⁷ Branko Petranović, *Zapisnici sa sednica Politbiroa Centralnog komiteta KPJ, (11. jun 1945 - 7. jul 1948)* (Belgrade: Arhiv Jugoslavije, Službeni list SRJ, 1995); Petranović, Končar, Radonjić, *Sednice CK KPJ 1948-1952* (Belgrade: Komunist, 1985).

of his spirit even then, but I knew that there was no kind of independence that could go hand in hand with orthodox communism. The possibility that Tito and his clique might develop into something more than mere Soviet exponents seemed to me too far-fetched to serve as the basis of our calculations. But it still seemed a possibility worth bearing in mind.”⁸ In the time span until the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict of 1948, these calculations showed the accuracy of his assumptions. However, when J. B. Tito subsequently refused to give up his “own road to communism”, the West did not reap all the benefits of this development, apart from the fact that Yugoslav territory provided a buffer zone between the East and the West.

Opposing Stances

On the eve of the conflict with the USSR, Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations also led to a misunderstanding in the relationship between Belgrade and Moscow. The conflict started with the views Moscow put forth in March 1948 and until June 1948 grew unbeknownst to the rest of the world. After the meeting of the Cominform, its resolution was issued and the conflict was finally revealed.⁹ As part of his tactic for resisting Stalin, Tito would even congratulate him on his birthday on 21st of December 1948, which to the general public did not give off the impression that a conflict existed – this would later become a source of bewilderment, considering the fact that Tito failed to do so the following year, in 1949. According to Milovan Djilas, Tito at that time offered to resign the office of Prime Minister, but the offer was not genuine: “Tito was testing us to see how each of us would react. By the way, everybody was earnestly against it – only Žujović, whom we already suspected, pointedly remained silent.”¹⁰

During this period (1948-1953), Yugoslavia was faced with the reality of an attack from the East and the undermining of its stability from within. The borders between Yugoslavia and its neighbors had become sites of armed conflicts: military provocations, terrorist attacks, sabotage, propaganda pressure, economic blockade, ideological and political divisions, fear of uncertainty and general insecurity in which people lived. That meant that the military became more influential, while the police (UDBA) imposed rule of terror. This resulted in repression: many people were arrested and imprisoned. The Yugoslav leadership and the Yugoslav army expressed determination and willingness to stand up to against the attack of the socialist countries.¹¹ For this purpose, the territory of Yugoslavia was divided into zones protected by partisan detachments. Svetozar Vukmanović ‘Tempo’ was appointed Staff Commander of Partisan

⁸ Fitzroy MacLean, *Rat na Balkanu* (Zagreb: Stvarnost, 1964), 48.

⁹ Branko Petranović, *Politbiro*.

¹⁰ Milovan Djilas, *Druženje s Titom* (Šabac: Zaslona, 1990), 130.

¹¹ Petranović, Končar, Radonjić, *Sednice*.

detachments, Mijalko Todorovic as Commissar, and General Rudolf Primorac as Chief of Staff. During this period, Tito's rule took shape after the office of the President of the Republic was constitutionally instituted in 1953.

The conflict of 1948 was in fact a complex divergence in which various factors were reflected: ideological, party, political, military, economic, cultural, personal, etc. However, it should be noted that, in Tito's case, there was an unquestionable personal element to the conflict. Josip Broz Tito, a realistic, reasonable politician and a political pragmatist, was the most important figure of the year 1948 in Yugoslavia. It is the specific details of his decision-making (his attitude towards the Roman Catholic Church, the fact that he gave interviews to Western journalists and so on) that show the energy, flexibility and operational capacity he conducted his policies, as well as his refined sense for its internal and external use – in other words, he worked on two levels.¹²

Yugoslavia and Tito were faced with the challenge of how to persist and keep their position between the East and the West.¹³ The foothold was found in the West and Yugoslavia, under the patronage of the United States and Great Britain,¹⁴ first turned to Greece and Turkey, but carefully considered every step toward this new challenge in the sphere of international relations.¹⁵ On February 23rd 1953, the close relationship between the three countries (Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey) was made official in the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation signed by their ministers of foreign affairs in Ankara, Turkey. The upgrading of this agreement was completed by agreeing on military cooperation and the signing of the Treaty on Alliance, Political Cooperation and Mutual Assistance on August 9th, 1954 in Bled.¹⁶ Fearing an attack from the East, Yugoslavia strengthened its military and political security by this agreement, while the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc considered this military alliance to be belligerent and directed at the socialist bloc. Governed by the principle of political pragmatism, J. B. Tito had no qualms about contractually regulating his relations with Greece, despite the fact that this country was at the time a monarchy.

¹² Milan Terzić, *Titova vještina vladanja: Maršal i Maršalat 1943-1953* (Podgorica: Pobjeda, 2005).

¹³ Predrag J. Marković, *Beograd između Istoka i Zapada 1948-1965* (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ, 1996).

¹⁴ Ivan Laković, *Zapadna vojna pomoć Jugoslaviji 1951-1958* (Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore, 2006).

¹⁵ Darko Bekić, *Jugoslavija u hladnom ratu (Odnosi s velikim silama 1948-1955)* (Zagreb: Globus, 1988); Dragoljub Živojinović, *Vatikan*; Dragan Bogetić, *Jugoslavija i Zapad 1952-1955* (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ, 2000); Lorraine M. Lees, *Održavanje Tita (Amerika, Jugoslavija i hladni rat)* (Belgrade: BMG 2003); Bojan Dimitrijević, *Jugoslavija i NATO* (Belgrade: Tricontinental, Vojna, 2003).

¹⁶ Milan Terzić ed., *Balkanski pakt: 1953/1954* (Belgrade: Vojnoistorijski institut, 2005).

The visit of Anthony Eden in September 1952; Tito's visit to Churchill in March 1953¹⁷, immediately after Stalin's death; resolving the "issue of Trieste" in 1954 in the talks which Vladimir Velebit, Tito's trusted diplomat, conducted in London; obtaining Western military and economic assistance – all were parts of the story of Tito's turning towards the West. Having adopted the aim to "keeping Tito afloat",¹⁸ Western countries considered which steps they should take in order to bind Yugoslavia and its leader to their own defense structures (NATO).

Stalin's demise, both physical and political, and the bipolar organization of the world were the factors that allowed Tito to persevere. The relationship between Josef (Stalin) and Josip (Tito) was changing in favor of the latter. With this rebellion in the monolithic world of Communism, Tito opened up the space that launched him into the orbit of world politics, which continued the war (the Cold War)¹⁹ after the war (the Second World War). However, immediately after Stalin's death, the Soviets showed initiative for normalization of relations, and that removed the pressure of the Western countries, which were pushing for Tito to form closer ties with NATO. That enabled Tito and Yugoslavia to distance themselves from this pressure and maintain a neutral position. Tito's rebellion within the system of the East took place before the 1956 events in Hungary, the 1968 events in Czechoslovakia, the Albanian turning towards the "harder" version of Chinese communism, Romania's slight distancing and the Polish trade union movement.

Normalization of Relations

The new Soviet leadership, headed by Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, was aware of the situation in and around Tito and Yugoslavia, and so it sought to salvage what it could. An initiative was launched for the normalization of relations and the correspondence between Tito and Khrushchev during 1954 points to the efforts of the Soviet regime to regain their position in Yugoslavia. This, in turn, strengthened Tito's position and the Soviet initiative allowed Tito to keep the necessary distance from the West. The initiative came from Moscow and Yugoslav diplomats' reports indicate how the Soviet diplomatic efforts were carried out in practice: after the passing of Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, they asked what protocol stance they should adopt – the initial directive was for the diplomatic representative to issue *oral* condolences. Reports on Stalin's funeral ceremony pointed towards a power struggle among his future heirs ("Stalin became a nuisance as soon as he died. That's why he was buried

¹⁷ Djordje Borozan, "Jugoslovensko-britanski razgovori u Beogradu 1952. i Londonu 1953. godine", *Istorija XX veka*, 2, 1997, 113-127.

¹⁸ Lorraine M. Lees, *Održavanje Tita*.

¹⁹ John Lewis Gaddis, *Hladni rat* (Belgrade: Clio, 2003).

so quickly”), with speculation after Stalin death (“that Stalin was assassinated”). The first intimations of reconciliation followed: “the kindness” of the staff of the Soviet embassy in Belgrade following the Stalin’s death; the report of the Yugoslav diplomatic representative from Ottawa (that “last Saturday, in a park in the vicinity of the embassy buildings, some members of the Soviet Embassy most amicably approached the children of our employees, asking them their names and trying to get them to play with their own children”); “conciliatory May Day slogans” (“there were no slogans against us”), the attitude of Belgrade (“if you get an invitation for the May Day ceremony – accept it”), that in the parade there was nothing “against us”, Djuric’s (Yugoslav diplomatic representative in Moscow) visit to Molotov, to which there was a reaction in the international press (embassy reports), normalization of relations (Djuric’s report that Molotov called him and told him of the need to send a Soviet ambassador in Belgrade, information about the new ambassador / Valkhov /, Djuric’s visit with Molotov, conciliatory writing in the Soviet press, giving the Yugoslavs agreement on Valkhov, attitude towards the Soviet Ambassador, / “If Valkhov pays you a visit, receive him politely, but be reserved, not particularly warm or kind. By no means offer lunch or the like/, the departure of the Yugoslav ambassador Dobrivoje Vidić to Moscow and his talks with Gromyko, Vidić’s presence at the ceremony and military parade for the anniversary of the October Revolution /November 7th/, diplomatic reports about the Soviet embassy receptions on the anniversary of the October revolution, Vidić’s report on the anniversary of Stalin’s death, /“there was no commemoration”, but praises the party line/). The information also suggests that the issues of Yugoslav political émigrés were being discussed (the return of children who had been sent to school in the USSR, the issue of repatriation of individuals and the position of Yugoslav emigrants in the USSR).

Simultaneously with these efforts ran the correspondence between Tito and Khrushchev, first at party level and then at state level, which reflects the Soviet initiative for reconciliation: Khrushchev’s letter to Tito dated June 22nd 1954 in which he asked for the improvement of relations; Ambassador Valkhov’s demand that Tito receive him after he returns from Moscow; Khrushchev’s second letter to Tito dated July 24th 1954, in which he expresses his thanks for the response to a previous letter, written by Edvard Kardelj, as well as his willingness to cooperate; Tito’s response dated August 11th 1954 regarding further steps for the normalization of relations; another letter from Khrushchev to Tito dated September 27th 1954; the shutting down of the radio station for Yugoslav émigrées residing in the USSR “Free Yugoslavia”; Tito’s letter to Khrushchev dated November 16th 1954 regarding the initiative to the normalization of relations; Tito’s presentation at the 5th plenary on November 26th 1954 regarding the initiative for the normalization of relations; Khrushchev’s letter to Tito dated March 17th 1955 expressing the need for meetings

at the state level; Tito's letter to Khrushchev dated April 16th 1955 in which he suggested the time and the location of the meeting; Khrushchev's response dated May 6th 1955 in which he suggested that the meeting be organized in Belgrade; arrival of the Soviet delegation in Belgrade and the reaction of the West to the meetings of the Yugoslav and Soviet delegation.²⁰

To many, the arrival of the Soviet delegation in Belgrade seemed like "going to Canossa". That was immortalized in a photograph showing Tito greeting Khrushchev, in which the latter appears with his back bent. Tito emerged victorious from all this, but the Soviet leadership reckoned that the Yugoslav leader would return to his previous policy. This was followed by the visit of the Yugoslav delegation to Moscow in 1956. However, Tito understood the new situation very well and was ready to reap the fruits of his victory.

The Yugoslav Version of Communism

The search for one's own road to communism began with the "the Yugoslav case" of 1948. That case was ideologically defined by Milovan Djilas, head of Agitprop – the state and party apparatus for agitation and propaganda. In late 1953, Milovan Djilas's articles raised the question of Yugoslav party uniformity.²¹ The man in question belonged to the innermost circle of the state and party leadership; he was one of Tito's closest associates; his party membership card bore the number 0004. His rebellion occurred at the time when Tito was negotiating the forming of the Balkan Pact with Greece and Turkey (1953/54). It was then that the first signs of the difficulties faced by the Communist government in Yugoslavia because of the change of political orientation came to the surface. It is therefore understandable that the first anti-communist dissident appeared in Yugoslavia – even before Solzhenitsyn in the Soviet Union. Djilas's ideological shift was the result of ideological dilemmas caused by the conflict with Stalin; it did not stem from the encounter with the West following the Yugoslav turnaround of 1948. A Milovan Djilas later said it was a "moral revolt with views that had not yet been differentiated". By following the notion of autocracy, the leader (Tito) and the Party had distanced themselves from monopartism and Western pluralism. They thought they had the right to judge what was "revolutionary" and what was "reactionary". Ever the pragmatic politician, Tito noted that the case of M. Djilas was only the "precursor" for the confrontation with pluralism, within the party as well as within the state. He

²⁰ Radojica Luburić, *Pomirenje Jugoslavije i SSSR-a 1953–1955* (Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore, 1999).

²¹ Milovan Djilas, *Vlast i pobuna* (Belgrade: Književne novine, 1991); Branislav Kovačević, *Djilas heroj-antiheroj: iskazi za istoriju* (Podgorica: Pobjeda, 2006); Mira Radojević, "Milovan Djilas i srpska politička emigracija (1954–1995)", *Tokovi istorije*, 4, 2007, 118–135. Milan Terzić, "Ništa nije radio već sedio i pisao – Slučaj Milovana Djilas u JNA 1954", *Vojnoistorijski glasnik*, 2, 2010, 40–59.

did not want anyone to upset his position which enabled him to reap the fruits of the policy he had until then pursued. That was especially true of Djilas, who at that point, as time would tell, stood no chance to realize his short-term plans. The return to “original Communism” directly challenged the legitimacy of the 1948 rebellion, while in the process of Western-style democratization it also meant losing power.²² That is why he opted for a softer version of communism. This variant of Yugoslav communism was best described by Sveta Lukic: while in the USSR – where socialist realism was deeper and more comprehensive – artists were told what to do, in Yugoslavia ideologues and politicians consulted with the artists and “advised” them on what they “should not do”.²³

Milovan Djilas, – revolutionary, Communist Party ideologue, later a rebel (communist dissident) and political thinker – was during the war one of the most prominent revolutionary leaders and a member of the Big Four (Tito, Kardelj, Rankovic, Djilas). He was the one who clashed with the party leadership. He stepped forward to criticize those in power, even though he was one of them. Later, the road of his personal development would lead him as far as renouncing the very ideology he had so whole-heartedly advocated. He outlived Tito and went on to express the devastating opinion that Tito was a man of no great deeds, because the state he had headed subsequently collapsed. Time would show that he saw further – that is why, in his books and media appearances, he spoke calmly, placably, without any bitterness or vindictiveness. He had to get rid of that urge while he was in prison – otherwise he would not have survived, much less stayed on the path he had chosen and cleared for himself, knowing that in the long-term his opinions were correct and that time would prove him right.

Josip Broz Tito managed to maintain this peculiar position (for himself, his country and his party or ideology). Henry Kissinger, the U. S. Secretary of State, vividly illustrated this by describing his meeting with Tito in Belgrade in his memoir: “Marshal Tito greeted us at the airport in Belgrade ... the first communist leader who dared to stand up to Stalin, *the inventor of national communism* and today one of the champions of non-alignment ... After his falling out with Stalin, Western perception of Tito changed. His concern for the preservation of his own regime was perceived – to a considerable degree owing to his skills – as the renunciation of the very values that helped him establish it. The fact that Tito’s split from Stalin was caused by problems of national autonomy, not by the value of communist ideology, was almost overlooked. While all these changes were taking place, Tito believed in Lenin’s principles. The need for survival led him to protect himself from Soviet aggression; they did not, however, significantly influence the beliefs he had formed during his

²² Mihajlo Basara, “Balkanski pakt i jednopartijski monopol” in M. Terzić, *Balkanski pakt*, 84–95.

²³ Sveta Lukić, *Ogledi iz estetike* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1981), 125.

life of revolutionary commitment – nor should they be expected to. Only firm beliefs can give a man something to lean on through the dangers and hardships of working in secret and guerilla warfare. Why would he abandon them at the time of victory? The reluctance to accept this fact caused a number of misconceptions. For us, Yugoslavia was a useful factor in the Balkans and, to a lesser extent, in Eastern Europe. It symbolized the possibility of independence. To a certain extent, it alleviated the threat to NATO. But outside of Europe, Tito followed his convictions, which were generally not inclined to Western interests and ideals. His sympathy for revolutions in developing countries was not significantly different from that of Moscow. In fact, Tito was still more assertive in helping nations which were radically developing; in the support he offered them, he saw a prop for his own independence and an additional political safeguard against Soviet pressure. On the other hand, his autonomy from the Soviets allowed him to have greater influence in the developing world than would have been possible for any other satellite regime in Eastern Europe... Yugoslavia could neither be won over by accepting its rhetoric nor could there be – when we were defending our own interests – a permanent confrontation”²⁴

Tito outlived Stalin and Khrushchev both physically and politically, he left the political stage (and, naturally, also the stage of life) before the next Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. His star shone brightest after Stalin’s death and during Khrushchev’s rule. At that time, the world was standing on the brink of war (the Cuban Missile Crisis), and his policy of “peaceful coexistence” had its own place in Cold War confrontations between the two superpowers – the USA and the USSR. Thus, balancing between those two (the West and the East), he followed his own path to the end of his reign (1980). In Yugoslavia, the ideology lived on in the endeavors of his successors until the fall of the Berlin Wall – this caused a tectonic shift which the fragile (as it turned out) Yugoslav structure could not withstand.

²⁴ Henry Kissinger, *Memoari*, Vol. II (Zagreb: Vjesnikova press agencija, Mladost, 1981), 142-146.

Alexander Stykalin

The Institute of Slavonic Studies

Russian Academy of Sciences

Moscow

ON SPECIFIC HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE LIQUIDATION OF THE COMINFORM

Abstract: The Cominform achieved its renown as a tribune for excommunication of Yugoslav communist from the Soviet bloc. Afterwards his importance as a forum for the exchange of ideas and cooperation between Communist parties was practically nil, since Stalin and CPSU never made use of it. After Stalin's death, the new leadership of CPSU, headed by N. Khrushchev, tried to use its dissolution as a means of getting back Yugoslav comrades in the Soviet sphere. This stratagem proved to be inefficient, since the Yugoslavs cherished too much their ideological independence. Nevertheless, the inefficiency of the structure led to its dissolution, since several other parties, namely Italian, with its leader, Togliatti, requested a new, more flexible, mode of cooperation between Communist parties.

Keywords: *Cominform, Khrushchev, Tito, Togliatti, dissolution, Communist parties, cooperation*

The Information Bureau of Communist and Labor Parties (the Cominform) set up in September 1947 for “the exchange of experience and coordination of the work of Communist parties on the basis of mutual accord” was, in fact, a mechanism for the centralization of the international communist movement; a tool for Moscow’s ideological-political management of the work of Communist parties. The Cominform adopted, in some sense, the functions of Comintern that was dissolved in 1943.¹ It is well known that the Cominform was the main instrument around which the anti-Yugoslav campaign conduct-

¹ For further information on the circumstances surrounding the construction of the Cominform see: L. Gibianski, “Kak vznik Kominform. Po novym arhivnyim materialam”, *Novaya i noveishaya istoriya*, 4, 1993, 131-152.

ed between 1948 and 1949 concentrated.² After this campaign proved unsuccessful, Stalin quite quickly lost vital interest in this organization. After 1949, extensive meetings of the Cominform were no longer conducted and no meetings of the Cominform Secretariat took place after November 1950.³

Stalin's successors did not undertake serious attempts to reactivate the work of the Cominform either. In 1954, the initiative advanced by the editor-in-chief of the Cominform's publishing organ "For Solid Peace, for People's Democracy", member of the academy, M. Mitin, was not supported.⁴ Moscow clearly understood the Cominform's structural flaws, one of which was the limited circle of its participants. Neither the Communist party of world's second largest Communist power, China, nor the Communist parties of both Germanies, nor the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (the signs of reconciliation with LCY appeared in the politics of CPSU, only in 1954) were part of the Cominform. This did not promote the course pursued by CPSU in the world Communist movement in a number of important directions. Not satisfied with the Cominform, Soviet leaders, however, were not yet ready to offer any other new, more effective, form of control over the Communist movement.

In February 1954, the issue of the necessity to correct the inefficient methods of USSR's foreign policy towards the countries that were known as "people's democracies" shaped during Stalinist years was raised at the Presidium of CPSU CC. The work of the USSR's ambassador to Poland G. Popov was discussed who, as it was noted in the corresponding resolution of the CPSU CC Presidium, "violated directives of the CPSU CC and the Soviet government on the inadmissibility of any interference of USSR's ambassadors into domestic affairs of people's democratic countries and attempted to assume the function of control over the work of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party and the Polish government" and ventured to arbitrarily interpret the CPSU CC recommendations on the issues of state and party construction. He assumed "arrogant attitude toward Polish comrades" that "could have caused serious damage to Soviet-Polish relations".⁵ Popov was removed, the resolution of CPSU CC Politburo stated the inadmissibility of the abuse of powers by ambassadors, their interference into domestic affairs of the country of service.⁶

² G. M. Adibekov, A. Di B'iadzho, L. Ya. Gibianskii, F. Gori, S. Pons eds., *Soveshchaniya Kominforma, 1947, 1948, 1949*. (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1998).

³ G. M. Adibekov, *Kominform i poslevoennaya Evropa* (Moscow: Rossiia molodaia, 1994).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 221-224.

⁵ A. A. Fursenko ed., *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964, Vol. II, Postanovleniya TsK KPSS 1954-1958*, (Moscow: Rosspen, 2006),

⁶ *Ibid.* Popov's experience was to be taken into account by all ambassadors working in Eastern European countries, including Yu. Andropov, ambassador to Hungary in 1954-1957. He adhered, in outward appearance, to a completely different style in relations with Hungarian leaders and not only did he abstain from peremptory shouts but observed all rules of diplomatic etiquette



The frontier separating the Cominform countries from the rest of Europe

There was no mention of the Cominform; the pursuance of policy in Eastern European direction was increasingly viewed through diplomatic and not only through party structures.

In 1954, while a gradual normalization of Soviet-Yugoslav relations was undertaken it was decided that the liquidation of a number of key Cominform

and shaped even roughest recommendations of Moscow into “advice” and, where possible, pursued USSR’s course by proxy – via most trusted and devoted of Kremlin’s friend in Hungarian party nomenclature. See: A. Stykalin, “Posol SSSR kak provodnik sovsetskogo vliyaniya v “narodno-demokraticeskoi” strane. K istorii diplomaticheskoi kar’ery Yu.V. Andropova”, in E. Serapionova ed., *Vlast’ i obshchestvo: neprostyie vzaimootnosheniya (Strany Central’noi i Yugo-Vostochnoi Evropy v XX veke)* (Moscow: Institute of Slavonic Studies RAS, 2008), 283-317

structures used as tools of anti-Tito propaganda was a priority. The union of Yugoslav Patriots for the Liberation of the Peoples of Yugoslavia already in the second half of 1953 curtailed its activity and was completely abolished in the end of September 1954. The radio station “Free Yugoslavia” also terminated its work.⁷

In May 1955, the Soviet party-governmental delegation, headed by N. Khrushchev, visit to Yugoslavia was expected to achieve a breakthrough in mending relations between two Communist regimes and, in essence, to overcome the emerging split in the Communist movement. For Khrushchev, the top priority of the meeting was to return Yugoslavia into Soviet sphere of influence, but he clearly failed to achieve that in the course of negotiations.⁸ Three days before delegation's departure to Belgrade, on 23 May, CPSU CC Presidium approved a telegram to be sent to the leaders of the Communist parties – members of the Cominform.⁹ It suggested the annulling of the resolution titled “the Yugoslav Communist party in the hands of killers and spies” adopted at the Third Cominform Meeting in November 1949 when relations between the Communist party of Yugoslavia and the Communist parties – members of the Cominform “were disrupted and both sides were in a state of enmity and mutual attacks”. The document admitted that many Cominform's accusations against Yugoslavia had been unfounded; the blame for their fabrication, in accordance with the directives originated in the spring of 1955, was put on Beria, Abakumov and their agents who “maliciously acted against the interests of Soviet Union and its allied states”. As for the resolution of the Second Cominform Meeting adopted in July 1948, this was suggested to retain its force with some reservations. In the opinion of CPSU CC Politburo, it “contains fair criticism on fundamental issues of CPY's activity that is fully admissible in relations among parties”. At the same time, it was admitted that the resolution also held unfounded accusation of the Yugoslavia party leadership and contained, in essence, a call for the removal of CPY's leadership “that we consider erroneous since the issue of the leadership in each Communist party is not Cominform's terms of reference but the internal affair of the party”. This was intended to be announced self-critically during negotiations with the Yugoslavs. Although, the Soviet delegation aspired to make all efforts to improve bilateral relations they, however, planned to clarify disputable issues in relations of two parties and openly point to CPY representatives that “we resolutely object the position of some CPY leaders on a number of most important ideological and political issues most fully reflected in Edvard Kardelj's non-Marxist lecture delivered in

⁷ More on Soviet-Yugoslav relations during that period see: Edemski A. B., *Ot konflikta k normalizatsii. Sovetsko-yugoslavskie otnosheniya v 1953-1956 godakh*, (Moscow: Institute of Slavonic Studies RAS, 2008)..

⁸ *Ibid.*, on the course and outcomes of the visit on May 26 – June 2 1955.

⁹ See the text of the telegram in *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1958*, Vol. II, 88-90.

Oslo before Norwegian social-democrats".¹⁰ Thus, in May 1955 CPSU leadership did not only raise the issue of abolishing one of the Cominform's most significant resolutions, but also specified the future functions of the Cominform and its terms of reference.

With the agreement of other parties, the information that the Communist and labor parties, members of the Cominform, had reconsidered the resolution adopted in November 1949 on the Yugoslavia issue, was published. "As a result of additional verification of all circumstances that served as the rationale behind the adoption of the resolution, it has been ascertained that the accusation of the leadership of the Yugoslavia Communist party contained in this resolution proved to be unfounded, the Communist and labor parties, members of the Cominform, agreed to annul the Cominform's resolution on the Yugoslav question adopted in November 1949".¹¹

The negative attitude of the leaders of the League of the Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) toward the Cominform due to its role in the concentrated anti-Yugoslav campaign of 1948-1949 was not a secret to the Soviet leaders. They did not plan to touch upon issues connected with the work of this organization in the course of negotiations with the Yugoslavs,¹² and as far as one can judge from the available sources, they did not become the matters of dispute.

Severely attacking the Minister of Foreign Affairs V.Molotov, who skeptically treated the future of far-reaching Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement at the CPSU CC plenum in July 1955, the leadership of CPSU soon had to admit that first attempts to establish ideological unity of CPSU and LCY ended in failure. The document presented for the discussion of the Yugoslav problem at the CPSU CC Presidium in January 1956, admitted that recently "we succeeded to slow down and later stop the process of Yugoslavia's rapprochement with the Western camp" and, to the contrary, "Yugoslavia's rapprochement with the socialist camp is taking place on a number of key issues", at the same time "it not possible to recognize the results in party rapprochement as satisfactory. Frankly speaking, it is a long way off before there will be solid unity and cooperation on the principles of Marxism-Leninism in relations between our parties".¹³ One of the most significant differences concerned the attitude of

¹⁰ Kardelj's speech was delivered in Oslo in October 1954. He also touched upon the question of Cominform as a weapon of Soviet policy but mainly spoke of opportunities of evolutionary progress to socialism.

¹¹ *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1958*, Vol. II, 90.

