

**YUGOSLAV-SOVIET RELATIONS, 1953-
1957:
Normalization, Comradeship,
Confrontation**

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ABSTRACT

The thesis chronologically presents the slow improvement of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, starting with Stalin's death on 5 March 1953, through their full normalization in 1955 and 1956, to the renewed ideological confrontation at the end of 1956. The normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations brought to an end a conflict between Yugoslavia and the Eastern Bloc, in existence since 1948, which threatened the status quo in Europe.

The thesis represents the first effort at comprehensively presenting the reconciliation between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, between 1953 and 1957. It will also explain the motives that guided the leaderships of the two countries, in particular the two main protagonists, Josip Broz Tito and Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, throughout this process. It will also provide insight into the reasons behind the collapse of this process in the beginning of 1957.

The thesis will establish that the significance of the Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation went far beyond the bilateral relations between the two countries. It had significant ramifications on relations in the Eastern Bloc and in the global Communist movement, and on the dynamics of the Cold War world at its crucial juncture. The reconciliation had brought forward the process of de-Stalinization in the USSR and in Peoples' Democracies; it had also encouraged the process of liberalization throughout Eastern Europe and had helped Khrushchev win the post-Stalin leadership contest. Finally, the reconciliation had enabled Yugoslavia to acquire equidistance from both Blocs and to successfully embark upon creating, together with India and Egypt the new entity in the bi-polar Cold War world – the Non-aligned movement.

The unique contribution of this thesis is that it is based on the research of the Yugoslav and Russian archives; it brings into the Cold War scholarship a great number of previously unresearched documents.

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INTRODUCTION

The Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation between 1953 and 1957, which is the subject of this thesis, was the second and concluding half of the historic drama that had started in 1948. In June 1948 the World was shocked to learn of the Yugoslav-Soviet confrontation. As a bolt from the blue, a rupture appeared in what was perceived to be the impermeable, monolithic Communist Bloc. The news was received with equal disbelief on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Hitherto, Yugoslavia had been considered the most doctrinaire of the Socialist regimes and the most reliable pillar in the Stalinist edifice. On 28 June, at its extraordinary session in Bucharest, the COMINFORM issued a Resolution accusing Tito and the Yugoslav leadership of conducting policies aimed against the Soviet Union and the All Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), and of abandoning Marxism-Leninism. The Resolution openly encouraged *'healthy elements in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY)'* to replace Tito and his closest associates with a *'new, internationalist leadership'*.¹ The Resolution was never officially sent to Belgrade. Yugoslav leaders learned of it when it was published in the East European press on 29 June.

Following ideological disqualification, Yugoslavia was immediately subjected to concrete pressure from the Peoples' Democracies. They began unilaterally

¹ *The Resolution of the Information Bureau on the situation in the CPY, Bucharest, 28 June 1948*, in Dokumenti o spolnoj politici Socijalisticke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije: 1945-1950 [Documents on the Foreign Policy of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia: 1945-1950] (Beograd: Savezni sekretarijat za inostrane poslova / Institut za medjunarodnu politiku i privredu / Jugoslavenski pregled, 1984), 621-7.

cancelling existing agreements on trade and economic cooperation with Belgrade.² Simultaneously, a vicious anti-Yugoslav propaganda campaign was initiated throughout Eastern Europe and in the USSR.³ In response, Tito and his associates successfully rallied the CPY membership and Yugoslav public opinion in support of their resistance to Stalin's hegemony. The Fifth Congress of the CPY (the first since 1940) was convened in Belgrade between 21 and 28 July. It *'approved the position of the Central Committee (CC) of the CPY'*. It also declared the Soviet and COMINFORM accusations to be *'untrue, incorrect, and unjust'*.⁴ The fault lines of the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict were thus defined.

By the end of 1948, the Soviet Union and Peoples' Democracies had imposed on Yugoslavia a full economic blockade. Its economy came on the verge of collapse. The threat of famine became real and would remain so for several years after 1948. The gravity of the situation can only be appreciated given the fact that Yugoslavia had emerged from the Second World War devastated; its proportional losses in human life in this conflict had been second only to that of Poland. In addition, between 1945 and 1948, following doctrinarian Stalinist concepts, the Yugoslav leadership had subordinated their country's economy to the *'division of labour'* within the Socialist *camp*⁵, making it fully dependant on Soviet assistance.⁶

² *Note of the Government of FNRJ [Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia] to the Government of Peoples Republic of Albania regarding unilateral cancellation of economic contracts, agreements, and conventions, 2 July 1948*, in Dokumenti of spoljnoj...(1948), 189-93.

³ *Statement by the Federal Assembly of the FNRJ on the propaganda campaign by the Information Bureau, Belgrade, 30 September 1948*, in Dokumenti o spoljnoj...(1948), 373-6.

⁴ *Resolution of the Fifth Congress of the CPY on relations with the Information Bureau*, in Dokumenti of spoljnoj...(1948), 266-7.

⁵ The Socialist *'camp'* or *'lager'* were commonly used by the Soviet and Satellite officials to depict the Soviet Bloc and would henceforth be used in the text.

⁶ *Speech by President J.B. Tito at the Fourth (extraordinary) session of the Federal Assembly of FNRJ on the economic development of Yugoslavia in 1948, Belgrade, 27 December 1948*, in Dokumenti of spoljnoj...(1948), 488-90. For more detailed analysis of the consequences of the blockade and Yugoslavia's consequent dire economic situation post-1948, see Chapters I and II.

However, the likelihood of the Soviet and Satellite military aggression posed the biggest threat to the survival of Tito's regime. Within months of the COMINFORM Resolution, armed incidents, clashes and infiltration of armed groups became daily occurrences on Yugoslavia's borders with the Satellite countries. Between 1948 and 1953, 7,877 border incidents took place, of which 142 were characterized as '*substantive*' clashes. Between 1948 and 1952, threatened by the prospect of a military aggression from Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia was forced to increase its military budget ten-fold to US \$655 million. At the same time, in the first two years of the economic blockade, the economy of war-torn Yugoslavia sustained losses amounting to US\$429 million.⁷

Within a year after the COMINFORM Resolution, diplomatic relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union and its allies effectively lapsed. Diplomatic missions were reduced to skeleton staffs, which were subjected to absurd restrictions on their movements and to intimidating surveillance and harassment. Between 1948 and 1953, 145 Yugoslav diplomats were expelled from the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries.⁸

In August 1949, the Yugoslav leadership became convinced that Stalin was contemplating an attack on Yugoslavia. During the previous months, the Yugoslav authorities had arrested a group of White Russian émigrés, who had settled in Yugoslavia after the October Revolution. A number of them had

⁷ Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi Prilozi za Biografiju Josipa Broza Tita*, [The New Supplements to the Biography of Josip Broz Tito] Volume 3, (Beograd: Izdavačka radna organizacija 'Rad', 1984), 461-2.

⁸ Ibid.

received Soviet citizenship after 1945. After June 1948, many had been recruited by the Soviet military intelligence for subversive activities in Yugoslavia. At 3 a.m. on 18 August a Soviet Embassy representative left a Soviet Government Note with the night porter in the Yugoslav Federal Secretariat for Foreign Relations (DSIP) in Belgrade. Using the recent arrests of White Russian émigrés as a pretext, the Note openly threatened that the Soviet Government would be *'forced to adhere to other, more effective measures that it finds necessary in order to protect the rights and interests of Soviet citizens in Yugoslavia and to bring to account [Yugoslav] Fascist despots.'*⁹ The Yugoslav leadership immediately set into motion contingency military measures, including the formation of partisan units throughout Yugoslavia, as well as the stockpiling of food and munitions in the interior of the country, the evacuation of archives, etc.¹⁰

During the following weeks and months, Stalin raised the prospect of an imminent attack on Yugoslavia. On 11 September, the Hungarian Foreign Minister, Laszlo Rajk, was indicted as the *'chief American and Yugoslav spy.'* On 24 September it was officially announced that he had been sentenced to death. On 28 September, the Soviet Government unilaterally cancelled the accreditation of Karlo Mrazović, the Yugoslav Ambassador in Moscow.¹¹ On 27 November 1949, at its session in Matra, Hungary, the COMINFORM issued the second resolution on Yugoslavia, entitled *The Yugoslav Communist Party in the*

⁹ *The Note by the Government of the USSR to the Government of the FNRJ, Belgrade, 18 August 1949*, in Dokumenti of spoljno... (1949), 462-7.

¹⁰ Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi Prilozi...*, 430-6; Also, Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, *Revolucija koja teče: Memoari* [The Continuous Revolution: Memoirs], (Beograd: Komunist, 1971), 106-8; Author's interview with S. Vukmanović-Tempo, 12 February 2000, Reževići, Serbia and Montenegro.

¹¹ Djoko Tripković, *'Vruće leto' 1949. godine* [The Hot Summer of 1949], in JUGOSLOVENSKI ISTORIJSKI ČASOPIS, No. 1-2, 2000, 189-208.

Hands of Murderers and Spies. The document declared that the '*struggle against Tito's clique – paid spies and murderers, represents the internationalist duty of all Communist and Workers parties.*'¹²

Belgrade remained in constant fear of a Soviet attack until well after Stalin's death in March 1953. The angst of August 1949 and of the following months forced the Yugoslav leadership to accept Western offers of assistance. Secretly at first, it negotiated procurement of the US military aid. The first formal and public Yugoslav-US military assistance agreement was signed on 14 November 1951.¹³ By this time, Yugoslavia and its leadership, the most loyal of Stalin's disciples until 1948 had become not only one of the West's most important propaganda assets in the ideological war against the Soviets but also a vital strategic component of the Western alliance. As such, between 1949-1950 and 1955, Yugoslavia received approximately US\$1,5 billion in Western (mainly American) economic and military aid. This was more than many NATO member countries had received.¹⁴

The Yugoslav-Soviet conflict encouraged a belief among the Yugoslav leaders that they were waging a life-and-death struggle against Stalin. Fearing a split among the members of the CPY and infiltration by a Soviet-inspired fifth column, the Yugoslav leadership adopted decisive but repressive methods. Between 1948 and 1953, approximately 200,000 people were arrested in Yugoslavia on charges of supporting the COMINFORM Resolution. However,

¹² *Note of the Government of the USSR to the Government of FNRJ, 28 September 1949*, in *Dokumenti of spoljnoj...*(1949), 477.

¹³ Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi Prilozi...*, 435.

¹⁴ Transcript of Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Belgrade, 27, 28 May and 2 June 1955; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-56.

not all were indicted. The first and only concentration camp in Tito's Yugoslavia was created in 1949 on the island of Goli Otok in the Adriatic. More than 32,000 political prisoners, most of them ex-partisans, co-combatants, and close friends of their jailers were imprisoned in the camp. Around 3,200 of these detainees died.¹⁵

The Yugoslav-Soviet rupture in 1948 was one of the defining moments of the immediate post-Second World War era; it blurred the fault lines of the Cold War. Furthermore, Yugoslavia's challenge to Stalin's authority in 1948 represented the first schism in the post-October 1917 history of the international Communist movement and destroyed its monolithic cohesion.

The reconciliation between Belgrade and Moscow between 1953 and 1956, and their renewed confrontation at the end of 1956, were equally significant for the course of the Cold War. Even more than the Yugoslav-Soviet break-up in 1948, these two developments irrevocably changed the dynamics of relations within the Soviet Bloc. As the first effort of its kind, this thesis will map out the process of the Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation and provide insight into the considerations that motivated and guided the Soviet and Yugoslav leaders. It will also assess the contribution of the two leaders, Josip Broz – Tito of Yugoslavia and Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev of the Soviet Union, to this process.

Analysis of the Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation, and the vital contribution made by Tito and Khrushchev, will suggest several important conclusions. Firstly, the process eliminated a point of conflict in the middle of Europe, which threatened

¹⁵ Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi Prilozi...*, 478.

to trigger a large scale confrontation between the two Blocs. Secondly, and as a result of the removal of the threat of the Soviet and Satellite aggression, the normalization of relations with the Soviet Union enabled Yugoslavia to acquire an equidistant position from both Blocs and to pursue the policy of non-alignment. Within several years, this new Yugoslav strategic orientation contributed decisively to the establishment of the non-aligned movement as a global phenomenon that would decentralize the Cold War. Thirdly, the reconciliation between Belgrade and Moscow helped Khrushchev to overcome hard-line opposition in the Kremlin and to consolidate his leadership. Fourthly, it fostered the process of de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union and in the international Communist movement. Fifthly, the Soviet recognition of independent forms of Socialism that resulted from the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia contributed to the liberalization processes in Eastern Europe in 1956. Sixthly, together with issues raised during the renewed Yugoslav-Soviet ideological polemics at the end of 1956, the reconciliation irrevocably challenged the form of rigid subordination imposed by Stalin on relations between the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries, and between the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) and other Communist parties. In addition, the renewed confrontation between Moscow and Belgrade at the end of 1956 helped to promote the new role of the Chinese Communist Party and its leadership as an authority and arbiter in the international Communist movement; this would ultimately lead to the Chinese challenge to the leading role of the Soviet Party in the beginning of 1960s.

The topic of this thesis is defined within the period between 1953 and 1957. The process of Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation started with Stalin's death on 5 March

1953 and ended with the renewal of ideological confrontation in the beginning of 1957. The years 1953 and 1957 thus encapsulate the full circle of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union – from the state of hostile confrontation, through first tentative overtures towards improvement of relations in 1953, the subsequent normalization of state relations and full reconciliation after the re-establishment of relations between the CPSU and the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) in June 1956, to confrontation at the beginning of 1957 which threatened the repeat of the 1948 rupture.

In its coverage of the historical significance of the Yugoslav-Soviet relationship between 1953 and 1957, the thesis will be presented in four chronological chapters. This methodological approach offers the best understanding of the dynamics of the relations between the two countries during this period. The reconciliation between Moscow and Belgrade was an evolutionary process. The causality of the motives that guided the two leaderships and the policies they implemented is best demonstrated through a chronological progression. Moreover, changes in the international system inevitably influenced relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR. Even the ideological tenets and perceptions held by Tito and Khrushchev, the architects of their countries' foreign policies, were a function and reflection of historical developments.

Chapter I of the thesis, entitled *Overtures*, opens with an explanation of Yugoslavia's national security crisis at the end of 1952. It then provides insight into Belgrade's reaction to Stalin's death in March 1953, the first Soviet overtures towards improving relations with Yugoslavia during 1953, and the Yugoslav leadership's lack of responsiveness to these Soviet initiatives. Lastly,

it analyses the change in the Yugoslav attitude towards the Soviet exploratory overtures at the end of 1953.

The secret correspondence between the Soviet and Yugoslav leaderships that followed Khrushchev's letter in June 1954 constitutes the core of the second Chapter, *Normalization*. It also addresses the impasse in Yugoslav-Soviet relations that occurred during the winter of 1954-5 and the sequence of events that prompted Khrushchev's trip to Belgrade. The third Chapter, entitled *Comradeship*, covers the highpoint of the Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation. It starts with Khrushchev's historic visit to Belgrade in May 1955, describes the accelerating improvement of relations between the two countries that followed this visit, and concludes by examining the comradeship that characterized relations between the two countries between the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in February 1956 and Tito's visit to the USSR in June 1956. The last Chapter of the thesis, *Confrontation*, opens with this visit because it marked the beginning of the deterioration of the Yugoslav-Soviet relations. The core of this Chapter addresses the renewal of the confrontation between the two countries that eventually led to the open ideological conflict in the beginning of 1957.

Due to the word limit imposed upon this thesis and the need to focus on Yugoslav-Soviet relations, a number of interesting subjects have either been omitted or awarded less space than they would otherwise have merited. Tito's trip to India and Burma at the end of 1954 and its implications on Yugoslavia's reorientation towards non-alignment similarly have been awarded much less space in Chapter II than they deserve. Likewise, the meeting between Tito, Nasser and Nehru in Brioni in July 1956 was only briefly referred to in Chapter

IV. Furthermore, a more detailed account of Yugoslav relations with the West in 1956 has been omitted from Chapter IV because Yugoslav-Soviet relationship in 1956 was exclusively determined by developments in Eastern Europe. These were defined by events in Poland and Hungary and the reopening of the ideological chasm between Belgrade and Moscow. The constraints imposed by the word limit and the focus on the Moscow-Belgrade relationship have not permitted a more comprehensive account of Yugoslavia's relations with the People's Democracies. Likewise, the crises in Poland and Hungary during the summer and autumn of 1956 and the Hungarian uprising in November are presented only to the extent that they had a direct impact on relations between Belgrade and Moscow. Most unfortunately, the same restrictions did not allow for a more detailed discourse about the influence of ideology and of Khrushchev and Tito's personalities on the course of Yugoslav-Soviet relations.

This thesis represents the first comprehensive attempt at addressing the subject of the Yugoslav-Soviet relations in the critical period between 1953 and 1957. It is the first work that aims at providing insight into the process of Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation in its entirety, from the first overtures in 1953 until its collapse in the beginning of 1957. Hitherto, historians have addressed only particular events in Yugoslav-Soviet relations, or certain aspects of Yugoslav or Soviet foreign policy during this period. Because the existing historiography is of tangential relevance to the subject of this thesis, only a few works will be presented in the briefest possible manner. Several Yugoslav historians, namely Ljubodrag Dimić, Djordje Borozan, and Djoko Tripković have written valuable articles but these are limited to specific developments in the Yugoslav-Soviet

relationship during this period.¹⁶ Professor Dimić's many works, together with those of the late Branko Petranović are essential for an understanding of the domestic frictions and developments, which influenced Yugoslavia's foreign policy.

Leonid Gibianskii and Johanna Granville have contributed articles on the Yugoslav involvement in the Hungarian uprising in November 1956, in particular Imre Nagy's asylum in the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest.¹⁷ The new documentary reader by Csaba Békés *et al* presents several important documents related to Yugoslavia's role in the Hungarian events.¹⁸ Lorraine Lees' work on Yugoslav-US relations is a valuable contribution to the understanding of certain aspects of Yugoslav foreign policy during the 1950s. However, it does not provide insight into the Yugoslav-Soviet relationship.¹⁹

Among the biographies and memoirs of the Yugoslav and the Soviet leaders, this work has benefited most from the Russian language edition of Khrushchev's own *Reminiscences*, and the Serbo-Croat edition of Dedijer's seminal *The New Supplements to the Biography of Josip Broz Tito*, Volume 3.

¹⁶ Ljubodrag Dimić, *Josip Broz i Nikita Sergejević Hruščov: Razgovori u Beogradu, 27. maj-2. juni 1955* [Josip Broz and Nikita Sergevich Khrushchev: Belgrade talks, 27 May – 2 June 1955], in ISTORIJSKI GLASNIK, No. 1-2, 1997, 35-67; Djordje Borozan, *Posrednik mira između 'Gvozdениh zavesа' (razgovori Tito-Hruščov u Moskvi 1956* [Peace Mediator Between the 'Iron Curtains' (Tito-Khrushchev Talks in Moscow, 1956)], in VOJNOISTORIJSKI GLASNIK, No. 2, 1996, 133-153; Djoko Tripković, *Jugoslavija i pitanje azila Imre Nadja* [Yugoslavia and the Asylum of Imre Nagy], in ISTORIJA 20. VEKA, No. 1, 1997, 61-73.

¹⁷ Granville, Johanna, *Josip Broz Tito's Role in the 1956 'Nagy Affair'*, SLAVONIC AND EAST EUROPEAN REVIEW, 1998, 76 (4), 672-702, No. 3, 1998, 493-517; Leonid Gibianskii, *Sovjetsko-jugoslovenski odnosi i Mađarska revolucija 1956. godine* [The Soviet-Yugoslav Relations and the Hungarian Revolution in 1956], in JUGOSLOVENSKI ISTORIJSKI ČASOPIS, No. 1-2, 1996, 151-70.

¹⁸ Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne, János M. Rainer, (eds.) *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents* (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2002)

¹⁹ Lorraine M. Lees, *Keeping Tito Afloat: The United States, Yugoslavia, and the Cold War*, (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997)

Unfortunately, numerous biographies of Khrushchev, the latest by William Taubman, do not shed much light on Yugoslav-Soviet relations.²⁰

A special mention should be made of the Serbo-Croat edition of Veljko Mićunović's *Moscow Years, 1956-1958*. This remains the best first-hand account of an important phase in the Yugoslav-Soviet relationship. Having had access to original Yugoslav documents from that period, it can be confirmed that when writing his memoirs, Mićunović went back to the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry archives and retraced the events he had witnessed. This only adds to the value of his work and to his integrity as a witness and a historian.

During the very last days of the writing of this thesis, Professor Dimić kindly forwarded to me a monograph by Jan Pelikán, a Prague historian, entitled *Yugoslavia and the Eastern Bloc, 1953-1958*. Due language constraints, only a passing impression of the work was formed. Pelikan's presentation is limited by absence of certain important Yugoslav and Soviet documents. In addition, his work ends with Tito's visit to the USSR in June 1956, which represented only the beginning of the most important phase in the process of the Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation – namely, its collapse. It is impossible to understand the motives of the protagonists of the normalization between Moscow and Belgrade, or the multifaceted aspects of the process itself, without an acute understanding of the reasons behind its breakdown. Lastly, Pelikan devotes significant space to Yugoslavia's relations with the Satellite countries, thus inevitably reducing its focus on the relations between Moscow and Belgrade. .

²⁰ William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man And His Era*, (New York: Norton, 2003)

In its intention to contribute to the widening of Cold war scholarship and research, this thesis is almost exclusively based on the Yugoslav and Soviet archival documents. Much of this archival material was consulted for the first time and almost all of these documents have never before been presented in the English language historiography. Thus, this thesis fulfils another of its goals – to integrate the wealth of Yugoslav archival sources into the global historical scholarship.

Although the current limitation on access to Soviet archival material necessarily prevented examination of all possible relevant material to this thesis, the transcripts of the CPSU Central Committee Plenums and reports from the Soviet Ambassadors in Belgrade proved to be invaluable.

In the absence of full access to the Soviet archives, my unprecedented access to the Yugoslav archives nevertheless, allowed for the most comprehensive analysis of the Yugoslav-Soviet relations. Yugoslav documents, which proved the most revealing originated from several sources: the political reports by various departments of the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry and the reports from Yugoslav Ambassadors in Moscow, in particular those from Mićunović's on his meetings with Khrushchev; transcripts of talks held between Tito and the Yugoslav leadership, and Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership; and transcripts of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) Central Committee Plenums and the meetings of its Executive Committee²¹. Unfortunately, due to lack of adequate governmental support and years of neglect, working in the Yugoslav archives remains a challenge. This was

²¹ LCY Central Committee Executive Committee – highest most leadership of the LCY and Yugoslavia (equivalent to the Politburo).

exacerbated by the paranoia of Milošević's regime and the political instability that prevails in Serbia to this day.

Very valuable among primary sources have been speeches by Yugoslav and Soviet leaders and officials, in particular those of Tito, published in the Yugoslav and the Soviet party organs, BORBA and PRAVDA. Editorials of these publications were another important source, in particular on the polemics between Moscow and Belgrade. Unfortunately, due to the sad demise of the protagonists of this era of Yugoslav-Soviet relations, only one oral source was available - namely Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, a member of the highest Yugoslav leadership at the time, with whom an interview was conducted only months before his death. A number of published documental collections have proven invaluable, namely the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS, Volumes VIII, 1952-1954, and XXVI, 1955-1957), Documents on the Foreign Policy of FNRJ (1945-1950), and the already mentioned *Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents* by Csaba Békés et al.