¹² *Ibid.*, 48-60. This is evident from CPSU CC's and Soviet government's directives to the delegation on negotiations with Yugoslav leaders submitted to CPSU CC presidium session on 19 May 1955.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 179, 180, 183. The note of M.Suslov, B.Ponomaryov, A.Gromyko "On some results of normalization of relations with Yugoslavia" prepared for the heads of delegations of the countries of people's democracy present at the meeting of communist and socialist parties in Moscow, 6-11 January, 1956 was submitted not later than 7 January, 1956 (*Ibid.*, 178-187). Unpreparedness of

the LCY leadership toward the methods of interaction and cooperation between Communist parties established during Stalinist years that presupposed the presence of a certain ideological and organizational center in the world Communist movement (and Belgrade perceived the Cominform as such). The criticism of the Cominform's political practice was present in disguised form in the letter of LCY CC addressed CPSU CC of 29 June 1955, 1955 that stated LCY leadership's view on several fundamental issues of bilateral inter-party cooperation.¹⁴ The issue of the inefficiency of the Cominform existence as a Stalinist tool of foreign policy that had discredited itself by improper actions and impeded the trust in Soviet-Yugoslav relations under new conditions was repeatedly raised by the Yugoslav side in their negotiations with Soviet representatives at different levels.¹⁵ In autumn 1955, Moscow's attention was drawn to an article in LCY's main newspaper "Borba" where a prominent party figure Veljko Vlahović (the then editor-in-chief of the newspaper) openly formulated a demand to dissolve Cominform.¹⁶

A politician friendly to the Soviet Union who was the first to delicately but openly raise the issue of the expediency of the Cominform's further existence was Prime Minister of India, J. Nehru . His conversation with Khrushchev and N. Bulganin took place in mid-December 1955 during their visit to

LCY to send its delegation to 20th CPSU congress is the evidence of the correctness of the evaluation given above. The Yugoslav side justified its refusal by several reasons: in order not to make impression that FNRJ is coming closer to the bloc of Eastern European countries and ready to join the Warsaw treaty; so as not to give Western powers reason to refuse Yugoslavia economic assistance; and because communist parties of Eastern European countries did not make steps to establish contacts with LCY. Only a salutary letter of LCY CC to 20th CPSU congress was addressed and FNRJ ambassador was present at the congress as an observer.

¹⁴ Russian State Archives for Contemporary History (Russian abbreviation is RGANI), F.3, Op.8, D. 254, 17-19. See also: *KPSS i formirovanie sovjetskoj politiki na Balkanakh v 1950-kh – pervoi polovine 1960-kh godov. Sbornik dokumentov* (Thesaloniki: Paratiritis, 2003), Document 7. The letter pointed to the necessity of mutual exchange of countries building socialism. At the same time it was noted that LCY CC came to a conclusion that cooperation of parties and movements struggling for socialism had to be voluntary and based on principles of equal rights, independence of separate parties, free exchange of opinions and mutual constructive criticism, non-interference of one party into internal affairs of another. Criticism, however useful, should not lead to imposing of one party's opinion on other parties.

¹⁵ See, for example, report of a correspondent of "Pravda" V. Platkovski after his visit to Yugoslavia in the summer of 1955 addressed to Pravda's editor-in-chief D. Shepilov: RGANI, F.5, Op.30, D.121, 77. This question was raised later, including during the contacts of diplomats of the two countries. See: transcripts of conversation of an officer of the USSR embassy in Hungary with the Yugoslav military attaché on 23 February 1956: Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (Russia abbreviation is AVP RF), F.077, Op. 37, P. 187, D. 7, 178-179.

¹⁶ See on this in the above mentioned note of January 1956 "On some results of normalization of relations with Yugoslavia": *Prezidium TsK CK KPSS 1954-1964*, Vol. II, 184. During these days J. Broz Tito confirmed his commitment to nonaligned policy and agreed with the necessity to restore sovereignty to countries –members of the Soviet bloc at his meeting with U.S. State Secretary J. Dulles on the island of Brioni on 6 November 1955 (Ibid., 184-185).

India.¹⁷ In CPSU's information on the outcome of the visit of N. Khrushchev and N. Bulganin to India, Burma and Afghanistan sent to the Central committees of Communist and labor parties of the countries of people's democracy it was reported: "Nehru raised the issue of Cominform, and of contacts of the Communist party of India with CPSU. He said that he knew about personal contacts of some leading representatives of the Communist party of India with CPSU CC officials as well as massive spending of the Communist party of India. [...] Nehru touched upon the issue of the newspaper "For solid peace, for people's democracy!" noting that articles published in this newspaper are viewed by communists of other states as directives for them. Though not directly, the meaning of Nehru's question on Cominform boiled down to the proposal to liquidate this organization as well as "For solid peace, for people's democracy!" newspaper. Our comrades in an appropriate form rejected Nehru's arguments; [...] they stated that CPSU does not conceal its sympathies with Communists of other countries [...]. These sympathies, as it is well-known, had an ideological basis. As for the activity of the Cominform, it was stressed that Communist and labor parties had no less rights to create their organizations than socialist parties that created so called "Socialist international", or capitalists who created their international organizations".¹⁸ As it can be seen from the documents, Moscow treated Nehru's position quite seriously, they also felt that there was a cautious attitude towards the Cominform not just of a leader of a big Asian country but of one of the initiators of the emerging nonalignment movement as a result of the Bandung conference (April 1955) that was viewed in Moscow as a strategic ally in the struggle against imperialism. It was Nehru who made Soviet leaders think over insufficient efficiency of the organization. "The conclusion is: apparently we work tawdrily. We might think over the issue of assisting [Communist parties]", noted Khrushchev at the meeting of CPSU CC Presidium on 22 December.¹⁹ Since then the attention of Soviet leaders was to a greater degree attached to the problem of improving the work of the Cominform.

Conscious of the shortcomings of the Cominform and therefore the inevitability of its reorganization, Khrushchev at first believed untimely to pub-

¹⁷ The conversation with Nehru was reflected in a brief transcript of the CPSU CC Presidium session on 22 December 1955 when the report of Khrushchev and Bulganin on their visits to India, Burma and Afghanistan was discussed. See: *Prezidium TsK CK KPSS 1954-1964, Vol. I. Chernovyye protokolnyie zapisi. Stenogrammy*, (Moscow: Rosspen, 2003), 74. It is recorded in the transcripts in the following way: Conversation with Nehru. On Cominform, on communist party, on assistance to communists, on newspaper "For solid peace, for people's democracy". All these questions were raised by him. Our response: we sympathize with communists. Why should communist parties be deprived of the right for Cominform? He said: "I understand all this".

¹⁸ RGANI, F.3, Op.10, D.211, 17, 87-94.

¹⁹ *Prezidium TsK CK KPSS 1954-1964, Vol. I*, 74.

licly raise the issue of the abolition of this organization, since he viewed this as a concession to those powers in the world who did not like “international solidarity of the working class”. It is demonstrative that he quite nervously responded to the forecasts of Western observers regarding forthcoming dissolution of the Cominform. The West governments could not help but see the low efficiency of the Cominform and expected Moscow’s move to abolish it. Western correspondents who directly asked Khrushchev and Bulganin about the future of the Cominform’s existence at the press conference in Delhi on 14 December, provoked the Soviets statesman to make strong statements. According to the comment Khrushchev made at the press-conference, the work of this organization, whose goal was information exchange, experience exchange of the struggle of the working class for its liberation, concerned everyone who “would want to preserve the old, obsolete system of exploitation of man by man forever”. “Why should Communist parties abandon a generally accepted form of international communication and cooperation? Why don’t, for example, those who raise the question about “the Cominform’s liquidation” express any objections to the activity of Socialist International that unite social-democratic parties? He asked foreign journalists “why do they think that it is natural and legitimate for capitalists to be united into international monopolist associations and meet on a regular basis in order to jointly manage their affairs, but would want to deprive the working class” from the right for international cooperation “aimed at protection of vital interests of all working people, struggle for peace”.²⁰

Two weeks later at the session of the Supreme Council of USSR on 29 December 1955, Khrushchev again addressed the problem of Cominform in the context of an answer to the question: who consolidates the “spirit of Geneva”²¹ and who undermines it? The purport of the Soviet leader’s speech was that the issue of further existence of the Cominform was the internal affairs of Communist parties independent from the will of those who did not like the solidarity of working people and it was too early to speak about its dissolution.²² This position was also reflected on the pages of the CPSU theoretical

²⁰ *Pravda*, 15 December 1955.

²¹ Geneva meeting of the heads of the governments of the USSR, USA, Great Britain and France on 18-23 July 1955, that became a step in relaxation of international tensions.

²² As Khrushchev said he had to answer foreign correspondents’ question as to why you don’t liquidate Cominform and terminate activity of communist parties in other countries. But they have nothing to say when we respond to their proposal with a counter-question: why don’t propose to liquidate Socialist International, international organizations of capitalists. As concluded by the soviet leader, “certainly opponents of communists do not like Cominform. But scientific communism as a doctrine had existed almost one hundred years before the Cominform was set up. Cooperation within the frameworks of Cominform is the internal affair of communist and labor parties that stand on the platform of Marxism-Leninism and propagate certain social order. Communist parties represent the working class, express and protect their interests, vital interest of people’s masses. Enemies of communism, the soviet leader continued, do not like not

organ “The Communist” when in January 1956, a leading article was published on the importance of the Cominform as a form of communication and cooperation of communist parties.²³

The following day after Khrushchev’s speech at the session of the Supreme Council of USSR, the last 1955 session of CPSU CC Presidium took place and discussed the issues connected with the meeting of representatives of communist parties of the countries of “people’s democracy” to be held in the beginning of January.²⁴ In the course of discussions, the question of differences with Yugoslavia on the issue of the Cominform and the necessity to make CPSU’s viewpoint clear to Yugoslavia Communists²⁵ was discussed. The CPSU CC prepared a note for the representatives of Communist parties, “On some results of normalization of relations with Yugoslavia”²⁶ where it was clearly stated: “we want to improve” our relations with Yugoslavia. The note spoke of existing differences between the CPSU and the LCY on the issue not only of the Cominform as such, but more generally of the necessity for the existence of a unifying body of Communist parties. “According to all data, LCY leadership adheres to the position that there is no need for a unifying body of Communist parties at all. It is quite obvious that this position is erroneous. Our party’s opinion on the issue of the Cominform of Communist and labor parties was clearly expressed in the speech of comrade Khrushchev at the session of CPSU Supreme Council”.²⁷

only Cominform but even more “the unalterable fact that all-triumphant doctrine of communism is conquering more and more people under its banner in all countries”. Khrushchev concluded his escapade with the words that those “who would like to oppress people forever” and who do not like international solidarity of the working class wanted termination of Cominform. “But this does not depend upon them”, *Pravda*, 30 December 1955.

²³ “Kommunisticheskaia party – vdokhnovitel i organizator kommunisticheskogo stroitel’stva v SSSR ?” *Kommunist*, 2, 1956, 3-14.

²⁴ At the meeting on 6-11 January, 1956, economic and military issues were mainly discussed. Opinion exchange also took place on some issues of international situation.

²⁵ It was recorded in the transcripts: “respond to them”, i.e. Yugoslavs, on Cominform (*Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964*, Vol. I, 78) It is possible to suggest that it meant the statement of Soviet position in response to the theses in the LCY CC letter mentioned above of June 29, 1955. It is not clear whether the Soviet position was delivered to Yugoslavs. On December 31, the question on the desirability of more active foreign policy of allied countries was discussed. A.Mikoyan raised the question that had not been raised in the Kremlin before: “why we alone (but not in a concert) advance in foreign policy”. N.Khrushchev agreed, though with reservation: “push for initiative (but without reviving dead spirits)”. Probably, he expressed fears that old national-territorial disputes could revive.

²⁶ It was submitted on 7 January to CPSU CC Presidium by M.Suslov, B.Ponomaryov, A.Gromyko. See: *Prezidium KPSS 1954-1964*, Vol. II, 178-187. It was distributed among participants of the meeting on 9 January.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 184. No information whether the issue on Cominform was raised at the January meeting is available, in any case no decision was made. See also CPSU CC’s note to the LCY CC with information on the meeting of 6-11 January. *Ibid.*, 188-190

Such unambiguously expressed position, however, went through a further evolution within a short period of time. As it follows from the documents, by the time the 20th CPSU congress was held an opinion on the necessity of a fundamental reorganization of Cominform, that did not meet its goals under new conditions, prevailed in the Soviet leadership. Meanwhile, during the duration of the congress the issue of liquidation of this structure had been put into a particular perspective. Taking into account Khrushchev's December statements that the Cominform had no less rights than, say, Social International (SI), it is clear that the progress took place after long hesitations.

On 30 January, at the CPSU CC Presidium, during the discussion of CC's report to 20th congress of CPSU, the issue of the Cominform, as far as it can be judged from the transcripts, was not raised.²⁸ This testifies to the fact that despite Khrushchev's recent sensational declarations, Soviet foreign policy strategy in fact did not attach great significance to this organization at the time. Thus, in the report pronounced on the day the Congress opened, on 14 February, the issue of the Cominform was not elaborated.²⁹

As it can be judged from the transcripts of the CPSU CC Presidium available to researchers, Khrushchev spoke of the Cominform's future liquidation with some certainty for the first time on 22 February 1956. That day, at the Presidium session devoted to the forthcoming meeting of representatives of Communist parties who arrived in Moscow in connection with the 20th CPSU Congress, CPSU CC's first secretary outlined the existing plans quite unambiguously: "We will liquidate the Cominform".³⁰ A note of the head of the CPSU CC department for relations with foreign Communist parties B. Ponomaryov, dated from 7 February, was submitted to the meeting of 22 February.³¹ The Department for Relations with Foreign Communist parties believed it expedient to use the presence of delegations of foreign parties in Moscow invited to the 20th CPSU congress to exchange opinions on some fundamental issues of international communist movement, including the ways to improve the Cominform's efficiency and new forms of contacts and relations among parties. It was noted that six years had passed since the last Cominform meeting. Although, the CPSU maintained regular contacts with foreign Communist parties, "foreign communist parties are poorly mutually informed about their work among themselves". Meanwhile there were a number of issues common for Communist parties and exchange of opinions was needed. In the opinion of the CPSU CC department, it was necessary to address the issue of cooperation between the Communist parties during the 20th Congress.

²⁸ Ibid., Vol. I, 88-93.

²⁹ *Pravda*, 15 February 1956.

³⁰ *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964*, Vol. I, 106-107 (Transcript 189. Meeting on 22 February).

³¹ Ibid., Vol. II, 200-202.

The note also mentioned that, during their visits to Moscow, representatives of many Communist parties had raised the issue of the Cominform's poor work which, in fact, was limited to the mere publication of the newspaper.³² It was suggested that the issue of Cominform's composition should be discussed in the course of meetings, taking into account the fact that China's Communist party was a not member and it negatively affected the influence and authority of Cominform (several parties such as Socialist Unity Party of Germany, Communist party of Finland, Albanian party of labor repeatedly put the question of their participation in the Cominform to Moscow). CPSU CC apparatus attached special importance to CPC's opinion. Ponomaryov suggested to conduct preliminary talks with a member of the CPC CC delegation responsible for CPC's international relations Yang Zuo-Qing and clarify the attitude of Chinese comrades toward the proposal on CPC's possible participation in Cominform. At the main meeting with the participation of party representatives, Cominform members, it was suggested that opinions would be exchanged on a possible convention of a regular Cominform meeting with a tentative date and agenda (the CPSU could initiate to convene such meeting in Bucharest in May-June). It was suggested that a number of questions at the meeting be discussed, including possible expansion of the Cominform's composition, improvement of the work of "For Solid Peace, for People's Democracy" newspaper, publication of Cominform's theoretical organ. The note proposed to include the issue of expanding contacts and cooperation with socialist and social-democratic parties in the agenda of the forthcoming important meeting (with adoption and publication of a corresponding resolution). Discussions of this issue were believed to be expedient in connection with the emerging tendency within a number of socialist parties to activate contacts with communist parties (and LCY in particular). New progress in the relations with international communist movement was expected from forthcoming new session of SI.

It was also planned that the issue of the economic situation of working people in capitalist countries and experience of the work of Communist parties on protection of vital interests of the working class would be discussed in the Cominform meeting.³³ The note also admitted that some problems of the economic theory of Marxism-Leninism needed adjustments in the light of specific experience of the development in the West. The need for a such

³² Unwilling to deviate from CPSU's line, fraternal parties, excluding LCY, did not put forward the question on Cominform's liquidation. So, French communist party Politburo in its letter of 7 October 1955, stressed that the reasons that conditioned the creation of the Informational Bureau in 1947 still remained in force, *Ibid.*, 200.

³³ This problem appeared of importance in the light of the fact that some communist parties concentrated their efforts on the struggle for peace and national independence while they weakened their attention to the protection of economic interests of the working class, as noted in Ponomaryov's note. *Ibid.*, 201.

adjustment was put forward by representatives of Western Communist parties during their visits to Moscow. The Swedish Communist party, in particular, expressed its desire to “clarify some issues on the textbook on political economy and the issue of absolute and relative pauperization of the working class.”³⁴ Analogous desire was expressed by representatives of other Scandinavian Communist parties as well as that of Great Britain. Summarizing the content of the note, the head of the CPSU CC department suggested holding discussions during the congress with the delegations of all Communist parties with the purpose to clarify the thoughts of some parties on pending common problems of the Communist movement, and namely “on possible forms and ways of communication among Communist parties under modern conditions”. The note also contained specific proposal on activation of contacts among Communist parties at the regional level, i.e. by groups, for example, Latin America, Scandinavian countries, some countries of Western Europe. The form of activity presupposed creation of corresponding regional inter-party structures. No information about meeting and conversations of Communist party representatives was to be published, meetings had to be of a working nature.³⁵

Already during the congress, the CPSU CC received a letter from Italian Communist party secretary general P. Togliatti dated 20 February.³⁶ It was distributed among members of the CPSU CC Presidium on 21 February. The experienced Italian Communist leader proceeded from the official, not yet reconsidered position of the Soviet leadership voiced by Khrushchev in December and reflected in the leading article of “Communist” journal. While he agreed on the necessity of further existence of the Cominform, Togliatti noted that “the question on the work of the Information Bureau, however, is still open, i.e. whether the bureau fulfills its functions well and in case it did not, then we should discuss how to improve its work so as to more successfully

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 204.

³⁵ Along with the note mentioned above, Ponomaryov submitted the draft of CC resolution that included several items: to approve proposals to conduct opinion exchange among delegations of the parties-members to Cominform on the issues of Cominform’s further work, to put forth a proposal on convening a meeting in Bucharest to discuss the issues of actuality; to charge Ponomaryov with the task to conduct talks with a CPC representative; to organize meetings and talks with delegations of various communist parties on issues of the communist movement and propose establishment of closer contacts among communist parties within country groups; to assign CPSU CC department on contacts with foreign communist parties with preparation of proposals based on questions raised by delegations of communist parties. A list of specific questions for consultations with fraternal communist parties and CPSU CC based on requests of communist parties was prepared. So, Czechoslovakian communist party wanted Moscow’s advice on reconsideration of “the Slansky case”, representatives of the Finnish communist party – regarding the tactics at forthcoming presidential elections. Many parties addressed CPSU CC with requests for advice on the tactics in respect to social-democrats of their countries. See. *Ibid.*, 202-205

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 205-206.

pursue the goals it sets for itself”.³⁷ In the opinion of ICP leader, it seemed appropriate to convene a meeting of representatives of the parties-members of the Cominform and invite representatives of at least several parties, non-members of the Cominform to exchange opinions. In case if CPSU CC leadership considered such meeting inopportune, Togliatti expressed his readiness to state in writing ICP’s considerations on the ways to improve the work of the Cominform, and on opportunities for more expansive contacts and experience exchange among Communist parties of capitalist countries. Thus, one of the most influential figures of the world Communist movement directly put to Moscow the question on the necessity of the far-reaching reorganization of Stalin’s most important mechanism to centralize this movement.

On 22 February, members of the CPSU CC Presidium after having familiarized themselves with Togliatti’s letter discussed Ponomaryov’s note.³⁸ A. Mikoyan, elaborating on the theses of the note, advanced an idea of creation of regional associations such as a union of Communist parties of the countries building socialism; the Cominform of Western European countries; the Cominform of Nordic countries, the Latin American countries, the Southeastern Asian countries. He suggested reinforcing the CPSU CC’s International department so as to work on the appropriate level with all these regional associations. This proposal caused debates while no one stood for the preservation of the former structure. V. Molotov, who often argued with Mikoyan on foreign policy issues, fully agreed with his proposal this time. L. Kaganovich saw advantage in the existence of two different structures uniting communist parties of capitalist and socialist countries. M. Suslov who as a member of the CPSU CC Presidium was in charge of issues of the world Communist movement beheld the shortcoming of the advanced initiative in the fact that Communist parties of European socialist countries could retreat into themselves and lose their influence on Asian countries. N. Khrushchev supported the idea of regional associations and in this context clearly defined his new position – “we will liquidate the Cominform”. He regarded the scheme suggested by Mikoyan as acceptable. In his opinion, the majority of the parties-members of the Cominform would now become members of “the bureau of contacts of Communist and labor parties of the countries building socialism”. Exclusion of ICP and FCP from this structure seemed expedient since these parties had different goals. Khrushchev thought that CPSU should “contact regional associations” as a mediator and supporter. The question to improve the newspaper, research journal and adjust publica-

³⁷ Ibid., 205.

³⁸ Ibid., Vol. I, 106-107.

tion of scientific literature was also discussed. It was decided as a result of discussions to assemble representatives of delegations and consult them.³⁹

The meetings were organized, but there are no transcripts of them. It is possible to suggest that the idea of regional “Cominform” was not supported by the most influential leaders of the Communist movement (Togliatti in the first place) and was rejected at this stage. The proposal of creating the Bureau of Communist countries building socialism was still in force for some time.⁴⁰ In the end of December 1956, already after the Hungarian events, at the VIII ICP session, Togliatti attached significant attention to the issue of Cominform and its possible successors while clearly defining his position. “We believe it dangerous and erroneous to attempt to split the Communist movement into two parts” (he obviously spoke of the creation of the Bureau of Communist countries building socialism and association of Western Communist parties) since one could have the impression of differences between these two structures, and of different interpretations of the conclusions to be drawn from the resolutions of 20th CPSU congress. He also stressed that ICP was “against return to any form of centralized organization”, though he considered meetings of representatives of Communist parties useful not “with the purpose of development of resolutions mandatory for all but clarification of positions, comparison of different ways”. The Italian Communist leaders believed that social-democrats inclined to the union with communists should also be invited to participate in such meetings.⁴¹

One month later, on 28 March, the issue of the Cominform of Communist and labor parties was included in the agenda of the CPSU CC Presidium meeting.⁴² The meeting examined the drafts of the information on termination of Cominform’s work submitted by M. Suslov and B. Ponomaryov as well as a draft of a corresponding CPSU CC letter to the Central committees of the communist and labor parties – members to the Cominform.⁴³ The existence of these documents is the evidence that by mid-March, after the meetings with foreign Communists that had taken place during the Congress, the issue on

³⁹ On the basis of the opinion exchange, Mikoyan, Suslov, Ponomaryov were instructed to prepare by 23 February proposals and submit to CPSU CC. In accordance with the resolution “On conducting meeting of representatives of communist parties arrived in Moscow in connection with 20th CPSU congress” N.Khrushchev, A.Mikoyan, M.Suslov were to “conduct close meeting with leaders of French and Italian communist parties on issues connected with the work of Cominform and organization of contacts among parties” and report to the members of CPSU CC Presidium. Ibid., Vol. II, 199-200.

⁴⁰ This proposal was in the note of Suslov, Shepilov, Ponomaryov submitted to CPSU CC Presidium session on 28 March. RGANI, F.3, Op. 14, D.14, 76-79.

⁴¹ *Materialy VIII s’ezda Ital’ianskoi kommunisticheskoi partii (Rim, 8-14 dekabrya 1956)* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1957), 67-69.

⁴² See: transcripts: *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964*, Vol. I, 116-117.

⁴³ See: RGANI, F.3, Op.1., D.21, 181; Op.14, D.14, 76-79.

Cominform's abolition was in fact settled. Now the members of CPSU CC Presidium were interested in how to publish the information of Cominform's dissolution.⁴⁴ Khrushchev proposed to not drag out with the publication of the information on the dissolution of the Cominform since it is possible to find explanations for speeding it up. Taking into account the special role of the Cominform in anti-Yugoslavn campaign of the end 1940s – beginning of the 1950s and Yugoslav Communists' negative attitude toward the Cominform it is possible to suggest that one of the main reasons of its dissolution was the CPSU's aspiration to make a good-will gesture toward LCY, since Moscow considered mending of inter-party contacts as a priority task.⁴⁵ On the eve of the new meeting with Tito planned for June, to which Moscow attached certain hopes for a more significant breakthrough in rapprochement between the two countries, the CPSU leadership tried to eliminate the significant obstacle on the way of improvement of Soviet-Yugoslav relations.

Another reason for the Cominform's dissolution was an aspiration to make a gesture of goodwill toward European social-democracy that, as is known, looked with skepticism on Khrushchev's report to the 20th CPSU Congress and its theses on the variety of ways to transit to socialism and possibilities of peaceful transition to socialism.⁴⁶ In the same period when the

⁴⁴ See transcripts of the meeting, *Prezidium Tsk KPSS 1954-1964*, Vol., 116-117.

⁴⁵ One of the evidences of continuation of the policy directed at further rapprochement with Yugoslavia, and its gradual involvement in the Soviet sphere of influence was the formulas of the variety of ways to socialism included in the final report of CPSU CC to 20th CPSU Congress. The formulation of the question on the variety of ways to socialism itself was of importance for CPSU in 1956, first of all, due to the necessity to reflect the originality of USSR's relations with the great far eastern communist power – China as well as relatively not big but important in terms of foreign policy to Tito's Yugoslavia.

⁴⁶ On 2-4 March, Socialist International (SI) session took place in Zurich where the issue of social-democrats' tactics in relation to the world communist movement was discussed in the light of 20th CPSU decisions (the participants of the session did not know of Khrushchev's closed report on the cult of personality delivered on the last working day of of their session). As noted at the session, the criticism of Stalin's methods pronounced in a number of speeches at the congress (for example, Mikoyan's speech) did not change the nature of the Soviet regime – it remained a dictatorship, and socialists who did not share communist doctrine were deprived of the rights, as before; there were still "many whose only crime was their conviction that there are several ways to socialism" in Eastern European prisons. The concept of "collective leadership" widely popular after Stalin's death, in the opinion of European social-democracy ideologues, meant collective dictatorship; they did not see any signs of its evolution to real democracy. The thesis on the variety of ways to socialism in the final report was viewed as no more than a tactical ruse. If it was possible in relation to the ideas of 20th congress, to a certain degree, to speak about searches for new opportunities to avoid civil war during revolutionary transformations then this new search, social-democrats believed, was based on dogmatic axiomatization of the past experience which was, at best, unambiguous. So, the Estonian party leader I.Kebin in his speech at the congress as an example of "peaceful transition of power to the working class" named Estonia of 1940, and A.Mikoyan reminded of Czechoslovakia in February 1948. At the SI session in Zurich, the secretary of the Norwegian labor party H.Li said taht peaceful ways to socialism proposed by communists were no other than a blow to the

CPSU CC Presidium discussed the issue of publication of the message on the Cominform's liquidation, it discussed also Ponomaryov's programmatic article for publication in "Pravda on proposed revival of cooperation of Communists and social-democrats within frameworks of peoples' fronts".⁴⁷ Though, the response to this article was not positive in social-democratic circles,⁴⁸ the CPSU CC continued to attribute great importance consider to the task of building bridges to European social-democracy. On 28 April – 14 May, a delegation of the French socialist party headed by its Secretary General, P.Commin visited the USSR. In March-April 1956, during visits of deputy chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers G.Malenkov, CPSU CC First secretary N.Khrushchev and chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers N.Bulganin to Great Britain contacts with members of the Labor party took place, though at the occasion a an incident occurred. To soviet leaders' great displeasure, they were given a list of social-democrats of the countries of the soviet bloc who were still imprisoned. Nevertheless, the incident did not change Kremlin's line for rapprochement with social-democracy.