Finally, I would like to thank a number of people who contributed to the making of this thesis. It is impossible to overstate unique contribution of my supervisor, Dr. Anita Prazmowska. As a PhD student, I could not have been more fortunate. I can only hope that the quality of this thesis does justice to her support and patience in guiding me to its completion. My gratitude also goes to Dr. Sue Onslow who tirelessly pointed to linguistic errors. I wish to express my deepest appreciation to Professor David Stevenson and Professor Odd Arne Westad who have offered invaluable advice and comments whenever I have asked for these. Heartfelt thanks must also go to the kindness of Carol Toms. I am

grateful for all the invaluable advice to Professor Ljubodrag Dimić, the most prominent Yugoslav historian, whom I am proud to call a friend. Thank you also to Miodrad Perišić. The research for this thesis would have been difficult without the help and kindness of the staff of the Archives of Serbia and Montenegro and of the Archives of the Foreign Ministry of Serbia and Montenegro in Belgrade. Thank you also to Rebecca. I will never be able express due gratitude to my family and friends for their encouragement and help. Above all however, the love and support of my parents, Jelena and Nikola, and sister Mirjana have made all this possible.

CHAPTER I

OVERTURES

1953 (January) - **1954** (May)

Analysis of Yugoslavia's relations with the West at the end of 1952 is critical to the understanding of Yugoslav-Soviet relations in 1953. Strategic planning discussions between Yugoslavia and the tripartite governments¹ were held in November 1952 in Belgrade. Tito and the Yugoslav leadership judged these discussions to have been unsuccessful and were convinced that, as a result, Yugoslavia faced a national security crisis.² The resurgence of the Trieste problem between Yugoslavia and Italy around this time added to Yugoslav anxieties. For the next year and a half, Yugoslavia's foreign policy strategy was determined by these considerations. Tito and his associates³ fervently sought to maintain strategic

¹ The term used by the governments of the United States, Britain, and France to denote their coordinated effort to negotiate military and economic cooperation or aid to Yugoslavia.

² Meeting of the Executive Committee (Yugoslav equivalent of the Politburo) of the Central Committee (CC), League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) – Memorandum of Discussions, 27 November 1952; AJ (Yugoslav Archives), ACK SKJ (LCY CC Collection), 507/III/61.

³ Also 'Tito and his collaborators' or 'Tito and his comrades' - henceforth to mean Tito and a small number of top Yugoslav leaders, his most trusted collaborators. This circle usually comprised of Edvard Kardelj, Aleksandar Ranković, Milovan Djilas (until January 1954), Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo (from 1954), and

cooperation with the Western powers, particularly the US, and to create an alliance with Yugoslavia's Balkan neighbours, Greece and Turkey. During this period, Yugoslavia had to cope with a catastrophic economic situation. The second consecutive drought of 1952, coupled with the disastrous consequences of forced collectivisation threatened with widespread food shortages. In addition, a spiralling balance of payment deficit had deprived Yugoslav industry of badly needed raw materials.⁴

Following Stalin's death on 6 March 1953, the new Soviet leadership initiated unprecedented and very subtle conciliatory overtures towards Yugoslavia. Tito's pursuit of closer association with the West and the creation of the new Balkan Alliance had forced the new post-Stalin leadership to seek ways to normalize Yugoslav-Soviet relations. However, the earlier mentioned priorities of the Yugoslav foreign policy, together with Yugoslav leadership's accumulated mistrust towards the Soviets, attributed to the lack of Yugoslavia's responsiveness to Soviet overtures. It was only after the renewed Trieste crisis in October 1953 that Belgrade decided to change its attitude towards Soviet approaches.

Koča Popović. Depending on the issue under consideration, other high officials from relevant Ministries were sometimes invited to participate in the decision making process.

⁴ On 6 October 1952, in a plea to the tripartite governments' ambassadors, the Yugoslav Deputy Foreign Minister, Aleš Bebler indicated that Yugoslavia desperately needed food aid. He also indicated that due to the lack of raw materials, factories would soon have to be shut down; industry only had coke for 22 more days and cotton for 30 days. The US Ambassador in Yugoslavia (George Allen) to the Department of State, 7 October 1952, FRUS, 1952 – 1954, Vol. VIII, pp. 1314 – 15. In the period July – December 1952, Yugoslavia received \$50 million worth of US economic aid. In addition, on 22 December 1952, a supplemental \$20 million of urgent, 'drought aid' had been extended through the Mutual Security Agency, Memorandum by the Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs (Bonbright) to the Assistant Secretary of State (Perkins), 26 December 1952, FRUS, 1952-1954, pp. 1324-5; Allen to the Department of State, 10 January 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, pp. 1336-9. On 20 March 1953, the US allotted a further \$7 million to Yugoslavia for the procurement of wheat to assist in addressing the effects of the 1952 drought, Note to the Memorandum of Conversation, William Barbour, Director, Office of Eastern European Affairs with the Yugoslav Ambassador in Washington (Vladimir Popović), 2 March 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, pp. 1342-1344.

I.1 Yugoslavia's National Security Crisis

At the end of 1952, Tito and the Yugoslav leadership firmly believed that the country faced a national security crisis.⁵ In July 1952, the three Western powers, the US, Britain, and France had reached an understanding that military cooperation with Yugoslavia had reached a level, which demanded strategic planning discussions with Belgrade. From the Western point of view, the talks were to serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, militarily, the South-eastern NATO flank would be strengthened with the Yugoslav link between Italy and Greece. On the other hand, politically, the talks could help further integrate Yugoslavia into the Western Bloc. Consequently, between 16 and 20 November, the tripartite military delegation led by the US General Thomas T. Handy held talks in Belgrade with the Yugoslav delegation headed by the Yugoslav Army Chief of Staff, General Peko Dapčević. The Yugoslavs attributed utmost importance to these talks. There was strong indication that, behind the scene, Tito was personally heading the Yugoslav side of negotiations. Reporting on the talks, the British Ambassador in Belgrade, Sir Ivo Mallet, speculated that the conference room was bugged and that Tito followed the discussions from a nearby room. According to him, General Dapčević relied heavily

⁵ Meeting of the Executive Committee (EC) of the LCY CC – Memorandum of Discussions, 27 November 1952; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/61.

on written messages regularly brought to him by an orderly from an adjacent room.⁶

From the first day of talks, it was apparent that the two sides had divergent goals. On the one hand, Belgrade was looking for concrete Western commitment towards Yugoslavia in case of Soviet aggression. Once it received such guarantees, Yugoslavia was willing to disclose its defence plans and coordinate them with the West.⁷ General Handy, on the other hand, came with a limited mandate. His task was to acquire a better insight into Yugoslavia's defence planning and capabilities in order for Western military planners to structure future military aid in accordance with Yugoslav Army's true requirements. He was not authorized to disclose NATO's defence plans to the Yugoslavs or to offer them formal security guarantees.⁸ General Handy's refusal to make security commitments to Yugoslavs during talks convinced Tito and his associates that Western strategists have accepted that a Soviet or Satellite attack on Yugoslavia could be limited to a local war. Faced with daily military incidents on its borders with the Satellites,⁹ Belgrade found such a position frightening. More than anything else, the Yugoslavs feared becoming a European Korea.¹⁰ Yugoslav apprehensions were augmented by the

⁶ Report on Yugoslav Defence talks – UK Military Attache in Belgrade (Colonel G.R.G. Bird) to the War Office, 22 November 1952. The National Archives, formerly Public Records Office (PRO), FO 371, File No. 102168, Doc. No, WY1022/94.

⁷ The meeting of the EC, LCY CC – Memorandum of discussions, 27 November 1952, AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/61.

⁸ The Ambassador in Yugoslavia (Allen) to the Department of State, 18 and 20 November 1952; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, pp. 1316-7 and 1320-1, respectively. In his report, the British Military Attache stressed that General Handy had '*absolutely nothing concrete to offer to Yugoslavs*' - UK Military Attache in Belgrade (Colonel G.R.G. Bird) to the War Office, 22 November 1952. The National Archives, (PRO), FO 371, File No. 102168, Doc. No, WY1022/94.

⁹ Term used also by the Yugoslavs to depict countries of Peoples' Democracies, i.e. the countries of Eastern Europe, members of the Soviet Bloc.

¹⁰ The meeting of the EC, LCY CC – Memorandum of discussions, 27 November 1952, AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/61.

vociferous anti-Communism of the newly elected Eisenhower/Dulles administration.

Alarmed by the outcome of talks with General Handy, Tito convened the meeting of the Executive Committee¹¹ of the Central Committee (CC) of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) within a week of General Handy's departure from Belgrade. Speaking of the talks, Tito angrily emphasized that '[the West] *considers that a Soviet-Yugoslav war could be confined to Yugoslavia...It is obvious that [General] Handy is a member of the reactionary wing... The developments in the World are turning towards the Right (the Eisenhower victory)... The American reactionary forces are going against Communism in general and not just against Soviet hegemony and aggression.*'¹² Given the coincidental timing of the Belgrade talks and the US Presidential elections, the Yugoslav leadership attributed General Handy's stance to the pronounced anti-Communism of the new Eisenhower Administration. Tito feared that the new Republican President would be indifferent to Yugoslavia's fate and would regard it as just another Communist state undistinguishable from the Soviet Union or its Satellites.

The compelling reason for the Yugoslav reaction to Handy's mission was the ubiquitous threat of a Soviet invasion. Yugoslavia had lived in its shadow since 1948. Belgrade was still subjected to the Soviet economic blockade, daily incidents on its borders, vicious anti-Yugoslav propaganda from the Eastern Bloc, and total

¹¹ Yugoslav equivalent of the Politburo.

¹² The meeting of the EC, LCY CC – Memorandum of discussions, 27 November 1952, AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/61.

isolation from the international Communist movement. Tito was nevertheless confident that his people would defend their independence against the Soviets. Furthermore, Western economic and military aid since 1950 had helped Yugoslavia to overcome the debilitating consequences of the Soviet economic blockade and to maintain its defence capabilities in excess of the combined capabilities of its Satellite neighbours. Nevertheless, Tito knew only too well that the true deterrent against a Soviet invasion lay elsewhere. As he would admit later,

'...my associates and I believed that for as long as he lived, Stalin would not initiate a war that could lead to a global conflict. He was shrewd enough not to walk into something like that'.¹³

In this context, lack of Western security guarantees towards Yugoslavia undermined the very deterrent that kept the Soviets at bay. Tito and the Yugoslav leadership were convinced that the removal of this deterrent would present Stalin with an open invitation. Yugoslavia would be left with the prospect of a localized war in which it would alone fight the Soviet and Satellite forces for years.

In the twelve months following General Handy's visit, Yugoslavia's foreign policy focused on averting the perceived danger of strategic isolation that could result in Yugoslavia fighting a '*localized*' war against the Soviets and the Satellites. At the aforementioned meeting of the Executive Committee of the CC LCY, on 27 November, Tito repeatedly emphasized the danger of isolation. At the same time he pointed to the exit strategy. He insisted that [Yugoslavia] *must not allow* [itself] *to be isolated in Europe... However, we need not enter NATO. We should*

¹³ Tito's speech at a rally in Belgrade, 31 March 1953, upon returning from England, BORBA, 1 April 1953, 1-2.

negotiate with the Greeks and the Turks'.¹⁴ Edvard Kardelj,¹⁵ at the time the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, added that *'with the Greeks and the Turks [Yugoslavia] must enter political clarifications. This way, we would not undertake obligations towards NATO... certain political arrangements with them are possible and could form the basis for later military discussions.'*¹⁶ Explaining Yugoslavia's dilemmas in the aftermath of General Handy's visit, in a conversation with the British Ambassador two years later, Kardelj emphasized that *'in the situation when there was real danger of the attack by the USSR, we put emphasis on strengthening our defences... For this reason we went for the Balkan Pact, Tripartite strategic talks, etc.'*¹⁷

During this period, Yugoslavia simultaneously pursued several strategies in the hope of averting isolation and preventing Soviet aggression. On the one hand, every effort was undertaken, in particular during Tito's visit to Britain in March 1953, to change the American and British view that a Soviet attack on Yugoslavia could remain localized. Belgrade hoped to secure some Western commitment, even if not full security guarantees. On the other hand, Yugoslavia immediately initiated contacts with Greece and Turkey to create a defensive alliance. The first

¹⁴ The meeting of the EC, LCY CC – Memorandum of discussions, 27 November 1952, AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/61.

¹⁵ Together with Aleksandar Ranković, **Edvard Kardelj** was Tito's closest collaborator. He was elected to the Politburo of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1938. As the member of the Supreme Staff of the Partisan Army, he was at Tito's side throughout the War. After liberation and until January 1953, he was the first Yugoslav Foreign Minister. From January 1953 he became the vice-President of the Federal Executive Council (Yugoslav Federal Government) of which Tito was the President. After the expulsion of Milovan Djilas in January 1954, Kardelj became the Yugoslav ideologue. Even after Koča Popović took over as Foreign Minister in January 1953, Kardelj remained the interpreter of Tito's foreign policy directives. The Yugoslav Foreign Ministry often sent memorandums of his conversations or speeches to Ambassadors as interpretations of official Yugoslav positions on various issues. Until his death in 1979 he remained Tito's closest associate.

¹⁶ The meeting of the EC, LCY CC – Memorandum of discussions, 27 November 1952. AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/61.

¹⁷ Memorandum of conversation between Kardelj and the British Ambassador in Belgrade (Sir Frank Roberts), 8 April 1955; SMIP (Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs), SPA (Top Secret Archive Collection), 1955, F II / Engl. I – 199.

goal was to combine Yugoslavia's defensive capabilities with those of willing neighbours against Soviet expansionism. Although inferior to the combined Soviet and Satellite forces, such an alliance would nevertheless represent a formidable deterrent against the Soviets and the Satellites. There was also a second, more sophisticated rationale behind Yugoslavia's search for a Balkan alliance. Greece and Turkey had recently become members of NATO. If allied with Belgrade, they would be obliged to come to its aid in case of a Soviet or Satellite attack on Yugoslavia. Consequently, they would inevitably come under a Soviet attack. According to the Atlantic Treaty Charter, an attack on any member of NATO would immediately provoke a response from all other members, including the US. Yugoslavia would thus secure an indirect US commitment. Moreover, by forming a defensive Pact with Greece and Turkey, Yugoslavia would be able to evade Western pressure to enter NATO. According to this logic, Yugoslavia would be incorporated in the Western defence system and still remain outside NATO.

Why was Yugoslavia adamant about not joining NATO although it sought integration into the Western defence system? On the one hand, only if it stayed outside NATO could Yugoslavia still remain neutral in the event of an East – West war initiated elsewhere in the world. The Yugoslav leadership took very seriously the rhetoric of the incoming US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles. They were afraid of being dragged into a '*preventive war*' against Communism that Dulles has been propagating throughout the Presidential campaign.¹⁸ Unless directly attacked

¹⁸ The meeting of the EC, LCY CC – Memorandum of discussions, 27 November 1952. AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/61. Also, Tito's report of his visit to Great Britain, given before the Federal Executive Council – Memorandum of discussions, April 1953 (no specific date of the session); AJBT (The Josip Broz Tito Archive), KPR (The Cabinet of the President of the Republic), I-2/1, 1300-12.

by the Soviets, the Yugoslav regime, being Communist, was opposed to fighting other Communists. On the other hand, by joining NATO Yugoslavia would give credence to Stalin's propaganda that it had betrayed Communism and had become the '*imperialists' pawn*'.¹⁹ Even during the darkest hours of the conflict with Stalin, Tito never denied his Communist identity. He was in confrontation with Stalin's aggressive and hegemonic policies, not with the Marxist ideology. This explains the third and the most important reason for Tito's refusal to enter NATO, one that Tito never mentioned in contacts with foreigners. He feared that if Yugoslavia ever joined NATO, the ideological character of the Western Alliance would eventually undermine his Communist regime.²⁰

In pursuit of the first foreign policy strategy, Tito and other Yugoslav officials used every opportunity with Western leaders and diplomats to change the perception that a Soviet attack on Yugoslavia could remain '*localised*'. During his meeting with the US, British, and French Ambassadors on 20 December 1952, Kardelj stressed that Yugoslavia did not want to '*become another Korea*' and expressed hope that the Western powers '*would not permit COMINFORM to extend its control any further*'.²¹ On 7 January 1953, Tito told the US Ambassador, George Allen that General Handy's visit had made '*a most unhappy impression on the Yugoslavs*', mainly because they understood that the West had reconciled itself with the idea

¹⁹ Official talks between President Tito and the Turkish Foreign Minister, Fuad Köprülü - Transcript, 23 January 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F II / Turska I-48.

²⁰ The meeting of the LCY CC Executive Committee (Extended) - Transcript, 19 July 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/62a.

²¹ The Ambassador in Yugoslavia (Allen) to Department of State, 22 December 1952, FRUS, 1952 - 1954, Vol. VIII, pp. 1322 -23.

that Yugoslavia '*would become another Korea in case of [a Soviet] attack*'.²² In his meetings with Churchill and Eden in London, between 17 and 22 March 1954, Tito insisted that the question of the '*local war*' should receive absolute priority during their talks. The British assured Tito that they shared his opinion that a military conflict anywhere in Europe could not remain '*localized*' and explicitly disavowed General Handy's position on this question. Furthermore, they promised to bring the Americans in. The joint Communiqué, issued at the end of Tito's visit, stated that '[the British and Yugoslav Governments] *undertook to work closely together and with other freedom loving nations to defend peace. They were in full agreement that, in the event of aggression in Europe, the resulting conflict could hardly remain local in character*'.²³

Tito's second foreign policy strategy, namely to create an alliance with Greece and Turkey, was pursued with equal vigour and in a breathtaking fashion. After Tito had closed his country's borders with Greece in July 1949 and effectively stopped the infiltration of Greek Communist guerrillas and shipments of arms into Northern Greece, relations between the two countries had gradually improved. However, closer military cooperation between Turkey, Greece, and Yugoslavia became a possibility only after Yugoslavia started receiving military aid from the US in 1950 and effectively became part of the Western defence system in Europe. By the beginning of 1952, both Greece and Turkey had come to a joint conclusion that

²² The US Ambassador in Yugoslavia (Allen) to the Department of State (Telegrams 934 and 935, 8 January 1952, FRUS, 1952 – 1954, Vol. VIII, pp. 1333 – 36.

²³ Tito's visit to Britain, 17 – 22 March 1952; AJBT, KPR, I-2/1, pp. 1270-1299; Memorandum of conversations between Tito, Churchill, and Eden, 17 – 21 March 1953; AJBT, KPR, I-2/1, pp. 1259-1269. The U.S. Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Aldrich) to the Department of State, 21 March 1953, FRUS, 1952 – 1954, Vol. VIII, pp. 1346 – 47.

'close collaboration with Yugoslavia was indispensable for [their] defence efforts'.²⁴

Contacts between the three countries intensified during the summer of 1952. A Greek Parliamentary delegation, led by its Speaker, M. Gondikas, had visited Yugoslavia in mid-July 1952. A Turkish political delegation, led by the Mayor of Istanbul, F. Gokay had visited Belgrade in August. At the end of August, the Yugoslav parliamentary delegation, headed by the Speaker of the Yugoslav Federal Assembly, Moša Pijade, visited Greece. Moreover, the Yugoslav military delegation, led by General Pavle Jakšić, visited Greece and Turkey in September 1952.²⁵ This early phase of the rapprochement between the three countries had been characterized by Yugoslavia's reluctance to formalize it, in particular with regards the military cooperation.

However, things changed dramatically in the aftermath of General Handy's visit to Belgrade. On 23 November, just three days after the conclusion of General Handy's mission and a day before the Greek General Ioannou's reciprocal visit to Belgrade, Yugoslav officials informed the Greek Military Attaché in Belgrade that the *'stage [was] set for substantial developments'.²⁶* This signalled the Yugoslav leadership's readiness to start talks on military cooperation with its Balkan neighbours. From then on, rapprochement between the three countries accelerated at a breathtaking speed. A Turkish military delegation, which arrived to Belgrade on 20 December, found the Yugoslavs willing to discuss a tripartite military alliance.

²⁴ The US Ambassador in Athens (Peurifoy) to the Department of State, 6 May 1952, FRUS, 1952–1954, Vol. VIII, pp. 592-3.

²⁵ Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1 July 1952-31 December 1954, Vol. IX, (Bristol: Keesings Publications), 12781-2

²⁶ The US Ambassador in Belgrade (Allen) to the Department of State, 24 November 1952, FRUS, 1952–1954, Vol. VIII, 597.

Between 26 and 30 December, as an immediate follow-up to these talks, a high-ranking Yugoslav military delegation led by General Miloš Šumonja visited Greece.²⁷ General Šumonja's enthusiasm for an alliance with the Greeks and the Turks shocked the Greeks. They were stunned by the sudden and complete change of heart by the Yugoslavs.²⁸ The US Ambassador in Athens, J. Peurifoy, reported that

'the Yugoslavs desire formal tripartite agreement with Greece and Turkey [stipulating that co-signatory countries] will assist in case of attack upon any one of parties... Greeks are puzzled by urgency with which Yugoslavs are pressing for this agreement, particularly since the Yugoslav delegation which visited Athens in September did not raise the question and appeared to consider threat of war not imminent'.²⁹

Within two months, by the beginning of 1953, the new Balkan alliance was put in place. Between 20 and 25 January 1953, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Fuad Köprülü, visited Yugoslavia and held intensive talks with Tito. In an astonishing *volte face*, Tito informed Köprülü that *'different possibilities now exist for our joint collaboration. It is for this reason that I believe that our two countries and Greece could proceed to negotiate and create an alliance.'*³⁰ At the same time, Tito did his best to dispel Greek and Turkish reservations arising from the Yugoslavia's refusal to join NATO. He went so far as to state that

'in principle we are against being formally tied to NATO. I underline, formally... We are waging a fight with the Russians for the public opinion of the [Communist] world, which currently supports them. This most potent of weapons

²⁷ Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1 July 1952-31 December 1954, Vol. IX, (Bristol: Keesings Publications), 12781-2

²⁸ The US Ambassador in Athens (Peurifoy) to the Department of State, 31 December 1952, FRUS, 1952 – 1954, Vol. VIII, 600-2.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Official talks between President Tito and the Turkish Foreign Minister, Fuad Köprülü - Transcript, 23 January 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F II / Turska I-48.

*is in our hands and this is one NATO does not possess. We are the only ones who have it, and why discard it for the sake of some formal alliance?*³¹

On the one hand, Tito's clarification was an excuse for what, in truth, was his ideological opposition to joining NATO. On the other hand, it revealed a genuine belief held by Tito and the Yugoslav leadership that Yugoslavia represented a beacon that would attract Satellite countries away from Soviet control. During talks with Köprülü, Tito succeeded in creating a definitive push towards the Balkan alliance.

The Turkish Foreign Minister went straight from Belgrade to Athens in order to brief his Greek counterpart, Stephanos Stephanopoulos, and the new Greek President, General Alexander Papagos, on the astonishing outcome of his talks with Tito. On 3 February 1953, only three days after Köprülü's departure from Athens, Stephanopoulos flew to Yugoslavia to meet Tito. During the four days of talks he had had with Tito and his associates, it was agreed that negotiations for the Balkan alliance should be accelerated.³² As a result, a tripartite Greek, Turkish, and Yugoslav military conference took place in Ankara between 17 and 20 February. Even at this early stage, Yugoslavia not only did everything to speed up the creation of the Balkan alliance but was also insisted that it have a distinct military character from the outset.³³ On 20 February, the very same day that the military conference in Ankara was concluded, the Conference of the Foreign Ministers of Greece, Yugoslavia, and Turkey, began in Athens. At its conclusion, on 26

³¹ Ibid.

³² Official talks between President Tito and the Greek Foreign Minister, Stephanos Stephanopoulos, 6 February 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, FII / Turska I-48.

³³ Telegram, the US Ambassador in Greece (Peurifoy) to the Department of State, 26 February 1953; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 625-6.

February, the three Foreign Ministers initialled the draft of the Treaty of Friendship and Assistance. The three ministers then flew together to Ankara where, on 28 February they formally signed the Treaty.³⁴

The speed with which the Ankara Agreement was created revealed Yugoslavia's desperate search for security. Although yet not a fully fledged military alliance, the Agreement represented a decisive step forward in Yugoslavia's closer integration in the Western defence system, the sole purpose of which was to alleviate fear of isolation in the face of a Soviet threat. Thus, within just three months after General Handy's mission, Tito was on course to fulfil his most pressing strategic goal.