Based on the results of these discussions M. Suslov, D. Shepilov and B. Ponomaryov were charge to revise the draft of the news message on termination of the work of the Cominform as well as to prepare a document on the contacts between Communist and labor parties of the countries of socialist camp within a 5-day period.⁴⁹

On 13 April, the CC Presidium adopted the resolution "On termination of the work of the Cominform", and finally adopted the text of the information on

parliamentary democracy according to Czechoslovakian example and invitation to social-democrats to take part in their own destruction. The programmatic documents of SI and statements of its leaders noted that if there were various ways to socialism there were also fundamental differences between communists and social-democrats in understanding of the socialist goal since despotic socialism did not exist. SI retained its previous directives in force that co-existence at the governmental level did not mean ideological co-existence. Social-democrats on principle refused to conclude ideological peace with parties whose intention was to liquidate their parties and fundamental values. They believed that a minimal preliminary condition for such peace was restoration of free democratic labor movements in all countries where they had existed but have been oppressed by communists. Social-democrats made some reservations in relation to the League of the Communists of Yugoslavia that had won respect for its courageous resistance to Stalin's dictate. See: M. Chukanov M. "Otkliki Socialisticheskogo Internacionala na XX svezd KPSS", *Otechestvennaya istoriya*, 1, 2006.

⁴⁷ See Ponomaryov, B. "Nasuschnaya zadacha rabocheho dvizheniya", *Pravda*, 31 March 1956. Various factors influenced CPSU leaders' optimism in relation to opportunities for rapprochement with social-democrats: positive response of the leader of Italian socialists P.Nenni, successes of leftist forces at the parliamentary elections in France in January 1956.

⁴⁸ The resolution of SI of 7 April contained hard anti-communist statements and the idea of the common platform with communist was rejected. See: Chukanov, "Otkliki Socialisticheskogo".

⁴⁹ See: resolution of CPSU CC Presidium "Vopros Cominforma kommunisticheskikh rabochih partii", 28 March 1956, in *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964*, Vol. II., 214.

its dissolution.⁵⁰ On the occasion the Presidium discussed the text of the CPSU CC's letter to central committees of the Communist and labor parties of the countries of people's democracy – members of Cominform, and the text of the letter to the leaders of ICP and FCP as well as a note of Suslov, Shepilov, Ponomaryov with proposals on new forms of contacts between communist parties, including publication of a new organ.⁵¹ The information on the termination of the work of the Cominform was published in "For Solid Peace, for People's Democracy!" on 17 April, and the following day in "Pravda" accompanied with the editorial article "An important decision" as a commentary.

It was stated in the news message that the creation in 1947 of the Cominform "had played positive role in eliminating disunity among Communist parties that appeared after the dissolution of Comintern", "in developing and strengthening fraternal ties and mutual exchange of experience" among communist parties, "reinforcing the influence of Communist parties among the masses". At the same time, positive changes in the international situation in recent years (transformation of socialism into the world's system, formation of a spacious "peace zone", growth and strengthening of communist parties, etc) created new conditions for the work of Communist parties. "The composition and the contents of the activity of the Cominform do not meet" the tasks of "overcoming of the split of the working movement and consolidation of unity of the working class in the interests of the successful struggle for peace, for socialism". After exchange of opinions among parties-members of the Cominform, it was admitted that the Cominform had exhausted its functions, and that new, more useful forms of mutual cooperation were to be found.

The article "An Important Decision" noted that the decision to terminate the work of the Cominform was dictated by "the necessity to adjust the forms of contacts and cooperation among communist parties in accordance with the changed historical situation" and was the evidence of creative approach to the elaboration of forms of mutual ties that was aware of a specific historical situation. New emerging opportunities to prevent wars and aggressions "by united efforts of peace-loving states and peoples", new perspectives of transition to socialism, including through parliament were noted. It also mentioned the necessity to "develop ways and forms of progressing to socialism in full accordance with the traditions of the people concerned". The need for uniting Communist and socialist parties' efforts "in the interests of saving the human-kind from new wars, and for further development of international socialism" was stressed. The documents connected with the termination of the work of the Cominform reflected the new concept of cooperation between Communist parties. The leading bodies of Communist parties, while developing their activity in accordance with common goals, national features and conditions,

⁵⁰ RGANI, F.3, Op.14, D.14, 3.

⁵¹ Archives of the President of Russian Federation, (APRF), F.3, Op. 23, D.54, 145-146.

would continue the exchange of opinions on a new, more effective and useful forms of contacts among parties in the nearest future.

On 22-23 June 1956, in Moscow a meeting of leaders of Communist parties of socialist countries devoted primarily to economic and defense issues took place.⁵² The agenda also included the issue of the forms of further cooperation and contacts among parties. A note was prepared, for the session of the CPSU CC Presidium of 16 June, that discussed the agenda of the forthcoming meeting, and included a proposal of the CPSU delegation declaration "On forms of contacts among communist and labor parties of socialist countries".⁵³ It was noted in the document that "in the opinion of the CPSU CC, future cooperation should have the form of meetings of representatives of parties of socialist countries to be convened from time to time for opinion exchange on common problems of their activity and for collective discussions of specific issues of party and economic building that are of common interest for all parties". These meetings could be convened "on the initiative of parties willing to table issues for collective discussion with the purpose of opinion exchange, generalization of the existing experience and harmonization of arrangements on coordination of actions of corresponding parties on these issues in the future". The place for the meetings was to be determined by mutual agreement. The CPSU CC believed that meetings should not adopt mandatory resolutions but could deliver recommendations agreed upon by all participants.⁵⁴ The proposal on periodically convened meetings was supported by the leaders of all communist parties, including Tito, who was familiarized with the CPSU's new initiative during his visit to the USSR in June. Several months later, in November 1956, many parties advanced their proposals in accordance with the achieved fundamental agreement on convening meetings as well as with the CPSU Declaration on relations among socialist countries published on 31 October, (during the days of the Hungarian revolution). So, Interim CC of the Hungarian socialist labor party proposed to convene a meeting of communist parties of the USSR and countries of people's democracies in any convenient place in order "to discuss mutual relations and the national question, in particular, on the basis of the events in Hungary".⁵⁵ Some time later Romanian communists also put forward analogous initiative.⁵⁶

⁵² See documents in *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964*, Vol. II, 338-347.

⁵³ APRF, F.3, Op.63, D.378, 113-114. Corresponding proposals were approved on 21 June. See: *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964*, Vol. II, 346-347.

⁵⁴ It was suggested to discuss at the meeting on 22-23 June the future of the publication of the journal that could cover issues of theory and practice of the socialist building, experience of some communist parties. "Issues of peace and socialism" started to be published in 1958.

⁵⁵ See: E. Orekhova, V. Sereda, A. Stykalin eds., *Sovetskii Soyuz i vengerskii krizis 1956 g. Dokumenty* (Moscow: Institute of Slavonic Studies RAS, 1998).

⁵⁶ A. Sticalin, "Consfătuirile de la Moscova ale partidelor comuniste și muncitorești, noiembrie 1957", *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, 1-2, 2008, 86-107.

The visit of the Yugoslav leader Tito to Soviet Union lasted for more than 20 days (1-23 June) and was organized with great splendor.⁵⁷ A Soviet-Yugoslav friendship meeting of many thousands at the Moscow stadium “Dinamo” on 19 June was to symbolize full overcoming of the mutual distrust. In order to draw Tito closer, Moscow was ready for significant cadre reshuffling. Literally, on the day of Tito’s arrival “the change of guards” on the Smolensk square took place – a hundred-percent orthodox and conservator V. Molotov who persistently continued to preserve a special position on the Yugoslav issue was replaced by a younger, liberal (certainly, in Kremlin’s system of reference) and mobile D. Shepilov who had a reputation of the main intellectual of the party. Although, the preparation was more than serious, the main objective of negotiations was not achieved; the Kremlin was not satisfied with the results of Tito’s visit to the USSR. While fully understanding the benefits of closer economic cooperation with the USSR, Yugoslavia at the same time did not want at all to waive its sovereignty and continued to dissociate itself from the soviet camp by not showing a desire to join the Warsaw Pact and Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, CMEA, in particular. The concluded inter-party declaration⁵⁸ was a compromise on USSR’s part. There was no mention of the ideological unity of the two parties, nor of Yugoslavia’s joining the socialist camp. The stress was, however, put on the fact that the two sides “are free from tendencies to impose their opinions in defining the ways and forms of socialist development”. Transcripts of the CPSU CC meetings reflect the Soviet side’s disappointment with the outcomes of the negotiations with the Yugoslavs. So, a decision was taken during the approval of the document at the CPSU CC Presidium to “tell the Yugoslav comrades that we are not satisfied with the text of the declaration but we are not going to argue”.⁵⁹ Later the same position was reflected in the CPSU’s letters to fraternal parties. Thus, the expectations of a great breakthrough in Soviet-Yugoslav relations connected with the Cominform’s dissolution proved to be in vain. This, however, did not mean that the CPSU leadership abandoned its long-felt plans to reform the inefficient, out of date mechanism of exerting Soviet influence on the world Communist movement. The Yugoslav factor might have expedited the dissolution of the Cominform but the task to renovate the form of interaction of communist parties existed independently nevertheless.

Later on, one of the most important forms of coordinating the Communist movement was the meetings of Communist parties. The convention of the first meeting in November 1957 was timed to the 40th anniversary of

⁵⁷ On Tito’s visit to the USSR on 1-23 June 1956 and its political results see: A.Edemskii, *Ot konfliktu k normalizacii*, 553-57.

⁵⁸ *Pravda*, 21 June 1956.

⁵⁹ RGANI, F.3, Op.12, D. 66, 5.

the October revolution in Russia.⁶⁰ The question of specific forms of cooperation among the Communist parties was still considered highly important and the practice of Cominform was lively discussed. Togliatti consecrated a great deal of attention to the Cominform in his speeches. In comparison with the Comintern, he said, the experience of the Cominform was less successful, and not only because of the split with the Yugoslav comrades in 1948, but also because the Cominform did not fulfill the tasks of information – because of more or less propagandist character of the articles published in the Cominform press, Communists all over the world could find out little about what was happening within the other parties. “When we met with comrades from Communist parties of other countries and asked about their state of affairs, how, for example, socialist building was going on, they replied that everything was going well. Then, later we suddenly found out about lawsuits over one or another party leader, which meant that not everything was going on well. Now we know that some countries had serious difficulties and failures.”⁶¹ Togliatti believed that “at this moment in order for our movement to develop as a large massive movement we need high degree of independency of each party in defining their slogans and forms of cooperation with other political forces in accordance with specific conditions of their countries”⁶². “It is not difficult to give the impression of the unity of common goals but we do not need this kind of unity”, “we needed constant creative activity that does not exclude the use of courageous, well-thought political actions that will be more effective if they take into account the actual situation” in each specific country. Togliatti concluded that there was “no need to make haste in creating new international bodies. It is necessary to combine independent development of each party with a maximum of solidarity and unity of our movement”. At the same time, the Italian leader called for all parties “to assist other parties in familiarization with their problems, exchange of necessary informational materials, to establish direct contacts as often as possible, conduct discussions and exchange of delegations, not excluding meeting among several parties for the discussion of common problems”.⁶³ The delegation of the Polish United Workers’ Party also noted that any attempts to centralize could damage the Communist movement and referred to the experience of the Comintern and the Cominform. The Romanian delegation openly argued against this opinion, insisting on the positive

⁶⁰ See: Stykalin A. “Za kulisami yubileinykh torzhestv (Moskovskie soveshchaniya kompartii v novabre 1957 g. i uchastie v nih pol’skoi delegatsii)”, *Rossiisko-pol’skii istoricheskii almanakh*, Vol., II, Stavropol’-Volgograd- Moscow, 2008, 62-99.

⁶¹ *Tol’iatti P. Izbrannyye stat’i i rechi*, Vol. II, (Dekabr’ 1956-1964) (Moscow: Politizdat, 1965), 113.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 114.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 114-115.

role of the Comintern in spreading Marxist-Leninist ideology and formation of cadres of communist movement but not in relation to the Cominform.⁶⁴

M. Suslov, as a CPSU representative, spoke of the necessity to search for new forms of interrelations among parties as well as the independence of each party along with the need to harmonize each party's formulation of interests of the working class of its country with the unity of the communist movement. The stress in his statement was put not on the shortcomings and limitations of the Cominform (emerged under certain historical conditions) but also on the need for its succession: CPSU's top ideologue believed that the acquired principles of mutual relations of communist parties and parties of socialist countries, in particular, were time tested.⁶⁵

In November 1957, the new form of cooperation and interaction of Communist parties destined to replace the dissolved Cominform was, in general, successfully tested. The Moscow meetings of Communist parties conducted under the sign of unity were the evidence that by 40th anniversary of October revolution in Russia the world Communist movement had overcome temporary difficulties caused by CPSU's 20th Studies congress and the denunciation of Stalin and his methods. The crisis of Communism was also overcome, to a significant extent, due to considerable growth of USSR's military-political power manifested by satellite launch in October 1957 and testing of intercontinental rockets in August 1957. Moscow succeeded to achieve a passing compromise with China at the cost of mutual concessions, though the difference of positions foreshadowed further, impending divergence of the parties of two big communist powers.

On the occasion, new attempt of the Khrushchev's leadership to draw Tito's regime in Yugoslavia closer to the USSR ended in failure. Several months later when CPY adopted new program in the spring of 1958, anti-Yugoslav campaign was unleashed. It, certainly, did not reach the acuteness of the end 1940s – beginning of 1950s, but it was the criticism of the Yugoslav revisionism at the next big meeting of communist parties conducted in November 1960 that became the common compromise platform able to delay open conflict of CPSU and Chinese KP for several months. It was only in 1960s, under the conditions of a profound split between USSR and CPC that Moscow accepted (knowing about Beijing's irreconcilable attitude to Belgrade's "revisionists") Yugoslavia's special status among socialist countries and stopped its a fortiori fruitless attempts to involve the neutral socialist state, interested only in economic cooperation with the USSR, into Soviet sphere of influence.

As for the problem of convening consequent meetings of Communist parties, in 1960s, it would be the object of acute struggle between the CPSU

⁶⁴ A. Stykalin, "Za kulisami yubileinykh torzhestv".

⁶⁵ Suslov M, *Marxizm-Leninizm i sovremennaya epokha. Izbrannyye stat'i i rechi*, Vol. I, (Moscow: Politizdat, 1982), 267-295.

and the CPC aspiring to ensure support for a division of the communist movement, pursuing their own geopolitical and ideological ambitions. This, however, is a subject of another paper.

Leonid Gibianskii

*Institute for Slavonic Studies
Russian Academy of Sciences
Moscow*

SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS, THE COMINFORM AND BALKAN COMMUNIST PARTIES: DOCUMENTARY SOURCES AND SOME ASPECTS OF ITS RESEARCH

Abstract: The paper analyses the availability of archival sources on Cominform as well as the literature on it's the activity with the special attention on the role of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Even though a considerable part of the archival materials is still closed, more so in the Russia than in the countries that used to be a part of the Soviet bloc, from the available data it is evident that Cominform from the start was a Soviet tool to control the Communist parties in the bloc, Yugoslavia included. The latter's leadership up to 1948, had no issue with being a faithful and obedient part of the Communist bloc, under Soviet guidance. Only after the Tito-Stalin split in the memoirs and historiography Yugoslav comrades tried to demonstrate, in vain as demonstrated by the now available sources, that differences with the Soviets had existed before 1948. However, the struggle against Yugoslav leadership was one of the principal objectives of Cominform after 1948. Its Conferences and Meetings, its daily activity, propaganda, were focused on demonstrating the falsity and treachery of the CPY. Nevertheless, all its efforts, including infiltration of agents, propaganda material, radio broadcasts, and dropping of printed material were of no avail, and eventually Cominform activity lessened. Stalin finally abandoned it altogether when he became aware that it was impossible to transform it in a sort of directive body of World Communism like Comintern used to be.

Keywords: *Cominform, Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Communist Party of URSS, archives, historiography, propaganda, Tito, Stalin.*

The Information Bureau of the Communist Parties,¹ better known in the West – as the Cominform, founded at Stalin's will in September 1947 and

¹ Since late 1940s – early 1950s, this body was often mentioned as the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties.

existed until April 1956, was one of the symbols of the Cold War beginning and the confrontation between blocs. The establishment of this international communist body was aimed at strengthening the Soviet control of the Communist Parties which became its members: those were the CPs of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, Italy and France, besides the CP of the USSR itself.² The overwhelming majority of the Cominform consisted of CPs of Eastern Europe, and the Eastern European countries of the Soviet bloc were in the focus of the Cominform's attention. Among those countries and their CPs, the Balkan communist regimes were important objects and simultaneously participants of the Cominform's activities. Until the conflict between Moscow and Belgrade, the Yugoslav communist regime was the most active participant in the establishment and work of the Cominform. After the rupture between Stalin and Tito in June 1948, Yugoslavia became nearly the main object of Cominform activity.

Since the establishment of the Cominform, researchers of its history had access only to the documents on its activities that its managers had decided it was necessary to publish. But very a few these documents were available because most of the activities were kept under a thick cloak of secrecy. From all activity of Cominform, during the eight and a half years of its existence, only four events were public: three, as they were called then, "conferences" (in September 1947, June 1948 and November 1949) and one "sitting" (in January 1948) of the representatives of the CPs members of the Cominform. Moreover, much remained unknown even about these events which were always announced solely post factum. Their materials were made open to public only partially, while everything that the Cominform decision-makers preferred to conceal was withdrawn from the open documents, as it can now be seen from the archival sources.

At best, as it happened to, for example, with materials of the Cominform's September 1947 (foundation) and the November 1949 conferences, were published the adopted resolutions, usually destined for publication, but also the delivered reports.³ However the report by one of the then Soviet

² Over the course of Cominform's existence the names of most CPs, which were members of the body, changed: the Bulgarian Worker's Party (Communists) was renamed into Bulgarian Communist Party in December 1948; the CPs of Romania and Hungary after they had absorbed the Social-Democratic Parties of these countries, were named the Romanian Worker's Party (since February 1948) and the Hungarian Working People's Party (since June 1948) respectively; in Poland the CP, known as Polish Worker's Party since 1942, after it had absorbed the Polish Socialist Party was named as the Polish United Worker's Party in December 1948; in the USSR, the CP was called the All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks), with Russian abbreviation – VKP (b), until October 1952 when it was renamed into the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Russian abbreviation – KPSS, and in English – CPSU).

³ The materials of those conferences were published in the press of the CP's and in the Cominform's newspaper *For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy!* (the name in Russian is *za prochnyi mir, za narodnuiu demokratiuu!*), and in addition issued as special brochures and collections in the countries of the Soviet bloc. In the USSR, for instance, the following collections were

leaders Andrei Zhdanov “On the International Situation”, which had been report of the 1947 Conference was published with significant changes and deletions made to the text prior to publication.⁴ The report by Władysław Gomułka, the leader of Polish communists, i.e. of the Polish Worker’s Party (Polish abbreviation is PPR), “On the Exchange of Experience and Coordination of Activity of the Communist Parties” made at that conference was not published at all. The report by Jacques Duclos, one of the French Communist Party’s leaders, on the draft Rules of the Cominform, delivered at the 1949 Conference, and the Rules itself adopted there, were not published, too. The fact that the Cominform had been considering an issue about adopting the Rules as well as the fact that the Rules had been adopted was never made public. Its existence thus remained a secret. In the worst case, as with the materials of the January 1948 Sitting and the June 1948 Conference, no public mention about reports delivered at the meetings, were made. With regard to the January 1948 Sitting, the public information was limited to a short communiqué that mentioned the attending representatives of the CPs and the approved members of the editorial board of the Cominform’s newspaper *For a Lasting Peace, for a People’s Democracy!*⁵ As for the June 1948 Conference, in addition to a communiqué citing present delegates of CPs, only the resolution on the Yugoslav CP (Serb abbreviation is KPJ) – which was then expelled from Cominform – , was published, while all other resolutions adopted in association with the aforementioned were passed over in absolute silence.⁶

The preparation process for those meetings, their proceedings and what was said and by whom, during discussions, also remained secret. Even the place and the time of the meetings were concealed. The communications published by the Cominform, were written in a conspiratorial language, for example: regarding the 1947 Conference, it was reported that it took place “in late September in Poland”; about the January 1948 Sitting – that it took place “in mid-January in Yugoslavia”; about the June 1948 Conference – that it was held “in the second half of June in Romania”; about the 1949 Conference – that it took place “in the second half of November in Hungary”.

It goes without saying that no information had been disclosed about the Cominform’s other activities. Except for the four above-mentioned meetings

published: *Informatsionnoe soveshchaniie predstavitelei nekotorykh kompartii v Pol’she v kontse sentiabria 1947 goda*, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1948); *Soveshchaniie Informatsionnogo biuro kommunisticheskikh partii v Vengrii vo vtoroi polovine noiabria 1949 goda*, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1949).

⁴ See on these changes and eliminations: G. Procacci, ed., G. Adibekov, A. Di Biagio, L. Gibianskii, F. Gori, S. Pons, co-eds., *The Cominform: The Minutes of the Three Conferences, 1947/1948/1949*, (Feltrinelli Editore: Milano 1994), 420-422, 452-461.

⁵ *Za prochnyi mir, za narodnuiu demokratiuu!*, 1 February 1948.

⁶ *Pravda*, Moscow, 29 June 1948.

and the existence of the editorial board of *For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy!*, the organizational structure and the way Cominform functioned were kept in secrecy.

The secrecy persisted not only during the entire period of the Cominform's existence but even after April 1956 when Stalin's successors decided to dissolve this international Communist body largely compromised in Stalin's times. The Cominform's archival documentation, during its activity kept partially in Moscow and partially in its headquarters in Bucharest and entirely in Moscow after its dissolution, continued to be completely inaccessible for the public over the course of the subsequent three and a half decades, since no archival materials were published.

Nonetheless, despite efforts of those who tried to preserve the secrets of the Cominform the veil of secrecy that used to cover its activity, commenced to disappear gradually.

This started, for example in June 1948, after the Yugoslav communist regime was expelled from the Soviet bloc and the Cominform. In its opposition to Stalin's propaganda attacks, the Yugoslav side began to disclose certain formerly withheld information concerning the establishment of the Cominform and the early period of its activities. This kind of information was touched upon for the first time, though in passing, in the confidential correspondence between Moscow and Belgrade that had preceded the June 1948 Cominform Conference that was partially published by the Yugoslav leadership in August 1948.⁷ This publication, however, as well as the documents published later in the official Yugoslavia's *The White Book* concerning the conflict⁸ and even later in the three-volume pretentiously titled book *The Documents of 1948* by Vladimir Dedijer, a famous Yugoslav functionary and publicist,⁹ contained little data directly on the Cominform. The official biography of the head of the Yugoslav communist regime Josip Broz Tito, also written by Dedijer and published in 1953, contained somewhat more information.¹⁰

⁷ See: *Pisma CK KPJ i pisma CK SKP (b)*, Belgrade 1948; in English see, for example: *The Soviet-Yugoslav Dispute: Text of the published Correspondence* (London, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1948). The question is about a short mention contained in the confidential Soviet letter of 22 May, 1948, which concerned the harsh criticism of the policy of the CP's of France and Italy expressed with Soviet support, if not initiative, at the Cominform founding conference. The public documents of the Cominform did not have any information on this, and the fact itself of such criticism was thoroughly concealed.

⁸ *Bela knjiga o agresivnim postupcima vlada SSSR, Poljske, Čehoslovačke, Madjarske, Rumunije, Bugarske i Albanije prema Jugoslaviji* (Belgrade: Ministarstvo inostranih poslova FNRJ, 1951).

⁹ V. Dedijer, *Dokumenti 1948*, Vol. I-III (Belgrade: Rad, 1979).

¹⁰ See edition in Cyrillic alphabet: V. Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito: Prilozi za biografiju*. (Belgrade: Kultura, 1953), 470-478, 525-529, 533-536. The known Western editions of the book, published in English for example, V. Dedijer, *Tito Speaks: His Self-Portrait and Struggle with Stalin* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1953), to some extent differ in its content from the Yugoslav editions.

It was only later that evidences from some of the participants at the Cominform's foundation Conference in September 1947 began to appear. In 1958, the memoirs of Eugenio Reale devoted to this conference were published. Reale was a former well-known figure of the Italian CP, who represented it at that Conference together with Luigi Longo, one of the leaders of the Party.¹¹ In early 1980s, information about that Conference was also published in the memoirs of Edvard Kardelj and of Milovan Djilas, who both were the delegates of the CPY there.¹² Reale's book was especially valuable because it contained, in addition to the extensive memoir part, also the notes made by the author during the Conference that described much of what had been said there.

A gradual appearance of publications of this kind was in most cases very important since step by step, they gave researchers the opportunity to get acquainted at least with some of the data which the Cominform and its successors had tried to conceal. However, this in no way, of course, could compensate for the absence of access to the archival documents. Moreover, as it was ascertained later, the memory of even the most serious memoirists, as Reale or Djilas, who were free from the previous ideological involvement at the time of writing (both had broken up with Communism by that time) could be at fault. For this reason they committed a number of inaccuracies and simple mistakes, and occasionally reported not quite reliable information. Not only the memoir part of Reale's book, but also his notes of some speeches from the 1947 Conference contained inaccuracies, not to mention significant omissions which he himself warned about.¹³ Various facts were distorted to an incomparably greater extent in Tito's biography written by Dedijer, and in Kardelj's memoirs. Dedijer did not possess the entire necessary information about the Cominform events he described, but only the part about which the Yugoslav side was in the know, and this already made the picture he portrayed incomplete. Moreover, a careful selection of the factual material available for the Yugoslav leadership that Dedijer could use in his work was typical of his book. The book included only those facts that were designed to support Belgrade's official version of

¹¹ The book was published in Italy and almost simultaneously in France. The most renowned edition was the French one: E. Reale, *Avec Jacques Duclos au Banc des Accusés à la Réunion Constitutive du Kominform à Szklarska Poreba, 22-27 Septembre 1947*, (Paris: Plon, 1958).

¹² Memoirs by Kardelj, who remained one of the key figures in the Yugoslav communist leadership until the end of his life, were published in Yugoslavia and their translations in the West: E. Kardelj, *Borba za priznanje i nezavisnost nove Jugoslavije 1944-1957: Sećanja* (Ljubljana, Belgrade: Radnička štampa, Državna založba Slovenije, 1980), 106-111 (English edition: E. Kardelj, *Reminiscences: The Struggle for Recognition and Independence of the New Yugoslavia, 1944-1957* (London: Blond & Briggs, 1982); Memoirs by Djilas, who became a dissident since 1954, on the contrary, had been first published in the West, and their publication in Yugoslavia became possible only a decade later, in the course of the communist regime's fall: M. Djilas, *Jahre der Macht: Kräftespiel hinter dem Eisernen Vorhang. Memoiren 1945-1966*, (Molden-Seewald : München 1983), 151-157; M. Djilas, *Vlast i pobuna*, (Belgrade: Književne novine, 1991), 112-118.

¹³ See about these warnings in: Reale, *Avec Jacques Duclos*, 50.

the role Yugoslavia played in the Cominform and of the origins of the 1948 conflict. The version advanced after Yugoslavia found itself outside the Soviet bloc and outside of the Cominform was intended to picture the situation in such a way as if Belgrade, even before the conflict, had had a political position in the Communist movement and in the Cominform in particular, different than that of Moscow.¹⁴ Kardelj followed the same propagandist and politically motivated version of the events and even supported it by obvious fabrications regarding the 1947 Conference¹⁵. This is why Kardelj's memoirs, unlike the evidences Reale and Djilas offered, could not facilitate the clarification of the historic reality. Neither could Duclos' memoirs published in early 1970s. Duclos as a supporter of the former Communist orthodoxy adhered to the course of preserving the secrets of the Cominform and limited himself, in essence, to a mere retelling of the propagandist postulates that the Cominform's published materials had contained.¹⁶

Already since the late 1940s and the early 1950s, research of the history of the Cominform was initiated in the Western historiography on the basis of limited available materials, and several works were written on that basis, most prominent among which were the books by Adam Ulam and Lilly Marcou.¹⁷ In most countries under communist rule, research on these problems was in fact either banned or, as in Yugoslavia, limited to the repetition of the official versions of the respective communist regimes.¹⁸ Some western researchers

¹⁴ As Dedijer himself asserted later, his book about Tito had been prepared under strict control of the Yugoslav leadership, especially the part of the book which dealt with setting up the Cominform, and in particular, its founding Conference (*V. Dedijer Novi prilozci za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita*, Vol. III, (Belgrade: Rad, 1984), 272, 277-279).

¹⁵ This will be examined in detail below.