I.2 Stalin's Death

Tito's confidant and biographer, Vladimir Dedijer, claims that first news of Stalin's fatal illness reached the Yugoslav leadership through him.³⁵ On the morning of 4 March 1953, the Belgrade correspondent of the British *Daily Express* woke Dedijer at 5 a.m. to tell him that Stalin was ill, probably dead, and asked for an official Yugoslav statement. Dedijer immediately called Milovan Djilas, who then informed

³⁴ In documents from the time and in historiography, this Treaty is also referred to as the Treaty of Ankara, the Ankara Pact, the Ankara Agreement, or, wrongly, the Balkan Pact. The Treaty became a full military alliance, the Balkan Pact, on 9 August 1954, in Bled, Yugoslavia. Henceforth the term Ankara Agreement will be used.

³⁵ Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi Prilozi za Biografiju Josipa Broza Tita* [New Supplements to the Biography of Josip Broz Tito], Volume 3, (Beograd: Izdavačka radna organizacija 'Rad', 1984), 614.

Tito, Kardelj, and Aleksandar Ranković over a special telephone line.³⁶ Given that the Yugoslavs regularly monitored all Soviet and Satellite radio broadcasts, it is hard to accept the veracity of Dedijer's version. On the evening of 3 March, Radio Moscow had broadcast a joint statement by the Soviet Government and the Party Central Committee about Stalin's illness. No matter the true course of events, the manner in which the Yugoslav leaders became aware of Stalin's illness is indicative of Yugoslavia's complete isolation from events in Moscow. The rupture of relations between the two countries in 1948 and the ensuing ferocious ideological battle resulted in the complete severance of contacts between the two countries. Diplomatic relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union and Peoples' Democracies were barely maintained. The Yugoslav Embassy in Moscow, had been reduced to only two diplomats, headed by Chargé, Dragoje Djurić. These diplomats were restricted in their movements to the centre of the city only, and even then worked under the heaviest and unconcealed surveillance. The Embassy had very limited means of communicating with Belgrade. A short telegram that arrived in Belgrade from Djurić, in the evening of 4 March, was the first communication from the Yugoslav Embassy in Moscow regarding Stalin's illness. It revealed barely suppressed elation over the demise of a hated enemy. Djurić

³⁶ **Milovan Djilas** - Until January 1954, together with Kardelj and Ranković, he was a member of Tito's innermost circle. Elected to the CPY Politburo in 1940. Leader of the uprising in Montenegro, during the Second World War, Djilas was known for rigid, ultra-leftist views and was responsible for several massacres and executions of Communists' opponents, as well as of fellow Communists. After the war, he headed the AGITPROP, the propaganda machinery of Tito's regime and became the ideologue of the Yugoslav Communist party. In January 1954, expelled from the LCY leadership.

Aleksandar Ranković – Chosen by Tito to his first Politburo in 1937. Remained Tito's closest and most loyal collaborator during and after the War. Ranković shaped the organisation of the Partisan Army and was entrusted with the security of the movement. After the War, headed Yugoslavia's security apparatus, officially until 1953 and unofficially afterwards. Elected Vice-Prime Minister to Tito in 1953 and later Vice-President. Expelled from the leadership in 1966 for '*usurpation of power*'.

reported that [Stalin] *has no chance. Death is to be expected at any moment. Unhidden jubilation among diplomats.*³⁷

There was no official reaction in Belgrade either to the news of Stalin's illness or his subsequent death. The Yugoslav press printed without commentaries Western agency reports from Moscow and official Soviet communiqués. The very lack of documentation in the Yugoslav archives reveals the crucial importance of Tito's public persona and studied indifference at this time of great uncertainty. On the evening of 5 March, Tito left Belgrade by train for the port of Zelenika where he boarded his yacht 'Galeb' en route to Great Britain for an official visit. News of Stalin's death was awaited by the hour; Dedijer, who was among those seeing Tito off at the Belgrade railway station, described Tito as being in a jovial mood, cracking jokes.³⁸ The trip to Zelenika took several days, which were filled with public engagements. On the evening of 6 March, when Radio Moscow broadcast the official statement announcing Stalin's death, Tito attended an opera performance in Sarajevo.³⁹ He spent the next day visiting a nearby metallurgical plant in Zenica. On the day of Stalin's funeral, 9 March, Tito was on board 'Galeb'. The Yugoslav leader was obviously at pains to demonstrate complete indifference to events in Moscow. Not once during his public appearances and speeches did he make any reference to Stalin's illness or death. Behind the scenes, however, he followed events with the greatest attentiveness. During his trip to Zelenika, Tito was accompanied by Ranković, in charge of the security apparatus, Koča

³⁷ D. Djurić to DSIP (Državni Sekretarijat za Inostrane Poslove – Federal Secretariat for Foreign Affairs – the official name at the time for the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry; henceforth DSIP), 4 March 1953, SMIP, PA, SSSR (USSR), 1953, F84/13-42877.

³⁸ Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi Prilozi...*, 615.

³⁹ BORBA, 7 March 1953, 1, 2. Also, BORBA, 8 March 1954, 1.

Popović,⁴⁰ the Foreign Minister and Aleš Bebler, the Deputy Foreign Minister. The composition of his entourage, as well as the fact that Kardelj was left in charge in Belgrade, revealed Tito's care and determination to be in absolute control of events. According to Dedijer, Tito and his entourage spent every moment between public engagements in discussions and analyses of the latest news from Moscow and the world, and in issuing instructions to various government agencies.⁴¹ The official silence and public manifestations of indifference continued even after Tito's departure for Britain. In an interview given to TANJUG, the official Yugoslav news agency, on board 'Galeb' on 15 March, Tito never once mentioned Stalin.⁴² The only Yugoslav comment of Stalin's death during this period appeared in the unofficial daily POLITIKA on 9 March, the day of Stalin's funeral. The short commentary asserted that '*regardless of who inherits [Stalin], no one will have his power and authority. The infighting at the top, should give food for thought to conscientious revolutionary forces that surely still exist in the Soviet Union.*'⁴³ The statement predicted the certainty of imminent infighting for the leadership position in the Kremlin and called for the removal of Stalin's legacy.

In the aftermath of Stalin's death, Yugoslavia pursued a dual foreign policy strategy that would remain in place until November 1953. On the one hand, Belgrade continued to pursue military integration within the Western defence system with

⁴⁰ **Koča Popović** – From a wealthy Serbian family. Attended graduate studies at the Sorbonne and was a prominent surrealist poet in 1930s. As a member of the CPY since 1933, joined the International Brigades and fought in the Spanish Civil War. In the Second World War became the first General and Commander of the first Partisan brigade and then its first corps. From 1945 until 1953 he was the Chief of Staff of the Yugoslav Army. From January 1953 until 1965 occupied the post of the Yugoslav Foreign Minister. Retired on his own insistence in 1968 as the Vice President of Yugoslavia.

⁴¹ Dedijer, Vladimir, *Izgubljena bitka J.V. Staljina* [The Battle Stalin Lost], Sarajevo, Svjetlost-Prosveta-Oslobodjenje, 1969, 423

⁴² BORBA, 16 March 1953, 1.

⁴³ POLITIKA, 9 March 1953, 2.

undiminished determination, refusing at the same time to join NATO. On the other hand, Tito and his associates adopted a cautious wait-and-see attitude towards the new post-Stalin leadership. Belgrade's efforts at closer military cooperation with the West were focused on the continuation of the strategic cooperation talks with the three Western powers, which had been suspended after General Handy's mission, and on the creation of the Alliance with Greece and Turkey. This coincided with the 'New Look' US foreign policy approach, introduced by the new Eisenhower Administration. The three Western powers increased efforts to consolidate NATO's European South-eastern flank by connecting Greece and Turkey, with Italy. Yugoslav integration was crucial for this strategy. Following Tito's successful visit to Britain in March 1953, military experts of the three tripartite powers began work on a joint platform for the continuation of strategic discussions with Yugoslavia and the overcoming of the negative effects of General Handy's mission.⁴⁴ A series of meetings between Yugoslav, US, British, and French military representatives paved the way for the second round of strategic talks, held in Washington between 24 and 28 August 1953. Unlike General Handy's mission, this round proved to be much more successful. The Yugoslav Ambassador in Washington, Vladimir Popović, commented that these talks opened way for the *'development of mutual concept for the defence of Southeastern Europe, thereby strengthening the common defensive system against Soviet aggression'*. As a result, the Yugoslavs for the first time divulged their defensive plans to Western experts.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Agreement Between Military Representatives of the British, French, and the United States Government, 22 May 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 1354-5.

⁴⁵ Memorandum of conversation between the Secretary of State and the Yugoslav Ambassador in Washington (V. Popović), 3 September 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 244-7.

The second tier of the Yugoslav strategy towards military integration with the West, the creation of the Balkan Alliance with Greece and Turkey, progressed equally well. After the signing of the Ankara Agreement in February 1953, Belgrade initiated discussions with Greece and Turkey for the transformation of the Agreement into a firm military alliance. Towards this end, a meeting of representatives of the three General Staffs was held in Athens, between 3 and 12 June 1953.

Yugoslavia's continued commitment to military cooperation with the West was the result of the fact that despite Stalin's death, the Yugoslav leadership continued to see the Soviet Union as the biggest threat to Yugoslavia's security. On 19 March, speaking before the British Parliament during Tito's official visit, Koča Popović, the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, stated that *'the peace is under threat, directly and concretely, by policies of a big superpower – the Soviet Union.'*⁴⁶ Commenting on the visit of the Yugoslav Chief of Staff, General Peko Dapčević, to the US between 11 and 25 March, a top secret Yugoslav Foreign Ministry memo underlined that the aim of the visit had been to exchange views on required measures in peace and war, *'to fight off the aggression of the Russians and their Satellites against our country and Europe.'*⁴⁷ During the Yugoslav leader's visit to Britain in March, the third round of official Churchill–Tito talks was entirely devoted to defence issues arising from a possible Soviet attack on Yugoslavia. The talks were appropriately held in the Cabinet Map Room. At the end of the talks, Tito gladly accepted

⁴⁶ Speech by Koča Popović before the British Parliament, 19 March 1953, AJBT, KPR, I-2/1, 1276-7.

⁴⁷ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 30 April 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F V / Fasc. 10b / I - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten br. 8/53, 6-8,

Churchill's proposal that the press release should specifically mention the venue where the talks had been held.⁴⁸ The intention was to make it obvious to the Soviets that the subject of talks was closer military cooperation.

Several factors contributed to the fact that the Yugoslav leadership continued to perceive the Soviet Union as a threat. In the months after Stalin's death, there was no decrease in the hostility and pressure from the Soviet Union and Satellite countries against Yugoslavia. At the end of May, the Yugoslav Deputy Foreign Minister, Bebler, informed Yugoslav Ambassadors that *'there is no sign to date that [Yugoslav-Soviet] relations have improved... During March there were 296 border incidents and during April, 342. Between 1 April and 15 May alone, the central press [of the Soviet Union and the Satellites] printed 107 articles against Yugoslavia. Their Radio stations broadcast 20 commentaries against Yugoslavia daily. The attitude towards our representatives [in these countries] remained the same.'*⁴⁹ Furthermore, the composition of the post-Stalin leadership suggested to the Yugoslavs that there could be no change in Soviet policies towards Yugoslavia. Every member of the 'new' leadership in the Kremlin belonged to Stalin's innermost circle. Several of them, namely Lavrenty Beria, Vyecheslav Molotov, and Mikhail Suslov, were either chief organisers or had headed the apparatus entrusted with executing the policies of intimidation and hostility towards Yugoslavia after the 1948 break-up. In a telegram to the Yugoslav Ambassador in Sweden, Koča Popović underlined that *'regardless whether the present [Soviet] leadership, or part of it, condemns the previous course, it is almost inconceivable that they would*

⁴⁸ Transcript of the third round of Tito – Churchill talks, 19 March 1953, AJBT, KPR, I-2/1, 1259-69.

⁴⁹ Bebler to Ambassadors, 22 May 1953, SMIP, PA, 1953, Jugoslavija, F45/5-46745.

condemn Stalinism because all of them were Stalin's closest associates'.⁵⁰

Moreover, Tito predicted a fierce leadership contest among Stalin's successors that would inevitably destabilise the USSR and add to global tensions.⁵¹ He was convinced that [the Soviet leadership] *will try to get themselves sorted out, to create authority... there will only be a temporary respite... The Western world needs to understand that the Cold War will never cease between them and the [Soviets], nor will it cease between [Yugoslavia] and [the Soviets]*'.⁵² Tito had spent several years in Moscow in the 1930s, working in the COMINTERN and knew only too well that Stalin's death had created a vacuum in the Soviet power structure. In such circumstances, the Yugoslav leadership was concerned that one or more pretenders to the Kremlin throne could see an attack on Yugoslavia and the elimination of the ideological heresy as a winning formula. Infighting in the Kremlin could thus pose an even bigger threat to Yugoslavia than the period before Stalin's death.

The second part of the foreign policy strategy pursued by the Yugoslav leadership in the wake of Stalin's death was the cautious wait-and-see strategy towards Moscow. *'We will just keep on watching'*, declared Tito at a party Plenum in June.⁵³ On the one hand, this was the result of Belgrade's lack of a clear understanding of the intentions of the post-Stalin leadership. On the other hand, the Yugoslavs were careful not to discourage positive signals coming from the Kremlin that might help

⁵⁰ Koča Popović to Yugoslav Ambassador in Sweden (Černe), 4 May 1953, SMIP, PA, SSSR, 1953, F85/14-45648.

⁵¹ Churchill to Eisenhower, 19 March 1953, FRUS, 1952 - 1954, Vol. IX, Part Two, pp. 2026-7.

⁵² Tito's report on his visit to Great Britain, given before the Federal Executive Council – Memorandum of discussions, April 1953 (the document carries only April as the date of the session); AJBT, KPR, I-2/1, pp 1300-1312.

⁵³ The Second Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcript, 16-17 June 1953, AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/II/10.

reduce tensions on Yugoslavia's borders with the Satellite countries. For this reason, Belgrade was careful to acknowledge and reciprocate the Soviet leadership's minor but unprecedented, goodwill gestures that occurred even before Stalin's burial. During preparations for Stalin's funeral, Djurić had reported an absence of the usual discrimination of Yugoslav diplomats vis-à-vis other members of the diplomatic corps in Moscow. The short telegram of condolences that he, along with all other heads of missions in Moscow had sent to the new Soviet leadership was printed in the Soviet press along with the others. Together with other foreign diplomats, Djurić had been invited to the commemorative reception given by the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister. Furthermore, the Soviet press recorded his presence at Stalin's funeral.⁵⁴ Such civilized Soviet behaviour towards Yugoslav diplomats had been unheard of since 1948.

Belgrade's restrained reaction to Stalin's death, instead of jubilation, was thus in response to the aforementioned small positive changes in the attitude of Stalin's successors. Within this context, Belgrade had decided to follow the usual diplomatic protocol and express official condolences to the Soviet Chargé in Belgrade. The official chosen to fulfil this extraordinary task, given the deceased's pre-eminent role in the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict, was Veljko Mićunović, the Yugoslav Deputy Foreign Minister. In his memoirs, Mićunović admitted that, once in the Soviet Embassy, in front of Stalin's portrait, he *'said, almost recited, according to the protocol rules, the words of condolences on behalf of the Yugoslav Government. Even I was aware however, that it did not sound like an*

⁵⁴ Djurić's report to DSIP, 9 May 1953; SMIP, PA (Confidential Archive), 1953, SSSR, F84/9-46642.

expression of condolences, but rather like congratulations on a happy occasion'.⁵⁵

However, Belgrade had carefully chosen the messenger. Mićunović did not belong to the top echelon of the Yugoslav leadership. This ensured that the gesture would not be accorded unwarranted importance, either in Moscow or in the West. At the same time, he was a sufficiently high-ranking official for his visit to be noticed in the Kremlin. The gesture was meant to send a signal to the new Soviet leaders that the Yugoslavs would respond positively towards the reduction of tensions in relations between Yugoslavia and the 'lager'.

Belgrade's first official reaction to Stalin's death came on 23 March. In a speech before the Federal National Assembly, on the occasion of the ratification of the Ankara Agreement, Kardelj stated that *'Yugoslavia [had] no demands from the countries of the Eastern Bloc, other than for them to leave her be and to respect its borders. Moreover, [Yugoslavia] has done its best and will continue to do so, to normalize its relations with those countries, in as much as it is possible'*.⁵⁶ The choice of the ratification of the Ankara Agreement as the venue for sending a message to the Soviets was not accidental. Neither was its brevity – it consisted of only two sentences. On the one hand, it was intended to show Moscow that Yugoslavia will not initiate improvement of relations with the USSR and that it remained firm in its determination to maintain strategic cooperation with the West. On the other hand, the statement expressed Yugoslavia's willingness to normalize relations with the Soviets if the initiative came from Moscow. In accordance with

⁵⁵ Veljko Mićunović, *Moskovske godine, 1956-1958*, [The Moscow Years, 1956-1958], (Zagreb: Sveučilišna naklada Liber, 1977), 22.

⁵⁶ BORBA, 24 March 1953, 1-2.

the strategy of restraint and caution, Tito's public speeches in the immediate aftermath of Stalin's death were carefully balanced. On 31 March, upon his return from Briatin, Tito addressed a rally in Belgrade and spoke publicly for the first time about Stalin's death. He accentuated that

'a question arises however, what will happen after [Stalin's] death, now that new people are in the leadership – Malenkov and others? Being younger and more temperamental, wouldn't they be tempted to take irresponsible actions, even go to war? ... I do not believe that they would do such a thing. I believe that, seeing that the peace-loving forces of the world are stronger by the day, they will try to look for a way out of the dead-end to which they were brought by [Stalin's] foreign policy'.⁵⁷

Tito's conciliatory tone was deliberately noncommittal. On the one hand, at a time when Yugoslavia was doing its utmost to secure military cooperation with the NATO powers, Tito was eager to avoid suspicion in the West that there might be a change in the Yugoslav attitude towards the USSR. On the other hand, the Yugoslav leadership was equally careful to demonstrate to the Soviet and other Communist parties that it would not initiate normalization with Moscow itself. In the international Communist movement, this would have been perceived as Yugoslavia's admission of responsibility for the 1948 rupture.

⁵⁷ BORBA, 1 April 1953, 1-2. Tito's public speeches played an important part in his politics. He enjoyed speaking at public rallies and spoke frequently. The speeches represented the quickest way for him to relay a message to all concerned, at home or abroad. Tito was aware of the extraordinary attention the Western media and diplomats awarded to his public speeches. Furthermore, by announcing foreign policy initiatives or positions on foreign policy issues in public speeches, Tito was able to sound reactions abroad. If necessary, he would later modify or fully retract these public statements through quieter diplomatic channels. Tito also used public speeches to rally domestic support behind his policies and actions and stave off possible opposition within the party. In the absence of democratic institutions and debating forums, public speeches legitimised his policies. Many Yugoslav documents confirm the importance of Tito's public speeches in the formulation of the country's foreign policy. Yugoslav Ambassadors abroad would very often be advised by the Foreign Ministry to read Tito's most recent speech as Yugoslavia's official position on a certain issue [For example: DSIP to Yugoslav Mission in UN, 24 September 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, FV/f3/2, Razno-645 / DSIP to Yugoslav Embassies, 3 August 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F III / Jug. I – 297]. Tito himself would sometimes issue instructions that his recent speech be used as a guideline for new foreign policy direction [Fifth Plenum of the LCY CC - Transcripts, 26 November 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/13]

Belgrade followed the first steps of the post-Stalin leadership with utmost attention. Tito and associates interpreted the first changes introduced by the new Soviet leadership through Yugoslav ideological perceptions developed during the conflict with Stalin. Tito and his associates believed that Stalin's system was estranged from the 'true' nature of Socialism and was kept in power through crude oppression. Once the creator of such a system had died, it was inevitable that the system itself would collapse. According to this line of thinking, there were several motives behind changes introduced in Moscow after Stalin's death. The amnesty was introduced to placate huge domestic dissatisfaction accumulated during Stalin's reign. The new leaders were simply not able to control popular discontent; none of them possessed Stalin's charisma or authority.⁵⁸ Furthermore, a fierce leadership struggle in the Kremlin had forced the post-Stalin leadership to '*buy time*' – to introduce populist measures in domestic policy and a conciliatory foreign policy of small concessions, the '*peace offensive*'.⁵⁹ Belgrade regarded the new decency in the Soviet diplomatic communication as a mere by-product of this policy; the Yugoslav leaders did not see it as a sign of a Soviet policy shift. Given the undiminished number of border incidents and the intensity of anti-Yugoslav propaganda, Belgrade continued to believe that the long-term Soviet goals of expansionism and aggression remained unchanged.⁶⁰ The Yugoslav documents of this period address the Eastern Bloc countries as the '*COMINFORM countries*', the same disparaging term that had been in use since 1948.

⁵⁸ Koča Popović to the Yugoslav Ambassador in Stockholm, A. Černež, 4 May 1953, SMIP, PA, 1953, F85/14-45648, Sovjetski Savez.

⁵⁹ Tito identified Malenkov, Beria, and Molotov as the main leadership contenders. Khrushchev was completely out of the Yugoslav focus, at the time - The Tito-Churchill conversation in the Yugoslav Embassy, 21 March 1953 - Transcript; AJBT, KPR, I-2/1, pp 1270-99.

⁶⁰ Tito's report on his visit to Great Britain, given before the Federal Executive Council – Memorandum of discussions, April 1953 (No specific date on document); AJBT, KPR, I-2/1, 1300-12.

At the same time however, Yugoslav leaders were perplexed by the pace of changes in the USSR, some of which were introduced even before Stalin was buried. At the session of the Federal Executive Council in April, Koča Popović admitted that *'theoretically, we have expected something similar to what is now going on in the USSR to happen sometime after Stalin's death... I must say however, that the suddenness and the speed of these changes have surprised me'*.⁶¹ In a telegram to Djurić in Moscow, the head of the First (East European)

Department of the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry (DSIP), Arso Milatović stated that

'due to their often contradictory character, the sudden and unexpected changes carried out hitherto and specific decisions taken by the present [Soviet] leadership are making it difficult for us to analyse them and to anticipate future actions of the Soviet foreign policy'.⁶²

The Yugoslav leadership had identified several contradictions in the actions of the post-Stalin leadership that made it hard for them to fully assess the course of changes in the USSR.⁶³ There was an apparent effort by new Soviet leaders to reduce the number of economic ministries and to strengthen the role of the Army and of the security apparatus. At the same time, the new leadership had inaugurated a much more conciliatory attitude on a number of foreign policy issues. The post-Stalin leadership had introduced formal separation between the Party and State apparatus. Simultaneously, however, a much stronger presence of the Party cadres in the state apparatus was being encouraged. This had aroused Belgrade's interest in the new role that the Soviet Party leadership seemed to be assuming.

⁶¹ Koča Popović's exposé at the meeting of the Federal Executive Council—Memorandum of discussions, April 1953 (carries only April as the date of the meeting); AJBT, KPR, I-2/1, 1300-12.

⁶² Arso Milatović to Djurić (Moscow), 6 April 1953, SMIP, PA (Confidential archives), 1953, SSSR (USSR), F84/9-45309.

⁶³ Policy paper prepared by the First Department, DSIP, 27 April 1953, SMIP, PA, 1953, SSSR, F84/8-417777.