¹⁶ In particular, Duclos did the same when he described the September 1947 foundation Conference of the Cominform. See: J. Duclos, *Mémoires*, Vol. IV, "Sur la Brèche. 1945-1952: Des débuts de la IVe République au "complot" des pigeons", (Paris: Livre club Diderot, 1971), 217-220. The only thing that had not been mentioned in the public materials of the Cominform but mentioned by Duclos, was the criticism to which the CP of France had been subjected on behalf of, as he put it, "some delegations" at this Conference. However, specifically he only mentioned Djilas' critical speech and gave a negative evaluation of it without revealing its content. Duclos did not relate a word of that Djilas speech, as well as the speeches of some other CPs which criticized the politics of the CPs of France and Italy, nor the fact that the criticism of the two CPs was initiated by by Zhdanov and the delegation of the VKP (b). Duclos mentioned nothing about the Soviet criticism (*Ibid.*, 220).

¹⁷ A. Ulam, *Titoism and the Cominform* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952); L. Marcou, *Le Kominform: le communisme de guerre froide* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1977). Of special interest are also the interpretations of the history of the Cominform in such renowned works on the international communist movement as: F. Claudin, *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform* (Harmondsworth (Middlesex), London: Penguin, 1975), 455-548; J. Braunthal, *Geschichte der Internationale*, 2. Auf. Vol. 3 (Berlin, Bonn: Dietz, 1978), 179-219, 439-456.

¹⁸ The Yugoslav literature on the Cominform written almost exclusively in connection with the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict of 1948, repeated the officious version presented by Dedijer. This was



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attempted to somehow compensate the obvious lack of information on real activities of the Cominform which, to a greater extent, had remained behind the scenes. Marcou, for instance, attempted to achieve this through interviews with Duclos and another French participant of these events, Georges Cogniot. She also used information about the Cominform she obtained from one of her Hungarian colleagues, a historian who had access to some archival materials

typical of not only various popular publications (for example, S. Kržavac, D. Marković, *Informbiro: šta je to? Jugoslavija je rekla: ne* (Belgrade: Sloboda, 1976); D. Marković, S. Kržavac, *Zavera Informbiroa* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1987); M. Nikolić, *Informbiro*, Vol. I-II (Zagreb: Centar za informacije i publicitet, 1989), but also rarer works claiming, though not always justifiably, to be a scientific studies: B. Petranović, Č. Štrbac, S; Stojanović, *Jugoslavija u međunarodnom radničkom pokretu* (Belgrade: Institut za međunarodni radnički pokret, 1973); Č. Štrbac, *Jugoslavija i odnosi između socijalističkih zemalja: Sukob KPJ i Informbiroa* (Belgrade: Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, 1975), 1984.

in Hungary, then inaccessible to others. But the data which Marcou was able to obtain in this way, were absolutely scanty and partly unreliable or inaccurate, like, for example, information on the existence of “fourth Conference” of the Cominform, similar to those of September 1947, June 1948 and November 1949, ostensibly held in 1950 in Bucharest.¹⁹

It was only in the late communist period that individual researchers in Poland were more successful. In their works published in the 1980s, they were able to shed light on some important episodes related to the establishment of the Cominform and its activities in the period from September 1947 to June 1948, by using some materials from the Polish archives and the oral memoirs of Gomułka.²⁰

However, opportunities for large-scale revealing of the secrets around the establishment and the activities of the Information Bureau of the Communist Parties appeared only in late 1980s – early 1990s when, as a result of the end of the communist rule, an access to previously classified archival documentations of both the Cominform itself and its’ member-parties was possible in the former USSR and Eastern European countries. The consequence of this new situation was the emerging publication of a number of important archival sources on the Cominform’s work and simultaneously research of a wide array of opening documents.

The most significant result on this way so far was manifested as two important research projects undertaken jointly by Russian and Italian historians and archivists since early 1990s. The basis of the projects was the examination of the Cominform materials kept in the Russian (former Soviet) archives. The goal was to publish archival materials with their simultaneous investigation. One project was focused on the minutes of the three Cominform Conferences – those of September 1947, June 1948, and November 1949. The other project was focused on the documents about the development of the Italian CP’s relations with the USSR and later with the Cominform in 1943-1951. The first of above-mentioned projects was been carrying out by the Russian Center for Conservation and Study of the Records of Modern History (Russian abbreviation is RTsKhIDNI) in Moscow,²¹ now called the Russian State Archives for Social and Political History (Russian abbreviation is RGASPI), and the Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Foundation in Milan. The partners in the second of the projects were the RTsKhIDNI, the

¹⁹ Marcou, *Le Kominform*, 111-112.

²⁰ B. Brzeziński, “Wpływ Biura Informacyjnego na politykę PPR” in *40-lecie Polskiej Partii Robotniczej: Materiały sesji 5-6 stycznia 1982 r.*, (Warsaw: WSNS, 1982); *Ibid.*, “Gomułka a Kominform” in *życie Literackie*, (Cracow), 7, 14 March 1982; J. Ptasziński, *Pierwszy z trzech zwrotów czyli rzecz o Władysławie Gomułce* (Warsaw: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1984), 81-83, 111-112; A. Werblan, *Władysław Gomułka: Sekretarz Generalny PPR*, (Warsaw: “Książka i Wiedza”, 1988), 503-505, 511-517, 520-524.

²¹ The RTsKhIDNI was founded in 1991 on the basis of the former Central Party Archive of the CPSU.

Institute of Universal History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Foundation and the Gramsci Institution in Rome.

The outcome of the first project was the first ever publication in 1994 of full minutes of the three Cominform Conferences. The volume published in Milan contained original texts of the minutes in Russian (the minutes were recorded in Russian) with their English translations. The minutes were accompanied by extensive notes which included, in addition, various editorial versions of reports, discussions and final documents of the conferences. Besides that, the volume contained research articles of the editors of its documentary part: Russian historians Grant Adibekov and Leonid Gibianskii and Italian historians Silvio Pons and Anna Di Biagio.²² For the first time, the articles which were based on the materials from the archives of Russia, Bulgaria, Poland, the former Yugoslavia and the CPs of Italy and France, gave an analysis of the preparatory works and the proceedings of each of the conferences.²³ Four years later within the framework of that project, an expanded version of this book was published in Moscow, in Russian.²⁴ Moscow edition contained a greater number of archival documents than that of Milan. Apart from the minutes of the three above-mentioned conferences, the Russian volume included encoded radiograms that during the 1947 and 1948 Conferences their Soviet participants sent daily to Moscow, for Stalin. The Soviet delegates, in those radiograms, informed Stalin of what was taking place at the conferences and behind the scenes. They gave their evaluations and asked for instructions. In addition, some research articles of the Russian volume were enlarged on the basis of new archival sources, and the volume also included a new article by Gibianskii about the historical writing on the Cominform.²⁵

²² Procacci ed., Adibekov, Di Biagio, Gibianskii, Gori, Pons (co-eds), *The Cominform*. This volume was published as a regular annual issue of the Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli series: *Annali*, 30, 1994. All notes to the minutes, and the research articles are in English.

²³ G. Adibekov, "How the First Conference of the Cominform Came About", in *The Cominform*, 3-9; A. Di Biagio, "The Establishment of the Cominform" in *Ibid.*, 11-34; L. Gibianskii, "The Beginning of the Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict and the Cominform" in *Ibid.*, 465-481; L. Gibianskii, "The Last Conference of the Cominform" in *Ibid.*, 645-667; S. Pons, "The Twilight of the Cominform" in *Ibid.*, 483-503. In addition, the volume contained two articles specifically devoted to some aspects of issues related to the sources for the history of Cominform: G. Adibekov, "Something About the Sources" in *Ibid.*, 1029-1033; G. Adibekov, L. Gibianskii, R. Yermolaeva, "The Information Bureau of the Communist Parties: a Brief Survey of Collection 575 at RTsKhIDNI" in *Ibid.*, 1035-1046.

²⁴ G. M. Adibekov, A. Di Biagio, L. Ia. Gibianskii, F. Gori, S. Pons, eds., *Soveshchaniia Kominforma, 1947, 1948, 1949: Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1998).

²⁵ This volume contained the following articles: G. M. Adibekov, "Korotko ob istochnikakh" in *Soveshchaniia*, XIV-XXI; G. M. Adibekov, "Kak gotovilos' pervoe soveshchanie Kominforma" in *Ibid.*, 3-20; L. Ia. Gibianskii, "Dolgi put' k tainam: istoriografiia Kominforma" in *Ibid.*, XXII-XLVI; L. Ia. Gibianskii, "Ot pervogo ko vtoromu soveshchaniu Kominforma" in *Ibid.*, 337-373; L. Ya. Gibianskii, "Kominform v zenite

The outcome of the second project was a volume published in Rome in 1998.²⁶ It contained Italian translation of several dozens of the documents, mainly from the RTsKhIDNI (RGASPI) and some from the Archives of the President of the Russian Federation (Russian abbreviation is APRF).²⁷ In addition, the volume contained a large section of research articles by Russian historians Mikhail Narinskii, Leonid Gibianskii, Grant Adibekov and their Italian colleagues Silvio Pons and Maurizio Zuccari. The articles were based on mainly Russian and partly Italian archival materials.²⁸

The realizing of the projects was accompanied by a number of publications of other studies on these issues written by the project participants and based on the archival documents of the Cominform and the CPs which had been its members.²⁹

aktivnosti: sozdaniie organizatsionnoi struktury i tret'e soveshchaniie" in *Ibid.*, 509-542; A. Di B'iadzho, "Sozdaniie Kominforma" in *Ibid.*, 21 -51; S. Pons, "Sumerki Kominforma" in *Ibid.*, 374-398.

²⁶ F. Gori, S. Pons, eds., *Dagli Archivi di Mosca: L'URSS, il Cominform e il PCI (1943-1951)*, Rome 1998. This volume was published as a regular issue of the *Fondazione Istituto Gramsci series: Annali*, 7, 1995.

²⁷ The APRF was set up on the basis of the former archive of the CPSU CC Politburo.

²⁸ The articles were devoted to various topics, including the policies of the USSR, the CP of Italy and the Yugoslav communist regime on the issue of the territorial delimitation between Italy and Yugoslavia ("the Trieste issue"): S. Pons, "L'Italia e il PCI nella politica estera dell'URSS (1943-1945)" in *Dagli Archivi di Mosca*, 19-70; S. Pons, "Una sfida mancata: l'URSS, il Cominform e il PCI (1947-1948)" in *Dagli Archivi di Mosca*, 135-174; M. Narinskii, "Stalin, Togliatti e Thorez (1944-1948)" in *Dagli Archivi di Mosca*, 71 -84; L. Gibianskii, "Mosca, il PCI e la questione di Trieste (1943-1948)" in *Dagli Archivi di Mosca*, 85-133; M. Zuccari, "Il PCI e la "scomunica" del '48. Una questione di principio" in *Dagli Archivi di Mosca*, 175-210; G. Adibekov, "Stalin, Togliatti e il Cominform (1950-1951)" in *Dagli Archivi di Mosca*, 211-220.

²⁹ In particular, these studies were the following. 1) The first book on the history of the Cominform which was based on the archival sources and written by Grant Adibekov: G. M. Adibekov, *Kominform i poslevoennaia Evropa. 1947-1956 gg.* (Moscow: Rossiia Molodaia, 1994, 2) Sections on the Cominform in the book by Silvio Pons on relations between the USSR and the CP of Italy in the years of the emerging Cold War: S. Pons, *L'impossibile egemonia: L'URSS, il PCI e le origini della guerra fredda (1943-1948)* (Rome: Carocci, 1999). 3) A number of articles by Leonid Gibianskii on the establishment and the beginning of the work of the Cominform: L. Gibianskii, Ia., "Kak vznik Kominform: po novym arkhivnym materialam", *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, Moscow, 4, 1993, 131-152; *Ibid.*, "La costituzione del Cominform (alla luce di nuovi materiali d'archivio)" in *Storia contemporanea*, Rome, 4, 1993, 489-516; *Ibid.*, "Informbyro a východní Evropa: Vzájemný poměr vnitřních a vnějších faktorů v procesu sovětizace", *Soudobé dějiny*, Prague, 4-5, 1994, 463-472; *Ibid.*, "Az 1948-as szovjet-jugoszláv konfliktus és a Kominform", *Múltunk*, Budapest, 4, 1994, 111-144; *Ibid.*, "Problémy mezhduнародno-politicheskogo strukturirovaniia Vostochnoi Evropy v period formirovaniia sovetskogo bloka v 1940-e gody" in M.M. Narinskii ed., *Kholodnaia voina: novye podkhody, novye dokumenty*, Moscow 1995, 112-122, 125-126; *Ibid.*, "Kominform v deistvii. 1947-1948 gg. Po arkhivnym dokumentam", *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, 1, 1996, 49-170; 2, 1996, 157-172; *Ibid.*, "The Soviet-Yugoslav Split and the Cominform", in N. Naimark, L. Gibianskii eds., *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944-1949*, Boulder (Colorado) 1997, 291-312; *Ibid.*, "Podgotovka sozdaniia Kominforma i problemy 'sotsialisticheskogo lageria' ", *Istorija 20. veka*, Belgrade 2, 1998, 103-126.

Certain archival materials of the Cominform itself as well as the documents related to its work from the archives of the countries whose CPs were the Cominform members, were also published within the framework of other projects. Of special note here are the two thematic collections on Eastern European countries of the Soviet bloc in 1944-1953 published in the second half of the 1990s – early 2000s and entirely compiled from the materials of the Moscow archives.³⁰ Prepared by a group of Russian historians and archivists, mainly from the Institute for Slavonic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, these collections included about 70 documents in one way or another related to the history of the Cominform, in addition to a great number of other materials. The two volumes of de-classified archival materials of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU in 1954-1964 contained, along with other materials, some documents concerning the Cominform's late, post-Stalinist period.³¹

Although all that has been published up to now is important for research, it represents relatively small portion of the archival materials on the issues in question. Far greater amount of documents have not yet been published while a significant part of them is available in the archives of Russia and other countries whose CPs used to be the Cominform members. First of all, let us turn our attention to general characteristics of the materials which were in the archives of Russia. These materials are significant for the investigation of the history of the Cominform, and specifically in connection with the issues of the Soviet-Yugoslav relations and the role of the Balkan CPs. Special importance of the Russian archival documentation is obvious taking into account, on the one hand, the absolutely hegemonic Soviet position in the Cominform, and on the other hand, the above-mentioned fact that the entire archive of the Cominform found itself eventually in the USSR and later, “by heritage”, in the post-Soviet Russia.

The prevailing part of the archives initially kept in Bucharest and then transferred to Moscow, after the dissolution of the Cominform, were being preserved, during more than ten years, in the International Department of the CPSU Central Committee, together with the part that originally already was kept in Moscow. Later, the majority of both parts of the materials in question were handed over to the Central Party Archive (Russian abbreviation is TsPA) of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism under the CPSU CC, in two steps: in the

³⁰ G.P. Murashko, ed., et al., *Vostochnaia Evropa v dokumentakh rossiiskikh arkhivov. 1944-1953 gg.*, Vols. I, II, (Moscow - Novosibirsk: The Institute of Slavonic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, 1998); T. V. Volokitina, ed., et al. *Sovetskii faktor v Vostochnoi Evrope. 1944-1953 gg.: Dokumenty*, Vols. I-II (Moscow: Rosspen, 1999), 2002.

³¹ A.A. Fursenko ed. et al., *Prezidium TsK KPSS. 1954-1964: Chernovye protokol'nye zapisi zasessii. Stenogrammy. Postanovleniia*, Vol. I (Moscow: Rosspen, 2003), , second edition, revised and enlarged: (Moscow: Rosspen 2004); Vol. II (Moscow: Rosspen 2006), the third volume of this publication issued in 2008 deals with the period after the dissolution of the Cominform.

latter half of April 1969 and in mid-March 1970. Those documents were kept as a TsPA's special collection which had been closed and until the early 1990s had neither been arranged nor inventoried. Only after August 1991 when the Soviet regime collapsed and from 1992 onwards, in the post-Soviet Russia, previously unavailable archival collections were gradually and partially opened, the situation with the Cominform collection in the former TsPA,- first renamed as the RTsKhIDNI and later as the RGASPI- changed, at last. The collection was arranged, inventoried and opened for researchers.³² In addition, but kept separately in the RGASPI, there is also the collection of the archival materials of the editorial board of the Cominform's newspaper *For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy!*³³ This collection, however, unlike the Cominform collection, has not yet been made open for the public.

Alongside the two collections mentioned above, various documents of the Cominform itself or documents related to its activities are kept, among other materials, in a number of other collections of the RGASPI. This is particularly true, first of all, of the Stalin collection³⁴ and the collections of the Soviet leaders such as Andrei Zhdanov³⁵ and Viacheslav Molotov.³⁶ These persons during the time of the Cominform, besides other responsibilities, were in charge of conducting of the Kremlin's line in the spheres of foreign policy and the world Communist movement. Secondly, this is also true of the VKP (b) CC collection, and namely of those its parts that contained materials of the Politburo³⁷ and the CC Department which had been responsible for international relations.³⁸ However, the RGASPI documents of both the Politburo and this Department cover the period only up to 1952. As for the post-Stalin period, the materials of the Presidium of the CPSU CC (former Politburo, renamed together with the Party itself in October 1952) are kept in the Russian

³² RGASPI, f. (collection) 575. A more or less detailed description of this collection can be found in: Adibekov, Gibianskii, Yermolaeva, "The Information Bureau of the Communist Parties: a Brief Survey of Collection 575 at RTsKhIDNI", 1035-1046.

³³ RGASPI, collection 576. See more on the brief information about the collection: V. Kozlov, ed. et al., *Rossiiskii tsentr khraneniia i izucheniia dokumentov noveishei istorii. Kratkii putevoditel': Fondy i kollektzii, sobrannnye Tsentral'nym partiinym arkhivom (spravochno-informatsionnye materialy k dokumental'nym fondam RTsKhIDNI, Vypusk 1* (Moscow: Blagovest, 1993), 104.

³⁴ RGASPI, collection 558, inventory 11.

³⁵ RGASPI, collection 77, inventories 3 and 4.

³⁶ RGASPI, collection 82, inventory 2.

³⁷ RGASPI, collection 17, inventories 3 and 162.

³⁸ RGASPI, collection 17, inventories 128 and 137. This department was several times renamed in late 1940s – early 1950s: in 1946-1948 it was called the Foreign Policy Department, in 1948-1949 – Foreign Relations Department, in 1949-1952 – Foreign Policy Commission, in 1952-1953 – Commission for Connections with Foreign Communist Parties, in 1953-1957 – Department for Connections with Foreign Communist Parties.

State Archives for Contemporary History (Russian abbreviation is RGANI).³⁹ The archives contain also documents of the above-mentioned CC Department which was responsible for international connections during the last years of the Cominform, after Stalin's death.⁴⁰ In addition, the Cominform materials and those related to the Cominform are kept in various collections of the APRE,⁴¹ including, in particular, the collection of Mikhail Suslov. In the Soviet leadership, he, along with Zhdanov and Molotov, was also in charge of the international Communist movement, including the Cominform's activities. A part of the documents of the enumerated collections is open to researchers, and a number of those documents was even included in the above-mentioned publications. However, many materials either have not yet been declassified or are in the so-called category of a limited access when archives' administration, at its own discretion, could selectively grant permission for some researchers. Moreover a significant number of documents made available in the first half of 1990s and not infrequently used actively by researchers, later became inaccessible again.⁴² Thus, the situation of the use of many materials mentioned above and concerning the Cominform in the RGASPI, the RGANI, not even mentioning the APRE, is often quite controversial and diverse in terms of different categories of the documents.

A highly important addition to the materials of the Cominform and about the Cominform kept in those Russian archives, is quite a significant documental array available in the archives of other countries whose CPs had been the Cominform members. The author of this paper has had an opportunity to study such documents and to evaluate their significance in the archives of Bulgaria, Poland, the Czech Republic and former Yugoslavia. Those materials mainly are from the archives of the former CPs of these countries which now are kept in state archives.⁴³ Analogously to situation in the Russian archives, the documents of Eastern European archives concerning the Cominform's ac-

³⁹ RGANI, collection 3. A significant part of these materials was the basis of the above-mentioned documentary publication: Fursenko ed. et al., *Prezidium TsK KPSS 1954-1964*.

⁴⁰ RGANI, collection 5, inventory 28. An annotated list of the archival files of the RGANI that contained these documents is published as the book: N. G. Tomilina, ed. et al., *Otdel TsK KPSS po sviaziam s inostrannymi kompartiiami. 1953-1957: Annotirovannyi spravocnik* (Moscow: Rosspen, 1999).

⁴¹ See partly on this, for example: Adibekov, "Something About Sources", 1029-1032.

⁴² One of the most typical examples are the documents of the Department for Connections with Foreign Communist Parties of the CPSU CC in 1953-1957. The predominant part of these documents was declassified in the 1990s, and the annotated list of all files, both declassified and not, was published as the above-mentioned book indicated in note 40. However, all this documentation became closed again later. Only recently some part of those materials was again available for researches.

⁴³ Tsentralen dърzhaven arkhiv in Sofia (hereinafter TsDA); Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warsaw (hereinafter AAN); Státní ústřední archiv in Prague (hereinafter SÚA); Arhiv Jugoslavije in Belgrade (hereinafter AJ) that since 2009 incorporated the former Josip Broz Tito's Archives.

tivities or connected with the participation of one or another of CPs in the work of the Cominform, as a rule, are also mainly in the collections of the supreme Party bodies like the CC Politburo and Secretariat of each CP and in the collections of the CC's Foreign Policy Departments. In addition, such documents are contained in the personal collections of the CPs' leaders as well as those Party figures who had been in charge of foreign affairs and cooperation with the Cominform structures or participated in its events. It is evident that an analogous storage structure of the materials of interest to us is common to the archives of two Eastern European countries, Hungary and Romania, whose ruling CPs had been also the Cominform members. Our research experience in the archives of Eastern European countries shows that in a majority of cases the access to the documents concerning the Cominform is wider and freer there than in a number of the Russian archives.⁴⁴

This entire large array of documents of the Cominform and about the Cominform kept in the archives of Russia and other countries, including the Balkan states which were under the communist rule during the period under consideration, can be divided into approximately six main thematic groups.

One of those groups is the minutes of the three Cominform Conferences of 1947, 1948 and 1949 and various materials that accompanied the proceedings the conferences. The minutes and a part of the accompanied documentation were published in the above-mentioned volumes issued in 1994 in Milan and in 1998 in Moscow. Besides that, a number of materials associated with the conferences were used in extensive notes to the documents of the volumes as well as in the research articles contained in the same publications.⁴⁵ These publications, together with some unpublished documents including those kept in the RGASPI, provide an opportunity to follow, in detail, the process of the 1947 and 1948 Conferences, both at the sessions and on the sidelines and behind the scenes. As for the 1949 Conference, the course of its sessions can be traced likewise in details in the available documents but its behind the scenes aspects are less known. Researchers have yet no access to the daily messages about that Conference sent to Moscow by the Soviet participants, similar to those sent to Stalin from the 1947 Conference by Andrei Zhdanov and Georgii Malenkov who represented the VKP (b), and in 1948 by them and Mikhail Suslov. For the present, it is still unknown, for the most part, what was Stalin's response to both the incoming messages on the course of all three conferences and Soviet delegates' inquiries. Scholars do not know what instructions he sent to the delegates about steps which they had to undertake. There is yet still no

⁴⁴ The documents of the Cominform and materials regarding its activities are kept also in the archives which contain former documentation of the CPs of Italy and France. However, the author of this paper has never conducted research there.

⁴⁵ See notes 22 and 24.

access for historians to Stalin's cipher-messages he sent to the VKP (b) representatives at the Cominform Conferences.⁴⁶

The minutes themselves as well as other documents studied by now and connected with the organization of the conferences reveal, in addition, many significant aspects related to the role of the CPY and the other Balkan CPs in setting up the Cominform and its' later activities. Having studied the archival sources, the author of this paper, in his previous works, has already drawn attention, to one or another extent, to a number of these aspects.⁴⁷ Let us dwell on some of them in more detail.

In regard to the founding Conference of 22-28 September 1947, it should be noted that its' minutes, daily confidential messages sent by the Soviet delegation to Moscow and other materials concerning preparation and conducting of the conference are the convincing disproof of many of the inventions about it which were being accumulated in the historiography over a long period of time. A majority of those inventions were in one way or another connected with the issue on the Yugoslavia's position and its role in convening the Conference and setting up the Cominform. A part of these inventions were mainly caused by a long-standing lack of access to the adequate sources and by some researchers' aspirations to compensate this lack by their speculative suppositions, formed at times as unjustifiably categorical assertions. In other cases, as mentioned above, mainly in regard to the Yugoslav official propaganda, the inventions were the results of a conscious falsification in the time-serving political interests caused by the 1948 conflict. This was a component of a wider Yugoslav propaganda myth on the origins of the conflict.⁴⁸

When speaking about the first of above-mentioned categories of the inventions, one should point out foremost various versions emerged in Western historiography in early 1950s and in some way or other remained at least until

⁴⁶ We can judge about some of Stalin's instructions, sent in the course of the 1947 Conference, from the responses given to him by the Soviet delegates. By comparing, for example, the information which VKP (b) representatives at the Conference, Zhdanov and Malenkov, received in telegrams from Stalin regarding the position of the CP of France, on the one hand, with Zhdanov and Malenkov's report sent to Stalin about their questions and remarks towards Duclos, on the other, one can understand what kind of instructions Stalin's telegram contained Procacci, ed., Adibekov, Di Biagio,

Gibianskii, Gori, Pons, co-eds., *The Cominform*, 327-329, 333). Another example is Zhdanov and Malenkov's telegram to Stalin notifying the receipt of his instructions to assign the Information Bureau with coordinating functions (*Ibid.*, 333).

⁴⁷ See, for example, my articles cited in notes 23, 25, 29.

⁴⁸ See about whole this myth in: L. Gibianskii, "The 1948 Soviet-Yugoslav Clash: Historiographic Versions and New Archival Sources" in J. Fischer, eds., *Jugoslavija v hladni vojni – Yugoslavia in the Cold War* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2004), 49-70; *Ibid.*, "Stolknovenie Stalin–Tito: mify i istoricheskaia real'nost'" in: M. Milošević, *Zbornik radova sa međunarodnog okruglog stola Tito – Staljin* (Belgrade: Arhiv Srbije i Crne Gore, 2007), 23-38. See also: L. Gibianskii, "The Soviet-Yugoslav Split" in K. McDermott, M. Stibbe, eds., *Revolution and Resistance in Eastern Europe: Challenges to Communist Rule* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2006), 17-36.

the 1980s, which alleged that the appearance of the Cominform was in the main the result of the internal struggle in the Soviet ruling establishment. According to those versions, the main advocate to set up this international body was Zhdanov who from the stage of planning of the action supposedly acted in coordination with most radical Eastern European communist leaders, especially with a preliminary collusion with the Yugoslav leadership headed by Tito.⁴⁹

Researchers who have had an opportunity to examine the now available documents on the establishment of the Cominform, including the author of this paper, have repeatedly stated that these documents do not contain any information which could allow to speak about a special Zhdanov's initiative, and even more so about his special line in the preparation and organization of the founding Conference. In contrast, the documental materials testify that Zhdanov who was directly in charged of this Conference in the Kremlin acted in a strict compliance with the decisions of Stalin and with members of the Politburo closest to Stalin (Zhdanov was only one of them).⁵⁰ The thesis about the alleged pre-Conference collusion of Zhdanov with the Yugoslav communist leadership to set up the Cominform can be disproved by Tito's telegram sent to Moscow a week before the Conference inquiring about at least the main agenda items of the forthcoming meeting. With Stalin's approval, Zhdanov demagogically responded to Belgrade that this would be decided at the Conference itself.⁵¹ So, in fact the leaders of the CPY, like the leaders of other CPs, invited to participate in the conference knew nothing about what was going to take place there. The invitations sent by Gomulka, the leader of Polish communists, as a formal initiator of the Conference informed them only about what had previously Stalin, the true initiator of the meeting, agreed with Gomulka. The invitations spoke of "information and opinion exchange on the situation in various countries." The invitations especially stressed that the Conference' organizers "were not aiming to establish any sort of organ of the international labour movement" but intended to establish a joint journal only.⁵² At the same time, as becomes clear from the now available documents, the Kremlin, in full secrecy and without any warning both from Gomulka and from other leaders of the invited CPs, decided to propose the creation of the Cominform with

⁴⁹ These versions were especially consistently developed in the works such as: F. Borkenau, *Der europäische Kommunismus: Seine Geschichte von 1917 bis zur Gegenwart* (Bern: Francke, 1952), 488-492; G. Ra'anan, *International Policy Formation in the USSR: Factional "Debates" during the Zhdanovschina* (Hamden, Connect.: Archon Books, 1983), 3, 8, 42-53, 75-76, 101, 103-106, 11-117

⁵⁰ See in more details: Gibianskii, "Dolgii put' k tainam", XXXV-XXXVII.

⁵¹ RGASPI, collection 77, inventory 4, file 57, 11; collection 558, inventory 11, file 108, 6 (№ 38); Č. Štrbac, *Jugoslavija i odnosi*, 229-230.

⁵² RGASPI, collection 77, inventory 4, file 57, 18; AJ, collection 836: Chancellery of the Marshal of Yugoslavia (Serbian abbreviation, KMJ) I-3-b/507, 1.

coordinating functions in the course of the Conference itself and to assure the adoption of such a resolution.⁵³ This plan was carried out by the VKP (b) delegation. It came as a surprise for all participants of the Conference, including the Yugoslav representatives.

When speaking about falsifications produced by Yugoslav propaganda versions and now disproved by the documentary materials, one needs first of all to dwell upon the inventions in Kardelj's memoirs about the Yugoslav representatives' position as well as positions of the representatives of most of the CPs-participants of the 1947 Conference concerning the establishment of the Cominform. Kardelj wrote that in response to Zhdanov's proposal on creating the Cominform as a coordinating permanent body Gomulka opposed the motion and the representatives of most CPs supported him. Among them, according to Kardelj's version, were the CPY delegation and the delegations of the CPs of France, Italy, and Czechoslovakia. Kardelj "recalled" as if the Yugoslav participants of the Conference generally declared themselves against establishing any international center of the CPs, even with only advisory functions. And as a result, the CPs' delegates agreed to set up the Cominform only after Zhdanov, though pressing hard, made concessions in favor of a "much milder" version of such body. Kardelj wrote that the Yugoslav consent was given only after he had telegraphed to Tito about this "much milder" variant and received Belgrade's corresponding sanction.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, the documents show that in fact Zhdanov and Malenkov, firstly, brought forward the proposal on the establishment of the Cominform not during official discussions but during behind the scenes talks with each delegation separately, and secondly, they received the support of all delegations immediately, except the one from Poland. In the course of exclusively bilateral discussions with the VKP (b) representatives, the Polish delegation indeed expressed its negative attitude towards setting up the Cominform, especially in view of the Soviet plans to announce it in public and to set up the body's headquarters in Warsaw. Gomulka opposed Moscow's plans first of all because, as he argued, the West would view the creation of such a body, announced openly, as the revival of the Comintern. According to him, the Polish participation in the Information Bureau and all the more its placing in Warsaw would lead to deterioration of Western attitudes towards Poland. In particular, Poland could lose the possibility to purchase goods in the West, which was of great importance for Poland. In addition, as to a political situation within Poland, Gomulka pointed out that the participation of the PPR in Cominform could interfere with prospects of merging of the Polish Socialist

⁵³ RGASPI, collection 77, inventory 3, file 90, 1-13; inventory 4, file 57, 12-13; Murashko ed., *Vostochnaia Evropa v dokumentakh rossiiskikh arkhivov*, Vol. I, 689-690.

⁵⁴ Kardelj, *Borba za priznanje*, 110-111.

Party with the PPR.⁵⁵ After three days of opposing, Gomułka was forced to agree with the Soviet plan. Moreover, he then, just as the Soviets wanted, made a speech at the Conference and *sui juris* proposed creation of the Information Bureau endowed with the functions to coordinate the work of the member-CPs.⁵⁶ However, during those three days when the Polish delegation and first of all Gomułka himself opposed the Soviet project no other participants of the conference supported these objections. On the contrary, Zhdanov and Malenkov reported to Moscow that all delegates they had spoken to, except the Polish ones, supported the Soviet position, and the Yugoslav delegation to whom the VKP(b)'s representatives spoke first (after they had received Polish objections) was particularly enthusiastic about it. Kardelj and Djilas expressed their full support for the Soviet plan immediately during the talks, without any delay. No "milder" variant of the Soviet proposal was discussed. The Yugoslav delegation did not mention that they needed to coordinate their actions with Tito. Kardelj and Djilas just stated that they did not need any endorsement. This statement came after the Polish objection to the Soviet plans to set up the Cominform in Warsaw, when, in the face of the primary Gomułka opposition, Zhdanov and Malenkov asked the Yugoslav and Czechoslovak representatives about the possible stationing of the Cominform's headquarters in Belgrade or Prague. Both the Yugoslav and Czechoslovak delegations, each taken separately, expressed their agreement to set up the headquarters in the capital of their country. But the Czechoslovak delegates said that their CP's Secretary General Rudolf Slánský who participated at the Conference had to meet with the Party Chairman Klement Gottwald to take counsel with him. In other words, it was necessary to obtain Gottwald's approval for final decision on Prague. The Yugoslav delegation at once gave its consent for Belgrade without Tito's approval.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Procacci ed., Adibekov, Di B'iadzho, Gibianskii, Gori, Pons co-eds., *The Cominform*, 325-326. Upon their return to Belgrade, Kardelj and Djilas in their report on the Conference delivered at the sitting of the CPY CC Politburo on 30 September 1947 noted that the Polish delegation had objected to publication of a communiqué about the Conference or any other its documents and preferred to leave the fact of its convening a secret. Gomułka believed that if the decision is made to set up the Cominform, this organ must be without coordinating functions and "strictly illegal", i.e. functioning in secret. B. Petranović, ed., *Zapisnici sa sednica Politburoa Centralnog komiteta KPJ* (11.

jun 1945 - 7. jul 1948) (Belgrade: Arhiv Jugoslavije, Službeni list SRJ, 1995), 214, 216). In contrast to this documentary collection by a renowned Yugoslav/Serbian historian Branko Petranović, Vladimir Dedijer when publishing the same minutes of this sitting of the CPY CC Politburo on 30 September 1947 completely distorted the meaning of this fragment by changing "strictly illegal" to "strictly legal" (Dedijer, *Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita*, Vol. III, 275), thus absolutely contradicting the archival original of the document (AJ, collection 507: CK SKJ, III/29, 3).

⁵⁶ Procacci ed., Adibekov Di B'iadzho, Gibianskii, Gori, Pons eds., *The Cominform*, 229-231, 333. See also: Gibianskii, "Kak voznik Kominform", 149-152.

⁵⁷ Procacci ed., Di B'iadzho, Gibianskii, Gori, Pons co-eds., *The Cominform*, 326.

Thus, Kardelj's version on the position of most CPs-participants of the 1947 Conference, including the CPY itself, does not reflect the reality. It is interesting that nothing that Kardelj wrote in his memoirs was in the confidential report on the 1947 Conference Djilas and he made at the CPY CC Politburo sitting on 30 September 1947 immediately upon their return to Belgrade after the Conference.⁵⁸ The memoir version is therefore the result of a propaganda falsification developed later as a result of the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict of 1948.

The minutes of the 1947 Conference and especially the reports sent by Zhdanov and Malenkov to Moscow from the conference together with some other documental materials associated with its organization prove also complete groundlessness of the two more Yugoslav propaganda versions invented in the aftermath of the Stalin-Tito conflict and widely spread in historiography. Both were first put in circulation by Vladimir Dedijer and can be put down as a part of conspiracy theory.

One of the versions concerned the role of the Yugoslav delegation in the bitter criticism the policy of the CPs of France and Italy was subject to at the Conference, because of "their opportunistic mistakes". The criticism was initiated by the VKP(b) delegation in Zhdanov's report and later supported by the representatives of other CPs-participants, among whom the Yugoslavs were most energetic: Djilas regarding the French CP and Kardelj mainly in relation to the CP of Italy.⁵⁹ According to the information Kardelj's and Djilas' reported after the Conference and also reflected later in their memoirs, they spoke at the meeting after having previously agreed with the Soviet representatives. If we are to believe Kardelj's memoirs, Zhdanov was the actual initiator of their statements since he had found out that the CPY delegates were very critical of the policy of the mentioned Western European CPs and thus asked Yugoslavs to express their opinions during the discussions. In his memoirs, Djilas portrayed the situation a little differently. He wrote that the Yugoslavs themselves, in their talks with Zhdanov and Malenkov, expressed their opinions about the necessity to criticize French and Italian communists

⁵⁸ See: Petranović ed., *Zapisnici sa sednica Politbiroa*, 213-219.

⁵⁹ In his memoirs, Djilas, whose memory was at times faulty, wrote that criticism in Zhdanov's report was allegedly of a general nature and Zhdanov did not especially mentioned the CPs of France and Italy but the Yugoslav delegates were first who did this (Djilas, *Vlast i pobuna*, 114). In reality, as the Conference minutes show Zhdanov's report contained a direct and sharp criticism of both those Parties Procacci ed., Adibekov, Di Biagio, Gibianskii, Gori, Pons, co-eds., *The Cominform*, 452-457). But it was decided at the end of the Conference to remove the critical part from Zhdanov's report when publishing the report (Ibid., 396-397). Moreover, that part of the report was also removed even from the copy of the Conference minutes kept in the archives of the Cominform to preserve its complete secrecy. The criticism was preserved only in the original minutes taken to the CC VKP (b) for keeping (Ibid., 1030-1031). All statements in the course of the discussion of Zhdanov's report, including the continuation of the attacks at the CPs of France and Italy, were not published at that time at all. The statements by Djilas and Kardelj were put on record in the Conference minutes see: Ibid., 252-263, 288-305.

while Zhdanov fervently approved them.⁶⁰ Using the information from Kardelj and Djilas, Dedijer already in early 1950s constructed a version that Zhdanov “very skillfully” pushed Kardelj and Djilas to express their criticism towards the political line of the CPs of France and Italy. And as if Zhdanov’s action was made in compliance with Stalin’s plan specifically aimed to cause discord between the CPY and the two largest, and as Dedijer stated, “most independent” Western European CPs at that time – the French and the Italian. “The creation of a schism” between the CPY and the CPs of France and Italy was intended, according to Dedijer’s version, to isolate Yugoslavia in the Communist movement and to make the CPY more vulnerable for the future Soviet attack which came about in 1948 but as if planned by Stalin already at the time of setting up the Cominform.⁶¹ The same version was repeated in Kardelj’s memoirs a quarter of a century later.⁶²

Another version authored by Dedijer was based upon allegations that Stalin planned to set up the Cominform’s headquarters just in Belgrade since he wanted to bind the Yugoslav communist regime to the Cominform “as tightly as he could” in order to “make it easier to hit” on Yugoslavia later. Dedijer stated as if a “discussion” on the issue, where the Cominform headquarters must be, took place at the Conference and some proposals in favour of Prague were brought forward but Stalin had instructed Zhdanov to set up the headquarters in Belgrade.⁶³ Kremlin’s entire action on setting up the Cominform, according to Dedijer, was made in pursuit of Stalin’s beforehand planned policy “against Yugoslavia”.⁶⁴

In addition to the fact that the first of the two above-mentioned conspiracy theories versions was not grounded on any factual data but only on simple “I believe it is so”, the creators of the version preferred not to dwell upon key issues that logically rose. Was the criticism of the CPs of France and Italy the Kremlin’s simple tactical device in pursuit of a subsequent attack at the Yugoslav regime, as the authors of the version argued? Did this criticism have an independent importance in the Soviet efforts to set up the Cominform? What real role did the criticism play in convening the 1947 Conference?

The Conference participants, Kardelj and Djilas, and via them the Yugoslav highest communist ranks, knew what the founders of the Cominform were thoroughly hiding from the world and what we now also know from the now available archival documents. It was that the criticism of the policy of the CPs

⁶⁰ Kardelj, *Borba za priznanje*, 108-109; Djilas, *Vlast i pobuna*, 114.

⁶¹ Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito* (edition in Cyrillic alphabet), 474-475, 476. This version was repeated in other Dedijer’s publications and was broadly used in the historiography: for example, V. Dedijer, *Izgnubljena bitka J.V. Staljina* (Rijeka: Liburnija, 1982), 149.

⁶² Kardelj, *Borba za priznanje*, 108-109.

⁶³ Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito* (edition in Cyrillic alphabet), 474.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 476.

of France and Italy, as was stated, because of their inadmissible concessions to the pressures from the “bourgeois circles” of their countries and “the American imperialism” occupied one of the most important places in the efforts of the Soviet delegation undertaken in the course of the Conference. In addition to the criticism in the report of Zhdanov himself, Zhdanov and partly Malenkov, in the course of the subsequent discussions on the report, repeatedly remarked and raised the questions destined to force the delegates of the both mentioned Western European CPs to accept the criticism.⁶⁵ As a result, the attack at the CPs under criticism supported by Eastern European delegates turned into one of the main parts of the Conference in general. It was spun by the representatives of the VKP (b) in accordance with the directive developed by the Kremlin before the Conference and conditioned by a serious discontent of the USSR leadership with the politics of the CPs of France and Italy. In particular, discontent with the CP of France was expressed on behalf of the VKP (b) CC in a confidential letter to its Secretary General Maurice Thorez already in early June 1947. The Soviet leadership informed the leaders of all Eastern European CPs invited later to the conference about the letter. This included Tito as well.⁶⁶ This means that he and his close circle were informed, to a certain extent, about the Kremlin’s existing claims towards the French CP. The progress of the Conference itself proved the gravity of these claims rather than some tactical device directed at Yugoslavs.

Just during those days in early June of 1947 when the letter on behalf of the VKP (b) CC was sent to Thorez, Stalin for the first time proposed to Gomulka to convene a conference of the CPs.⁶⁷ It is thus obvious that the Kremlin’s ruler from the very beginning planned the “tongue-lashing” of French communists as one of the most important goals of the meeting of the CPs and later extended it onto the CP of Italy.

The fact that Stalin attached great importance to this plan can be seen partly from the reports sent by Zhdanov and Malenkov to Moscow. As it was noted above, these reports have contained some mentions that in the course of the Conference the delegates of the VKP (b) had been receiving the Kremlin ruler’s special instructions in order to address certain statements and questions to the representatives of the French CP at the Conference.⁶⁸

Dedijer’s version, which was also repeated later by Kardelj, portraying as if the Soviet position concerning the CPs of France and Italy was only a

⁶⁵ See: Procacci ed., Adibekov, Di Biagio, Gibianskii, Gori, Pons co-eds, *The Cominform*, 262-265, 274-279.

⁶⁶ The Soviet letter to Thorez was published in: M.M. Narinskii, “Stalin i Torez, 1944-1947 gg. Novye materialy”, in *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, 1, 1996, 25. See on familiarization with the letter by Tito and other Eastern European leaders as well as the leadership of the British CP: RGASPI, collection 77, inventory 3, file 89, 5, 8-13 (also published in parts in: Murashko ed. et al., *Vostochnaia Evropa v dokumentakh rossiiskikh arkhivov. 1944-1953*, Vol. I, 632.

⁶⁷ See in more details: Gibianskii, *Dolgi put’ k tainam*, XXXIX-XLI.

⁶⁸ Procacci ed., Di B’iadzho, Gibianskii, Gori, Pons co-eds., *The Cominform*, 327-329.

tactical Yugoslav-oriented device, in no way corresponds with another quite significant circumstance that, apart from the VKP (b) delegation itself, representatives not only of the CPY but also of the CPs of Romania and Hungary spoke after Zhdanov with harsh criticism of the CPs of France and Italy⁶⁹ while delegates from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria supported criticism in a more moderate way.⁷⁰ When writing about such critical statements of the delegates of other CPs, Kardelj himself noted that Zhdanov and Malenkov “most probably” had talked to them beforehand as they had with the Yugoslavs.⁷¹ If so, then it appears that this all was done by no means because of a special account of Yugoslavs.

As for Dedijer’s second conspiracy version about Stalin’s alleged intention to locate the Cominform in Belgrade and the goals of this intention, the documental data mentioned above show that the Soviet plan envisioned placing the Cominform in Warsaw. So, this Dedijer’s version is also completely unfounded. It was only after the Poles had objected to the establishment of the Cominform and to its residence in Warsaw that Zhdanov and Malenkov had to raise the issue of Belgrade or Prague before the Yugoslav and Czechoslovak delegations. And the decision in favour of Belgrade was made as a result of such forced alternative.⁷² The documents related to the 1947 Conference do not contain any specific information how that decision was made. The report by Kardelj and Djilas at the CPY CC Politburo sitting of 30 September 1947 said that Zhdanov had communicated with Stalin, and the latter had decided to lo-

⁶⁹ Ibid., 264-269, 306-309. This critique was harsh but not as detailed as the Yugoslav.

⁷⁰ In his memoirs, Kardelj asserted that Gomulka and the Czechoslovak delegate did not participate in the attacks on the French and Italian CPs (Kardelj, *Borba za priznanje*, 109). It can be seen from the minutes of the Conference that it was not so. Speaking during the discussions of Zhdanov’s report, Gomulka supported the criticism and even gave his own arguments. He viewed it necessary to stress only that these Western CPs acted in a more difficult situation than the communists of Eastern Europe where the Soviet troops had come (Procacci ed., Adibekov, Di Biagio, Gibianskii, Gori, Pons (co-eds), *The Cominform*, 332-339). As for the Czechoslovak delegation, Slánský without any reserves expressed also his support for criticism but quite briefly (Ibid., 280, 281). Vladimír Poptomov, a member of the Bulgarian delegation, spoke in the same manner (Ibid., 332, 333).

⁷¹ Kardelj, *Borba za priznanje*, 109.

⁷² Procacci ed. Adibekov, Di B’iadzho, Gibianskii, Gori, Pons co-eds., *The Cominform*, 325-326, 333. It can be seen from the documents that in reality no “discussion”, about which wrote Dedijer and later – it may be under an influence of Dedijer’s description – Djilas repeated, took place at the Conference on where to place the headquarters of the Cominform (Djilas, *Vlast i pobuna*, 116-117). Zhdanov and Malenkov discussed the question of a possible choice between these two capitals with the Yugoslav and Czech delegations strictly confidentially. It seems they did not tell their interlocutors about the Soviet initial intention to locate the headquarters in Warsaw. In any way, the above-mentioned report made by Kardelj and Djilas at the sitting of CPY CC Politburo on 30 September 1947 noted only one alternative – Prague or Belgrade. There is no mentioning about the Soviet plan in relation to Warsaw (Petranović ed., *Zapisnici sa sednica Politbiroa*, 217). Dedijer and later Djilas wrote only about the proposal about Prague but did not even mention a “discussion” about Belgrade as the alternative to Prague.

cate the Cominform in Belgrade.⁷³ But before that Zhdanov and Malenkov had telegraphed to Stalin that they would inform him about “the final proposal on a residence of the Information Bureau’s headquarters” only after Slánský came back from consultations with Gottwald.⁷⁴ Slánský came back with a positive answer regarding Prague. However it is not clear from the documents available for researchers what was Zhdanov and Malenkov’s final proposal: whether it was them who eventually preferred the Yugoslav capital and sent such a proposal to Stalin, or Belgrade was the Kremlin dictator’s own choice. In any way, the documents make it obvious that Belgrade was not Stalin’s intended but forced choice since he had initially preferred Warsaw but had to give it up due to Polish brief, and apparently unexpected for him, objections.

We specifically dwelt upon on the issues of the 1947 Conference since among other conferences and, perhaps, in the Cominform’s entire activities this is one of the brightest examples how the use of documental sources accessible in the post-Communist period allows to unravel the pile of accumulated myths about those events. All the more surprising is the fact that some of those myths are still present in the historiography in one form or another, sometimes in a quite turned one. Moreover, this can be found even in the most representative scientific publications such as, for example, recently published *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*. The work which was created by more than seventy authors and claimed – in some cases justifiably – to provide the up-to-date generalization of the Cold War history, contains a chapter by Svetozar Rajak. By examining, in particular, “the Tito-Stalin split”, he, for example, writes about the 1947 Conference: “The Kremlin chose Yugoslav party representatives to spearhead the attack on the Italian and French Communist parties at the meeting that established the Cominform, and Belgrade was given the honor of hosting the new organization.”⁷⁵ In essence, this is a repetition of Dedijer’s version on Stalin’s allegedly purposeful pursuit to place the Cominform in Belgrade. With the only difference that whereas this Soviet decision appears in Dedijer’s version as an act aimed against the Yugoslav communist regime, Rajak, on the contrary, portrays this decision as an act of Stalin’s reward to Yugoslavs for their role in the attacks against the CPs of France and Italy. As was Dedijer’s version absolutely unsubstantiated, so was its unexpected transformation in that Rajak’s chapter not founded on any documental evidences. Rajak does not even mention that Stalin wanted to place the Cominform in Warsaw while Belgrade was his forced decision. Both in regard to the Cominform and the emergence and escalation of the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict in general, Rajak fully ignores the whole range of Soviet and Yugoslav archival

⁷³ Petranović ed., *Zapisnici sa sednica Politbiroa*, 217.

⁷⁴ Procacci ed., Adibekov, Di B'iadzho, Gibianskii, Gori, Pons co-eds., *The Cominform*, 326-327.

⁷⁵ M.. Leffler, O.A. Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Vol. I, “Origins”, 209.

documents that became available in the post-Communist time and the majority of which have been published or introduced into historical studies over the last two decades. Instead, he limits himself only to the material that Dedijer already used in accordance with the goals of the then Yugoslav propaganda. Moreover, Rajak characterizes Dedijer's publications as allegedly "a still unsurpassed insight into the Yugoslav side of the conflict and an accurate reading of Stalin's mindset".⁷⁶

Unlike the 1947 Conference, the following two Cominform Conferences of 1948 and 1949 which Yugoslavs did not attend were not mentioned in the memoirs of the participants. That is why there has been almost no information about these two conferences in the historiography. Again, only the Yugoslav propagandist version in relation to the 1948 Conference entirely devoted to the conflict between the Kremlin and the leadership of the communist regime of Yugoslavia stands out as an exception. The version concerning only some aspects of convening this Conference was put into circulation by the publications of the same Dedijer who referred significantly to confidential information sources he allegedly had and was not able to disclose. First of all, Dedijer stated that already during the preparation for the Conference, the Kremlin strenuously sought to ensure the presence of the Yugoslav representatives, even including Tito.⁷⁷ Secondly, Dedijer stated that "several participants" of the Conference "opposed the resolution against Yugoslavia to be adopted in this form and in the way as it was proposed by Russians". At the same time, in the above-mentioned biography of Tito published in 1953, Dedijer did not name those who, as he said, "opposed". Many years later, he wrote in his book *Izgnubljena bitka J.V. Staljina* as if "it was known for certain" that Romanian communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, during the Conference, "put several unpleasant questions" in regard to the Soviet accusations against the Yugoslav leadership. According to Dedijer, in the course of the discussions of the Yugoslav issue, the Soviet delegation countered those objections by stating that the Soviets possessed data confirming that Tito was an "imperialist spy".⁷⁸

As for the first of the above-mentioned Dedijer's statements, there are no evidences of Kremlin's special interest in Yugoslavia's participation either in the now available Soviet documents related to the 1948 Conference preparation or in the Yugoslav documents that contain information about Moscow – Belgrade contacts on the issue of the participation of the CPY representatives in the Conference. Neither there is any mentioning of the Soviet desire

⁷⁶ Ibid., 527.

⁷⁷ Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito* (edition in Cyrillic alphabet), 534-537; Dedijer, *Izgnubljena bitka J.V. Staljina*, 156-159.

⁷⁸ Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito* (edition in Cyrillic alphabet), 537; Dedijer, *Izgnubljena bitka J.V. Staljina*, 161.

to ensure Tito's participation. The VKP(b) CC's letter of 18 May 1948 to Tito signed by Suslov that Dedijer repeatedly referred to as the proof of his assertion⁷⁹ only misleads the reader. In fact, this letter was addressed and sent not only to Tito but to the leaders of all CPs, members to the Cominform. It contained the Soviet proposal (in essence, an instruction) to convene a conference "to discuss the issue of the situation in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia" specifying the date and the venue of the Conference. However, the letter contained neither special demand of the Yugoslav participation nor that of Tito.⁸⁰ On the whole as to the documental sources available to researchers, there is no evidence whatsoever whether Stalin wanted or not the CPY leadership's representatives to be present at the Cominform Conference on the Yugoslav issue when he have decided to hold the Conference. However, there are clear evidences that at least by the beginning of June 1948 he did not calculate on the Yugoslavs' presence and even did not want that. When Gomułka, for example, sent a telegram to Zhdanov in the beginning of May inquiring whether the Soviets believed it expedient for the Polish communist leadership to try to persuade Tito to attend the Conference, Zhdanov after a month of silence sent his negative reply.⁸¹

Zhdanov's report at the Conference and the draft resolution on the Yugoslav issue prepared in Moscow beforehand were written with the account of CPY representatives' absence. In particular, this was mentioned in the telegrams sent to Stalin by the VKP(b) delegation from the Conference.⁸² Therefore, Dedijer was absolutely wrong when he wrote that repeated invitation to the CPY CC, sent on behalf of the Conference on June 19 when the Conference had already started in fact its work, asking to delegate Yugoslav representatives,⁸³ was the proof of Kremlin's efforts to persuade the Yugoslavs to attend the Conference. The Soviet leadership was not guided by that at all. The idea to invite the Yugoslavs "on behalf of the Conference" aimed, as it could be judged, to formally observe "the democratic decorum" and to simultaneously demonstrate to the Conference' participants that the ruling tops of the Yugoslavia's re-

⁷⁹ Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito* (edition in Cyrillic alphabet), 534; Dedijer, *Izgubljena bitka J.V. Staljina*, 156.

⁸⁰ The original of the letter in Russian that remains deposited in the archives has been published by author of this paper in: L.Ia. Gibianskii, ed., "Sekretnaia sovetsko-iugoslavskaiia perepiska 1948 goda", in *Voprosy istorii*, 10, 1992, 152. See also: RGASPI, collection 77, inventory 3, file 103, 1-3.

⁸¹ AAN, zespół (collection) KC PZPR, 2609, 80, 82. Without waiting for Zhdanov to reply, Gomułka sent a telegram to Tito trying to persuade him to take part in the Cominform Conference. But, as is known, he did not receive a positive answer (Ibid., collection KC PPR, 295/VII-73, 12-13a, 16-17; AJ, collection 836: KMJ, I-3-b/514, 1, 5, 6).

⁸² Procacci ed., Adibekov, Di B'iadzho, Gibianskii, Gori, Pons co-eds., *The Cominform*, 488.

⁸³ Ibid., 506-515.

gime “themselves broke off” with the Cominform, the Communist Movement, “anti-imperialist, democratic camp” by ignoring the Conference.