Moreover, according to the Yugoslavs, the new Soviet leadership was emphasizing the dangers from the *'internal enemy'* and the need for vigilance. At the same time, the Soviet Presidium went ahead with an amnesty and continued to underline their confidence in the strength of the internal order in the USSR.⁶⁴ During a meeting with the US Counsellor in Belgrade, Woodruff Wallner, on 3 April, when asked whether he considered the most recent changes in the USSR to be a manoeuvre or a change of the policy, Koča Popović replied that *'according to my opinion, we can still not talk about the change in the policy. However, if it is a manoeuvre it is then interesting that this manoeuvre is carried out on such big issues. Only a year ago it would have been unthinkable.'*⁶⁵ A few days later, Koča Popović emphasized to Yugoslav Ambassadors that *'one should not underestimate the importance of changes in Soviet domestic and foreign policies, regardless of what they really mean and what purpose they are intended to serve.'*⁶⁶ The speed and the character of some of the measures undertaken by the new Soviet leadership immediately after Stalin's death, suggested to the Yugoslavs that changes introduced were more profound than first anticipated, and were not merely of a tactical nature.

I.3 Soviet Overtures

In the second half of March 1953, members of the Diplomatic Corps in Moscow were making courtesy calls to Molotov, the newly appointed Soviet Foreign

⁶⁴ Ibid. Also, Arso Milatović to Djurić (Moscow), 6 April 1953, SMIP, IPA, 1953, SSSR, F84/9-45309.

⁶⁵ Memorandum of conversation between K. Popović and the US Chargé in Belgrade (Wallner), 3 April 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F II/SAD II-154.

⁶⁶ Koča Popović to Yugoslav ambassadors, 9 April 1953, SMIP, SPA, 1953, F III / SSSR I – 165.

Minister. Djurić, the Yugoslav Chargé in Moscow suggested to his Ministry, the Yugoslav State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs (DSIP) that this might be a good opportunity for him to request a meeting with Molotov and test whether there were any changes in Soviet policy towards Yugoslavia. Belgrade agreed and on 4 April instructed Djurić to be courteous but restrained during his meeting with Molotov. He was also told not to address either the contested issues between the two countries or the history of relations between them. Instead, Djurić was allowed only to state that Yugoslavia was not responsible for the appalling state of these relations. With regard to the timing of the visit, Djurić was told to request a meeting with Molotov only once all other heads of mission had visited the Soviet Minister.⁶⁷ From the instructions, it is evident that the Yugoslavs did not wish to demonstrate willingness to initiate the normalization of relations. The initiative for a meeting eventually came from the Soviets through a third party, the Finnish Ambassador in Moscow. The Yugoslavs knew him to be close to the officials of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID). In the beginning of April, during a reception in his Embassy, the Finnish Ambassador told Djurić that *'he was confident'* that the Soviet MID would look favourably at the Yugoslav Chargé's request for a courtesy visit to Molotov.⁶⁸ After three days of deliberation, the Yugoslav leadership instructed Djurić to proceed with the request, but with the repeated warning not to *'demonstrate even a hint of curiosity, and not to mention anything more.'*⁶⁹ Both the Yugoslavs and the Soviets were treading very cautiously; neither was ready to be seen taking the initiative, thus accepting responsibility for the 1948 rupture.

⁶⁷ Bebler to Djurić, 4 April 1953, SMIP, SPA, 1953, F III / SSSR I – 146.

⁶⁸ Djurić to DSIP, 8 April 1953, SMIP, PA, 1953, SSSR, F85/14-44624.

⁶⁹ Bebler to Djurić, 11 April 1953, SMIP, PA, SSSR, 1953, F85/14-44624.

On Saturday, 25 April, in accordance with instructions received from Belgrade, Djurić telephoned MID and requested a courtesy meeting with Molotov.⁷⁰ To his surprise, the MID replied on Monday, confirming that Molotov would see him as soon as possible. Two days later, on Wednesday 29 April, to his further astonishment, the MID informed the Yugoslav Chargé that Molotov would see him that afternoon.⁷¹ According to Djurić's report, from the beginning of the meeting Molotov was courteous. Breaking with the usual custom, Molotov met Djurić alone and invited him to take a seat. During the initial cordial exchanges, Djurić made the first digression from instructions received from Belgrade. He stated that his government was interested in normalizing relations with the USSR. Molotov did not even acknowledge this statement. Then, in a sarcastic tone, Molotov asked Djurić *'what is it that is happening in Yugoslavia?'* He explained that he was referring to the signing of what he called the Balkan Pact. Djurić went on to explain at length the Ankara Agreement, adding that the Soviet side had not yet officially commented it. On leaving, Djurić repeated his Government's desire to improve relations with Moscow and again Molotov did not acknowledge the statement.

Molotov's willingness to meet with the Yugoslav Chargé, as well as the conduct of the meeting on 29 April, offer several conclusions. Only weeks after Stalin's death, the new Soviet leadership had decided to resume normal diplomatic contacts with Yugoslavia. Only the Kremlin leadership could have made such decision. The

⁷⁰ Report by Djurić on the meeting with Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister of 29 April 1953, 30 April 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F III / SSSR I – 228.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Yugoslav question was of the highest ideological sensitivity and, after all, carried Stalin's personal imprint. Furthermore, the fact that the only political topic introduced by Molotov during the meeting was the question of the Ankara Agreement reveals that the creation of the Balkan Alliance was a question of grave concern to the Soviet leadership. Its creation was perceived in the Kremlin as a potential threat to Soviet national security, prompting Moscow's first conciliatory move towards Yugoslavia since 1948. The Molotov-Djurić meeting on 29 April lasted mere fifteen minutes but had created a sensation among diplomatic observers in Moscow.⁷² It was the first time since 1948 that a Soviet official, let alone the Foreign Minister himself, had met with a Yugoslav diplomat.

The Soviet conciliatory attitude towards Yugoslavia continued after the Molotov-Djurić meeting. On 31 May, Yugoslavia and Rumania signed an agreement regulating traffic on the Danube, which forms a frontier between the two countries. Given that this question had been 'unsolvable' since 1948, Belgrade understood that this sudden Rumanian cooperation came only after a nod from the Soviets.⁷³ At the end of May, the Yugoslav national basketball team participated at the European Basketball Championship in Moscow. Unlike on previous similar occasions, the Yugoslavs enjoyed the same hospitality as other participating teams. Although a seemingly unimportant event, in reality it represented another precedent in Yugoslav-Soviet relations. On 6 June 1953 Moscow initiated a dramatic and sensational new development in the Yugoslav-Soviet relationship. At

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 15 June 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F V // Fasc. 10b /II - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten No. 11/53, 1-2.

a moment's notice, Djurić was called in by the Soviet MID to meet Molotov. According to Djurić, the meeting lasted only several minutes. After asking several questions about the Yugoslav basketball team, Molotov simply stated that the Soviet Government was of the opinion that it was time for the two sides to appoint Ambassadors in Belgrade and Moscow respectively. He then asked for the Yugoslav Government to grant agreement for Vassiliy Alekseyevich Volkov. Molotov further expressed hope that both governments would soon exchange Ambassadors. Still in shock, Djurić simply replied that he would inform his government and come back as soon as he received a reply. Grinning, Molotov commented that he hoped this would be the case.⁷⁴ Djurić was taken aback. Only two days earlier, in response to the Soviet request, he had issued a visa for the newly appointed Soviet Chargé to Belgrade, Oleg Kirsanov. During the meeting on 6 June, Molotov had offered no clues as to whether Kirsanov would go to Belgrade at all. To the Yugoslavs, this haste and lack of coordination suggested that the Soviet leadership had decided to re-establish normal diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia at the last moment and amidst disagreements within the Presidium.

Indeed, the Soviet leadership was deeply divided over future relations with Yugoslavia.⁷⁵ While Moscow was initiating the normalization of diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia, the head of the Fourth European Sector of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, M. Zimianin, sent a report to Molotov in which he accused '*Tito's clique*' of

⁷⁴ Memorandum of conversation between Djurić and Molotov, 6 June 1953; SMIP, Ambasada u Moskvi, 1953, F II / Strogo Pov. – 15.

⁷⁵ Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU CC) - Transcripts, 4-12 July 1955; РГАНИ (Russian State Archives of Contemporary History), Фонд (Collection) 2, Опись (Series) 1, Ролики (Microfilm rolls) 6225,7,8.

intending to *'liquidate the democratic accomplishments of the Yugoslav people'*.⁷⁶

The qualifications and the language used in the report were obviously intended for Molotov's ears. In the months after Stalin's death, the Soviet leadership agonized over the course of future relations with Yugoslavia, unable to resolve serious differences of opinion that existed between them. The Presidium then accepted Khrushchev's compromise proposal and appointed a special Central Committee Commission to determine whether Yugoslavia was still a Socialist country, or whether it had already slipped into Capitalism as those opposed to normalization were arguing. The findings of this Commission were to provide guidelines for the future approach to Yugoslavia.⁷⁷ The appointment of the Commission illustrated the degree to which the Soviet leadership had succumbed to Stalin's mendacious propaganda about Yugoslavia. It also confirmed the strength of the opposition in the Presidium towards normalization with Yugoslavia. As Khrushchev later admitted, *'it was shameful that we had to appoint a commission of economists to provide us with the answer whether Yugoslavia was a Fascist country or not. In a word we were trying to re-discover America'*.⁷⁸

The Yugoslav leadership suspected that Molotov's initiative was timed to inflict maximum damage on Yugoslavia's relations with the West. In a telegram to Djurić, Aleš Bebler, the Yugoslav Deputy Foreign Minister, stated that

⁷⁶ Internal report by the Head of the IV European Sector of the Foreign Ministry (M. Zimianin) for V.M. Molotov, 27 May 1953; Edemskii, A, *The Turn in the Soviet-Yugoslav Relations, 1953-1955*, Cold War International History Project Bulletin, Issue 10, March 1998, 138.

⁷⁷ Talbot, S. (Trans. and ed.), *Khrushchev Remembers*, (London: André Deutsch, 1971), 377-8.

⁷⁸ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 4-12 July 1955, Khrushchev's address, Transcript of 9 July 1955, evening session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Рोलик 6228, Дело 158, 81.

'[the Molotov-Djurić meeting of 6 June] and the [Soviet] haste to send a person of quality⁷⁹ to Belgrade came at a time when the military negotiations of the [Ankara] Agreement countries are taking place [3-12 June], when the Bermuda Ministerial Conference of the Big Three is being prepared [10-14 July], when the West is exerting pressure on Yugoslavia to enter NATO, and at the time of the prolonged Soviet "peace offensive" towards the West... One of the reasons behind [Molotov's proposal] is most certainly the desire to isolate Yugoslavia from the West, in particular at the moment when the Balkan Agreement is being strengthened'.⁸⁰

The initiative also came ahead of the Conference of the Yugoslav, Greek, and Turkish Foreign Ministers, scheduled to take place between 7 and 11 July. Mistrust of the Soviet intentions remained high in Belgrade. In an instructive telegram to Yugoslav Ambassadors, on 11 June, Bebler emphasized that *'[Yugoslavia] will make every effort to counter [Soviet] intentions in the Balkans through the strengthening and extending of our cooperation with Greece and Turkey and through the strengthening of our cooperation with the Western powers'.⁸¹*

Suspicious of Moscow's motives and determined not to allow Molotov's latest initiative to harm Yugoslavia's relations with the West, Tito and the Yugoslav leadership felt compelled to publicly restate Belgrade's independence. On 14 June, in a speech at a rally in Pazin, Croatia, Tito reminded the Soviets in an unequivocal tone that the *'exchange of Ambassadors did not mean an improvement of relations between the two countries'*. To assuage Western anxieties over the sudden normalisation of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia, as well as

⁷⁹ The new Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade, Vassiliy Volkov headed the Balkan Department in MID - Note attached to Djurić's report on the meeting with Molotov, 6 June 1953; SMIP, Ambasada u Moskvi, 1953, F II / Strogo Pov. – 15.

⁸⁰ Bebler to Djurić, 10 June 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F III / SSSR II – 315.

⁸¹ Bebler to Yugoslav Ambassadors, 11 June 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F III / SSSR II – 315.

to serve notice to the Soviet leadership that he was distrustful of their intentions, Tito reaffirmed that Molotov's initiative

*'would not cause a change in Yugoslavia's attitude to Western powers, nor would anyone abroad be able to break the new friendship pact between Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey... [The Soviets] are mistaken if they think that they can isolate us from our allies'.*⁸²

Tito disclosed that the number of border incidents since Stalin's death had actually increased by 50%, to 860, compared with the same period in the previous year, while Stalin was still alive. This fact, according to him, confirmed that the Yugoslavs were right to be suspicious of the Soviets. Tito stressed that after all *'the wrong [the Soviets] had done [to Yugoslavia since 1948]'* the Yugoslavs *'will never fully trust them. Whatever [the Soviets] do, we will take it with a pinch of salt'.*⁸³

On 28 June, marking the fifth anniversary of the COMINFORM resolution against Yugoslavia, BORBA, the Yugoslav party organ published an editorial by Kardelj. In the article, Kardelj launched a scathing attack on the hegemonic nature of the Soviet, Stalinist state and its *'imperialistic ambition that held peoples of Eastern Europe under its yoke'.*⁸⁴ The East Berlin demonstrations of 16 June and the Soviet military clampdown added credibility to Kardelj's article. The decisive demonstrations of public reservations towards Moscow's policies helped the

⁸² BORBA, 15 June 1953, 1-2.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ BORBA, 28 June 1953, 1-2.

Yugoslav leadership to dispel Western suspicions that the Yugoslav-Soviet diplomatic normalization signalled a secret accommodation.⁸⁵

At the same time, the Yugoslav leadership responded positively to Molotov's proposal. In hope of reducing tensions on its borders, Yugoslavia could not afford to forgo any chance of normalization of relations with the East. However, the atmosphere between the two countries remained far from friendly. The new Soviet Ambassador, Vassiliy Volkov, arrived in Belgrade on 21 July to a cool welcome. His presentation of credentials to Tito at the beginning of August lasted just several minutes, with few courteous statements exchanged.⁸⁶ During Volkov's courtesy call to the Yugoslav Deputy Foreign Minister Bebler, the Soviet Ambassador was brusquely reminded that *'things [that] have happened in the last few years between our two countries are difficult if impossible to forget'*.⁸⁷ In a demonstration of studied indifference to Soviet initiatives, Belgrade asked for Moscow's agreement to the appointment of the new Yugoslav Ambassador to the Soviet Union on 15 July, five weeks after the Molotov-Djurić meeting. The Yugoslav Ambassador-designate, Dobrivoje Vidić, arrived in Moscow at the end of September, more than two months after Volkov had taken up his post in Belgrade. In another rebuff to Moscow, unlike Volkov, Vidić was a young diplomat reassigned to Moscow from the more junior post of the Yugoslav Ambassador to Burma.

⁸⁵ Lees, Lorraine M, *Keeping Tito Afloat: The United States, Yugoslavia, and the Cold War*, University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997, 130.

⁸⁶ Arso Milatović, *Pet diplomatskih misija* [Five Diplomatic Assignments], (Ljubljana, Zagreb: Cankarjeva založba, 1985) 137.

⁸⁷ Memorandum of conversation between A. Bebler and the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade (Volkov), 1 September 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F II/SSSR I – 390.

Tito used the Second Plenum of the LCY CC, held on 16 and 17 June 1953 to inform the wider Party leadership of the most recent developments in Yugoslav-Soviet relations, in particular of the Molotov's initiative of 6 June. At the Plenum, he triumphantly declared that [the Soviet initiative for the exchange of Ambassadors was proof] *that even such a great opponent can be defeated... We were right in every respect*'. At the same time, he warned that ' [Yugoslavia will] *have to go towards normalization [with the USSR]. This does not mean that we will trust them blindly every time they smile at us and believe blindly in everything they are saying or will say to us. We will just keep on watching*'.⁸⁸ In his address, Tito offered an interpretation of the post-Stalin leadership's actions and defined the Yugoslav attitude towards them. He reaffirmed the wait-and-see strategy that Yugoslavia had followed since Stalin's death.

Tito's other intention was to prepare the party leadership and its membership for the possible full normalization of relations with the Soviets. He emphasized that, although domestic pressure and a dead-end that Stalin's foreign policy had reached had forced the post-Stalin leadership to inaugurate changes, they were also the result of the Kremlin's genuine intention to introduce new policies. Within this context, Tito presented Molotov's proposal as Yugoslav party's victory in the ideological conflict with the USSR. On the one hand, Tito needed to secure the support of his Party should real improvement of relations with the Soviets occur. At the same time, most of the LCY cadres were young; they were promoted to leading positions in the party and state apparatus during the conflict with Stalin. The crop

⁸⁸ The Second Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcript, 16-17 June 1953, AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/10.

of these cadres was indoctrinated with fierce anti-Stalinism that often bordered with anti-Sovietism. On the other hand, Tito wanted to send a strong message to those in the Party who still harboured affection for *'the first country of Socialism'*. He made it clear that there could be no detour from the independent course that Yugoslavia was pursuing in its foreign policy and that normalization with the Soviets would not mean a return to the pre-1948 relations. To this end, he juxtaposed Yugoslavia's achieved independent position with that of East Germany, the country that was unable to rid itself of the Soviet yoke, even after the bloody uprising that was concurrently unfolding in East Berlin.⁸⁹

After Molotov's initiative of 6 June, Soviet conciliatory gestures towards Yugoslavia multiplied. To this end, Moscow also engaged the Satellites. On 23 June, discriminatory restrictions on movement of Yugoslav diplomats in Moscow were removed; they were now given the same status as other Western diplomats.⁹⁰ Adhering to the tactics of strict reciprocity to Soviet gestures but with a three-week delay, the Yugoslavs responded on 18 July.⁹¹ A day earlier, for the first time since 1948 the Hungarian Foreign Ministry invited the Yugoslav envoy to observe the session of the Hungarian Parliament and to attend a reception given by the Hungarian Foreign Minister. On the same day, the Czechoslovak authorities invited the Yugoslav Ambassador in Prague to attend an international football match between Czechoslovakia and Rumania. At the end of June, the Rumanian Government informed Belgrade that it had accepted a standing Yugoslav proposal

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 1 August 1953, SMIP, SPA, 1953, F V // Fasc. 10b /II - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten No. 13/53, pp. 31-34.

⁹¹ Memorandum of conversation between A. Milatović and the Soviet Chargé in Belgrade (Shnyukov), 18 July 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F II/SSSR I – 350.

for the establishment of a joint commission to investigate border incidents. On 3 July, Bulgaria also agreed to form a joint commission and on 13 July Hungary followed suit. The Yugoslavs understandably attributed importance to these developments; armed incidents were still being a daily occurrence on its borders with the Satellites. In the period between 1 January and 1 June 1953 there had been 172 incidents instigated by the Rumanian side on the Yugoslav-Rumanian border. Between 1 August 1950 and 1 July 1953, 714 border incidents instigated by the Bulgarian authorities were registered on the Yugoslav-Bulgarian border.⁹² However, despite the Bulgarian and Rumanian apparently peaceful proposals, the number of incidents did not diminish and the setting up of agreed commissions dragged on indefinitely. It soon became clear to the Yugoslavs that the gestures made by Moscow and its Satellites were public relations exercises, designed to convey the impression that relations between Yugoslavia and the Eastern Bloc were improving at a breathtaking pace. They were meant to convince the West that Yugoslavia was returning to the *Socialist camp*.⁹³

At the beginning of July, Belgrade received with most careful consideration news of Lavrenty Beria's arrest. Because he had been the Head of the security apparatus, the foundation of Stalin's edifice, the Yugoslavs were of the opinion that Beria's removal signalled the actual and symbolic distancing of the post-Stalin leadership from Stalin's legacy.⁹⁴ Moreover, Tito and his associates also concluded that the Party was instrumental in Beria's removal. This suggested to them that the Party

⁹² DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 1 August 1953, SMIP, SPA, 1953, F V / Fasc. 10b / II - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten No. 13/53, pp. 31-34..

⁹³ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 31 August 1953, SMIP, SPA, 1953, F V / Fasc. 10b / II - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten No. 14/53, pp 1-3.

⁹⁴ A. Milatović to Djurić, 30 July 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F III / SSSR II – 365.

apparatus was asserting a more prominent, if not the leading role in the USSR.⁹⁵ The Yugoslav leadership believed that, for the time being at least, Beria's arrest had removed the danger of a coup against the new people in the Kremlin. The Yugoslav leadership was thus confident that it represented a positive turn of events in the USSR.⁹⁶

Beria's removal inspired Tito with optimism regarding the future of Socialism in the Soviet Union. During the conflict with Stalin, Tito and his associates had never abandoned their Communist beliefs. Accordingly, they never ceased to hope that the Soviet party would return to a 'true' path of Socialism, away from Stalin's deviation. Several statements made by Tito and Kardelj in the immediate aftermath of Beria's arrest reveal their re-born enthusiasm. On 14 July, in conversation with his associates, Tito underlined that Beria's arrest was of importance because it confirmed that the Soviet Party had managed to impose control on the NKVD.⁹⁷ On 19 July, during his meeting with Aneurin Bevan in Brioni, Tito warned that

*'we must never forget that the USSR is, despite Stalin's despotism, home to the October Revolution, a country whose base is progressive. A collapse of the USSR, in the anti-socialist sense, would represent a huge blow to all socialist and progressive forces in the world.'*⁹⁸

The Yugoslav leaders' new-born hope that with Beria's arrest the USSR and the CPSU would discard the Stalinist shroud is best illustrated in Kardelj's observation to Dedijer on 22 July that

⁹⁵ Ibid. Also, DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 1 August 1953, SMIP, SPA, 1953, F V / Fasc. 10b /II - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten No. 13/53, pp 11-13.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Dedijer, Vladimir, *Novi Prilozi ...*, 617.

⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 621.

'the base [the proletariat] in the USSR is progressive. [For this reason] we will have to revise our outlook on the social character of the USSR. [Our] existing views were created in the heat of the conflict. At the time, we had deliberately disregarded positive elements of [the Soviet] system, such as its base'.⁹⁹

The Yugoslav leaders recognised Beria's removal as the most important development of the post-Stalin succession up to that point. It confirmed to them the continuity of the process of change, inaugurated by the new Soviet leadership.

Despite the hope generated by Beria's arrest, the Yugoslav leadership regarded Soviet policy towards Yugoslavia as fundamentally unchanged. They continued to look at Soviet conciliatory gestures and initiatives with mistrust and suspicion. On 8 August 1953, in a speech to the session of the Supreme Soviet, Georgiy Malenkov, the most prominent member of the post-Stalin collective leadership and the President of the Council of Ministers, made the first official Soviet acknowledgment of the ongoing diplomatic normalization between the USSR and Yugoslavia.¹⁰⁰ However, the timing of Malenkov's statement made the Yugoslavs wary once again. It came ahead of the strategic coordination talks between Yugoslavia and the three Western powers, scheduled for 24-28 August 1953 in Washington. On 22 August 1953, Kardelj stressed to the Turkish Ambassador in Belgrade, Agah Axel, that the Yugoslavs *'did not trust the Soviet peace offensive to be sincere'*. He reaffirmed Yugoslavia's determination to develop the military aspect of the Ankara Agreement.¹⁰¹ Several days later, a Yugoslav Foreign Ministry paper concluded

⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 616.

¹⁰⁰ Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1 July 1952 - 31 December 1954, Vol. IX, (Bristol: Keesings Publications) 13096-7.

¹⁰¹ Memorandum of conversation between Edvard Kardelj and the Turkish Ambassador in Belgrade (Axel), 22 August 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F II/Turska I-380.

that ‘ [the Soviet] *offer for the exchange of Ambassadors and for the normalization of relations is, on the one hand, an admission of their defeat in conflict with Yugoslavia, and on the other hand, ... an effort to create mistrust in the West towards Yugoslavia*’.¹⁰² Thus, by the end of summer of 1953 the Yugoslav leadership remained unimpressed by the Soviet overtures. They judged the new Soviet ‘attitude’ to be nothing but Moscow’s ploy to create mistrust in the West towards Yugoslavia. Consequently, there was no dent in the Yugoslav resolve to pursue closer cooperation with the West, including military collaboration.