As for the second of above-mentioned Dedijer’s statements, the only truth in it was that the Soviet participants of the Conference indeed touched upon the issue of possible presence of “Anglo-American agents” among CPY’s tops.⁸⁴ However, it was not said in response to delegates’ disagreements with the Soviet position. The now available documents indicate that the Conference participants did not express any disagreements to the Soviet position. This includes Gheorghiu-Dej, about whose “unpleasant questions” Dedijer allegedly “knew for certain”. In contrast, all representatives of the CPs, members to the Cominform, at once demonstrated their full support to the Kremlin’s accusations of the Yugoslav leadership. They not only picked up actively the Soviet thesis that there apparently were U.S. and British agents among the Yugoslav tops but themselves expressed the same convictions. This took place already during the two-day preliminary phase of the Conference while its gathered participants waited for the CPY CC to respond to their collective address to delegate Yugoslav representatives. The delegates of the VKP(b) actively used this time for the behind the scenes talks with each delegation to check their positions and try to secure their opposition to Belgrade.⁸⁵ That was, however, not needed: all delegations were ready to perform the roles assigned to them. They confirmed that at the Conference official sittings that followed.⁸⁶

In his studies of the history of the Cominform, the author of this paper has already noted elsewhere that the 1949 Conference, according to the minutes, was of a more routine and formal nature in comparison with the two

⁸⁴ Ibid., 483.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 482-490.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 506-595. In particular, the VKP (b) delegation noted first of all the Bulgarian communist figure Traicho Kostov and Secretary General of the CP of Italy Palmiro Togliatti among those participants of the Conference who have supported with the greatest readiness the Soviet invention about Western agents in the Yugoslavia’s leadership and immediately developed their own argumentation in support of such suspicions (Procacci ed., Adibekov, Di B’iadzho, Gibianskii, Gori, Pons co-eds., *The Cominform*, 483, 485). Togliatti’s position at the Conference which received the highest evaluation of the Soviet representatives and was communicated to Stalin (Ibid., 497) poses fairly delicate dilemma before a researcher. Over more than a decade and a half after the events of 1948, Togliatti wrote in his article concerning those events that the solidarity with the Soviet accusations of the CPY’s politics was induced by the traditional commitment to the unity and discipline in the international Communist Movement but those who supported the Soviet accusations of the Yugoslav leadership did not believe “the absurd police-like accusation”. Dedijer also referred to this statement of the leader of the Italian Communist Party (Dedijer, *Izgnubljena bitka J.V. Staljina*, 223). However, since we know now that at the 1948 Conference Togliatti not only agreed with these “absurd accusations” but also on his part developed and justified them, not in public but in his private communication with the Soviet representatives, one can raise a question when he had recourse to lies: in his communications with the Kremlin’s emissaries at the Conference or in his above-mentioned article?

previous conferences.⁸⁷ If the importance of the 1947 Conference was determined by such major events as the establishment of the Cominform itself and the proclamation of the doctrine of the confrontation of the two camps and the importance of the 1948 Conference was marked by public anathema of Tito's regime, the Conference of 1949, in essence, did not produce anything new. Everything what was said during that Conference was a simple continuation of what had already been said and proclaimed at the first two conferences. This was also true of the Yugoslav issue, among others. In principle, it was repeated about the issue what had been said at the 1948 Conference. New was only an even greater, extreme hostility to the Yugoslavia's communist leaders that were this time called "the clique of killers and spies" which had accomplished a "transition to fascism". That was indeed the maximum of the arsenal of criminal-political abuse used by the Soviet rulers and their communist accomplices. It is evident from the archival materials on the Conference preparation that it was Stalin who directly orchestrated this clampdown.⁸⁸

Having mainly focused on the documents which help to reconstruct the real, not mythologized, picture of those three Cominform Conferences, let us dwell more briefly on other thematic groups of the available sources on the history of this international communist body.

The second, after the conferences' documents, group of sources consists of the materials on the two – as it was then formulated – "sittings" of the Cominform. The first sitting took place on 30/31 October 1947 in Belgrade where the Cominform residence had been placed. To be more precise, the Cominform did not still have then its own staff, its only organizational structure was the editorial board of the newspaper *For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy!*. During the sitting in question the delegated representatives of the Central Committees of the Cominform member CPs set up an interim editorial board to publish first numbers of the newspaper. The plans of those numbers, circulation, distribution quotes among the CPs and the publication expenditures to be borne by each CP were also agreed there. In addition, arrangements were made at the sitting, concerning the organizational measures the governing bodies of each CP were to take to ensure regular contributions to the newspaper and other materials for publication. Another analogous sitting took place on 18 January 1948 in the suburbs of Belgrade. It was, in fact, dedicated to the same issues as those of the sitting of October 1947. At this one, the permanent staff of the editorial board of the newspaper and the annual budget were approved, and the shares of each CP's publication expenses were somewhat modified. Nothing was publicly announced about the first sitting, and its convening remained secret. As for the other, as already mentioned in

⁸⁷ Gibianskii, "The Last Conference of the Cominform", 658. See the Conference minutes in: Procacci ed., Adibekov, Di Biagio, Gibianskii, Gori, Pons co-eds., *The Cominform*, 670-1005.

⁸⁸ RGASPI, collection 558, inventory 11, file 402, 1-24.

the beginning of the paper, a very brief official communiqué about the sitting was published two weeks later. It follows from the information from some RGASPI materials that shorthand records or minutes were taken at both sittings. They were kept in the Cominform's archives and later sent to the VKP(b) CC. According to the documental data, at least some of them are kept in the APRF.⁸⁹ In addition, various fragments of the materials of the 18 January 1948 sitting are available for researchers in the RGASPI.⁹⁰ As for the sitting of the end of October 1947, various information about it, including enough detailed data, can be found in the reports of a number of its participants to the governing bodies of their CPs. In particular, the author of this paper has had an opportunity to see such written reports or records of the oral reports in the archives of Poland, Czech Republic, and Bulgaria.⁹¹

All these materials indicate the Soviet absolute domination at these sittings and show that the resolutions adopted there had been originally taken in Moscow. The Yugoslav side as the host was playing an active role at both sittings. It was decisively supporting the Soviet decisions and preliminarily agreed their own proposals with the Soviets who until the end of the winter of 1948, as a rule, accepted Yugoslav proposals and even asked for the opinion of the Yugoslavia's leadership on some issues of the Cominform's organization and of nominations at the editorial board and staff of the Cominform's newspaper.⁹²

A special group of the Cominform documents consist of minutes and other materials of the sittings of its Secretariat. The decision to set up this body, never announced in public, was taken at the 1948 Conference.⁹³ Each member CP had one representative at the Secretariat. The activities of the Secretariat were in fact directed by Mikhail Suslov who represented the VKP(b) there. The Secretariat held four sittings over the period of Cominform's existence: on

⁸⁹ See in more details: Adibekov, Gibianskii, Yermolaeva, "The Information Bureau of the Communist Parties", 1038-1039.

⁹⁰ RGASPI, collection 575, inventory 1, file 52, 1-7, 25-36.

⁹¹ AAN, collection KC PPR, file 295/VII-73, 84-87; SÚA, **fond (collection) 100/24, sv. (inventory) 91, a.j. (file) 1087, 3-8**; TsDA, collection 1 b, inventory 6, **a.e. file 372, 1**.

⁹² See more in detail about the sittings of October 1947 and January 1948 and the establishment of the newspaper: Gibianskii, "Kominform v deistvii", *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, 1 1996, 149-159. Dedijer who, as in many other cases, played the role of an unreliable source or simply invented information, wrote on the occasion of a period shortly after the founding conference, in spite of historical reality, that the Cominform had only "one meeting which considered the issue of the editorial board" of the newspaper. Dedijer asserted that this took place on 15 December 1947 (Dedijer, *Josip Broz Tito* (edition in Cyrillic alphabet), 476). Though this statement contradicted the published official communiqué about the second sitting that have taken place in mid-January 1948 and hence Dedijer did not know anything about the first one at all, his invention nonetheless was uncritically used and spread in historiography as, for example, in: B. Petranović ed., *Zapisi sa sednica Politbiroa*, 599, note 607.

⁹³ Procacci ed., Adibekov, Di Biagio, Gibianskii, Gori, Pons co-eds., *The Cominform*, 602-605.

July 5, 1948, on 14-15 June 1949, on 20-22 April and 22-24 November in 1950. In essence, those were a kind of mini-conferences that differed from the three “big” conferences by the fact that they were not so much devoted to political and ideological issues but rather practical-organizational matters. The proceedings of the sittings were reflected in their minutes, available to researchers mainly in the RGASPI, and in some associated materials which were kept in the same archives, including the texts of participants’ speeches signed by the speakers.⁹⁴ The sittings considered such issues as implementation of the decisions of the previous Cominform conferences by the member CPs; agenda of forthcoming conferences; results and plans of publishing of the newspaper *For a Lasting Peace, for a People’s Democracy!* and issues of its financing; the work of newspapers and other media of some CPs. The sitting of the Secretariat in November 1950 was marked by the beginning of the course planned by Stalin to expand the Cominform’s functions and to bestow it, to a greater extent, with a prescriptive authority that would remind the practice of the Comintern (we will dwell on this later). Among other mentioned issues, the tasks of fighting against the Yugoslavia’s communist regime acquired greater importance at the sittings of the Secretariat that was set up at the same Cominform Conference of 1948 which announced the break-up with Belgrade. In particular, this type of tasks determined, in essence, the agenda of the first sitting of the Secretariat that took place on 5 July 1948, almost immediately after the anathema of the Yugoslav leaders had been proclaimed. The Secretariat sitting of April 1950 also focused, to a greater extent, on the Yugoslav issue. That sitting examined the implementation of the resolutions of the 1949 Conference, including the “Yugoslav CP in the power of murderers and spies” resolution, by the member Parties.

Most numerous is the group of the Cominform documents of the so called Chancellery of the Secretariat. The Chancellery was set up as a permanent executive body, i.e. the Secretariat’s apparatus. The decision to establish this office was taken at the first sitting of the Secretariat on July 5, 1948. The decision assigned Suslov and the Romanian representative (the Cominform headquarters had been moved from Belgrade to Bucharest due to the conflict with Tito’s regime) to submit concrete proposals on the organization of the Chancellery at the subsequent Secretariat’s sitting.⁹⁵ At the following sitting of the Cominform Secretariat that took place almost a year later on 14-15 June 1949, such proposals were indeed submitted and approved.⁹⁶ But that was a formality. In reality, the Chancellery was set up and functioned long before that, in late summer – early autumn of 1948. The Chancellery was de facto

⁹⁴ See the minutes and signed texts of speeches, which were delivered in the course of discussion, in: RGASPI, collection 575, inventory 1, files 49, 80, 120-123.

⁹⁵ RGASPI, collection 575, inventory 1, file 49, 8-9.

⁹⁶ RGASPI, collection 575, inventory 1, file 80, 26-27.

established by the resolution adopted by the Politburo of the VKP(b) CC on August 26, 1948.⁹⁷

According to this resolution, the Chancellery included four sub-divisions for operational work: a liaison department, a technical secretariat, a translation bureau and a general service department. Leonid Baranov who previously served as the deputy head of the Foreign Relations Department of the VKP(b) CC was appointed as the head of the Chancellery. He combined his duties in the Cominform office with those at the VKP(b) CC machinery. In early 1950s, after Baranov's replacement, Anatolii Kotelenets, also sent from Moscow, was appointed the head of the Chancellery. Later, towards the end of the Cominform's existence, the Chancellery was temporarily headed by other people, but they were invariably sent from the USSR. Soviet representatives were also the managerial personnel of all departments of the Chancellery as well as all personnel at the so called political positions (the readers) and even almost all technical staff like radio technicians and engineers, cipher clerks, translators, stenographers, typists, and secretaries. Only a significant part of operating personnel, mainly general services staff and security, was Romanian.

The major part of the Chancellery's work consisted of collecting and analyzing information on various aspects of the situation and activities of the CPs, primarily those which were members of the Cominform. Main focus was attached to foreign and domestic policies of the Eastern European countries of the Soviet bloc where the CPs were in power. A significant part of the information which interested the Chancellery's management was being obtained from a variety of memoranda and reports received from the leading bodies of the CPs. These memoranda and reports were systematically being requested by the Chancellery from the CCs of the above-mentioned Parties. The materials received from the CPs of the Eastern European people's democracies contained data on the measures to establish in those countries a political, social-economic and ideological order analogous to the Soviet. The reports of the CPs of France and Italy contained information on their actions against "imperialism and reaction", "American dictates", and on organization of the "the movement of the Partisans of Peace" initiated by the Kremlin. Besides these materials, Chancellery's political officers analyzed the press and other printed media published in the countries of people's democracies and in Western European states. In addition, Soviet officers among the managerial personnel and readers of the Chancellery were periodically sent mainly to Eastern European countries of the Soviet bloc to familiarize themselves with states of affairs there. Reports on the results of the trips, often quite detailed, were submitted to the Chancellery. Various information and analytic materials on the situation in

⁹⁷ Murashko ed. et al, *Vostochnaia Evropa v dokumentakh rossiiskikh arkhivov 1944-1953*, Vol. I, 914-915.

one or another of these countries, and on the policies of the CPs were compiled in the Chancellery on the basis of all those sources. These materials in most cases were sent to the VKP (b) CC. Many materials the Chancellery received from the leading bodies of the Cominform member CPs were also sent there. By taking into account the fact that the Chancellery, as can be seen from the documents, worked practically in accordance with the instructions sent from the VKP (b) CC, it is obvious, that this body was, in essence, one of the Soviet supervisory-controlling instruments in relation to the CPs and the communist regimes judging from the Chancellery's staff, direct subordination, and its practical activity.⁹⁸

Now in the archives, the whole documentations of the Chancellery, compiled there and sent, together with numerous materials reflecting the organizational structure of the Chancellery and its correspondence with Moscow and the CPs on various issues, provide great opportunities for research of Cominform's specific daily activities and its real role. The documents of the Chancellery, to a greater extent, make it possible to follow also the role one or another of the CPs and communist regimes played in the work of the Cominform.

Yet another and also very numerous category of sources, partly above-mentioned, – the documents of the participating CPs – is no less important for the study of the role of individual CPs and communist regimes in the organization and operation of the Cominform as well as for study of the history of this international communist body in general. Most significant are the Soviet materials, mainly kept in the Russian archives. The materials give the opportunity, to a certain extent, to see the real mechanism of the Kremlin's management of the Cominform, strategic aspirations of the Soviet leadership and their tactics in implementing their political steps through the Cominform. However, it is very often that in the Russian archives a historian has no access to many of the documents of the Soviet top leadership under Stalin, especially the materials of Stalin himself, concerning foreign policy issues, and including the Cominform activities. This makes it significantly difficult to find out about the Kremlin's behind the scenes decisions, motivations and circumstances of their adoption and calculations. As mentioned above, the materials of other Cominform member CPs in the archives of corresponding European countries are, as a rule, more available. These materials allow, first of all, to research the degree of activities and the real place of each of the mentioned CPs within the Cominform, specifics of interrelations of one or another Party with this body, with other CPs of the Cominform and especially with the Soviet patron.

⁹⁸ See on the organization and daily activities of the Chancellery of the Cominform Secretariat, for example: Gibianskii, *The Last Conference of the Cominform*, 646-649; Adibekov, *Kominform i poslevoennaia Evropa*, 172-182.

The minutes and various associated documents of the three “Conferences” and two “sittings” of the Cominform and later the four sittings of the Secretariat examined above demonstrate, among other issues, the place the Yugoslavia’s aspect occupied in the activities of the Cominform. Not to a lesser, but perhaps a greater degree it can be seen from the materials of the daily work of the Chancellery and documentations of the CPs which participated in the Cominform. In connection with the period preceding the 1948 conflict, the now available sources allow in an large enough measure to see the real Yugoslav role in setting up the Cominform and during the initial phase of the Cominform’s work, and to reveal interrelations of Yugoslavia with the USSR, neighboring communist regimes on the Balkans as well as with the regimes in other Eastern European countries of the Soviet bloc at those times. In connection to the period after the break with Yugoslavia, the documents reveal important behind the scenes aspects of how the Cominform was used as a tool of conducting the real cold war against Tito’s regime by its former communist allies. The daily life of this war, starting from mid-1948 that occupied almost key place in the work of the Cominform can be especially traced on the basis of the last two above-mentioned categories of sources – the documents of the Chancellery and those of the CPs participated in the Cominform. A large array of various materials of these two categories allow to research practical efforts undertaken during the war by Cominform’s office itself and the CPs, which represent a testimony on the USSR and Eastern European countries of the Soviet bloc, and on their state structures.

Main efforts were put through a large-scale propaganda aimed against the Yugoslav authorities and portrayed their foreign and domestic politics in the vein of those accusations that were brought, at the Kremlin’s will, against Yugoslavia’s communist leadership and written, in a concentrated form, in the resolutions of the Cominform conferences of 1948 and 1949. The propaganda was carried out through the press and various printed media, oral agitation and, in case of the USSR and the countries of the Soviet bloc, through their networks of state broadcasting. A largest part of the propaganda in each of countries of the Soviet bloc and all the more in the case of the French and Italian CP’s propaganda were oriented to the population of their own country. At the same time, there is a radio-propaganda from the USSR and some people’s democracies for outside world. It was carried out through broadcasting of these countries in foreign languages addressed to foreign listeners. The propaganda aimed at the peoples of Yugoslavia was a special sphere. It was carried out first of all through radio broadcasting in the languages of the main peoples of Yugoslavia as well as the language of some national minorities, and secondly, through illegal drop shipment of various printed products such as newspapers, leaflets, brochures in those language in Yugoslavia.

The materials of the Cominform Secretariat Chancellery and the documents of the member CPs make it possible, to a large extent, to research the place and role of the Cominform in the mechanism of implementing the mentioned propaganda and to a certain extent evaluate its nature, scale and organization. The Chancellery itself together with the editorial board of *For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy!* participated in the propaganda in three main ways. One was publication of the newspaper where materials on Yugoslav topics occupied extremely important place. Another way was the work of the Cominform's radio center in Bucharest supervised by the Chancellery that broadcasted for Yugoslavia allegedly as the broadcasts of "a radio station of Yugoslav patriots" titled "A Free Yugoslavia". The third line was publication of leaflets and brochures for illegal drop shipment in Yugoslavia and organization of these shipments.⁹⁹ In addition, the Chancellery occasionally requested, received, analyzed and sent to the VKP (b) CC information from the governing bodies of the CPs of Eastern Europe, France and Italy about the anti-Yugoslav propaganda of these CPs and people's democracies. Effectively, the Chancellery played the role of the Kremlin's supervisor which encouraged and controlled their work in this field. These documents kept in hundreds of various archival files can serve as important source for a modern researcher to study the work of the Cominform itself as well as the member CPs/ communist regimes.

The CPs and the communist authorities of the Yugoslavia's neighbors, namely Balkan countries and Hungary played special role in this propaganda. The radio stations broadcasted from here were located most closely to the Yugoslav territory what gave audibility advantages to their cross-frontier broadcasting. No less important was the bordering position of these countries which made them natural points, on the one hand, of receiving Soviet and Cominform supporters that illegally fled Yugoslavia and became political émigrés, and, on the other, for illegal drop shipment of propagandist materials and people with various special tasks in Yugoslavia. This work, especially active in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary, was reflected in numerous documents of these regimes, especially in regular and final reports systematically sent to the Chancellery of the Cominform Secretariat from the central committees of those CPs.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ See, for example, a report of the Chancellery of the Cominform Secretariat on publications of propagandist materials intended for drop shipment in Yugoslavia and on their mailing to the countries of people's democracies and Austria where from the materials were sent to Yugoslavia. The document was published in: Volokitina ed. et al., *Sovetskii faktor v Vostochnoi Evrope. 1944-1953*, Vol. II, 216-222

¹⁰⁰ Among numerous materials of this kind a typical one is, for example, the report for the second half of 1950 on the drop shipment of "anti-Tito literature" in Yugoslavia from Bulgaria. The document was sent from the Central Committee of the Bulgarian CP to the Chancellery of the Cominform Secretariat. RGASPI, collection 575, inventory 1, file 212, 136-142.

The archival materials of this kind that the author of the paper has had the opportunity to study also contained, apart from anything else, large information about organization of secret ratline missions in Yugoslavia from the territories of these countries. As a rule, for this purpose were used pro-Soviet political émigrés from Yugoslavia whom the Cominform, or more specifically its Chancellery, organized with the help of the authorities of the Balkan people's democracies and Hungary. Operations were prepared and implemented with the decisive participation of the state security organs and border police of those countries. In most cases, however, the data the researcher was able to examine concerned the people given the task to deliver propagandist materials to Yugoslavia's territory and illegally distribute or organize such distribution through their friends or relatives. Apparently, the question whether the ratline was given other specific missions demands further research and the use of other types of sources, and, first of all, documentations of state security services of the then communist regimes in the countries bordering Yugoslavia. The ratline reports sent to the Chancellery of the Cominform Secretariat contained evaluations of the success of the materials distribution in Yugoslavia. These evaluations and their reliability undoubtedly need to be, if possible, checked against the data in the state security documents and other special services of Yugoslavia.

As can be seen from documents studied by the author of the paper, the people sent to Yugoslavia which later illegally returned from there, served simultaneously as information sources on the situation in Yugoslavia and the mood of the population. People fled Yugoslavia and diplomats of the Soviet bloc' countries serving there were another source of information. Yugoslav press and radio, reports by Western media from Yugoslavia were also used as a special source. As can be judged from the archival materials, the Soviet organizers of the struggle against the Yugoslavia's regime, the Kremlin's subordinates in Eastern European countries of the Soviet bloc and the Cominform administration suffered from the lack of information about what was really going on in Yugoslavia and tried to use the sources mentioned above to fill in that gap. Special role was given to the people's democracies, predominantly the Balkan, bordering Yugoslavia. However this was done not so much to ascertain the truth but to use the obtained information in propaganda against the Yugoslavia's regime. In this perspective, corresponding services of Bulgaria were quite active. Since early 1950s, its official telegraph agency BTA even produced a secret weekly called "The Confidential Bulletin about Tito's Clique". Its materials were used in "anti-Tito" propaganda. The bulletin was regularly sent to the Chancellery of the Cominform Secretariat and forwarded to the VKP(b) CC.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ RGASPI, collection 575, inventory 1, file 194, 213, 226, 227, 229, 260.

A special area of the activities of the Cominform, its Kremlin managers and their Eastern European subordinates against the Yugoslavia's regime was the Yugoslav political emigration in the countries of the Soviet bloc. As already been stated, in addition to those who fled Yugoslavia to the bordering people's democracies, this "revolutionary emigration" was also formed out of Yugoslav citizens which had been sent to work or study abroad before the conflict, in most cases to the USSR and the countries of Eastern Europe, and became defectors after the conflict broke out. Under the leadership of authorities, both in the USSR and everywhere in people's democracies, émigrés organizations were set up and émigrés press in main languages of the peoples of Yugoslavia were published. General supervision of the émigrés and coordination of their activities, especially in Eastern European countries, was imposed, to a certain extent, by the Chancellery of the Secretariat of the Cominform and through it by the Kremlin.¹⁰² This sphere of Chancellery's work and of the governing bodies of people's democracies which had systematic contacts with the Chancellery in this connection have been also reflected in numerous documents of the Chancellery, central committees of the Eastern European CPs and the VKP(b) CC. Special role was again played by the Balkan people's democracies and Hungary: they hosted relatively large Yugoslav political émigrés, perhaps, the largest after that in the USSR, and, as bordering Yugoslavia, were at the "forefront" of the anti-Tito struggle. In particular, the émigrés newspapers, published in these countries, first of all in Romania and Bulgaria, played an important role in the propagandist materials illegally sent to Yugoslavia.

The minutes of the four meetings of the representatives of the "Yugoslav revolutionary émigrés" group existed in the countries of the Soviet bloc may be singled out as another, the sixth thematic category of the sources.¹⁰³ The meetings were held under the aegis of the Chancellery of Cominform Secretariat and took place in the suburbs of Bucharest on 27-28 July 1950, 17-18 January 1951, 17-19 January 1952 and 23 -25 April 1953. All of them were driven by the idea of the necessity to coordinate efforts of the organized émigrés groups formed in the USSR and all Eastern European people's democracies. Émigrés "coordination center" was set up at the second meeting. General Pero Popivoda that had fled Yugoslavia was appointed its head. The fourth meeting was also proclaimed as the first conference of the "Union of Patriots for Liberation of the Peoples of Yugoslavia from the Fascist Oppression of the Tito-Ranković Clique and Impe-

¹⁰² This was particularly reflected in one of the first documents of the Soviet leadership regarding the Yugoslav political émigrés – the resolution of the VKP (b) CC Politburo of 3 April 1949. It envisioned publication of émigrés newspapers and in fact measures on organizing émigrés groups in the USSR and people's democracies. The resolution specifically stipulated that "the apparatus of the Informburo Secretariat" rendered "assistance to Yugoslav communists" in the countries of Eastern Europe. The document was published in: Volokitina ed. et al., *Sovetskii faktor v Vostochnoi Evrope. 1944-1953*, Vol. II, 87-88.

¹⁰³ RGASPI, collection 575, inventory 1, files 176, 211, 250, 279.

rialist Captivity” formed of the emigrants. This organization was also headed by Popivoda. As can be seen from the documents, neither the “Patriots’ Union”, nor its member-organizations of Yugoslav émigrés set up across the countries of the Soviet bloc, nor the meetings of their representatives in fact had any independent significance. They were merely attributes to those political manipulations the Kremlin considered it necessary to use and organized them through the Chancellery of Cominform Secretariat.¹⁰⁴ However, the minutes of the four meetings of the émigrés representatives mentioned above, as well as the expansive archival documentation of the Chancellery itself and the member CPs regarding the Yugoslav emigration are interesting as a source to examine the mechanism of using the emigration in a general strategy of anti-Tito efforts. At the same time, they represent one of the sources to study the life of émigrés itself, its situation and problems they faced in the countries of the Soviet bloc, the moods, behavioral motivation.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that from the early 1951, in contrast to the previous period, the Kremlin in fact ceased to convene the general “Cominform Conferences” and Secretariat sittings. As a result, main attributes that maintained its façade as a collective body of the member CPs thus were suspended. Some researchers which specifically examined this issue, and Russian historian Grant Adibekov especially, linked this change to the failure of Stalin’s attempt to “expand Cominform’s functions” and assign it with directive powers towards member CPs. As already mentioned above, this attempt was announced at the sitting of the Cominform Secretariat on 22-24 November 1950. It was planned to transform the Secretariat into a permanent body headed by a General Secretary. A corresponding resolution adopted at that sitting of the Secretariat envisioned convening a Cominform conference to approve the planned reorganization.¹⁰⁵ It had the intention to convene a conference before the end of 1950. However, it did not happen despite the initiated preparation. Stalin’s plan was not implemented either. Adibekov and some other authors believed that Togliatti whom Stalin saw as the Cominform’s General Secretary refused such appointment and was supported by the ruling top of the CP of Italy. Togliatti even expressed to Stalin, certain doubts about the efficiency of the Cominform’s activities and, thus his doubts on utility of this body.¹⁰⁶ Re-

¹⁰⁴ One can gain an idea of the methods of organizing the conferences from, for example, a special report on the outcomes of the first conference sent to Stalin on 7 August 1950 by Mikhail Suslov and the Chairman of the Foreign Policy Commission of the VKP (b) CC Vagan Grigor’ian. The document was published in: Murashko ed. et al., *Vostochnaia Evropa v dokumentakh Rossiiskikh arkhivov. 1944-1953*, Vol.II, 395-399.

¹⁰⁵ RGASPI, collection 575, inventory 1, file 122, 98-100. See more in detail about the preparation and convening of this sitting of the Cominform Secretariat in: Adibekov, “Kominform i poslevoennaiia Evropa”, 206-218.

¹⁰⁶ Togliatti’s letter of 4 January 1951 to Stalin and an information memorandum on the position of the leadership of the CP of Italy sent to the VKP (b) CC dated of 12 February 1951 were

searchers do not yet have available the documental data on how Stalin treated Togliatti's actual rejection and arguments. It is revealing that the planned Cominform conference aimed to approve the projected reorganization did not take place. The issue of reorganization itself was never raised again.

Cominform conferences and the sittings of its Secretariat were never convened again. But the Cominform's working apparatus – its Chancellery and the editorial board of *For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy!* newspaper with their subordinate services – still operated.

Stalin continued to use the Cominform as a tool of his policy but, apparently did not pin any serious plans on it. After Stalin's death, his Kremlin's successors had to gradually understand the necessity to get rid of the Cominform that had much compromised itself, first of all, by its role in the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict.¹⁰⁷

published in: *Istochnik*, Moscow, 3, 1995, 149-152; Procacci ed. Adibekov, Gibinaskii, Gori, Pons co-eds., *The Cominform*, 417 -422. See also: Adibekov, "Stalin, Togliatti e il Cominform".

¹⁰⁷ See also Alexander Stykalin's paper especially devoted to that topic in this volume.

Aleksandar Životić

Institute for Recent History of Serbia
Belgrade

SOVIET FACTOR IN YUGOSLAV-ALBANIAN RELATIONS (1953–1961)

Abstract: The paper analyzes Soviet perception of relations between Yugoslavia and Albania during the years of normalization of relations between Yugoslavia and Eastern Bloc countries. The period was a tumultuous one and witnessed stormy political breaks within the socialist world in 1956, new confrontations and repeated lessening of tensions. The research presented here is based on published and unpublished archival sources of Yugoslav, Soviet and Albanian origin, available historiography and memoirs.

Key words: *Balkans, Yugoslavia, Albania, Soviet Union, Josip Broz Tito, Enver Hoxha, Cold War, socialist world, ideological confrontations, normalization of relations*

The process of normalization of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union was accelerated by the following events: Stalin's death in March 1953, the accession of the Eisenhower administration to power in the United States, Yugoslavia's rapprochement with the West and creation of the Balkan Pact with Greece and Turkey. The process which started in the middle of 1953 with Lavrenti Beriya's initiative, for which there are no available sources that can give us a clearer picture of the position of the Soviet party leadership, continued in 1954 with secret correspondence between the Soviet and Yugoslav party leaderships. This had serious repercussions for the normalization of relations between Yugoslavia and Soviet satellites.¹ Considering the character

¹ For more on the beginning of the normalization process between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, see: A. S. Anikeev, *Kak Tito ot Stalina ushel. Jugoslavija, SSSR i SShA v nachal'nyy period 'holodnoi voiny' (1945–1957)* (Moscow: Institute of Slavonic Studies RAS, 2002); A. B. Edemskii, *Ot konflikta k normalizacii. Sovietsko-yugoslavskie otnosheniya v 1953–1956 godah* (Moscow: Institute of Slavonic Studies RAS, 2008); E. Калинова, И. Баева, *Следвоенното десетилетие на българската външна политика (1944–1955)* (Sofia: Polis Publishers, 2003); J. Vykoukal, B. Litera, M. Tejchman, *Východ, vznik, vývoj a rozpad sovětského bloku 1944–1989*, Prague 2000;

of the confrontation between Yugoslavia and Albania, the beginning of the normalization process had a specific course as well.

The process of normalization between Yugoslavia and Albania started with negotiations over border demarcation and cessation of border incidents. Even though this event was relatively trivial, it marked the beginning of contacts between the representatives of the two countries which was supposed to result in the normalization of mutual relations. Next step toward normalization was the initiative of the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for opening a Yugoslav diplomatic mission in Tirana and vice versa.

During the normalization process with Yugoslavia, relations between Albania and the Soviet Union intensified. As a result of improved relations, Mehmed Shehu was appointed Prime Minister, and Liri Belishova, back in the country after two years of studying in Moscow, became Secretary of the Central Committee. Besides, Soviet navy ships visited Albanian ports, and economic delegations and delegations of several social organizations exchanged visits as well.² Enver Hoxha announced in the parliament additional Soviet aid for Albania's agricultural development.³ In order to obtain urgent economic aid Albania intensified contacts with Soviet representatives.⁴ Cooperation in the area of education for Albanian party members in Moscow was also intensified.⁵ Berishova, in Moscow at the time, asked permission to learn more about

J. Pelikán, *Jugoslávie a východní blok 1953–1958* (Prague: Karolinum, 2001); *Balkan posle Drugog svetskog rata* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, Kultura, 1996); *Velike sile i male države u Hladnom ratu 1945–1955* (Belgrade: SD Publik. 2003); *Spoljna politika Jugoslavije* (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, Beoknjiga, 2008); Dj. Borozan, "Posrednik mira između gvozdjenih zavesa (Razgovori Tito–Hruščov u Moskvi 1956)", I, *Vojnoistorijski glasnik*, 1, 1997, 93–114, and II, *Vojnoistorijski glasnik*, 2-3, 1997, 133–153; Dj. Tripković, "Uspon i pad jugoslovensko-sovjetskih odnosa 1956. godine", *Istorija XX veka*, 2, 1998, 129–141; Dj. Tripković, "XX kongres Komunističke partije Sovjetskog Saveza i jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi", *Arhiv*, 2, 2001, 200–212; L.J. Dimić, "Josip Broz i Nikita Sergejevič Hruščov. Razgovori u Beogradu. 27. maj – 2. jun 1955", *Istorijski glasnik*, 1-2, 1997, 55–66.

² Russian State Archives for Contemporary History (Russian abbreviation is RGANI), 5-OO Central Committee of the Communist Party of USSR (hereinafter CC CPSU), o. 128- Commission on relations with foreign communist parties (Russian abbreviation KVIKP), d. 153, l. 43-44, Note on the conversation between M. J. Hochev, counsellor at the Soviet Embassy in Tirana with the Secretary of Central Committee of Labour Party of Albania, (hereinafter CC LPA) Pita Marko on recently held elections and on the visit of Soviet vessels to Albania on 7 June 1954.

³ Diplomatski arhiv Saveznog ministarstva spoljnih poslova (Diplomatic Archive of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs [hereinafter : DASMI], PA[Political Archives]-1954, f. 1, Albania, 411257, Report on the situation in Albania, 19 August 1954.

⁴ RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 153, l. 12, **Note on conversation between the First secretary of Soviet Embassy in Tirana I.M. Belov of 10 May 1954 and the Party Secretary Korçe Chambury.**

⁵ RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 153, l. 16-22, The list of members of LPA that were in USSR for study, 26 June 1954.

the work of Soviet party organizations.⁶ The Soviet government helped the building of a radio network in Albania.⁷

The Soviet side informed the Albanian party leadership about its intentions regarding the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia during Hoxha's visit to Moscow in June 1954.⁸ On July 1, 1954, the Soviet ambassador in Tirana, Levichkin, and Mehmed Shehu talked about Yugoslav-Albanian relations and Hoxha's report submitted to the Politburo upon his return from Moscow. The report claimed that tensions along the border with Yugoslavia had lessened. Reportedly, during the first six months of 1954 there had been no more than three incidents. The report discussed economic problems in Albania and the need for Soviet assistance.⁹ The Soviets wanted to help Albania in the development of cultural and economic cooperation.¹⁰ Having analyzed all the problems burdening the Albanian economy, the Soviet government decided, however, to apply a different approach. Their goal was to allay the fears aroused by the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia and Albania's possible subsequent economic subordination to Yugoslavia in the future.¹¹ The Soviet representatives in Albania wanted to soften the position of the Albanian leadership and encourage them towards renewing relations with Yugoslavia.¹² Soviet diplomacy worked towards a better cooperation between Albania and Yugoslavia, which was to be preceded by the full normalization of their relations.¹³ The Soviets suggested that oil production might be one of the comparative advantages of the Albanian economy. The Albanian side agreed.¹⁴ This led to a

⁶ RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 153, l. 135, **Request of Liri Belishova to acquaint herself with the workings of party, youth, union and propaganda departments of the Central Committee of CPSU.**

⁷ RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 153, l. 41-42, **Note on the talks between the First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Tirana and Petro Kito, Director of the Tirana radio, 22 July 1954.**

⁸ A. B. Edemskii, *Ot konflikta*, 236.

⁹ RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 153, l. 45-46, **Note on the talks between Soviet Ambassador in Tirana, Lyovychkin and Mehmed Shehu, of 1st July 1954.**

¹⁰ RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 153, l. 119-129, **Information of the Soviet Embassy in Tirana on ideological work in Albania of 6 October 1954.**

¹¹ RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 153, l. 142-159, **Information on economic situation in Albania of 27 November 1954.**

¹² RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 153, l. 160-167, **Note on the talks between chargé d'affaires of the Soviet Embassy in Tirana A.F. Kabanov and Enver Hoxha about a possible Soviet economic aid to Albania of 14 October 1954.**

¹³ RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 153, l. 168-176, **Note on the talks between Soviet Ambassador in Tirana, Lyovychkin and Enver Hoxha of 15 November 1954 about economic problems in Albania.**

¹⁴ RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 153, l. 177-178, **Note on the talks between chargé d'affaires of the Soviet Embassy in Tirana, A.F. Kabanov and Enver Hoxha about forthcoming visit to Albania of Soviet experts on oil prospecting of 20 September 1954.**

complete reorganization of the planning system in the economy.¹⁵ The Soviet side took on the responsibility.¹⁶

Changes within the Soviet party leadership and the Soviet policy of normalization of relations with Yugoslavia were announced early in 1955 by changes in the Albanian leadership.¹⁷ In July 1955 ministers Bedri Spahiù and Tuk Jakova were dismissed.¹⁸ The Yugoslav diplomatic representative, Ajtić, assessed that this meant a purge of the opponents to the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia, who also spoke in favour of a more independent Albanian foreign policy. According to him, this gave hope for the rehabilitation of Koçi Xoxe's followers.¹⁹ In accordance with the confrontation reduction policy in relations with Yugoslavia, the Albanian government decided to reduce its military troop strength by nine thousand by the end of 1955,²⁰ which was a twenty percent decrease.²¹

Economic assistance to Albania from the Soviet Union and its satellites grew in keeping with the changes in Soviet foreign policy and also owing to the geopolitical position of Albania. The goal was to uphold Hoxha's regime and keep Albania in the Eastern Bloc.²² In January 1955 an Albanian trade delegation arrived in Moscow with the task of extending the existing trade arrangement with the Soviet Union.²³ In response to Yugoslavia's insistent endeavour to obtain information about the character of the Albanian-Soviet trade arrangement, Soviet diplomat Kabanov told the Yugoslav ambassador in Moscow, Dobrivoje Vidić, that it all would depend on the amount of goods that the Albanians would import from the Soviet Union,²⁴ and complained that the Albanians did not export much to the USSR. The Yugoslav mission in Tirana was immediately informed about the new situation.²⁵ This was a change in Soviet foreign trade policy with Albania, marking a transition from the system of economic assistance to the principle of commercial relations. In late 1955

¹⁵ RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 153, l. 185-193, Note on the talks between chargé d'affaires of the Soviet Embassy in Tirana, A.F. Kabanov and Enver Hoxha about the plans for the development of Albania economy of 2nd October 1954.

¹⁶ RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 153, l. 194-196, Note on the talks between chargé d'affaires of the Soviet Embassy in Tirana, A.F. Kabanov and Spiro Panao of 11 August 1954 on reorganisation of the economic planning of the Albanian economy.

¹⁷ DASMIP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 43955, [Diplomatic] Mission in Tirana cable to DSIP [State Secretariat of Foreign Affairs], 21 March 1955.

¹⁸ D. Dyrmishi, "Goditjet e organeve të drejtësisë dhe dënimi i Tuk Jakovës dhe Bedri Spahiut (1949-1952)", *Studime historike*, 1-2, 2007, 153-170.

¹⁹ DASMIP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 49037, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 5 July 1955.

²⁰ DASMIP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 414463, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP 27 October 1955.

²¹ DASMIP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 412452, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 21 September 1955.

²² DASMIP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 4416, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 10 January 1955.

²³ DASMIP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 4367, DSIP memo to Tirana Mission, 20 January 1955.

²⁴ DASMIP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 41236, Moscow Embassy cable to DSIP, 10 February 1955.

²⁵ DASMIP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 41236, DSIP memo to Tirana Mission, 18 July 1955.

the Soviets harshly criticized Albanian economic practices. In spite of their ample economic aid to the whole Eastern Bloc, it was only in Albania that the economic situation did not improve and the supply system based on coupons was still in force. This resulted in the Soviet decision to cut down on economic aid to Albania.²⁶ Moreover, the Soviets wanted to share the burden of economic assistance with their allies in order to make it easier on themselves and to help improve economic cooperation between Albania and these countries.²⁷ However, by the end of 1956 Albania had made certain improvements in the economic area, especially because of the vast economic assistance of the USSR and its East-European satellites.²⁸

Despite economic changes, the process of normalization was still very slow. According to Yugoslav sources, Hoxha advised lower party officials to refrain from publicly offending Yugoslavia and to be careful when dealing with Yugoslav citizens because of the changed political situation.²⁹ The Yugoslav diplomatic envoy, Ajtić, complained to Soviet ambassador Levichkin in their conversation on February 24, and Levichkin expressed his belief that Yugoslav-Albanian relations would improve soon.³⁰ The assumption was that Levichkin had been briefed on the future Soviet actions and that he had that in mind while talking to Ajtić. Hoxha protested with Levichkin that Yugoslavs unnecessarily complained about the lack of willingness on the Albanian part to normalize mutual relations. In fact, they were doing everything possible to prevent the normalization.³¹ On March 11, Hoxha repeated the same assertion.³²

During the talks between the Yugoslav and Soviet delegations held in Belgrade from May 27 to June 2, 1955, the issue of relations between Yugoslavia and Albania was not specifically dwelt upon. It was discussed mostly in the context of the normalization of relations between Yugoslavia and the Eastern Bloc. The Soviets tended to present their relations with Albania as brotherly. This, however, discouraged the Yugoslav side, because it interpreted this kind of attitude as reflecting Soviet influence on the Albanian party elite and its pol-

26 DASMIP, PA-1956, f.1, Albania, 4624, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 17 December 1955.

27 DASMIP, PA-1956, f.1, Albania, 4624, Sofia Embassy to DSIP, 17 January 1956.

28 DASMIP, PA-1956, f.1, Albania, 4624, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 17 December 1955.

29 Archives of Yugoslavia (hereinafter AJ), 507/IX-KMOV CK SKJ, 1/I-264, Cable from Albania relating to talks between Enver Hoxha and the Shkoder party officials on relations with Yugoslavia, 29 January 1955.

30 DASMIP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 42564, Moscow Embassy cable to DSIP, 24 February 1955.

31 RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 288, l. 2-11, **Note on the talks between Soviet Ambassador in Tirana, Lyovychkin and Enver Hoxha of 26 February 1955.**

32 RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 288, l. 12-17 **Note on the talks between Soviet Ambassador in Tirana, Lyovychkin and Enver Hoxha of 11 March 1955.**

icy towards Yugoslavia.³³ This was a clear sign of the Soviet orientation towards creating normal relations with Yugoslavia. Considering the nature of relations within the Eastern Bloc, this was bound to have important repercussions on relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet satellites. During Yugoslav-Soviet negotiations in Belgrade, Hoxha expressed Albania's full support to the negotiations at the special session of the Albanian Parliament devoted to the creation of the Warsaw Pact, held on May 29.³⁴ In a conversation with the Yugoslav diplomatic representative, Ajtić, on June 17, 1955, the Soviet ambassador in Tirana, Levichkin, expressed his particular interest in the state of Yugoslav-Albanian relations. Ajtić repeated that there was some improvement in the Yugoslav attitude but that everything was developing very slowly, and that the Albanian side showed no wish to start resolving a whole series of unresolved issues. Levichkin responded that developments take time, and expressed his hope that relations between Yugoslavia and Albania would soon improve.³⁵ In his conversation with diplomatic envoy Ajtić on June 30, Shehu expressed his belief that the Belgrade Declaration would contribute to furthering relations between Yugoslavia and the countries of Eastern Bloc and, therefore, between Yugoslavia and Albania.³⁶ The first perceptible Albanian reaction to the Belgrade Declaration was Hoxha's speech before the Congress of the Democratic Front of Albania on June 18, 1955. He emphasized that the Albanian government had initiated the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia, and that the relations were improving daily. He also said that the Belgrade Declaration opened the way for the normalization of relations between Yugoslavia and the Eastern Bloc countries. According to him, the government, party and people of Albania were looking forward to it, and the improvement of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union would have a positive effect on the strengthening of relations between Yugoslavia and Albania.³⁷

One of the important echoes of the Belgrade Declaration was Hoxha's article in the *Zeri Popullit* magazine of July 16, 1955. He practically retold the speech Khrushchev had given at the airport upon his arrival in Belgrade. Hoxha sought to emphasize close Yugoslav-Albanian relations during the war and depicted their subsequent confrontation as a conflict of opinion within a family. Repeating the phrases about commitment to socialist and Communist principles, he said that Albania informally strived for the normalization and strengthening of relations with Yugoslavia in different areas. Inevitably,

³³ AJ, 507/IX-KMOV CK SKJ, 119/I-56, Conferences with the Soviet delegation in Belgrade, 27 May to 2 June 1955. For more on the visit of the Soviet delegation to Belgrade and negotiations with the Yugoslav side, see: LJ. Dimić, "Josip Broz i Nikita Sergejevič Hruščov", 55–66.

³⁴ A. B. Edemskii, *Ot konflikta*, 459.

³⁵ DASMP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 48459, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 17 June 1955.

³⁶ DASMP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 49907, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 30 June 1955.

³⁷ DASMP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 48213, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 18 June 1955.

he mentioned Albanian allegiance to the Soviet Union and its foreign policy.³⁸ For the Albanian middle-level party functionaries, the Belgrade Declaration came as a complete surprise. They thought that Khrushchev's visit to Belgrade and the necessity to find out about the Cominform's position as regards relations with Yugoslavia were unclear.³⁹ The Yugoslav side was concerned about Albania's verbally supporting normalization, while eschewing dealing with unsettled issues in practice.⁴⁰ After thorough analysis of the Albanian foreign political position and the position of its leaders, it was concluded that attempts should be made, through contacts with Albanian representatives, to find appropriate ways to popularize the Belgrade Declaration: its purpose and ideas.⁴¹ In the autumn of 1955 the Albanian leadership perceptibly changed its position towards Yugoslavia. The guard in front of the Yugoslav diplomatic mission in Tirana was withdrawn, the surveillance of Yugoslav diplomats eased, some Albanian party functionaries emphasized that Yugoslavia was a socialist country and that Beriya was the one to blame for the previous state of mutual relations. The press began to write more positively about Yugoslavia, Yugoslav ships and strayed children began to return. Talks about the destiny of the Yugoslav soldiers still held in captivity also began.⁴² Shehu was gradually adopting Hoxha's position towards Yugoslavia. In his public appearances, he emphasized that the Belgrade Declaration was the basis for Yugoslav-Albanian relations, and that all earlier obstacles to the development of the relations were removed. Their common fight in the previous war was said to be a solid basis for a common fight for peace, socialism and democracy. However, emphasizing the common fight during the war, Shehu only mentioned the engagement of Albanian troops in Yugoslavia, while failing to mention Yugoslav assistance to Albania during and after the war.⁴³ Shehu spoke with Soviet representatives in Albania about the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia. On September 19, he informed the advisor of the Soviet embassy in Tirana, Hoshev, about his conversation with Yugoslav diplomatic representative in Albania, Ajtić, about the latest border incidents. He spoke of Yugoslav criticism of the Albanian side because of its anti-Yugoslav campaign, of economic relations between the two countries, and of the ways of improving international relations.⁴⁴ Hoxha informed the Soviet ambassador Levichkin about problems within the party leadership and about the difficulty of explaining the necessity of the normalization of relations

³⁸ DASMIP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 49616, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP.

³⁹ AJ, 507/IX-KMOV CK SKJ, 1/I-264, Cable from Tirana relating to interpretations of the Belgrade Declaration among the functionaries of Albania's Party of Labour, 23 June 1955.

⁴⁰ J. Pelikán, *Jugoslávie...*, 252–253.

⁴¹ DASMIP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 49831, DSIP memo to Tirana Mission, 18 July 1955.

⁴² DASMIP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 414181, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 18 October 1955.

⁴³ DASMIP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 415273, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 12 November 1955.

⁴⁴ RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 288, l. 187-190, 19 September 1955.

with Yugoslavia to the Albanian public. Levichkin expressed his full support to Hoxha's improving relations with Yugoslavia.⁴⁵ This was an encouragement to Hoxha to make a move towards the process of normalization of relations with Yugoslavia, which influenced Shehu to stick to this course for the moment.

In spite of the significant shift in the Albanian side's attitude towards Yugoslavia in the course of the autumn of 1955, and more politeness in dealing with Yugoslav representatives, the Yugoslav side concluded that none of that expressed a sincere intention to improve mutual relations. Instead, the shift was seen as a forced move prompted by the change in Soviet policy towards Yugoslavia, as resulting from the influence of the Soviets on the behaviour of the Albanian party leadership towards a neighbouring country.⁴⁶ Yugoslav diplomats concluded that the normalization of relations with the Soviet Union had led to an improvement of relations between Yugoslavia and Albania. This, however, was not the result of a true change in Albania's relation to Yugoslavia.⁴⁷ Hoxha, on the other hand, was much more flexible than Shehu who, along with the circle of his supporters, was the main obstacle to the normalization of relations.⁴⁸ By the end of 1955 the Albanian government had taken several normalization measures. It liberalized cross-border traffic, lessened tensions along the border, and instructed local authorities that Yugoslavia was a socialist country and that it should be treated as such. In spite of the achievements, Shehu made use of several problem areas to prevent completion of the normalization process. In his conversation with Soviet ambassador Levichkin held in Tirana on 8 December 1955, Shehu insisted that the Albanians wished to improve relations with Yugoslavia, but, he added, the Yugoslavs only invited obvious Western spies to their receptions at the diplomatic mission, which could not be interpreted otherwise than as a hostile act.⁴⁹ In that way, with some malice and using misrepresentations, Shehu sought to slow down, even disrupt, the normalization process between the two countries.

An important problem in relations between Yugoslavia and Albania was the position of the Albanian party leadership towards the decisions of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Yugoslavs expected that the decisions of the Congress (which officially initiated the process of

⁴⁵ RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 288, l. 183-186, Note on the talks between chargé d'affaires of the Soviet Embassy in Tirana, Hochev and Enver Hoxha of 26 September 1955.

⁴⁶ DASMIP, PA-1955, f.1, Albania, 414181, Tirana Mission cable Note on the talks between chargé d'affaires of the Soviet Embassy in Tirana, Hochev and Mehmed Shehu of to DSIP, 18 October 1955.

⁴⁷ DASMIP, PA-1956, highly classified, f.1, Albania, 42, Note on relations between Yugoslavia and Albania, 9 February 1956.

⁴⁸ AJ, Cabinet of the President of Republic (hereinafter KPR), I-3-b/109, Some issues of relations with Albania.

⁴⁹ RGANI, 5-OO CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 288, l. 203-205, Note on the talks between Soviet Ambassador in Tirana, Lyovychkin and Mehmed Shehu, of 8 December 1955.

de-Stalinization and the struggle against the cult of personality in the Soviet Union) would have a significant impact on the position of the Albanian Communists, who still harboured extreme Stalinist views on many issues. The decisions of the 20th Congress provoked reactions within the Albanian Labour Party. Along with preparations for the 3rd Labour Party Congress, the conference of the Tirana Labour branch in March 1956 voiced criticisms of certain developments within the party. This led to arrests and persecution of the conference delegates and, in the middle of 1956, to the arrest and execution of Dali Ndreu and Liri Gega.⁵⁰ Addressing the Parliament on 5 April 1956, Shehu, the Prime Minister at the time, supported the decisions of the 20th Congress, especially denouncing the cult of personality as a phenomenon alien to a socialist society. On the same occasion, he emphasized that Yugoslavia was successfully building socialism. He neither dwelled too much on the importance of the Congress decisions, nor analyzed in any depth the consequences that such a radical break with the legacy of a bitter past would have in Albania.⁵¹ The Yugoslav diplomatic envoy in Tirana, Ajtić, remarked that, until the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, all important decisions of the Soviet party bodies had been discussed and analyzed within Albanian party organizations. However, the 20th Congress was little spoken about and nobody had the courage to look at the Albanian problems in the light of its decisions.⁵² The Soviet, Czechoslovak and Polish ambassadors in Tirana concurred with the observation that Albania had not been working along the lines of the decisions of the 20th Congress, and that there was much Stalinism in Albania, which they explained as a consequence of backwardness, weakness, immaturity and lack of critical thinking.⁵³ As Hoxha later emphasized in his memoirs, the Albanians found the decisions of the 20th Congress very hard to take, but they had to concur formally with them. At the same time, Hoxha claims, Mikhail Suslov advised them to gradually revise their attitude and to begin the process of rehabilitating the victims of the show trials staged between 1948 and 1953.⁵⁴

The next phase in the normalization process between Yugoslavia and the USSR began during the visit of a Yugoslav state delegation to Moscow in June 1956 and resulted in the Moscow Declaration. In the talks the Yugoslav state delegation held with the Soviets in Moscow, the normalization issue was especially emphasized. Josip Broz openly said that the normalization process

⁵⁰ P. Pljaku, *Nasilje nad albanskom revolucijom* (Belgrade: BIGZ, 1984), 112–118.

⁵¹ DASMIP, PA-1956, f.1, Albania, 45179, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 5 April 1956.

⁵² DASMIP, PA-1956, f.1, Albania, 45299, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 6 April 1956.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ E. Hoxha, *The Khrushchevites: Memoires* (Tirana: “8 Nentori” Pub. House, 1980), 141–144.

between Yugoslavia and Albania encountered difficulties in the area of inter-party and international relations.⁵⁵ The issue of the normalization of relations between Yugoslavia and Albania aroused a broad discussion. Josip Broz claimed that the alleged Yugoslav mistake was still much discussed in Albania and that Tito was blamed for it among the party leadership.⁵⁶ He repeated that Yugoslavia had provided significant assistance to Albania until 1948. Khrushchev replied that the Soviet Union was helping Albania at that moment, and that Albania would not survive without that help. Tito brought out a number of accusations against the Albanian stand, emphasizing that it was Yugoslavia that had built their state, party and first railway line, but that the Albanian leadership had no sense of responsible statesmanship. He stated that relations with Albania had not been normalized yet and that they should be, but that they could not be for so long as Albania imputed to Yugoslavia the intention to occupy Albania.⁵⁷ At the end of his address, Tito admitted that it had been a mistake to attempt to deploy a Yugoslav army division to Korca. However, he emphasized that it had been done at Albanian request, and because Albania had been under pressure from Greece. In that way Yugoslavia had indirectly wanted to help the Greek partisan movement.⁵⁸ Khrushchev claimed that, according to his information, the Yugoslav diplomats in Albania maintained contacts with those who had been on the Yugoslav side during the earlier confrontation with Yugoslavia. They invited to their receptions only those punished by the party for their stance at the Tirana party conference.⁵⁹ In his view, the Albanians tried to use such actions to create the impression that Yugoslavia sought to change the Albanian leadership and advised the Yugoslavs to show good will, suggesting that Svetozar Vukmanović seemed the most suitable person for the task.⁶⁰ Tito in turn replied that the Yugoslav side might have made some mistakes in the past, but that it did not matter now. What mattered was that the Albanian leadership did not give up on making accusations against Yugoslavia. As an illustrative example, he cited the case of Koçi Xoxe and the Albanian refusal to rehabilitate him. Xoxe had been convicted on the charge of being a Yugoslav spy, which directly led to Albania's persisting in its accusations against Yugoslavia.⁶¹ Under such circumstances, it was very difficult for Yugoslavia to take any serious action towards normalization. Khrushchev said that Xoxe had not been convicted only because of Yugoslavia and that every-

⁵⁵ AJ, KPR, I-2/7-1, Notes on the Kremlin talks of 5, 9, 18 and 20 June 1956, 10.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

thing takes time. He advised Tito to take steps similar to those he himself had taken by coming to Belgrade.⁶² Khrushchev sought to justify the actions of the Albanian leadership, but he did it in a way which clearly showed that the Soviet side was not satisfied with the Albanian approach to the normalization process, as it in some way endangered the whole normalization process between Yugoslavia and the Eastern Bloc countries. On July 2, 1956, in a conversation with Soviet ambassador Kirilov in Tirana, Hoxha supported the Soviet political course towards the full normalization of relations with Yugoslavia.⁶³

The Albanian party leadership was ill-disposed to the normalization of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union for several reasons, and tended to support the winds of change in the Soviet Union only verbally. Steeped in dogmatism and without really wishing to change and to open the country to the outside world, it tried to strengthen its position within the Communist world through establishing firm connections with the socialist countries of the Far East. At the same time, it feared the possibility that in the process of the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union would leave the primate to the Yugoslav party in Albania.⁶⁴

The Yugoslav position regarding the crisis in Hungary and Albanian reactions to it led to several conflicts with the Soviet ambassador to Yugoslavia. On 13 November 1956, in a conversation with Soviet ambassador Firyubin, Dobrivoje Vidic touched upon an article of Enver Hoxha published in the *Pravda*. The article contained a series of accusations against the Yugoslav policy on the countries of the socialist bloc.⁶⁵ According to Yugoslavs, Hoxha's claims stood in direct contradiction to the decisions of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, especially as regards the theoretical bases of relations between the socialist countries. The Yugoslavs were concerned about the fact that the article had been published in the *Pravda*, fearing that the Soviet party leadership was behind Hoxha's attitudes. The conversation ended in a friendly tone, but it clearly spoke about the directions of the development of Yugoslav-Soviet relations, which also affected relations between Yugoslavia and Albania.