I.4 Implications Of the October 1953 Trieste Crisis

In October 1953, the Trieste question escalated into a crisis that nearly plunged Yugoslavia into a war with Italy and threatened with a conflict with the US and Britain. The Trieste crisis in autumn 1953, as well as its resolution a year later had considerable implications for the progress of the normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations.

In the aftermath of both World Wars, the port of Trieste, at the northernmost tip of the Adriatic Sea, emerged as a contentious issue. After the First World War, both Italy and the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes¹⁰³ demanded

¹⁰² DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 31 August 1953, SMIP, SPA, 1953, F V / Fasc. 10b /II - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten br. 14/53, pp 1-6.

¹⁰³ From 6 January 1929, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Trieste, formerly part of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Trieste re-emerged as a problem at the end of the Second World War. On 30 April 1945, units of Tito's National Liberation Army reached Trieste ahead of the British and the American troops. The peninsula of Istria and the territory between the city of Trieste and the pre-war Yugoslav-Italian border came under Yugoslav occupation. Tito's new Yugoslavia, however, was Communist. The Western powers were not ready to accept Communist Yugoslavia's occupation of the strategically important port. In a statement of 19 May 1945, the Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean, British Field Marshal Harold Alexander, compared Yugoslav occupation of Trieste to *'those of Hitler, Mussolini, and Japan.'*¹⁰⁴ A dangerous standoff followed between the still formally allied Yugoslav and the British and American troops. Daily incidents, which threatened to escalate into a full-blown military confrontation, created the first fault line of the Cold War.

On 20 June 1945, a provisional agreement was signed between the Yugoslav High Command and the Supreme Allied Command of the Mediterranean. It established a demarcation line that placed the eastern part of the disputed territory, including the peninsula of Istria, under the Yugoslav Army occupation. Under the provisions of the agreement, the western part of the territory, including the port of Trieste came under the British and American military occupation. The agreement left the

¹⁰⁴ Statement by Field Marshal Harold Alexander, Caserta, 19 May 1954; *Dokumenti o spoljnoj politici Socijalisticke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije: 1945* [Documents on the Foreign Policy of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia: 1945], (Beograd: Savezni sekretarijat za inostrane poslova / Institut za medjunarodnu politiku i privredu / Jugoslovenski pregled [Federal Secretariat for Foreign Affairs / The Institute of International Affairs / Yugoslavia Review], 1984), 380..

final settlement to be negotiated with the Peace Treaty with Italy.¹⁰⁵ However, the Peace Treaty, signed at the Paris Peace Conference on 10 February 1947, failed to resolve the problem. The Treaty only formalized another provisional agreement, much along the lines of the demarcation arrangement of 20 June 1945. The co-signatories of this latest agreement were the victorious Allied powers, the US, UK, France, USSR and Yugoslavia. The Treaty declared the city of Trieste and the adjacent territory the so-called Free Territory of Trieste. It was divided into two Zones. Zone A, the western part, including the city of Trieste, came under the joint Anglo-American military and civil administration. Zone B, the eastern part, including the Istria peninsula, was to be administered by the Yugoslavia. The agreement was provisional, until Italy and Yugoslavia negotiated a final settlement. Furthermore, according to the agreement, any future arrangements regarding the status of Trieste would have to be endorsed by all co-signatories.¹⁰⁶

However, Yugoslavia established itself as a prominent member of the Soviet Bloc and Italy remained in the Western sphere of influence. On 20 March 1948, with the advent of the Cold War and the increased Italian importance to the Western Alliance, the US and the British governments declared their unilateral decision to hand over the administration of Zone A and the city of Trieste to the Italians. However, in June 1948, the Tito-Stalin conflict broke out. Yugoslavia became West's invaluable propaganda asset against the Soviets. Overnight, the British and the Americans took care that whatever antagonised the new and important ally,

¹⁰⁵ Agreement between the Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean and the Supreme Commander of the Yugoslav Army, Devin, 20 June 1945 in *Dokumenti o spoljnoj...*, 1945, . 98-9.

¹⁰⁶ Peace Treaty with Italy, signed in Paris, 10 February 1947 in *Dokumenti o spoljnoj politici ...*, 1947, Vol. I, 125 – 185.

including their March 1948 declaration on Trieste, was swept aside. Italian dissatisfaction was silenced for the sake of '*higher*' interests. Unfortunately for the Western allies, the Trieste question continued to fester in Yugoslav and Italian consciousness.

In the summer of 1953, after the indecisive parliamentary elections of 7 June, Italy was thrown into a period of political instability. Vying for public support, Italian political parties pulled the Trieste question back into the limelight. At the end of August, the Italian Government accused Yugoslavia of intending to annexe Zone B and declared that Italy would respond by annexing Zone A and the city of Trieste. Moreover, the Italian Prime Minister, Giuseppe Pella, threatened the West with the Italian exit from NATO should the Allies refuse to support Italian demands on Trieste. In the following weeks, the accusations and counter accusations between Italy and Yugoslavia burgeoned. Tensions were further exacerbated by the highly public nature of the dispute. It stirred popular opinion in both countries whilst limiting both governments' manoeuvrability. On 11 September, the US State Department came up with a plan aimed at forcing a solution of the Trieste problem on Italy and Yugoslavia. President Eisenhower explained that the Balkans '*represented our weakest flank*' and that '*it was this European situation and the defence problem that caused us to make a desperate effort to get these two countries on the same side of the fence. Our only hope of getting them together rested on a resolution of this Trieste problem.*'¹⁰⁷ As it turned out, the American plan merely poured oil on fire. The plan derived from the American assessment

¹⁰⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, President Eisenhower, Secretary of State, Defence Secretary, et al. on Trieste, Washington, 22 October 1953; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 325.

that Yugoslavia would accept the division of the Free Territory of Trieste along the existing zones. It was based on Tito's remarks made during talks with the British Foreign Minister, Anthony Eden, on 19 March 1953, during Tito's visit to Britain. However, one important omission was made. Tito had underlined that he was ready to accept such division only if Britain and the US would provide official and public guarantees that it would be a final solution and would not serve as a springboard for future Italian demands for Zone B.¹⁰⁸ The new State Department initiative did not contain this provision. The US plan of 11 September called for the British and the Americans to hand over administration of Zone A to the Italians. Americans expected that it would provoke Yugoslavs to annex Zone B. According to the plan, pressure would then be exerted on both Italy and Yugoslavia to accept this division as a final solution of the Trieste problem.¹⁰⁹ While London and Washington were putting the plan in place, the Yugoslav-Italian public row intensified, further electrifying public opinion in both countries.

On 8 October, the British and the American governments issued a joint statement announcing their decision to hand over Zone A and Trieste to Italy. This triggered a crisis that, in the dramatic week that followed, brought Italy and Yugoslavia to the brink of war. Because of the presence of their troops in the area, the conflict would have inevitably dragged in the US and Britain. On the morning of 8 October, the British Ambassador, Sir Ivo Mallet and the US Chargé, William Wallner, called upon Tito and handed him the Anglo-American Declaration transferring

¹⁰⁸ The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Austria (Thompson), 28 January 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, pp. 368-71. Also, Memoranda of conversations between Tito, Churchill and Eden, 17 – 21 March 1953; AJBT, KPR, I-2/1, 1259-69.

¹⁰⁹ The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, 11 September 1953; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 273-7.

administration of the Zone A and the city of Trieste to the Italians. Tito promised a response the following day, once he had had a chance to consult his government. He stressed however, as his personal opinion, that he found the Anglo-American decision unacceptable to Yugoslavia. He further asked the two governments to delay their official announcement until he had prepared a communiqué of his own.¹¹⁰ The Allies however, allowed Radio Paris to broadcast the full text of the Declaration barely an hour after the two envoys had left Tito's residence in Belgrade.

The Radio Paris broadcast, without Yugoslav consent or ^{comment} clearly demonstrated that the Anglo-American decision had been made without prior consultations with Belgrade. This heaped further insult upon the already injured Yugoslav pride.¹¹¹ Within a couple of hours, demonstrators were already gathering in front of the US and the British Embassies in Belgrade. By that same evening, huge and violent anti-British and anti-American demonstrations broke out throughout Yugoslavia. The US and British Embassies in Belgrade and their consulates in Zagreb were stoned. Their libraries and Cultural Centres in several cities in Yugoslavia were demolished and ransacked.¹¹² The State Department assessed that popular reaction and anger of demonstrators seemed to have been spontaneous and genuine, simply because they were under way before Yugoslav

¹¹⁰ The Chargé in Yugoslavia (Wallner) to the Department of State, 8 October 1953; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 298.

¹¹¹ Memorandum of conversation, the Yugoslav deputy Foreign Secretary (Bebler) with the UK Ambassador in Yugoslavia (Mallet) and the US Chargé in Yugoslavia (Wallner), 9 October 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F IV / V – 454.

¹¹² Ibid.

officials had time to organise anything.¹¹³ On the next morning, during an emergency meeting with Kardelj, Ranković, and Djilas, Tito blamed them for allowing vandalism, which took place during the previous night's demonstrations. The three were at pains to persuade him that they did not order demonstrations at all.¹¹⁴ The demonstrations continued for several days throughout Yugoslavia although less violent and by now under full control.

Tito's response to the British and the US Government's statement came on 9 October. The Deputy Foreign Secretary, Aleš Bebler, handed an official Note from the Yugoslav Government to the British Ambassador and the US Chargé rejecting the Anglo-American decision of 8 October.¹¹⁵ On 10 October, Tito held a speech at a rally in Leskovac, southern Serbia, demanding that the decision of 8 October be revoked. He added that [Yugoslavs] *can trust no one any more*'. He declared that any *'attempt by Italian troops to occupy Zone A would be considered by Yugoslavia as an act of aggression'*. Tito further confirmed that ... Yugoslav Army reinforcements were being sent to the Yugoslav-administered Zone B. Alluding to the possibility that the British and Americans might exert pressure on him to compromise, he warned that Yugoslavia *'was a proud nation'* and that it would never trade *'any part of its territory for aid'*.¹¹⁶ The next day, at a rally in Skopje, Macedonia, Tito raised the stakes and threatened that *'the very moment* [the Italian

¹¹³ Memorandum of conversation, Secretary of State's Staff Meeting, 9 October 1953: FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 303.

¹¹⁴ V. Dedijer, *Novi Prilozi ...*, 626.

¹¹⁵ Memorandum of conversation between the Yugoslav deputy Foreign Secretary (Bebler) and the UK Ambassador in Yugoslavia (Mallet) and the US Chargé in Yugoslavia (Wallner), 9 October 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F IV / V – 454.

¹¹⁶ BORBA, 11 October 1953, 1-2.

soldiers] *enters Zone A, [Yugoslav troops] shall enter that zone*'.¹¹⁷ By issuing blatant threats day after day, Tito was in fact desperately trying to avert the Italian entry into Zone A, which, as he saw it, would have left him with no alternative but to go to war. Available documents suggest that the British and the Americans were unaware how close Yugoslavia and Italy came to a military confrontation in the week following the 8 October declaration. Washington attributed Tito's belligerent rhetoric on 10 and 11 October in Leskovac and Skopje, to his brinkmanship.¹¹⁸ However, in his diary entries for 12 and 13 October 1953, Dedijer provides a chilling account of these fateful two days. The Yugoslav leadership was expecting Italian troops to enter Zone A on 12 October. On that very same day, Tito despatched his Chief of Staff, General Peko Dapčević to the border region with orders to begin immediate operations upon Italian entry into Zone A. At the same time, a Foreign Ministry team, headed by Bebler, was instructed to prepare official Notes to major powers and the UN announcing the beginning of hostilities with Italy. A blank space was left in the completed Notes for the date to be filled in. According to Dedijer, the Yugoslav leadership spent a sleepless night on 12/13 October, expecting the beginning of military operations. Fortunately, Italian troops did not enter Zone A. The immediate danger of war further subsided after two days of talks, on 12 and 13 October, in Washington, between the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, Koča Popović and the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles. The Yugoslavs however, did not destroy the official Notes prepared several days

¹¹⁷ BORBA, 12 October 1953, 1-2.

¹¹⁸ Memorandum of Discussions at the 166th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, 13 October 1953; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 312-3.

earlier; they were stored in the safe in the Foreign Ministry in case of future deterioration of the crisis.¹¹⁹

Through a combination of belligerent rhetoric and intense diplomatic activity focussed on the US Administration, the Yugoslavs managed to regain the initiative and postpone the decision of 8 October until a negotiated solution was found. On 21 October, in a telegram to the Yugoslav Ambassador in Washington, Vladimir Popović, Kardelj concluded that the first phase of the Yugoslav effort to reverse the decision of 8 October could be considered successful because [Yugoslavia] *had succeeded in moving the whole issue to diplomatic channels and making it the subject of negotiations*.¹²⁰ Indeed, in the next two months, consultations, proposals, and counter-proposals between Belgrade, Washington, and London succeeded one another. Meanwhile, the implementation of the 8 October decision was put on hold. As a result of this intense diplomatic activity, at the end of December the US and the British Governments invited representatives of the Yugoslavian Government to meet in Washington or London, *'as the three occupying powers in Trieste to discuss secretly possible solution to the Trieste question'*. It was agreed that the Italian representative would be present in the same city and would be kept informed by the British and the Americans of the progress of negotiations. Once a successful agreement was reached, all parties

¹¹⁹ V. Dedijer, *Novi Prilozi...*, 629. Also, Memorandum of conversations between the Yugoslav Federal Secretary for Foreign Affairs (Popović) and the US Secretary of State (Dulles), 12 and 13 October 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F IV / VII – 528. Also in, FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 305-12.

¹²⁰ Edvard Kardelj to the Yugoslav Ambassador in Washington (V. Popović), 21 October 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F IV / VI – 487.

were to join in a Five-Power conference that would also include France.¹²¹ The secret negotiations between Yugoslavia, Britain, and the US started on 1 February 1954, in London. The conference would pave the way for the final resolution of the Trieste question on 5 October 1954.

At the peak of the Trieste crisis, the Soviets tried to become party to the dispute from which they had been excluded. On 12 October, the Soviet Government handed official notes to the US and British Embassies in Moscow and to the UN Security Council protesting against the Anglo-American decision of 8 October as a violation of the Italian Peace Treaty of 10 February 1947.¹²² However, the Yugoslavs were very careful to disassociate themselves from any such Soviet '*support*'.¹²³ The Yugoslavs never forgot that Stalin's lack of support during the negotiations over the 1947 Peace Treaty with Italy created the problem in the first place. Furthermore, during the years of the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict after 1948, the USSR supported the Italian Communist Party, which went along with Italian Government's demand for the annexation of Trieste and both zones. Most importantly however, the Yugoslavs were fully aware that the solution of the Trieste problem could be reached only with support of the British and the Americans who occupied the city of Trieste and Zone A, and who held a decisive sway over the Italian Government.

¹²¹ The Ambassador in Italy (Luce) to the Department of State, 24 December 1953; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 356-7.

¹²² FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 310, footnote 2.

¹²³ Memorandum of conversation between the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade (Volkov) with the Vice President of the Federal Executive Council (Kardelj), 13 October 1953; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1953, I - 5 - v / 188. Also, Memorandum of conversations between the Yugoslav Federal Secretary for Foreign Affairs (Popović) and the US Secretary of State (Dulles), 12 and 13 October 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F IV / VII – 528. The same also in: FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 305-12.

The Trieste crisis of October 1953 forced Tito and his associates to re-evaluate the opportunities that normalization with the Soviets might offer. At the peak of the Trieste crisis, the Yugoslav leadership decided to reconsider their attitude towards the conciliatory overtures emanating from Moscow since Molotov's initiative of 6 June. On 20 October, on Tito's orders, Kardelj summoned the top Yugoslav leadership, together with several top Foreign Ministry and Interior Ministry officials to his home in Belgrade. He conveyed to those present Tito's instructions to plot the strategy that would encourage the Soviets towards normalization with Yugoslavia. According to Kardelj, Tito demanded that '*in this respect there has to be a definite break*' with the hitherto lack of Yugoslav responsiveness to Soviet initiatives.¹²⁴ Kardelj opened the meeting by suggesting that '[Yugoslavia's] *relations with the USSR and other Eastern European states have reached a stage where it is possible to define [Yugoslavia's] policy on a more long-term basis*'.¹²⁵ In his view, there was no doubt any more that changes in Soviet policy towards Yugoslavia, as well as towards the world in general, were genuine. Kardelj explained that the Soviets, after finally realizing that they could not '*crush*' Yugoslavia, had adopted new tactics aimed at achieving two goals – to prevent further rapprochement between Yugoslavia and the West, and to prevent the transformation of the Ankara Agreement into a true military alliance and a threat to the USSR and its Satellites. The Soviets, according to Kardelj, had also come to the conclusion that the normalization with Yugoslavia could provide the much-needed credibility to their '*global peace offensive*'. Kardelj emphasized that

¹²⁴ 'Discussion on our relations with the USSR and the Cominform countries, 20. X. 1953, at Comrade Kardelj's', 20 October 1953; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1953, I - 5 - v / 297.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Yugoslavia had so far deliberately shown no responsiveness to the Soviet initiatives for improvement of relations. According to him, if this had been the correct approach immediately after Stalin's death, it was now proving to be a limiting factor. Kardelj insisted that the time had come to reassess Yugoslavia's current attitude in order to enable it *'to make better use of the existing global contradictions and relations'*. He underlined that changes that had taken place in the USSR *'should be exploited in a better way in order to strengthen Yugoslavia international position'*.¹²⁶

Following Kardelj's address, Veljko Mićunović summarised Soviet initiatives since Stalin's death.¹²⁷ Given that he had appeared in the same role at the 19 July meeting of the Executive Council, this confirms that Mićunović was at the time entrusted by Tito to supervise the daily operational aspects of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. According to Mićunović, apart from the liquidation of Beria, nothing exceptional had happened in the USSR since the initial changes inaugurated by the new leadership in the first few weeks after Stalin's death. By July, according to him, the limited achievements of the new Soviet foreign policy in general, and Yugoslavia's lack of responsiveness to their conciliatory gestures, contributed to an impasse in the process of minor improvement in Yugoslav-Soviet relations. Throughout this period, in contacts with the Soviets, Yugoslavia's representatives limited themselves to reminding the other side of the 1948 conflict. At the same time, Mićunović admitted, a positive change was evident in the Soviet behaviour. There had not been a single public anti-Yugoslav statement by any member of the

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

new Soviet leadership. Equally, the Soviet propaganda against Yugoslavia was no longer as vulgar as before. With regard to possible changes in the Satellite leaderships, Mićunović observed that *'for the time being, the Soviets had decided to stick to the existing teams there.'*¹²⁸ He summarised Belgrade's conclusion that *'the Satellites firmly follow Soviet instructions and were careful not to show any superfluous enthusiasm [towards Yugoslavia] beyond what the Soviets allow.'*¹²⁹ As a result, Mićunović concluded, *'throughout this period [April – October 1953], Yugoslavia did not express particular interest in improving diplomatic relations with the Satellites.'*¹³⁰ Mićunović's exposé reveals that Belgrade, at this point, had concluded that hitherto improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations had not developed to its full possibilities. At the same time, Yugoslav leaders were of the opinion that there were no prospects of immediate improvement of relations with the Satellites.

Concluding the meeting, Kardelj defined the new Yugoslav approach towards the Soviet initiatives. He declared that the imminent danger of Soviet aggression had ceased but predicted that the process of normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations would be slow, without any sudden leaps and changes. Kardelj stressed that *'normalization of [Yugoslavia's] relations with the USSR and the Satellites will not mean a change in [Yugoslavia's] foreign policy.'*¹³¹ At the same time, he insisted that the significance of changes in the USSR should not be underestimated either. Accordingly, the Yugoslav attitude towards the Soviet Union should be modified.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

Kardelj outlined steps that should be taken as soon as possible to promote this change. Yugoslavia should adopt normal communications with the Soviets and should lead a '*constructive*' policy shaped in its own interest. At the same time there was to be no triumphalism in contacts with the Soviets. In contrast to hitherto pursued practice, in future communications with the Soviets, difficult issues should be left out and attention should be focused on uncontroversial issues. Finally, he insisted that henceforth '*questions raised by the Soviets were to be dealt with in a more expeditious manner... In doing so, however, [Yugoslavs] should always be governed by reciprocity; not to obstruct the process of normalization but, at the same time, to establish it firmly on the basis of equality*'. For this reason, Kardelj specified that Yugoslavia would not exchange Ambassadors with those countries of the Eastern Bloc that had not initiated it themselves.¹³²

During the meeting on 20 October, Kardelj spoke on Tito's behalf thus reflecting the Yugoslav leader's assessment of the state of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. The timing of the meeting suggests that the Allied unilateral decision of 8 October and the ensuing Trieste crisis had prompted Tito and his associates to reconsider Soviet overtures. The crisis had reminded Tito of the lesson he had learned in 1948 – never to be solely dependent on one Superpower. Tito and the Yugoslav leadership were convinced that in its handling of the Trieste question the West disregarded Yugoslavia's interests. With the Soviet threat diminishing after the most recent overtures from Moscow, the Yugoslavs saw in the normalization with the Soviets an opportunity for Yugoslavia to play one Bloc against the other. This

¹³² Ibid.

also offered Yugoslavia an escape from the Western embrace, while remaining independent from the Eastern Bloc. Of course, neither Tito nor any one else in the Yugoslav leadership contemplated a return to the Soviet '*camp*'. Kardelj was clear about it at the meeting when he underlined that relations with the USSR must be on par with relations with the West. Kardelj's statement that Yugoslavia should make '*better use of existing global contradictions*' was the first indication of Belgrade's new foreign policy orientation – a position of equidistance from either Bloc. However, it should be noted that at this stage this new policy concept was still far from being a blueprint for non-alignment.

The new Yugoslav approach to the Soviet overtures was implemented immediately after the meeting at Kardelj's residence. On 3 November 1953, Koča Popović informed the Yugoslav Ambassadors in the US, UK, France, Italy, West Germany, and the UN of the modification of Yugoslav policy towards the Soviets. He instructed them to '*gradually normalize diplomatic contacts with the Russians.... It is inappropriate to further precondition such contacts by insisting that [Soviets] admit [responsibility for the 1948 conflict with Yugoslavia]. Furthermore, feel less obliged to inform Western representatives of what was talked with the Russians*'.¹³³

A DSIP policy paper of 17 November advised its Ambassadors of specific measures and activities towards fulfilment of the new Yugoslav approach towards the Soviets. It underlined that '*from now on, we will do our best through planned activities and use every opportunity to speed up the normalization [with the Soviets], bearing in mind the necessity to make better use of existing global*

¹³³ Telegram, K. Popović – Yugoslav Ambassadors in the US, UK, France, Italy, W. Germany, and the UN, 3 November 1953; SMIP, SPA, 1953, F III / SSSR II – 512.

contradictions'. At the same time however, the paper reaffirmed that Yugoslav responsiveness to the Soviet initiatives would be limited. It warned of the insincerity of Soviet motives and warned Yugoslav diplomats that

'today, as will be the case in the future, in its policy towards Yugoslavia, the USSR will do its best to prevent further development of our co-operation with the western countries, to prevent transformation of the Balkan Pact into a more effective defensive alliance, as well as to cash in elsewhere in the world on its formal normalization with us... The Soviet government will continue, albeit within new and innovative forms to exert pressure on us because the USSR, as a big power, remains an enemy of our political system and independence... We should understand the normalization with the USSR as normalization with any other capitalist country or any other big power. Thus, the normalization in question is exclusively a normalization of inter-state relations. With regard to political and ideological spheres, there is nothing that can be normalized between us, as we are countries with incongruent political systems'.¹³⁴

As the DSIP paper made it clear, the change in the Yugoslav attitude towards the Soviets, inaugurated in the wake of the Trieste crisis, was not a policy U-turn. The Yugoslavs adopted the new approach to the Soviet initiatives only because it offered them a strategic opportunity and not because it reflected true Yugoslav-Soviet rapprochement. Yugoslav responsiveness to the Soviets was to be limited strictly to state relations. The Yugoslav leadership continued to regard the USSR as a threat, although a diminishing one. They also denied the prospect of Yugoslav-Soviet ideological convergence. Furthermore, Belgrade remained highly sceptical of Soviet motives for normalization. However, a small but important change in the Yugoslav political vocabulary illustrates clearly the new Yugoslav attitude towards the Soviets. From November 1953 onwards, in all Yugoslav documents and correspondence, the countries of the Eastern Bloc were being

¹³⁴ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 17 November 1953, SMIP, SPA, 1953, F V / Fasc. 10b /II - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten No. 19/53, 5-6.

addressed as the '*East European countries*' instead of the '*COMINFORM countries*', the derogatory term that had been in use since 1948.