Tito's speech before the Istrian branch of the Communists Party in Pula on 11 November 1956 drew the particular attention of political parties, gov-

⁶² Ibid., 16.

⁶³ RGANI, 5-00 CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 391, l. 146-149, Note on the talks between Soviet Ambassador in Tirana, Krylov and Enver Hoxha of 2. августа 1956.

⁶⁴ J. Pelikán, *Jugoslávie*, 334-336.

⁶⁵ AJ, KPR, I-3-a/1254, Note on the talks of the State Undersecretary Dobrivoje Vidić and Soviet ambassador Firyubin at the lunch in honour of the Soviet military delegation hosted by General Ljubo Vučković, Chief of the General Staff, 13 November 1956.

ernments and the public.⁶⁶ The speech outlined his view on Yugoslavia's foreign political position and global international relations.⁶⁷ On 26 November, Tito's speech in Pula was a subject of discussion between Shehu and the Soviet diplomatic representative in Tirana, Hoshev.⁶⁸ Shehu harshly criticized the stance of the Yugoslav president, summing up the accusations which could be read in the Albanian press. Hoshev generally agreed with Shehu, but criticized some too aggressive and too exclusive Albanian criticisms of Yugoslavia and its foreign policy during the events in Hungary. He clearly stated that the Albanian and Soviet positions coincided, but that they did not approve of the way in which Albania treated Yugoslavia.⁶⁹

In a conversation with Veljko Mićunović, Yugoslav ambassador in Moscow, on 15 February 1957, Khrushchev informed the ambassador that he was going to visit Albania after the Albanian visit to Moscow, in order to acquaint himself with the state of affairs in Albania and to arrange for Soviet economic assistance to Albania, notably its agriculture.⁷⁰ Khrushchev especially spoke about the Yugoslav claim that they had come into the possession of an original document of the Albanian Politburo relating to alleged anti-Yugoslav intentions of the Albanian party leadership.⁷¹ He argued that Yugoslavia had received this piece of information from a foreign intelligence service through a Yugoslav agent. He exploited this case to accuse Yugoslavia of conducting intelligence activities relating to Albania. Micunovic tried to deny the accusation by emphasizing that if an Albanian party leader had informed his Yugoslav colleagues about the contents of documents he deemed objectionable, it would not have made him a Yugoslav agent.⁷² Obviously satisfied that Yugoslavia had intelligence activities regarding Albania, Khrushchev began to speak about the situation in Yugoslav-Albanian relations, emphasizing that the USSR wanted to help Albania both economically and politically, and that it would like to see improvements in relations between Albania and Yugoslavia. Micunovic used Khrushchev's statement to reiterate that, in spite of the confrontation, Yugoslavia was doing much to help Albania maintain its independence, and referred to a strong anti-Yugoslav campaign developing in Albania. This did not surprise Khrushchev, he only stated the basic fact, emphasizing that the USSR favored an improvement of relations between Yugoslavia and Albania

⁶⁶ Josip Broz's speech was published on the front page of the *Borba* in its issue of November 16, 1956.

⁶⁷ J. B. Tito, *Govori i članci, (1956–1957)*, Vol. XI (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1959), 227–250.

⁶⁸ RGANI, 5-00 CC CPSU, o. 128-KVIKP, d. 477, l.20–24, Note on the talks between chargé d'affaires of the Soviet Embassy in Tirana, Hochev and Mehmed Shehu of 27 November 1956.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ AJ, KPR, I-5-c, 1259, Report on the talks with N. S. Khrushchev on 15 February 1957.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

and that aggravation of relations between the two countries had an impact on the Yugoslav-Soviet relations.⁷³

The conversation between Khrushchev and Micunovic was seen as proof of the level of aggravation in relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Certain signs of improvement appeared on the Soviet side and some hints were given of the possible normalization of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the near future. Yugoslav diplomacy saw as significant Khrushchev's statement that the Soviet Union would help in overcoming the conflict between Yugoslavia and Albania. Considering the weight of Soviet authority over the Albanian party leadership, it would be clear that this kind of expectations had a real political, and economic, basis. The Soviet accusation that Yugoslav intelligence had been present in Albania was very serious. Although ambassador Micunovic had sought to deny it, he had obviously made an unconvincing impression. Given the nature of the available sources and the secretive nature of intelligence agencies, it is not possible to verify the accuracy of Khrushchev's allegations. However, the information that the JNA (Yugoslav Armed Forces) did not have a military representative in Tirana, but an officer with the status of civil diplomatic envoy assigned to the Yugoslav diplomatic mission in Tirana in 1957, suggests that the Yugoslav military intelligence was in some way present in Albania.⁷⁴ This was logical and expected because of the character of mutual relations, constant Albanian accusations and frequent concentration of Albanian troops on the Yugoslav-Albanian border, which posed a real threat because the crisis could turn into an armed conflict.

In early April, the Albanian state delegation led by Hoxha and Shehu went to Moscow.⁷⁵ The event was massively covered by the Albanian press, which glorified the role of the Soviet Union in the socialist world. The anti-Yugoslav tone in the Albanian press was weakening, but did not stop altogether. The departure of the Albanian governmental delegation to Moscow provided an opportunity for yet another attack on Yugoslavia, this time weaker in intensity, but strong enough to compromise the relations between the two countries. *Zeri i Popullit* published several defamatory articles about Yugoslavia's attitude towards Albania, understanding of relations within the socialist world, and policy during the crisis in Hungary.⁷⁶ It was assumed that in this way the USSR wanted to attach special importance to Albania as a small socialist country and, by depicting it as a small Muslim country successfully building socialism,

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Military Archives Belgrade, (hereinafter MA), Archives of the Yugoslav Army (hereinafter JNA), General Staff, -1, k. 22, f. 2, r.b. 5/1, Report of the Undersecretary of the Second Department of the General Staff of JNA on the issue of the military intelligence service, 2 April 1958.

⁷⁵ DASMP, PA-1957, Albania, f.1, 47547, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 6 April 1957.

⁷⁶ AJ, KPR, I-5-c, 1363, Note on the article "With the Soviet Union for Life" published in *Zeri i Popullit*.

to use it for the purpose of propaganda in the Arab world. After the return of the Albanian delegation from Moscow, Albanian diplomacy embarked on an intensive campaign with the purpose of expanding relations with Afro-Asian, especially Arab, countries. The Albanians argued that the existing contacts should be widened and that cultural and social relations should be expanded based on the common tradition and similar customs.⁷⁷ The main motive behind the visit to the Moscow was the loan of more than 200 million rubles extended to Albania by the Soviet government to help it overcome the difficult economic situation, develop the mining and processing industries, and improve agriculture by turning areas of heat into arable land, but also for the purpose of foreign political propaganda which would show that the USSR was helping smaller countries.⁷⁸

During the visit of the Albanian delegation to Moscow, Khrushchev made an attempt to steer to the conflict between Yugoslavia and Albania towards pacification. At the reception at the Georgievski Hall in the Kremlin on April 17, 1957, in front of journalists and the diplomatic core he called on the Yugoslav ambassador Micunovic to talk to Enver Hoxha. He wanted to play the role of peacemaker in public. Hoxha told Micunovic that he would be working on the development of friendly relations with Yugoslavia on the basis of Marxism-Leninism, and started to complain about the behavior of the Yugoslav envoy in Tirana, Arso Milatovic, whom he accused of being engaged in intelligence work in Albania, of moving through forbidden zones and maintaining contacts with persons opposing the regime he represented.⁷⁹ Micunovic denied Hoxha's allegations. He said that he knew Milatovic very well and that he was not an enemy of Albania. Given that both stuck to their positions, it was clear that Khrushchev's reconciliation attempt failed.⁸⁰ If we can rely on Enver Hoxha's memories, Khrushchev had planned this meeting and told Hoxha that it would have been good if that happened, since Hoxha was complaining on Yugoslavia's attitude towards Albania, revisionism, open intelligence activities of its diplomats in Albania and the attempts of the Yugoslav government to overthrow the Albanian government with the help of contacts with the Albanian opposition in earlier conversations.⁸¹

The visit of the Albanian delegation to Moscow itself had an impact on the Albanian relationship with Yugoslavia. Obviously acting on Soviet instructions, the Albanian leadership stopped the anti-Yugoslav press campaign just a few days before the visit. When the ideological campaign abated, a new one was launched, this time criticizing Yugoslav foreign policy, with an empha-

⁷⁷ DASMIP, PA-1957, Albania, f.1, 410239, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 7 May 1957.

⁷⁸ DASMIP, PA-1957, Albania, f.1, 47877, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 9 April 1957.

⁷⁹ V. Mićunović, *Moskovske godine (1956–1958)* (Zagreb: Liber, 1977), 136–138.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ E. Hoxha, *The Khrushchevites*, 192.

sis on undecided issues in international relations.⁸² Upon their return from Moscow, Hoxha and Shehu stressed that the Albanian government would be pursuing the policy of developing good relations with neighbours based on the principles of coexistence, Marxism-Leninism and proletariat internationalism.⁸³ They underlined the necessity of improving relations with Yugoslavia, but pointed to its alleged fault for the problems in mutual relations, and expressed his wish that Yugoslavia would initiate further normalization of relations. In spite of the verbal efforts, the Albanian leadership did not do much to improve the relations.⁸⁴

The Yugoslav side positively reacted to Shehu's and Hoxha's statements, believing them to provide a good foundation for opening a new dialogue. At the farewell reception for the Chinese ambassador on May 9, 1957, Arso Milatovic, Yugoslav envoy in Tirana, in a conversation with Nesti Nase, Albanian assistant minister of foreign affairs, positively assessed the developments, expressing hope that the normalization process would not end at that. He expressed his wish that ideological differences should not hinder the development of international relations. Both agreed that cooperation should develop on the basis of matters common to both countries, and that possible misunderstandings should be resolved together.⁸⁵

The visit of Soviet Marshal George Zhukov to Albania, which ensued after his visit to Yugoslavia in October 1957, was an opportunity for the Albanian party leadership to repeat the old pronouncements about their readiness to build good neighbourly relations with Yugoslavia. On 23 October 1957, in his welcoming address to Marshal Zhukov, Hoxha, motivated by Soviet criticism and encouragement to develop cooperation with Yugoslavia, stated that the relations between Yugoslavia and Albania had significantly improved, and that they would develop even further in a friendly spirit and that political cooperation between the two countries would be expanded and strengthened with new cultural and economic relations.⁸⁶ He obviously wanted to create the impression of very close relations between Yugoslavia and Albania in front of the important guest, but his portrayal was far from the truth. Relations between the two countries did improve considerably in autumn 1957 through the mediation of the Soviet Union, but they were nowhere near the level necessary to guarantee their actual strengthening.

⁸² DASMIP, PA-1957, Albania, f.1, 49879, Report of Arso Milatović to DSIP, 30 April 1957.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ AJ, KPR, I-5-c, 1242, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 10 May 1957.

⁸⁶ AJ, KPR, I-5-c, 1037, Excerpt from the speeches of Enver Hoxha and Marshal Zhukov at the reception in honour of Marshal Zhukov hosted on 23 October by the Ministerial Council and Central Committee of the People's Party of Labour of the People's Republic of Albania.

The abatement phase in the conflict between Yugoslavia and the East-European countries in the second half of 1957 did not last long. In autumn 1957 signs of renewed confrontation between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union began to appear, gradually impacting relations between the Eastern Bloc countries and Yugoslavia. Yugoslav refusal to join the declaration of twelve Communist parties concerning the socialist bloc and inter-party relations, as well as the new statute and program of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, and the decisions of its 7th Congress in the spring of 1958, affected Yugoslavia's relations with the entire Eastern Bloc. Against this background and Yugoslavia's fragile relations with Albania, the divergence between the two countries threatened to go beyond a divergence of ideologies and parties and to spill over into the area of international relations. The earlier conflict was not resolved, and a new one was already opened. Yugoslavia found a way out of the situation in strengthening its relations with the Western world and in intensifying foreign political activities aimed at giving a boost to the group of countries which were outside blocs, and organizing them into the Non-aligned Movement.⁸⁷

In late 1957 and early 1958 an anti-revisionist campaign was started in Albania in consequence of Yugoslavia's refusal to sign the Moscow Declaration. The Declaration was analyzed on lower party levels and the Albanian press was reporting on it on a daily basis. The fight against revisionism was put in the forefront and so was the debate about its manifestations, tendencies and the relations among Communist parties, along with pointing to the leading role of the Soviet Union in the international Communist movement. Special emphasis was placed on the combat against revisionism and the strengthening of the Communist parties' internal cohesion under the leadership of the Soviet Union.⁸⁸ This type of campaign was aimed directly against the stand of the Yugoslav Communist party, which questioned the leading role of the Soviet Union and insisted on its independence and the right to make decisions on issues directly concerning Yugoslav foreign and domestic policy.

The Albanian party leadership sought to undermine the position of Yugoslavia in the Arab world. Obviously under Soviet instructions, Albania continued the policy of strengthening relations with the Arab world, insisting on the similarity in traditions and customs. Soviet ambassador in Tirana, Ivanov, made such a reference in one of his public statements. Because of its traditions and customs, he said, Albania has a special place in Soviet policy towards the

⁸⁷ For more on the confrontation between Yugoslavia and the Eastern Bloc countries, see: D. Bogetić, *Nova strategija spoljne politike Jugoslavije 1956–1961* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2006); J. Vykoukal, B. Litera, M. Tejchman, *Východ*; D. Bogetić, "Drugi jugoslovensko-sovjetski sukob. Sudar Titove i Hruščovljeve percepcije politike miroljubive koegzistencije", *Spoljna politika Jugoslavije 1950–1961* (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju, 2008), 49–65.

⁸⁸ DASMP, PA-1958, Albania, f.1, 41440, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 21 January 1958.

Arab world.⁸⁹ In April 1957 the relations with Egypt were raised to embassy level.⁹⁰ Several Albanian delegations exchanged visits with Arab countries.⁹¹ A society for promoting friendship between Albania and Arab countries was formed under Soviet patronage.⁹² However, the motivations behind the Albanian actions and potential problems in relations with the West caused the relationship with this country to “cool down” soon after the establishment of diplomatic relations.⁹³ The main reason was non-aligned positions and potential imperilment of these positions by intensive cooperation with the Eastern Bloc countries.

The announcement of Khrushchev’s visit to Albania was an excuse to temporarily suspend the campaign against Yugoslavia in the media and party leaders’ public appearances. Soviet assistance to Albania was glorified and there were no regular articles about Yugoslav revisionism. After some months, there was not a single derogatory caricature on Yugoslavia in comic newspapers.⁹⁴ The reasons for suspending the anti-Yugoslav campaign were numerous and associated with the Soviet Union. Above all, it was the result of the following events: the conference in Geneva and a reaction to the weakening of the Soviet position in the Third World; the failure of the previous campaign; the possibility that the continuation of confrontation would raise certain issues that the Soviets did not want to be raised. Besides, the campaign had been exclusively aimed against Yugoslavia. Any further insistence would have the opposite effect. Yugoslavia had strengthened its position in Africa and Asia and had a reconciliatory attitude towards the Soviets. Moreover, it was an important zone for Soviet policy in the Balkans.⁹⁵ According to Khrushchev’s memoirs, he thought that the Yugoslav-Albanian duel in the press was damaging to the socialist world.⁹⁶ According to him, Albanian authorities were told that the Soviet representatives would not tolerate that kind of anti-Yugoslav statements made at rallies across Albania. He believed that such statements would not only prolong the conflict, but would take it further to the ideological and political levels. Therefore, the Albanians were asked to refrain from such actions. During Khrushchev’s visit, they respected these limitations in order

⁸⁹ Ibid., 4818, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 21 June 1958.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 46701, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 17 April 1958.

⁹¹ Ibid., 4818, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 21 June 1958.

⁹² Ibid., 415094, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 9 May 1958.

⁹³ Ibid., 415094, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 21 June 1958.

⁹⁴ DASMP, PA-1959, Albania, f.1, 431552, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 22 May 1959.

⁹⁵ AJ, 507/IX-KMOV CK SKJ, Albania, 1/II -220, Information on N.S. Khrushchev’s visit to Albania.

⁹⁶ N. S. Khrushchev, *Vospominania* (Moscow: Vagrius, 2006), 317.

not to offend the Soviet delegation – the highest representatives of the country which was their role model in every possible way and on whose generous economic and military assistance they depended.⁹⁷

Khrushchev used the state visit to promote the concept of the Balkans as a nuclear-free zone, in reaction to the setting up of American military bases in Italy and Greece, which had caused strong Italian and Greek opposition outrage. As for relations with Yugoslavia, Khrushchev and Hoxha both spoke in favor of a friendly relationship between the two countries based on equality, mutual respect and non-interference in each other's domestic affairs. It was on this occasion that this concept was emphasized for the first time in fifteen months and without any reference to Yugoslav revisionist policy. Even so, the frequent use of the term "contemporary revisionism", without directly naming Yugoslavia, clearly was criticism leveled at the Yugoslav idea of independent socialist society building. In practice, this opened a number of issues in relations between Yugoslavia and Albania.⁹⁸ According to Khrushchev's memoirs, the Soviet and Albanian leaders had very difficult talks on Yugoslavia and its relation with Albania,⁹⁹ and the two sides could not agree on the definition of developments in Yugoslavia. The Soviets clearly refuted Albanian claims that Yugoslavia was not a socialist country. Khrushchev emphasized that the Yugoslavs were Communists, but based on different theoretical assumptions.¹⁰⁰ In fact, the Soviets wanted to put an end to the conflict and to compel the Albanians to go along with the basic principles of Soviet policy on Yugoslavia.

The declaration which was publicized in the aftermath of Khrushchev's visit to Albania practically placed Albania under direct Soviet control in the matter of Yugoslav-Albanian relations. The formulation that both countries were prepared to develop relations with Yugoslavia based on mutual respect, equality and non-interference in internal affairs was meant exclusively for Albanian needs, not Soviet.¹⁰¹ The Soviet Union fully stood behind Albania. It was very obvious that this formulation separated international from inter-party relations. Yugoslav diplomacy hoped that putting the problem of Yugoslav-Albanian relations under exclusive Soviet jurisdiction would help alleviate the tension in relations between Yugoslavia and Albania.¹⁰² The emphasis on the legitimacy of the conclusions of the Moscow Conference as regards the dangers of revisionism was to justify the anti-Yugoslav campaign in Albania

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ DASMIP, PA-1959, Albania, f.1, 414982, Overview of the results of Khrushchev's visit to Albania.

⁹⁹ N. S. Khrushchev, *Vospominania*, 318.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ DASMIP, PA-1959, Albania, f.1, 412302, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 3 June 1959.

¹⁰² Ibid.

and leave room for its re-actualization in the future.¹⁰³ There was some change in that area. After the adoption of the Moscow Declaration, the situation in all Communist parties was consolidated. This resulted in unity within the socialist camp with the purpose of giving the necessary signal to quiet down the anti-Yugoslav campaign. This was carried out under the guise of fighting against alleged revisionism and orienting towards a party-ideological struggle, rather than towards international relations, and shifting from the rough method of struggle to a more intelligent and astute one.¹⁰⁴ Under the decisive Soviet influence, Albanian policy towards Yugoslavia was gradually changing, but it did not show any deviations from the previously drawn line of their relations with the neighbouring country.

The campaign against Yugoslavia did quiet down, but was not completely over. Albania still insisted that the Yugoslav position on the matter of intra-Balkan cooperation was utterly dishonest. It claimed that Yugoslavia was unwilling to accept Albania as an equal partner, diminishing its significance and role.¹⁰⁵ Yugoslavia was accused of several things: that it kept interfering in Albania's domestic affairs, training and sending to Albanian territory sabotage and intelligence squads recruited from among Albanian political emigrants in order to provoke a sense of insecurity in northern Albania.¹⁰⁶ It was repeatedly stated that Yugoslavia was unwilling to resolve a number of international issues, such as the water supply, citizenship and the contact of their citizens with the Albanian mission in Belgrade. One of the severest accusations was that Yugoslavia supported Greek territorial pretensions to Albania, and that its press, instead of condemning the Greek policy, called it the policy of co-existence, because Yugoslavia purportedly benefited from instability and confrontation between the two countries. This stood in complete contradiction to Yugoslavia's foreign policy efforts, which contributed to the normalization of relations between Greece and Albania.¹⁰⁷

In the autumn of 1959 the aggressive tone of the Albanian anti-Yugoslav campaign grew louder. The causes of this development were several. Albania's increasingly overt disagreements with the Soviet Union, and closer and more overt ties with China, raised a series of different issues which were temporarily frozen under the influence of the Soviet Union. Therefore, the campaign against Yugoslavia grew in intensity and did not remain confined to the statements of Albanian state and party leaders but spread down to local political levels. At the same time, Yugoslav diplomats in Tirana were placed under vari-

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ DASMIP, PA-1959, Albania, f.1, 416603, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 17 June 1959.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

ous forms of police surveillance.¹⁰⁸ Representatives of the highest authority in Albania publicly advocated the improvement of relations with Yugoslavia, while actually encouraging the propaganda about Yugoslavia's alleged hostility towards Albania. In fact, they did everything to prevent the normalization from happening. By the end of 1959, the accusations against Yugoslavia became less frequent, but it was not a sign of improved relations with Yugoslavia. The Albanian party elite found themselves facing a new challenge. The increasingly severe and visible crisis in Albania's relations with the Soviet Union prompted the Albanian oligarchy to put the question of Yugoslavia aside and turn to a more demanding issue which not only threatened to cause discord between the Soviet Union and Albania, but could decide the destiny of the entire nation which completely depended on Soviet economic and military assistance.

In late 1959 the ideological and political confrontation between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union began to abate and relations began to stabilize and strengthen.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, relations between the Soviet Union and Albania were in drastic decline. Soviets criticized the Albanian party leadership for ideological rigidity and poor management of the national economy. Albania resorted to seeking closer and tighter ideological and political ties to China. The two party leaderships shared similar ideological views, and China was openly alienating itself from the Soviet Union because of a number of mutual misunderstandings and problems. On the one hand, Yugoslavia wanted to parry the harsh Albanian campaign and, on the other, to normalize its relations with the Eastern Bloc, which resulted in decreased intensity of its economic cooperation with the West.

Soviet representatives tried to assure their Yugoslav counterparts that they did not stand behind the Albanian anti-Yugoslav propaganda and emphasized that they already had problems with the Albanian party leadership. They advised Yugoslavia to send an emissary to Tirana as an act of good will and a signal of its willingness to build good relations with Albania.¹¹⁰ By contrast, Yugoslavia believed that the atmosphere of frequent and heavy accusations against Yugoslavia was not suitable for such a move. The emissary would have to have various meetings to protest against all the things said about Yugoslavia. It was emphasized that the Yugoslav side was subjected to Albanian attacks on a daily basis, but that its press did not react in order to avoid sharper confron-

¹⁰⁸ DASMIP, PA-1959, Albania, f.1, 431550, Note on the situation in Yugoslav-Albanian relations, 1 October 1959.

¹⁰⁹ For more on the improvement, see: Đ. Tripković, "Poboljšanje jugoslovensko-sovjetskih odnosa 1961-1962", *Tokovi istorije*, 3-4, 2008, 76-97.

¹¹⁰ AJ, 507/IX-KMOV CK SKJ, SSSR, 119/I-139, Note on the conversation at the dinner hosted by the Soviet ambassador on 17 March 1960.

tation. The Soviet side concurred with this argument.¹¹¹ It did not completely understand what had provoked the animosity of the Albanian party leadership against Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav side believed that the most likely reason was the sense of responsibility for the execution of important Albanian party leaders during the first post-war years and the fear that the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia would lead to reconsideration of this issue.¹¹²

The escalating confrontation between Albania and the Soviet Union had an effect on relations between Yugoslavia and Albania. Under such circumstances, the Yugoslav government was ready to renew mutual cooperation based on the existing agreement which would have shown some sort of Yugoslav presence in Albania. Considering that there was no randomness in Albania's policy towards Yugoslavia, and its constant anti-Yugoslav tone, it was obviously unwilling to go any further in the development of mutual relations.¹¹³ In spite of the professed support to normalization in the media, attacks on Yugoslavia systematically spread and practically escalated in September 1961, which saw the Albanian party leadership's most concentrated and strongest attacks on Yugoslavia.¹¹⁴ Albanian wanted to initiate the improvement of relations with Yugoslavia on lower diplomatic levels, referring to the statements of Yugoslav president Tito about the necessity of normalizing relations between Yugoslavia and Albania. In accordance with the change in Albania's relations with the Eastern Bloc, there was an emphasis on the right of every country, even if it was not a member of the Eastern Bloc, to build socialism independently.¹¹⁵ Besides, it was openly said that a country taking loans from the West would not lose its character, which was a clear allusion to the relationship between Yugoslavia and the West. At the same time, the surveillance of Yugoslav diplomatic staff in Tirana was relaxed and they began to be treated in a more civil manner.¹¹⁶ The Albanian government sought to draw Yugoslavia into its confrontation with the Soviet Union, but the Yugoslav diplomatic representatives made every attempt to stay clear of it. The Albanian side listed various actions of the Yugoslav government which posed a threat to Albanian national security (texts on Albania in the Yugoslav press; the grant of asylum to Panajot Plaku; the arrest of Albanian immigrants accused of conducting intelligence activities in Yugoslavia). The Yugoslav government expressed protest over of Shehu's anti-Yugoslav speech in the Albanian parliament. In addition, the Al-

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ DASMIP, PA-1961, highly classified, Albania, f.1, 121, Tirana Mission cable to DSIP, 12 June 1961.

¹¹⁴ AJ, 507/IX-KMOV CK SKJ, Albanija, 1/I-338, Albanian press and radio attacks on Yugoslavia in September 1961.

¹¹⁵ DASMIP, PA-1961, Albania, f.1, 428728, Note on the situation in Albania.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

banian press wrote negatively about Yugoslavia and caricatures of the Yugoslav president could be seen in the Albanian press.¹¹⁷

The Soviets periodically informed the Yugoslav side about the situation in their own confrontation with Albania. What gave them a reason for optimism was that China was not completely supportive of Albania. This led to the assumption that at some point China might play a peacemaking role. On the other hand, Yugoslav diplomats imparted to their Soviet counterparts the Yugoslav position that the great powers should stay away from Albania, and that the Yugoslav government was willing to develop good relations with Albania, but the Albanian leadership should show the same willingness.¹¹⁸

The Albanian-Soviet confrontation put Yugoslavia in an extremely uncomfortable position. On the one hand, it wanted to normalize relations with the Soviet Union. On the other hand, it considered the Soviet break of diplomatic relations with Albania to be an anachronous and counterproductive measure. The Western powers kept a keen eye on Yugoslavia's reactions to the events, expecting them to be clearer. Italy and Greece, each for its own reasons, wanted to find out about Yugoslav plans and intentions as regards Albania. The Yugoslav government, in spite of much political criticism and insults levelled at it, sought to refrain from reacting, and left Albania to its spontaneous struggle with the Eastern Bloc and China's firm support. There also was a harsh campaign against Yugoslavia's view of the development of socialism. In an atmosphere which looked like a competition among the great powers, Yugoslavia wanted to stay aside. Its bilateral relations with Albania were reduced to a minimum, including the trade between the two countries. Although it continued its rough propaganda against Yugoslavia, the Albanian government, in the context of its confrontation with the Soviets and its allies, made an attempt at rapprochement. The Yugoslav government declined the Albanian initiative, anxious that it might be seen as its indirect support to Hoxha's regime, which in turn would spoil its relations with the USSR and the West, considered by the Albanian regime as unreliable and unacceptable for any form of political cooperation. Albania's gradual and overt moving closer to China, its self-isolation from two neighbouring countries, the Eastern Bloc countries and the Western world, along with Yugoslavia's moving closer to the Third World countries, and the balance of power between East and West, were the cause of extremely bad relations between Yugoslavia and Albania.

¹¹⁷ DASMIP, PA-1961, Albania, f.1, 415314, Note on the talks with Dimitar Stam, official of the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in charge of Yugoslavia, on 29 October 1961.

¹¹⁸ AJ, KPR, I-5-c/2471, Note on the talks between Ivo Vejvoda, Assistant State Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and Dedushkin, Minister-Advisor of the Soviet Embassy, on 1 June 1961.

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Edited by

VOJISLAV G. PAVLOVIĆ

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