In the beginning of 1954 a tremor shook the Yugoslav political establishment. On 10 January, a statement from the Central Committee of the LCY announced an imminent session of the Plenum of the Central Committee with a single point of agenda - the conduct of Milovan Djilas. At the time, Djilas was a member of the Executive Committee of the LCY Central Committee, head of the all-powerful Party propaganda apparatus, the AGITPROP¹³⁵, and the official Yugoslav party ideologue. Together with Kardelj and Ranković, he had been Tito's closest associate since 1940. In autumn of 1953 and in the beginning of January 1954, Djilas published a series of articles in the party organ BORBA and in the new literary journal NOVA MISAO (The New Idea), which were highly critical of the Yugoslav leadership and the Yugoslav political system. In doing so, Djilas irrevocably placed himself in opposition to the regime.¹³⁶ On 16 and 17 January 1954, the Third, Extraordinary Plenum of the LCY CC, held in Belgrade, addressed the '*case of Milovan Djilas*'. The Plenum condemned Djilas and appointed a special Party commission to recommend appropriate '*measures*' against him.¹³⁷ Although Djilas had, *de facto*, been expelled from the leadership at the Third Plenum, it was only at the Fourth Plenum on 30 March - after the Commission had formally concluded its work - that Djilas was officially stripped of all his functions. However,

¹³⁵ AGITPROP was the abbreviation for 'AGITation-PROPaganda', the name given officially to the Party propaganda and ideology apparatus. It was the arbiter on all matters related to culture, education, publishing, media and propaganda. As the guardian of ideological purity, the AGITPROP was second in authority only to the Security apparatus.

¹³⁶ Third, Extraordinary Plenum of the Central Committee of the LCY - Transcripts, 16-17 January 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/II/11.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

there was no legal persecution of Djilas, nor was he threatened with imprisonment.¹³⁸

The removal of Djilas did not provoke a major political upheaval in Yugoslavia nor did it have any impact on its foreign policy. Neither did it represent a threat to Tito's regime. The level of confidence that Tito commanded was best illustrated by the fact that Belgrade Radio broadcast live the whole session of the Third Plenum. Prior to his downfall, Djilas had not managed to create a following among the members of the Party nor among those who opposed the regime. The first did not wish to challenge Tito's authority and the latter could not forgive Djilas for his earlier left-wing radicalism. The West was equally indifferent to Djilas' removal. Washington commented that *'its primary significance is internal... and we do not anticipate that this will alter basic orientation of the regime'*.¹³⁹ It was only after his arrest in December 1956, in the aftermath of the events in Hungary that Djilas acquired the aura of the first Yugoslav dissident. The Soviets however, took exceptional interest in the removal of Djilas and tried to exploit it. In his first letter to Tito six months later, Khrushchev presented the removal of Djilas as the Yugoslav leadership's response to Beria's removal.¹⁴⁰ There is no evidence however, to suggest any connection between the Djilas affair and future normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. Transcripts of both the Third and the Fourth Plenum, and other available Yugoslav documents confirm that the Djilas' removal was strictly an internal affair, a result of a clash between different concepts regarding

¹³⁸ Fourth Plenum of the Central Committee of the LCY, 30 March 1954, AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/12.

¹³⁹ Walter Bedell Smith, the Acting US Secretary of State to the Embassy in Greece, 16 February 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 641.

¹⁴⁰ First letter from the CPSU CC, signed by Khrushchev to the LCY CC, addressed to Tito, 22 June 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-48.

the Communist party's role in Yugoslavia. The Djilas affair was not instigated by Yugoslavia's foreign policy considerations.

The decision of the Yugoslav leadership to modify its attitude towards the Soviets after the 20 October meeting at Kardelj's was soon tested during a meeting between the Yugoslav Ambassador in Moscow, Vidić, and Molotov at the beginning of 1954. On 21 January, Dobrivoje Vidić called on Molotov to inquire about the Soviet position on Austria, in advance of the Conference of the Four Allied Foreign Ministers in Berlin.¹⁴¹ The meeting lasted only twenty minutes. After informing Vidić about the Soviet position on Austria, Molotov then stated

*'that he wished to stress that the question of Djilas and subsequent discussions on this question [in Belgrade] have aroused huge interest in Moscow. It is well known that Djilas emulated the West and harboured negative feelings towards the Soviet Union. It is possible that measures taken against Djilas could have a positive impact on the improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations'.*¹⁴²

It is interesting to note that in the Soviet transcript of this meeting, Molotov's statement on Djilas was declared '*unofficial*', whereas in Vidić's report it was presented as '*official*'. The dialogue that followed between Molotov and Vidić, as reported by the Yugoslav Ambassador, is illustrative of the suspicions that burdened Yugoslav-Soviet relations:

'Vidić: '[the Yugoslavs] *have always been Marxists and [they] never behaved differently.*

[Molotov]: *"It is good to be a Marxist, but is Djilas a Marxist?"*

[Vidić]: *"No, definitely not."*

[Molotov]: *"And yet he was considered a party ideologue."*

[Vidić]: *"But you also had people at highest positions who were considered to*

¹⁴¹ Conference of the Foreign Ministers of the Big Four, Berlin, 25 January – 18 February 1954.

¹⁴² The report by Vidić on his meeting with Molotov, 21 January 1954, SMIP, Kabinet Drzavnog Sekretara Koče Popovića, FI, 1954. Also, Memorandum of conversation, V. Molotov – Yugoslav Ambassador, D. Vidić, 21 January 1954; АВП, РФ [Archive of the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation], Фонд 0144, Опись 39, Папка 157, Дело 5, 1-4.

be Marxists only to be proven differently. Life is a struggle."
[Molotov]: *"True, we have also had such cases. I agree"*.¹⁴³

The Molotov – Vidić exchange caused an irate reaction from Belgrade. In a strongly worded telegram, K. Popović personally reproached Vidić for allowing Molotov to make an official statement on Djilas, an internal Yugoslav affair.¹⁴⁴ Belgrade was particularly infuriated by the discussion between Vidić and Molotov on who was and who was not a Marxist. According to Popović, this had allowed Molotov to take the *'role of a Marxist, Communist authority and arbiter... It comes out that [Yugoslavia's] resistance to [the Soviet] crude aggressive policies was [the result of Yugoslavia's] betrayal of Marxism and of the opportunism of our leadership whom, until only recently they have called the "Tito-Fascist clique"'*.¹⁴⁵

Popović then reminded Vidić that

'although you were informed earlier that it is no longer necessary to insist on clarification of responsibility [for the 1948 break-up] when talking to the Soviets, if and when [the Soviets] try to pin the blame on us ... we must repel it resolutely... Do not allow them to present their de-facto capitulation as their victory or gracious conciliatoriness'.¹⁴⁶

In conclusion, Popović warned Vidić that *'[the Soviets] are above all interested in spoiling [Yugoslavia's] relations with the West through gradual normalization, especially if that would also help them rehabilitate their earlier policies and actions towards us.'*¹⁴⁷ Popović's angry reprimand to Vidić demonstrates the extent of Yugoslav sensitivity to Soviet ideological lecturing.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Dispatch from the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, K. Popović to the Yugoslav Ambassador in Moscow, D. Vidić, 22 January 1954, SMIP, Kabinet Drzavnog Sekretara Koce Popovica, FI, 1954.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

The Yugoslav Foreign Minister's angry telegram to his Ambassador in Moscow reveals that in the first months of 1954 the Yugoslav leadership remained deeply sceptical of the motives behind Soviet conciliatory gestures and cautious in its responsiveness to Soviet initiatives. The source of Yugoslav scepticism was the incongruity of the Soviet and Yugoslav views on the causes of the 1948 break-up. In this context, Molotov's meeting with Vidić on 21 January only reaffirmed the Yugoslav leadership in the belief that the Soviet position remained the same as it had been in 1948. This would determine Tito's approach to the improvement of relations with the Soviets in 1954 and 1955. He would insist that the normalization be limited to state relations. For Tito, the 1948 rupture had always been a case of resistance to Soviet state hegemony. It was not by chance that the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict surfaced in April 1948. Stalin had begun the final phase of consolidating his control over the Eastern European regimes by subjugating them. Stalin's first accusations against Tito appeared in March 1948, following the coup in Czechoslovakia. However, the mantle of an ideological confrontation, which the Tito-Stalin conflict acquired soon after it surfaced in public, was created by Stalin. He simply implemented a method he had used during the purges in 1930's to destroy internal enemies - declare the enemy to be deviant from Marxism-Leninism. Hence Popović's insistence in the telegram to Vidić that the Soviets must not be allowed to present '[Yugoslavia's] *resistance to [Soviet] crude aggressive policies not as a result of those very same policies but of our betrayal of Marxism...*'¹⁴⁸ Tito would repeatedly insist that the Soviets had tried to conceal the Soviet hegemonic onslaught on Yugoslavia by accusing the Yugoslavs of

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

abandoning true Marxism - Leninism and of ideological heresy. At the Fourth Plenum of the LCY CC in March 1954, Tito emphasized that *'[In the Eastern Bloc] they remain on the positions of 1948; that we have then made a mistake; that the conflict was purely an ideological matter; that it wasn't [with regard] to inter-state relations; that it wasn't with regard to economy; that we have deviated from Marxism-Leninism, etc.'*¹⁴⁹

Molotov's meeting with Vidić confirmed the lack of substantive progress in Soviet attitudes towards Yugoslavia. This frustrated the Yugoslav leadership precisely because of their recent decision to be more positive towards Soviet initiatives. On 29 January 1954, in his speech to the National Assembly, Tito called the Soviet normalization a *'partial normalization'* and made it clear that there *'exist a number of issues that need to be addressed if true normalization is to be achieved, not merely an exchange of diplomatic representatives'*.¹⁵⁰ In March 1954 Tito revealed his frustrations and pessimism that true reconciliation between Yugoslavia and the USSR was possible at all. He emphasized that

*'[the Soviets] now expect us to come to them in penitence. We must tell them that they are wrong, that we will never do that... [I do not believe] that we will ever come into a position that [the Soviets] will treat us as equals, as partners in foreign policy and other issues... I only hope that global developments force them to have at least the same kind of relations with us that they have with any other capitalist country. We do not ask them for more, because we... do not want to copy their methods any more, we have our own road, we follow our own road to Socialism...'*¹⁵¹

In the first months of 1954, other foreign policy considerations required Belgrade to

¹⁴⁹ The Fourth Plenum of LCY CC - Transcript, 30 March 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/12.

¹⁵⁰ BORBA, 30 January 1954, 1-2.

¹⁵¹ The Fourth Plenum of LCY CC - Transcript, 30 March 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/12.

remain cautious towards the Soviet overtures. Negotiations between Yugoslavia, the US and Britain over Trieste began on 1 February in London. Yugoslavia was well aware that the key to the settlement of the Trieste question was held by the Western powers. Furthermore, because of its catastrophic domestic economic situation, Yugoslavia still relied heavily on American economic aid. A crucial American emergency food relief aid package was being negotiated between Washington and Belgrade in the first months of 1954.¹⁵² This made it paramount for Tito's regime to maintain close relations with the West, in particular the US. To avert deterioration of relations with the West, Yugoslav leaders were very careful to discourage speculations that the Yugoslav-Soviet normalization might lead to Yugoslavia's return to the '*lager*'.

Paradoxically, at the time of the 21 January 1954 meeting between Molotov and Vidić and following it, developments in the Kremlin were moving in the opposite direction. Several days before his meeting with Vidić, the Presidium had instructed Molotov to communicate to the Yugoslav Ambassador Soviet readiness for further improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. According to Malenkov, Molotov completely disregarded the Presidium's instructions and conducted a '*dry*' meeting of twenty minutes, the '*transcript of which took me only half a minute to read*'.¹⁵³ This indirectly confirms that by January 1954 the Special Commission on Yugoslavia, appointed in July 1953 by the Presidium, had completed its work.

¹⁵² Memorandum of Conversation, Yugoslav Ambassador in Washington (Popović) and the Deputy Under Secretary of State (Murphy), 22 January 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 1367-9. Also, Memorandum of Conversation between the President and the Yugoslav Ambassador in Washington (Popović), 11 March 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 380-1.

¹⁵³ Plenum of the CPSU CC, 4-12 July 1955, Malenkov's address, Transcript of the 11 July, evening session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 160, 79.

Given the sensitivity of the Yugoslav issue, it is unlikely that the Presidium would have made any recommendations independent of the findings of the Commission. According to Khrushchev, the Commission had concluded that Yugoslavia was still a Socialist country.¹⁵⁴ In the following months, this would enable him to pursue normalization with Yugoslavia with the Presidium's official mandate. Together with Bulganin and Mikoyan, Khrushchev had by this time become the main force behind the Soviet leadership's drive for the improvement of relations with Yugoslavia.¹⁵⁵

The Molotov-Vidić meeting also revealed a continuing division within the Soviet Presidium regarding normalization with Yugoslavia. Molotov was still able to sabotage the Presidium directive. He would not have been able to do so unless he was assured of open or tacit support from other members of the Presidium. Apart from Molotov, Mikhail Suslov, and Kliment Voroshilov were the strongest opponents of the improvement of relations with Yugoslavia.¹⁵⁶ During the Yugoslav-Soviet confrontation, Suslov had headed a special Commission of the CPSU Central Committee that coordinated the activities of Yugoslav anti-Titoist émigrés, as well as the propaganda campaign against Belgrade.¹⁵⁷

Molotov's handling of the meeting with Vidić, in defiance of the Presidium directive, also indicates that at this point Khrushchev was still not in full control of the Presidium. With regard to relations with Yugoslavia, he still had to tread carefully.

¹⁵⁴ Н. С. Хрущев, *Воспоминания: Время, Люди, Власть* [N.S. Khrushchev, *Reminiscences: Times, People, Power*], Кн. 3 [Vol. 3], (Москва: Московские Новости, 1999), 126.

¹⁵⁵ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 4-12 July 1955, Kaganovich's address, Transcript of the 11 July, evening; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 160, 7 / Also, Saburov's address, Ibid, 112.

¹⁵⁶ Н. С. Хрущев, *Воспоминания...*, Кн. 3, 146.

¹⁵⁷ Yugoslav Ambassador in Moscow (Mićunović) to DSIP, 23 April 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, F 90/9, SSSR - 46256.

Consequently, another compromise within the Presidium had to be struck before the Yugoslav issue could move ahead. In February 1954, yet another Commission was appointed by the Presidium to prepare specific recommendations for further improvement of relations with Yugoslavia. The Commission was headed by the CC Secretary Mikhail Suslov and consisted of Molotov's deputies Valerian Zorin and Vladimir Kuznetsov. The composition of the commission reflected the effort of Molotov and opponents of normalization to sabotage the process. Not surprisingly, as Suslov later admitted, the first draft of Commission's recommendations prepared by Zorin, '*concluded that Yugoslavia was still a Fascist country... [The draft] was done [in such a way as] not to improve relations but to make them even worse*'.¹⁵⁸ However, in May the Presidium overruled the draft of the Commission's conclusions, taking advantage of Molotov's protracted absence from Moscow, from April to July 1954, due to his attending the Geneva Conference on Indochina.¹⁵⁹ While obviously still unable to openly challenge Molotov's opposition, Khrushchev nevertheless, managed to circumvent it. This would open way for Khrushchev's first letter to Tito in June 1954. The above sequence of decisions in the Kremlin leads to the conclusion that by May 1954 the majority of the Presidium had accepted Khrushchev's position that the process of normalization with Yugoslavia was necessary.

¹⁵⁸ Plenum of the CC CPSU CC, 4-12 July 1955, Suslov's address, Transcript of the 11 July, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 159, 151.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

CHAPTER II

NORMALIZATION

1954 (June) - **1955** (March)

For a full year following the normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet diplomatic relations on 6 June 1953, there were no new Soviet initiatives for the improvement of relations between the two countries. Desperately working at maintaining its strategic partnership with the West and still distrustful of Soviet leadership's intentions, Belgrade was careful not to show undue enthusiasm towards reconciliation with Moscow. Indeed, relations between Yugoslavia and the Eastern Bloc remained almost as hostile as before. Daily incidents and provocations on Yugoslavia's borders with the Soviet Satellites continued, as did fierce anti-Yugoslav propaganda. Then came a '*bolt from the blue*'. At the end of June the Yugoslav leadership received a letter from the Soviet Party Central Committee, signed by Khrushchev. It was the first direct communication between the two leaderships since 1948. The letter proposed a full normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet

relations. The Yugoslavs at first delayed with their response. On the one hand, Tito remained mistrustful of true Soviet intentions. On the other hand, the creation of the Balkan pact and the final settlement of the Trieste dispute were in the last delicate stages of negotiation. By September however, with the signature of the Balkan Pact Agreement and after a number of substantial concrete manifestations of Moscow's sincerity and eagerness to normalize relations with Belgrade, the correspondence between the Soviet and Yugoslav leaderships was in full flow. By the end of November, both sides were in agreement that the level of communication and understanding had reached a point when they could contemplate a meeting of their highest representatives. Yet the next few months saw an impasse in the process of Yugoslav-Soviet normalization. This was due partly to the long trip to Asia that Tito undertook at the time. The main reason for the impasse however, was the intensification of the leadership contest between Khrushchev and Malenkov, which would culminate in the showdown at the Soviet Party Plenum on 31 January 1955.

II.1 Establishment Of Direct Communication

In May 1954, the Soviet leadership was confronted with the increasingly pressing question of the normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. Further vacillation over Yugoslavia threatened a repeat of Stalin's strategic miscalculation in 1948. Six months after the dramatic Trieste crisis in October 1953, which brought Yugoslavia and the West to the brink of the war, the Trieste question was safely confined to

discreet diplomatic negotiations between Yugoslavia, Britain, and the US in London. On 31 May, the three had successfully reached an interim accord on Trieste. This heralded the restoration of full strategic cooperation between Yugoslavia and the West.¹ As a result of the progress over Trieste, the final negotiations between Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey on the creation of the Balkan Pact resumed with added momentum. Between 24 March and 1 April, a tripartite² military conference was held in Ankara.³ From 12 to 18 April 1954 Tito visited Turkey. At the same time, Belgrade announced that the Yugoslav leader would visit Greece between 2 and 7 June.⁴ The joint communiqué, issued at the end of Tito's visit to Turkey, declared readiness of both sides to proceed with the transformation of the Ankara Agreement into a full military alliance, the Balkan Pact.⁵ Belgrade expected Tito's forthcoming visit to Greece to remove the last obstacles to the successful conclusion of the Pact.⁶ All this suggested further integration of Yugoslavia into the Western alliance.

The Soviet leaders looked upon these developments with increasing apprehension.⁷ In addition, the removal of Djilas in January 1954 had provided Khrushchev and those in the Presidium who supported improvement of relations with Belgrade with an additional opportunity. They could now argue that by discarding a pro-Western supporter from its leadership, Yugoslavia merited

¹ Memorandum of conversation K. Popović – Sir Ivo Mallet, the British Ambassador in Belgrade, 26 May 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F I / Engleska I –288.

² Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey.

³ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 15 April 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F IV / I – DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten No. 7/54, 1.

⁴ Ibid. 2.

⁵ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 4 May 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F IV / I – DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten No. 8/54, 1-2.

⁶ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 15 May 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F IV / I – DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten No. 9/54, 1.

⁷ Plenum of the CPSU CC, 4-12 July 1955, Khrushchev's opening address, Transcript of the 9 July, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6225, Дело 143.

normalization of relations with the USSR. Throughout the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict, Djilas was the head of Yugoslavia's anti-COMINFORM propaganda apparatus.⁸ On 31 May the Soviet Presidium approved a Resolution, which was then sent as a letter to all '*comradely parties*', including the Chinese, Italian, and French. The Resolution was based on the recommendations of the Commission, appointed by the Presidium in February, which suggested steps for further improvement of relations with Yugoslavia.⁹ It informed '*comradely parties*' of the Soviet leadership's decision to establish direct contact with the Yugoslav leadership and initiate normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations.¹⁰ The Resolution must have been received with shock by leaderships of the '*fraternal parties*', given their prominent role in the anti-Titoist campaign after 1948. However, all of them duly wrote back expressing '*full support*' for the new course of the Soviet leadership.¹¹

The Resolution of 31 May revealed the motives behind the Soviet decision to take decisive steps towards improving relations with Yugoslavia. The need for the Presidium to pass yet another Resolution before it could embark on the new course towards Yugoslavia revealed the huge significance and divisive impact that the Yugoslav question had on the Soviet leadership and on the '*lager*'. Furthermore, the fact that the Presidium had found it ^{necessary} to inform and seek support from the major parties of the world Communist movement confirmed that

⁸ Talbot, S. (Trans. and ed.), *Khrushchev Remembers*, (London: André Deutsch: 1971), 377.

⁹ Plenum of the CPSU CC, 4-12 July 1955, Bulganin's address, Transcript of the 9 July, evening session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 158, 65. Also, Ibid, Suslov's address, Transcript of the 11 July, morning session, РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 159, 151.

¹⁰ Plenum of the CPSU CC, 4-12 July 1955, Bulganin's address, Transcript of the 9 July, evening session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 158, 107. Also, Ibid, Pervuhin's address, Transcript of 11 July, evening session, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 160, 91.

¹¹ Talbot, S. (Trans. and ed.), *Khrushchev ...*, 378.

the new leadership in the Kremlin lacked the authority Stalin had commanded. In its first paragraph, the Resolution contained an admission that the continuing conflict between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union was harming not only Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, but also the whole Socialist '*camp*'. It also pointed to the '*self-evident*' fact that should '*the imperialists*' succeed in their intentions towards Yugoslavia, it would bring misery and suffering not only to the peoples of Yugoslavia but would also '*seriously complicate the situation in the Balkans and strengthen the position of the aggressive Bloc in its struggle against the camp of peace, democracy, and Socialism.*' Soviet policy towards Yugoslavia, according to the Resolution, should aspire to '*destroy this anti-Soviet plan of Anglo-American imperialists and make use of all available possibilities to increase [Soviet] influence on Yugoslav people*'.¹²

The Resolution was uncharacteristically short –one page only - and devoid of excessive ideological jargon. It put forward crude geopolitical and strategic considerations. On the one hand, this reflected the Soviet effort to conceal its ideological retreat on the Yugoslav question behind the dictum of geopolitical concerns. On the other hand, the Resolution confirmed that Yugoslavia's integration into the Western alliance through the Balkan Pact was perceived in the Kremlin as a threat to the existing strategic balance in Europe. Furthermore, the Soviet leadership had for the first time acknowledged that the conflict with Yugoslavia had cost the Eastern Bloc dearly. In this respect, the Resolution

¹² Resolution of the Presidium of the CC CPSU sent as a letter to 'Comradely parties', 31 May 1954, Plenum of the CC CPSU, 4-12 July 1955, Transcript of the 9 July, evening session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 158, 66.

represented an admission of the failure of Stalin's policies. The available documents do not suggest that at this point Khrushchev, as the driving force behind the initiative for normalization with Yugoslavia had entertained the idea of Yugoslavia's return to the '*Socialist camp*'. The reasoning behind the initiative for normalize of relations with Yugoslavia, as depicted in the Resolution was calculated and highly rational; it was driven first and foremost by strategic considerations. At this early stage, Khrushchev could not have anticipated Tito's response to the Soviet approach. Thus, to gamble on the possibility of Yugoslavia's return to the '*camp*' would have been excessively risky for him vis-à-vis other leadership contenders. Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership could begin to entertain the notion of Tito's return to the '*lager*' only in the last months of that year, after Tito had responded positively to the Soviet initiative. The initial motive behind the Soviet change of policy towards Yugoslavia was to prevent Yugoslavia's full integration into the Western Alliance.

On 22 June 1954, the Soviet Party Central Committee sent a letter to the Yugoslav Party Central Committee proposing the full normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. The letter was signed by Khrushchev and was the first direct communication between the Soviet and Yugoslav leaderships since 1948.¹³ The Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade, Volkov, handed the letter to Tito on 30 June in Brioni. The letter came as a complete surprise to Tito and the Yugoslav leadership.

¹³ The CPSU CC letter, signed by N. S. Khrushchev, to the LCY CC, addressed to Tito, 22 June 1954 (First Khrushchev letter); AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-48.

Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo¹⁴, at the time a member of Tito's innermost circle, described it as a '*bolt from the blue*'.¹⁵

The Yugoslavs had noted that Khrushchev, on behalf of the Soviet Central Committee, was the sole signatory of the letter. Given the sensitivity of the Yugoslav issue for the Soviets and that the letter represented a major shift in the Soviet foreign policy, this signalled to Tito and his associates that Khrushchev was winning the leadership battle in the Presidium.¹⁶ At the time of Stalin's death, the Yugoslavs had identified Malenkov, Molotov, and Beria as the chief leadership contenders. Until the arrival of the letter, Khrushchev was completely out of the running as far as Tito was concerned.¹⁷

The date on the first Khrushchev letter¹⁸, 22 June 1954 was not accidental. On this occasion, as indeed was the case on many subsequent occasions, symbolism played an important part in Tito-Khrushchev interactions. Given the significance of this date (the anniversary of the German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941), it was highly likely that the intention was to remind Tito of the brotherhood in arms

¹⁴ After Djilas' removal in January 1954, Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo joined the most exclusive circle of Tito's closest associates, which included only Kardelj and Ranković. Between 1953 and 1958, Tempo was in charge of Yugoslavia's economy. Officially, he held the position of the Economy and Finance Minister and of the vice-President of the Federal Executive Council, Yugoslavia's equivalent of the Council of Ministers, presided by Tito. In 1958, he was appointed President of the Trade Unions of Yugoslavia.

¹⁵ Author's interview with Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, 12 February 2000, Reževići, Serbia and Montenegro. Also, Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, *Revolucija koja teče: Memoari* [The Continuous Revolution: Memoirs], (Beograd: Komunist, 1971), 210.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Tito-Churchill conversation in the Yugoslav Embassy, 21 March 1953 - Transcripts of Tito's conversations during his visit to Britain; AJBT, KPR, I-2/1, 1270-99. Also, Tito's report on his visit to Great Britain, given before the Federal Executive Council - Memorandum of discussions, April 1953 (the document carries only April as the date of the session); AJBT, KPR, I-2/1, 1300-12.

¹⁸ The Soviet-Yugoslav exchange of letters in 1954 is presented as the First, Second, etc. Khrushchev or Tito's letters. This is according to the depiction given by Tito himself when presenting them before the meeting of the Executive Committee of the LCY Central Committee, on 3 November 1954. Each document is annotated on top of the first page accordingly, in Tito's handwriting.

that existed between the two peoples during the Second World War, of their shared destinies and sacrifices, and that this ran deeper than any '*misunderstandings*' that might have happened in the past. It was also ironic and highly symbolic that another letter, one from Stalin and Molotov, on 27 March 1948, had triggered the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict in 1948. Another letter, again from the Soviet leadership, was intended now to put an end to this confrontation.

The letter opened with a statement that '*the CPSU CC had concluded that there exist some conditions for the improvement of relations between our countries and for the establishment of contacts between the CPSU CC and the leadership of the LCY.*'¹⁹ From the very beginning the Soviet leadership intended to impose its ideological seniority upon the Yugoslavs. The wording implied that the CPSU CC had the authority to determine whether the moment for normalization had arrived or not. The letter further asserted that

*'the President of Yugoslavia Tito and other leaders of the LCY and the government of [Yugoslavia] have in their speeches on numerous occasions expressed their desire for improved relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. This fully coincides with the wishes of the Soviet leaders.'*²⁰

This served to conceal the fact that the initiative for the normalization was coming from the Soviets; they were merely responding to Yugoslav overtures. Within the Communist paradigm, the side that initiated reconciliation would reveal itself before the Communist movement as the side responsible for the rupture. Furthermore, the letter established that the conflict between the two countries had caused damage

¹⁹ The CPSU CC letter, signed by N. S. Khrushchev, to the LCY CC, addressed to Tito, 22 June 1954 (the First Khrushchev letter); AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-48.

²⁰ Ibid.

*'to the interests of Yugoslavia and those of the Soviet Union... [that] there were no valid foundations for the dispute and accusations against Yugoslavia [in 1948]... [that] there exist no serious contradictions that [should be] the source of hostility and constant acrimony between our countries and peoples.'*²¹ This statement represented the first admission from the Soviet leadership that the conflict was destructive, unnecessary, and that Yugoslavia had been wrongly accused in 1948.

Khrushchev's letter then addressed the most contentious issue between the two sides, the responsibility for the 1948 rupture. It declared that facts relating to the causes of the 1948 conflict *'now look different'* as a result of the *'uncovering'* of the scheming of Lavrenty Beria. It accused Beria and his associates *... of fabricating accusations against the Yugoslavs in 1948 'without the knowledge of the CPSU CC and the government of the USSR'*. However, the letter added that

*'the leadership of the CPY [the Communist Party of Yugoslavia]²² did not take advantage of all opportunities to avoid conflict with the CPSU CC, either. For example, non-Marxist statements and anti-Soviet outbursts by [Milovan] Djilas did not, at the time, meet with resistance from the leadership of the CPY CC. Djilas, this pseudo-Marxist, a man estranged from the cause of Communism...has abundantly contributed to the deterioration of Yugoslav-Soviet relations'.*²³

Moscow thus proposed that the responsibility for the 1948 rupture be shared evenly between the two sides; the culpability was placed on two villains, one from each side - Lavrenty Beria and Milovan Djilas. It resorted to Stalin's formula of directing blame on an already expelled, preferably liquidated member of the

²¹ Ibid.

²² At its Sixth Congress, in June 1952, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) had changed its name to the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY).

²³ The CPSU CC letter, signed by N. S. Khrushchev, to the LCY CC, addressed to Tito, 22 June 1954 (the First Khrushchev letter); AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-48.

leadership. The letter offered to exonerate present Soviet and Yugoslav leaders of responsibility for the 1948 preserving the infallibility of both Communist parties.

In continuation, Khrushchev's letter addressed the common ideological identity of the two sides and pressed for the establishment of party relations. It argued that since the LCY leaders assert that Yugoslav Communists *'are also guided by teachings of Marxism-Leninism'* and are building Socialism, *'there truly exist objective conditions, not only for the improvement of political, economic, and cultural relations between our governments, but also for the establishment of contacts between the CPSU CC and the LCY CC'*.²⁴ By stressing Yugoslavia's adherence to Marxism-Leninism the Soviets wished to justify their initiative. This implied that Communist internationalism obliged them to do their best to establish relations with the prodigal member of the movement, Yugoslavia. At the same time, by reminding the Yugoslav leadership that Marxism-Leninism was the guiding principle of both Parties, the Soviets had hoped to impose a sense of obligation on the Yugoslavs. Being Communists, the Yugoslavs themselves were obliged to seek ways to reconcile themselves with the rest of the Communist movement and, accordingly, with its leader – the USSR. Moreover, because of the shared ideological identity, it followed that any Yugoslav-Soviet normalization must include the normalization of Party relations. Within this context and in accordance with the *'Communist comradeship'*, Khrushchev concluded the letter by proposing the *'meeting of leading representatives of the CPSU CC and the LCY CC... in the*

²⁴ Ibid.

nearest future, either in Moscow or in Yugoslavia, at [Yugoslav] convenience.²⁵ A proposal for a meeting of top leaders of the two countries was a brave and risky proposal. At the same time, it carried a hidden trap for the Yugoslavs. If years of confrontation between Yugoslavia and the USSR could be put behind with one meeting of their top Party leaders, it would imply, particularly to the West that the conflict was nothing but a *'family quarrel'*. To members of the Communist movement, it would conveniently suggest that the rupture of 1948 was a result of an ideological misunderstanding, fabricated by devious traitors Beria and Djilas.

For three weeks after having received it, Tito shared knowledge of Khrushchev's letter only with his innermost circle, namely Kardelj and Ranković. He wrote alone the first draft of the response to Khrushchev.²⁶ The unexpectedness of Khrushchev's initiative prompted Tito, as he later admitted, *'to approach the letter with extreme caution because we were not sure what was truly behind it'*.²⁷ Several factors were responsible for such caution. On the one hand, in the months preceding Khrushchev's letter, there had been no signs of change in the Soviet policies towards Yugoslavia.²⁸ After the diplomatic normalization in June 1953, the Yugoslavs saw no further signs of improvement in Yugoslav-Soviet relations. In May and June 1954, anti-Yugoslav propaganda in Eastern Europe remained undiminished. There was also no reduction in the number of border incidents.²⁹

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The meeting of the LCY CC Executive Committee (Extended) – Transcript, 19 July 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/62a. A meeting would officially be called 'Extended' whenever a number of important officials, not members of the Executive Committee but whose presence was deemed necessary for qualified deliberations on issues on the agenda, were in attendance.

²⁷ Fifth Plenum of LCY CC – Transcripts, 26 November 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/13.

²⁸ The meeting of the LCY CC Executive Committee (Extended) – Transcript, 19 July 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/62a.

²⁹ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 1 July 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F IV / I - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten br. 12/54, p 5.

The discriminatory surveillance of Yugoslav diplomats in Moscow, suspended for some months after Molotov's June 1953 proposal for the exchange of Ambassadors, had resumed once again.³⁰ As a result, the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry had concluded, only weeks before the arrival of Khrushchev's letter that *'regardless of [their positive gestures], it is clear that the essence of Soviet policy towards Yugoslavia had not changed. Their [positive] statements and actions are of tactical nature ...[and] are aimed at weakening Yugoslavia and contributing to its international isolation'*.³¹ The Soviet behaviour in the months preceding Khrushchev's initiative did not give credence to the sincerity of such gesture.

On the other hand, the timing of the letter, much as earlier Soviet conciliatory gestures, was suspiciously inopportune for the Yugoslavs. It coincided with the final negotiations between Greece, Turkey, and Yugoslavia on the creation of the Balkan Pact. Tito's visit to Athens between 2 and 7 June was successful and indicated the imminent signature of the Balkan Pact. The meeting of the Greek, Turkish, and Yugoslav military experts and representatives of their General Staffs was scheduled for 28 June in Athens, to be followed by the formal signing of the Balkan Pact at the end of July, in Bled, Yugoslavia. It is understandable then why Tito was inclined, at first, to believe that Khrushchev's letter was part of a ploy to sabotage the signing of the Pact and weaken Yugoslavia's relations with the West.³² If Yugoslavs responded to Khrushchev's initiative with undue eagerness and the Soviets chose to publicize the correspondence, it would have proved to the

³⁰ Telegram from the Yugoslav Ambassador in Moscow, D. Vidić, to DSIP, 31 May 1954; SMIP, PA, 1954, SSSR, F 87/2 - 47124.

³¹ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 1 July 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F IV / I - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten br.. 12/54,6.

³² A. Bebler to K. Popović, 29 June 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F V/f4/III, Razno-391.

West that Yugoslavia was secretly negotiating its return to the Soviet Bloc. Tito's anxiety about Western reaction was well founded. A day before Volkov had met Tito, the US Secretary of State, Dulles, unaware of the letter, had instructed his Ambassador in Belgrade, James Riddleberger, to convey to Koča Popović American reservations about the process of Yugoslav-Soviet normalization.³³

The top Yugoslav leadership learned of Khrushchev's letter at the meeting of the 'extended' LCY CC Executive Committee on 19 July 1954.³⁴ Tito opened the meeting by warning those present to keep the contents of the meeting secret. After reading Khrushchev's letter and his draft response, Tito asked members of the Executive Committee to decide on two questions. First, should Yugoslavia accept the Soviet initiative and, second, what impact would such course of action have on Yugoslavia's relations with the West, in particular with the US? With regard to the first question, he set the tone by underlining that *'when Stalin died, we expected changes [in the USSR] ...we wanted normalization with the USSR and relations have started to improve... This letter is a huge event and requires long and serious consideration... I believe that doubts that this letter might be a manoeuvre are unfounded'*. Tito emphasized that Khrushchev's letter surpassed bilateral Yugoslav-Soviet relations and was of wider implications for the international Communist movement. According to him, the letter showed that [although the Soviets] *will probably not relinquish their foreign policy aspirations, [they] will have to change their approach towards [other] Communist parties. This will give strength*

³³ The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Belgrade, 29 June 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 658.

³⁴ The meeting of the LCY CC Executive Committee (Extended) – Transcript, 19 July 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/62a.

to other parties to think independently and work freely'.³⁵ Kardelj added that Khrushchev's letter represented *'the strongest [Soviet] clash with Stalinism so far... Within the Cominform parties, new liveliness will arise and free discussions will begin. The silenced elements within them that have secretly sympathised with us will become more active. We have to react positively to [the letter] and provide [those silenced elements] with support'*. Veljko Mićunović stressed that *'the [Yugoslav response] is important for the cause of Marxism and Socialism and would be welcomed by all progressive forces in the world'*.³⁶ Tito and his associates saw in Khrushchev's initiative a profound change in Soviet political philosophy.

The Yugoslav leadership also perceived the letter as an acknowledgment of Yugoslavia's victory in the ideological conflict with Stalin. Many participants at the meeting of the Executive Committee euphorically claimed that the letter was a defeat of the Soviet Union. Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo proclaimed that Khrushchev's letter represented *'a capitulation of the CPSU before Yugoslavia'*.³⁷ This confirmed Yugoslav leaders in the belief that they now had the right to regard themselves as the ideological authority within the Communist movement. The Yugoslavs became convinced that, because the letter had acknowledged their version of Marxism-Leninism, the correct form compared to the one practiced in the USSR, the Khrushchev's initiative would have a profoundly positive impact on relations between the Communist parties and on relations between the USSR and

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

its Satellites. The Soviet initiative offered the prospect of equality in relations between the Communist parties. This, the Yugoslav leaders claimed at the meeting, placed a burden of responsibility on their shoulders. As Communist internationalists, they now had the duty to respond positively to Khrushchev's letter and to support anti-Stalinist forces, not only among other Communist parties but also within the Soviet Party itself. Tito admitted as much when he said that *'latent Socialist forces do exist in the USSR. This process is starting and [Yugoslavia] should have a role in that process'*. This aggrandized feeling of self-importance, ideological righteousness, and of an obligation to act as a role model for the world Communist movement dominated the atmosphere during the 19 July meeting of the Yugoslav Executive Committee.

Tito also set the tone and suggested the answer to the second question that he had asked the meeting of the Executive Committee to address - the impact that a positive response to Khrushchev's initiative might have on Yugoslavia's relations with the West. He unleashed a scathing attack on the West for its current attitude towards Yugoslavia declaring that

'in the West, they think that we have irrevocably broken-up with the USSR and that, as a result we have nowhere to go. For this reason they believe that they can hold us to ransom... [The West] wishes to make us their satellite and thinks that we cannot be independent any more. They exert pressure on us... and constantly nurture the idea that we are threatened by the Soviet Union... They keep postponing the signing of the Balkan Pact because, through the Pact, they wish to tie us to NATO. They create obstacles over Trieste, as well. In one word, the policy of the Western powers, first and foremost that of the United States towards Yugoslavia is neither sincere nor honest'.³⁸

³⁸ Ibid.

Tito's anger was, on the one hand, provoked by the current state of negotiations over Trieste and by the delay of the signing of the Balkan Pact. This aspect ^{will} be addressed in more detail further below. On the other hand, his anger was of a tactical nature. By berating the West for its behaviour towards Yugoslavia, Tito's intention was to overcome anxieties that some of his associates had had and encourage them to respond positively to Khrushchev's initiative. Discussions during the meeting confirm apprehension among some of those present that normalization with the Soviets might seriously damage relations with the West. Concerns were raised about the serious consequences that a possible cancellation of the US aid might have on Yugoslavia. General Ivan Gošnjak, the Defence Minister, stressed Yugoslavia's dependence on American military aid. Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, in charge of the economy, reminded those present of Yugoslavia's dire economic situation. He particularly stressed Yugoslavia's chronic wheat deficit and lack of other sources apart from the US to supplement it. He asked *'for serious consideration of these circumstances'*.

Tito acted immediately to dispel anxiety among members of the Yugoslav Executive Committee. He insisted that [Yugoslavia] *would not be receiving aid from the West for much longer anyway. [The West] is becoming more aggressive, they ask for concessions. But I do not believe that they will cancel the aid'*. Koča Popović supported Tito's observations and stated that *'it is a question whether and for how long would we continue to receive aid [from the US] and, at the same time, be able to maintain our independence. It is becoming increasingly difficult to manoeuvre... [I believe, however, that] the Americans would not risk making an*

enemy out of us'. Kardelj also expressed conviction that the US would not cancel aid to Yugoslavia. To allay misgivings that members of the Executive Committee might still have had, Tito used the incontrovertible argument - Yugoslavia's independence. He emphasized that

'it may happen that the West cancels aid under the pressure of reactionary propaganda. A problem then arises how and where to replace it? Are we still ready even under those circumstances to pursue the normalization of relations? I believe that we are because the other option spells capitulation to the US...Should we wish to pursue policies of principle, we must be prepared to sacrifice something'.

In response, voicing the opinion of others, Vukmanović-Tempo demanded that Yugoslavia maintains its independent foreign policy regardless of the cost.³⁹

As has been shown, the Yugoslavia's leadership was fully aware of the possible adverse consequences that normalization with the USSR might have on its relations with the West. However, these considerations did not impede its decision to respond favourably to Khrushchev's offer. The discussions at the meeting also confirm that the Yugoslav leadership had recognised that normalization with the USSR could reduce dependence on the US and enable Yugoslavia to achieve a position of equidistance from both Blocs. Tito successfully convinced members of the top Yugoslav leadership that due to West's increased demands for Yugoslavia's political concessions in return for aid, the improvement of relations with the Soviets would offer Yugoslavia room to manoeuvre between the two Blocs.

³⁹ Ibid.

At the end of the meeting, the Yugoslav party Executive Committee unanimously voted to respond positively to Khrushchev's letter of 22 June. In his closing statement, Tito insisted that the Yugoslav letter to Khrushchev should not be sent before the Balkan Pact had been signed and the Trieste negotiations successfully concluded. This would ensure that, in the event that Moscow's initiative was a ploy and the Soviets chose to publish the Yugoslav response, it would not jeopardize these sensitive negotiations. At the same time, Tito was of the opinion that the Soviets should not be left for too long without some sort of acknowledgment of Yugoslavia's response to the initiative. He recommended that the Soviet leadership be informed orally through diplomatic channels that Yugoslav leadership would send a full reply in due course. Tito demanded that the Yugoslav anti-Soviet propaganda be immediately cleansed of abusive and insulting contents. He nevertheless, voiced a suspicion that the Soviets might still, at some point, choose to publish the correspondence. For this reason, he emphasized, *'the wording of [the Yugoslav response] should be such that all progressive forces in the world would accept it'*. Tito proposed and the Committee accepted that he, Kardelj, and Ranković prepare the Yugoslav response to the Soviets based on his initial draft.⁴⁰

Despite the rhetoric and bravado, rational and sober assessment of Yugoslav foreign policy considerations prevailed at the 19 July meeting. Tito and the Yugoslav leadership were well aware that a sudden and substantial improvement in Yugoslav-Soviet relations could raise suspicions in the West, in particular with the US. The Americans were crucial for the resolution of Yugoslavia's three foreign

⁴⁰ Ibid.

policy priorities that Tito and the Yugoslav leadership were dealing with for the last year and the half, ever since General Handy's visit to Belgrade in November 1952. In the summer of 1954, Yugoslavia was engaged in the final and most sensitive stage of negotiations with the US and Western powers over the Trieste settlement and over the creation of the Balkan Pact. In addition, a third drought since 1950 had made Yugoslavia dependent on urgent and substantial food aid from the US. On each of these issues Tito and his associates could not afford to antagonize the West.

Tito's unprecedented angry attack on the West at the meeting of the Executive Committee on 19 July was provoked by the American induced stalemate in the resolution of Yugoslavia's foreign policy priorities. This stalemate had also prompted Tito to delay his response to Khrushchev. The first of these priorities was the settlement of the Trieste question. On 31 May 1954, after four months of secret negotiations over Trieste, in London, Yugoslavia, US, and Britain initialled the *'Agreed Record of Positions Reached'*. The Agreement was based on the territorial settlement. Yugoslavia accepted the division of the Free Territory of Trieste along the existing zonal lines. Italy was to get Zone A with the city of Trieste, currently under the joint British and American administration and Yugoslavia would get Zone B, which it already occupied. According to John Foster Dulles, the only changes to the existing situation amounted to *'minor rectifications of the boundary'*. In compensation for territorial concessions, namely relinquishing the claim to the city of Trieste itself, Yugoslavia was promised additional aid for the financial year 1954 of US\$20 million from the US and US\$5,6 million from the British to build another

port on its side of the border. The US was also to grant the Italians similar amount of aid to assist them in reaching a financial settlement with Yugoslavia regarding War reparations, another contested issue related to the Trieste question.⁴¹ Yugoslavia had '*graciously*' agreed to the last minute territorial concessions because of a commitment stipulated in the '*Agreed Record of Positions Reached*' that, once Italy and Yugoslavia had signed the final agreement, the US and Britain would issue a public statement '*of non-support of further territorial claims by either side*'.⁴² As was shown in Chapter I, Tito had been ready for some time to accept the existing zonal division, provided that the Western powers guaranteed that Italy would not make further territorial demands. After the agreement was reached on 31 May, in accordance with the previous understanding, Italian representatives joined Yugoslav, American, and British negotiators on 1 June for the final phase of negotiations on Trieste.

At this point, contrary to what the Yugoslavs were earlier led to believe, it rapidly became apparent that the Italians did not see the '*Agreed Record*' as a *fait accompli*. The Italian delegation came to London with a number of amendments to the 31 May agreement and with additional territorial demands. The Italian government exerted huge pressure on the US to support its demands. It openly conditioned its consent upon ratification of the EDC agreement and its signature on the Military Facilities Agreement on NATO and US bases in Italy with a '*favourable*'

⁴¹ Memorandum of the Secretary of State to the President, 3 June 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 438-9.

⁴² Ibid.

settlement of the Trieste question.⁴³ Although resentful of Italian tactics,⁴⁴ the US had nevertheless decided to lean on Yugoslavia to accept Italian territorial demands.⁴⁵ Yugoslavs were infuriated and regarded the US *volte face* as a betrayal of the agreement reached on 31 May.⁴⁶

The second Yugoslav foreign policy priority, which had prompted the Yugoslav leadership to postpone its reply to Khrushchev's first letter and provoked Tito's irate outburst against the West at the 19 July meeting was the postponement of the signing of the Balkan Pact. After his trip to Greece at the beginning of June 1954, the signing of the Balkan Pact seemed a foregone conclusion. In a joint communiqué at the end of the visit, Tito and the Greek President, General Papagos reaffirmed their commitment to the signing of the Balkan Pact as soon as possible.⁴⁷ The meeting of experts of the three Balkan countries, held in Athens between 28 June and 5 July, was expected to draft the final Balkan Pact agreement. This was to be followed by a Conference of Foreign Ministers and the signing of the Pact in Yugoslavia in mid-July.⁴⁸ During the meeting in Athens however, Turkey and Greece unexpectedly raised serious objections to the draft prepared by Yugoslavia and the whole process suddenly stalled.⁴⁹ Turkish and Greek opposition was, very obviously a result of strong US pressure. Washington

⁴³ Telegram 3952, Ambassador in Italy (Luce) to Secretary of State, 4 June 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 443, Note 3. Also, Memorandum of Conversation between Ambassador in Italy (Luce) and Assistant Secretary of State (Merchant), 14 July 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 472-3.

⁴⁴ The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Italy, 8 June 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 448-9.

⁴⁵ Telegram 5832, US Chief Negotiator (Thompson) to Department of State, 18 June 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 462, Note 2.

⁴⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, Yugoslav Ambassador in Washington (Mates) – the US Assistant Secretary of State (Merchant), 2 July 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 466-7.

⁴⁷ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 1 August 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F IV / I - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten br. 14/54, 1-4.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ K. Popović to A. Bebler in Athens, 28 June 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F V/f4/III, Razno-388. Also, A. Bebler to K. Popović, 29 June 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F V/f4/III, Razno-391 / See also, the Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, 8 July 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 661-2.

had objected to an early accord on the Balkan Pact Agreement for several reasons. First, it insisted that the timing of signing of the Pact should coincide with real progress in Trieste negotiations.⁵⁰ Second, the US strongly opposed the lack of 'symmetry' between Articles II and VII of the draft Pact Agreement submitted by the Yugoslavs in Athens. Article II stipulated the automatic response of the signatories in case of an attack on any member of the Pact. At the same time, Article VII did not require Yugoslavia's automatic response in case of Greek and Turkish involvement in a conflict under their NATO obligations.⁵¹ The Yugoslav draft clearly envisioned an extension of NATO commitments to Yugoslavia without Yugoslav reciprocal obligations towards NATO. This, of course, had been the Yugoslav aim since the start of their campaign for the creation of the military alliance with Greece and Turkey in the end of 1952. Finally, Washington rejected the notion that any agreement could be reached without prior US approval.⁵² To secure the desired outcome, the US became openly involved in the proceedings of the Athens meeting through its Ambassadors in Belgrade, Athens, and Ankara.⁵³ As a result, the Athens meeting adjourned on 5 July without agreement on the final draft of the Balkan Pact Agreement.⁵⁴ The three governments were forced to issue a humiliating joint statement on 15 July which admitted that the meeting of Foreign Ministers, scheduled for 17 July, was postponed indefinitely pending the '*completion of necessary preparations*'.⁵⁵ The disaster of the Athens meeting and open interference from Washington prompted Tito to angrily declare at the meeting

⁵⁰ The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Greece, 2 July 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 659-60.

⁵¹ The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, 8 July 1954; FRUS, 1952- 1954, Vol. VIII, 661-2.

⁵² The Secretary of State to the Embassy in Greece, 2 July 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 659-60.

⁵³ K. Popović to A. Bebler (Athens), 28 June 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F V/f4/III, Razno-385. Also, A. Bebler (Athens) to K. Popović, 2 July 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F V/f4/III, Razno-399 (I/174).

⁵⁴ Cable A. Bebler to all Embassies, 9 July 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F V/f4/IV, Razno-418.

⁵⁵ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 1 August 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F IV / I - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten br. 14/54, 1-4.

of the Executive Committee that *'the postponement of the signing of the Pact is the work of the US, maybe in collusion with the UK... The Italians believe that if the Balkan Pact was to be signed before the settlement of the Trieste question, Yugoslavia would be in a better position and would not compromise'*.⁵⁶ Tito and his associates were convinced that the US was using its accord on the signing of the Balkan Pact as leverage to extract Belgrade's concessions to Italian demands over Trieste.

Yugoslavia's catastrophic economic situation in the summer of 1954 was an additional factor that prompted Tito and his associates to delay the reply to Khrushchev's first letter. In the summer of 1954, Yugoslavia suffered another catastrophic drought. In July, Yugoslavia's wheat reserves were insufficient to cover a month of the country's needs. Of approximately 2.7 million tons of wheat that Yugoslavia consumed yearly, the 1954 yield was estimated at only 1.6 million tons.⁵⁷ Alternative supplies of wheat from Turkey or Canada were inaccessible to Yugoslavia either due to their own reduced crop yield or to Yugoslavia's inability to finance its purchases. To avert food shortages, Yugoslavia was thus completely dependent on US assistance.⁵⁸ The urgency of the situation prompted Tito, on the eve of the Executive Committee meeting, to authorize Tempo to seek US

⁵⁶ The meeting of the LCY CC Executive Committee (Extended) – Transcript, 19 July 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/62a.

⁵⁷ S. Vukmanović-Tempo, *Revolucija...*, 211. Also, author's interview with Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, 12 February 2000. See also The Ambassador in Yugoslavia (Riddleberger) to the Department of State, 15 September 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 539-41.

⁵⁸ The meeting of the LCY CC Executive Committee (Extended) – Transcript, 19 July 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/62a.

emergency aid.⁵⁹ On 5 July, Tempo met the US Ambassador and informed him of Yugoslavia's urgent requirement for 700,000 tons of wheat.⁶⁰

The second predicament that exacerbated Yugoslavia's economic situation was its debt burden, which, by the summer of 1954, amounted to US\$400 million. The structure of the debt however, exacerbated the problem. Short and mid-term loans with high interest rates constituted more than 60% of Yugoslavia's debt. Servicing the interest payments alone constituted 20% of the total Yugoslav debt.⁶¹ At the Executive Committee meeting of 19 July, Vukmanović-Tempo disclosed that 50% of the country's export earnings were being used for debt repayment.⁶² A considerable number of the short-term loans with the highest interest rates were the result of emergency purchases of wheat from Turkey and Canada after the previous drought of 1952. Most of the high interest loans however, were taken from countries like Belgium and Sweden in the first months after the USSR and the Satellites had imposed the economic blockade on Yugoslavia in 1948. In the beginning of July, Yugoslavia had to default a repayment of a £5 million UK loan.⁶³ During the 5 July meeting with the US Ambassador, Tempo officially asked Washington to support Yugoslavia's request for the reprogramming of its debts at the forthcoming conference of creditors. Tempo also appealed to the US to exert

⁵⁹ Vukmanović-Tempo, S, *Revolucija...*, 210. Also, author's interview with Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, 12 February 2000.

⁶⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo and the US Ambassador in Belgrade, (Riddleberger), 5 July 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, FV/f3/1, Razno-470.

⁶¹ Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, *Revolucija...*, 203.

⁶² The meeting of the LCY CC Executive Committee (Extended) – Transcript, 19 July 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/62a.

⁶³ Memorandum of Conversation, Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo and the US Ambassador in Belgrade, J. Riddleberger, 5 July 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, FV/f3/1, Razno-470. In his report of the meeting, Riddleberger mentioned the sum of £1 million. The discrepancy was probably due to the fact that Yugoslavs referred to the total loan and Riddleberger to the amount of repayment due. The Ambassador in Yugoslavia (Riddleberger) to the Department of State, 7 July 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 1395-6.

influence on the International Monetary Fund to convert its existing mid-term loans to Yugoslavia to the long-term loans.⁶⁴

II.2 Continuation Of Tito-Khrushchev Correspondence

On 21 July, during a reception in Belgrade in honour of the visiting Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selasie, Kardelj passed to the Soviet Ambassador, Volkov, an oral message from the Yugoslav leadership for the Soviet leadership. He conveyed to Volkov that the Yugoslav leadership had received Khrushchev's letter with interest but was forced to delay the response for the time being, due to matters outside its control. Kardelj explained that the Yugoslav leadership was afraid that an accidental indiscretion about the Yugoslav-Soviet correspondence could jeopardize its current sensitive negotiations with the Western powers on the Trieste settlement, a question of the utmost importance to Yugoslavia.⁶⁵ On 24 July, Moscow promptly responded with a short telegram expressing satisfaction about the Yugoslav positive reaction. The Soviet leadership also acknowledged the importance of the Trieste settlement for Yugoslavia and underlined their readiness to wait for the Yugoslav response.⁶⁶ The speed of the Soviet response reveals Kremlin's relief that the signal from Belgrade was positive. Furthermore, the

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Memorandum of conversation of the USSR Ambassador in Belgrade (Volkov) at the reception in honour of the Ethiopian Emperor, 21 July 1954; АВП, РФ, Фонд 0144, Опись 39, Папка 157, Дело 9, 87-8. Also, Tito's account at the Fifth Plenum of LCY CC, 26 November 1954 – Transcripts; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/13.

⁶⁶ The CPSU CC letter, signed by N. S. Khrushchev, to the LCY CC, addressed to Tito, 24 July 1954 (Khrushchev's second letter); AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-49.

expressed Soviet understanding for Yugoslav foreign policy considerations and readiness to wait for a full response was evidence of Soviet eagerness to appease Yugoslavia and encourage Belgrade to enter into a dialogue.

Tito's reply to Khrushchev's first letter was sent on 11 August 1954.⁶⁷ It was a measured response that left the door open for the Yugoslav-Soviet normalization but under conditions acceptable to Yugoslavs. It was carefully worded, the result of the lingering Yugoslav suspicion that the Soviets might make the correspondence public. In the opening sentence, Tito concurred with Khrushchev's statement that the existing state of relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR was harmful to both countries. This represented a declaration of Belgrade's readiness to work with Moscow to improve their relations. Tito then emphasized that the slow pace of normalization so far *'demonstrates the need for serious efforts ... to remove negative elements that have accumulated since 1948, which continue to aggravate our relations'*.⁶⁸ This was a clear message to the Soviet leadership that brushing aside everything that had happened since 1948 was not an acceptable basis for normalization. Tito further insisted that improvement of relations with the USSR must also mean an end to the isolation of Yugoslavia in the international Communist movement. He then chose to address issues raised in Khrushchev's letter point by point. In this way, Tito highlighted the fact that it was the Soviets and not the Yugoslavs who had initiated contact.

⁶⁷ LCY CC EC letter, signed by Josip Broz Tito, to the CPSU CC, addressed to Khrushchev (Tito's first letter), 11 August 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-50.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Having established at the very beginning that Yugoslavia was the *courted bride*, Tito went on to spell out his conditions for the Yugoslav-Soviet normalization of relations. He stressed that, *'it would be unrealistic to think that a quick and short process is possible for the creation of the necessary trust between [the Soviet and Yugoslav] governments'*.⁶⁹ Tito explained that the Yugoslavs had become mistrustful of Soviet intentions. For this reason, before it committed itself to full normalization, Yugoslavia would need to be convinced of Moscow's sincerity. Next, he insisted that *'normalisation and improvement of [Yugoslav-Soviet] relations must be... in accordance with our policy of international cooperation and not to jeopardize [Yugoslavia's] position in the world'*.⁷⁰ The Yugoslav leader wanted to make it absolutely clear to the Soviets that they should not entertain any hopes of changing Yugoslavia's independent position. This also implied Yugoslavia's resolve to continue the relationship it had built with Western countries. In continuation, Tito re-emphasized the pledge stated in Khrushchev's letter that Yugoslav-Soviet relations must be based on the *'principle of non-interference into affairs of other countries'*. This was important, according to Tito, because improved relations between the two countries must never again *'create new internal strife, whether political or economic'*.⁷¹ Tito here referred to the 1948 and the disastrous economic blockade imposed on Yugoslavia by the Eastern Bloc and its expulsion from the international Communist movement. It also referred to Stalin's subversive actions in 1948 and later and COMINFORM resolutions in 1948 and 1949 that almost ripped apart the Communist party of Yugoslavia. Tito then reasserted

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Yugoslavia's independence and declared that '[Yugoslavs] *are resolute in preserving [their own] principles of a socialist country, in [their] internal development as well as in [their] foreign policy, in particular in... the defence of [Yugoslavia's] independence*'.⁷² He further underlined this point by insisting that the Yugoslav-Soviet improvement of relations must not be conditioned by '*an unrealistic expectation of uniformity of views*'.⁷³ This was a crucial statement. On the one hand, Tito re-affirmed Yugoslavia's determination to resist any hegemonic aspirations. On the other hand, he defined what the Yugoslav leaders perceived to be the ideological *sine qua non* of relations between the Socialist countries. Tito demanded Soviet recognition of individual and independent forms of Socialism.

In the closing paragraphs of his letter, the Yugoslav leader addressed two questions that figured prominently in Khrushchev's letter – the question of responsibility for the 1948 break-up and the question of the re-establishment of relations between the Yugoslav and Soviet Parties. With regard to the onus of responsibility for 1948, Tito stated that he would prefer not to discuss this in the first exchange of letters. He clearly wished to avoid the debate and possible confrontation this early in their correspondence; it could endanger the process of normalization before it had even got off the ground. Nevertheless, Tito remarked that '*an individual, for example Djilas, was not the cause of this conflict... We recognise other reasons to be behind the conflict and the break-up of 1948. The Fifth [1948] and later the Sixth [1952] Congresses of our Party have stipulated them. As with regard to the extent of Beria's guilt, you know best his role in the*

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

*whole affair and we have no reason to doubt your assertions'.*⁷⁴ Tito wanted the Soviets to understand that his current reluctance to debate the question of responsibility did not mean that Yugoslavs would accept shared responsibility for 1948 or that the whole issue could be swept under the carpet. Without being explicit, he referred in his letter to the Fifth and the Sixth Congresses of the Yugoslav Party. Resolutions of these Congresses named Stalin as the main culprit of the 1948 conflict. Tito also masterly reminded the present Soviet leaders that they were all members of Stalin's innermost circle - as Beria had been - and had played a role in the events of 1948.

With regard to the second issue raised in Khrushchev's letter, the re-establishment of Party relations, Tito stated that *'in principle we are not against them... However, before some progress in normalization of government relations is achieved, the meeting you are suggesting [between representatives of the two Parties] would not prove effective'.*⁷⁵ This statement identified Yugoslav position that the normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations was to be restricted to improvement of state relations. Party contacts could be re-established only after a substantial progress in relations between the two Governments and once the trust between the two leaderships had been established. Tito's response with regard to the meeting of Yugoslav and Party leaders confirms that he and his associates were well aware such a meeting, before government relations had acquired a level of normality, would suggest to the world that the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict was just an ideological quarrel, a family

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

affair. Belgrade however, wanted the 1948 conflict to be understood for what they believed it to have been – Yugoslavia's resistance against Soviet hegemony.

Tito's reply to Khrushchev was sent two days after the Balkan Pact was signed. A Yugoslav compromise proposal made in July had diluted the contested Article VII of the draft Balkan Pact Charter, thus eliminating automatic engagement of NATO in the case of an attack on a signatory of the Balkan Pact. This paved the way for an agreement between Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey on the final draft of the Pact Charter. The Agreement then received a final seal of approval at the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Paris, on 29 July.⁷⁶ The signing of the Balkan Pact followed on 9 August 1954 in Bled, Yugoslavia.⁷⁷ Still mistrustful of the Soviets, Tito made sure to preclude possible Western suspicions should the correspondence become public. On 12 August, only a day after Tito's letter was sent to the Soviets, K. Popović called in the Ambassadors of Britain, US, Greece, and Turkey. He informed them that the Soviets have proposed normalization of relations and that Belgrade had decided to accept this. Popović underlined to the Ambassadors that Tito had made it clear to the Soviets that normalization must not interfere with the existing excellent relations between Yugoslavia and the West.⁷⁸

However, Tito's response to Khrushchev was sent before the Trieste settlement was reached, contrary to the conclusions of the Executive Committee meeting. The

⁷⁶ The United States Permanent Representative in the North Atlantic Council (Hughes) to the Department of State, 29 July 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 671-3.

⁷⁷ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 16 August 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, FIV/ I - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten br. 15/54, 1-3.

⁷⁸ Memorandum of conversations between K. Popović and the Ambassadors of the US, UK, Greece, and Turkey, 12 August 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F III / Jugoslavija, Zab.- 553. See also, the Ambassador in Yugoslavia (Riddleberger) to the Department of State, 12 August 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 1398-9.

available evidence offers the following explanations. On the one hand, Tito and his associates wished to take every advantage of the momentum created by the successful conclusion of the Balkan Pact. It provided the Yugoslavs with leverage in their dealings with the Soviets. A favourable conclusion of the Trieste issue, at this point looked a distant prospect. On the other hand, Tito and the Yugoslav leadership had probably become worried that further delay in their reply to Khrushchev's letter could weaken the position of those in the Soviet leadership who supported normalization with Yugoslavia and thus jeopardize the whole initiative.⁷⁹

The Soviet leadership replied to Tito on 23 September 1954, again in a letter signed by Khrushchev.⁸⁰ The Soviet letter accepted Tito's assertion that there was a *'necessity for... practical elimination of negative occurrences that obstruct rapprochement between Yugoslavia and the USSR'*.⁸¹ To dispel remaining Yugoslav misgivings about the Soviet initiative, Khrushchev then declared in his letter that

*'in the interest of the normalization of relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR, [the Soviet leadership] had explicitly confronted the Association of Yugoslav Patriots with the question of the appropriateness of the continuation of their activity... [The Soviet leadership] is taking measures to ensure the needed clarification of questions related to Yugoslavia in the Soviet press, journals, and books ... [The Soviet leadership] wishes to know what further practical measures, you consider, need to be undertaken in the immediate future, on both sides, for the purpose of contributing toward the establishment of mutual understanding and genuine cooperation between our countries'.*⁸²

⁷⁹ Fifth Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcripts, 26 November 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/13.

⁸⁰ The CPSU CC letter, signed by N. S. Khrushchev, to the LCY CC, addressed to Tito (Khrushchev's third letter), 23 September 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-51.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

The above remarkable statement revealed Soviet determination to normalize relations with Yugoslavia at all costs. Moscow admitted that it was shutting down the activities of the Association of Yugoslav Patriots. This was a Moscow-based organization of anti-Titoist Yugoslav émigrés who supported the COMINFORM Resolution against Tito in 1948. It was run by the KGB and was supervised, on behalf of the CPSU CC, by Mikhail Suslov. These *'true Yugoslav patriots and communists'*, as the Soviets used to call them, served as the *'fifth column'* in the Soviet propaganda campaign and participated in covert operations against Yugoslavia after 1948. Moscow also pledged to *'clean up its publications'* and bring to an end anti-Yugoslav propaganda. Moreover, the Soviet leadership requested advice from the Yugoslavs on what other measures it needed to undertake in order to foster improvement of relations between the two countries.

The above-cited statement was unprecedented in relations between a Superpower and a small nation. Concessions of this magnitude and without request for reciprocity were unmistakably aimed at providing ultimate assurances to Tito that the Soviet initiative was genuine. It was also designed to encourage Tito to accept an accelerated improvement of relations. Apart from one mention, Khrushchev's third letter lacked insistence on Proletarian unity based on Marxism-Leninism, customary in communications between the Socialist states at the time. Instead, the Soviet leadership specifically declared its tolerance towards *'issues of internal development'* and its commitment to *'equality and non-interference in affairs of others... and to the cooperation between countries with different political system'*.

⁸³ Moscow had thus accepted the postulate of equality in relations with Yugoslavia, set out as a precondition in Tito's letter of 11 August. For the first time in the history of relations between Communist parties or Socialist states, the Soviet Party and Government had also acknowledged the existence of a different model of Socialism and the right of another Socialist country to conduct its own, independent foreign policy.

However, in the letter of 23 September the Soviet leadership continued to insist that the improvement of relations between the two countries must include the establishment of relations between their Communist parties. The importance of the Party normalization to the Soviet leadership was manifested in the fact that this secret correspondence, the first since 1948, was carried out by means of letters between the Soviet and the Yugoslav Communist Party Central Committees. Despite all his insistence that the Yugoslav-Soviet normalization should be limited to State relations, this detail had escaped Tito. By continuing to communicate with the Soviet Central Committee, on behalf of the Yugoslav Central Committee, Tito had inadvertently acknowledged the re-establishment of relations between the two parties. Khrushchev's letter stressed that the '*cooperation of [the Yugoslav and the Soviet] parties, based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism, is vital not only in the interest of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia but in the interest of the consolidation of the international workers' movement and for the unification of all forces fighting for the victory of Socialism*'. ⁸⁴ This statement revealed the true motives behind the Soviet insistence on the establishment of relations between the LCY and the

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

CPSU. Besides the initial goal to deny Yugoslavia to the West, the Soviets were now looking at the normalization with Yugoslavia as a tool to reinforce the cohesion of their Bloc. An immediate re-establishment of Party relations during the first stages of Yugoslav-Soviet normalization would indicate to other Communist parties that the Yugoslavs had recognised the mistakes they had made in 1948 and have now reconciled themselves with the Soviet postulates. In this way, the schism of 1948 would be declared dead; the global Communist movement would again be governed by a single dogma, the one defined in the Kremlin. The resulting uniformity of thought within the international proletarian movement would undoubtedly, as the Soviets hoped, cement the cohesion of the Bloc behind the Soviet Union.

On 27 September, only three days after their third one, Moscow sent a new letter to Tito.⁸⁵ It was short, informing Tito and the Yugoslav leadership that

*'an inappropriate formulation... aimed against the leadership of Yugoslavia... which is contrary to directives from the CPSU CC... [appeared] in the book 'Historical Materialism'... in June 1954... The CPSU CC has discussed the question of this gross error... and has made an appropriate decision to punish harshly those responsible for the violation of directives of the CPSU CC on the character of material on Yugoslavia that is published in the USSR.'*⁸⁶

The transcript of the corresponding decision of the Presidium of the CPSU CC was attached to the letter.⁸⁷ The publication date of the book in question reveals that the editors had in fact followed what was then the official Party line, months before Khrushchev's first and secret letter was sent to Tito. It was obvious that the

⁸⁵ The CPSU CC letter, signed by N. S. Khrushchev, to the LCY CC, addressed to Tito (Khrushchev's fourth letter), 27 September 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-52.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

unfortunate editors of *'Historical Materialism'* had been sacrificed in order that a point could be made. This letter reflected Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership's desire to dispel Tito's suspicions and was meant to offer proof of the sincerity of their initiative, something the Yugoslav leadership had insisted on. In his first letter but much more in his public speech at a rally in Ostrožno, Slovenia, on 16 September, Tito underlined that only the concrete *'deeds'* would prove Soviet intentions to be genuine.⁸⁸ The latest Khrushchev's letter was also intended to demonstrate the Soviet leadership's determination to follow up on the pledge given in its previous letter to ensure *'clarification of questions related to Yugoslavia in the Soviet press, journals, and books'*.⁸⁹ Kremlin had hoped that its offering of a truce in the propaganda war and its harsh and rapid dealing with the *'transgression'* of its propagandists would confirm to Tito, once and for all, the sincerity of its initiative.

In analysing the Tito-Khrushchev secret correspondence in 1954, it is necessary to point to an aspect that is essential for the understanding of this exchange but which is often neglected - the use of language. Linguistic complexities, so common in the Tito-Khrushchev correspondence, reveal the atmosphere, motivations, and true meaning behind their exchange. The correspondence is remarkable for the extreme care shown by both sides to the use of the ideologically *'correct'* formulations. On the one hand, this can be explained by the fact that ideology had enshrouded the conflict between the two sides from the outset. This dictated their approach to the correspondence. Both the Yugoslav and the Soviet leaders had

⁸⁸ Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1 July 1952 - 31 December 1954, Vol. IX, (Bristol: Keesings Publications), 13806

⁸⁹ The CPSU CC letter, signed by N. S. Khrushchev, to the LCY CC, addressed to Tito (Khrushchev's third letter), 23 September 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-51.

been brought up within the system of values imposed by Stalin. According to this paradigm, any divergence from the '*universal*' truths proscribed in '*correct*' and rigid official Party proclamations was looked upon as the betrayal of the '*cause*'. On the other hand, both the Soviet and the Yugoslav leaderships remained suspicious of each other. They were wary that the other side might publish the correspondence. The fact that the whole international Communist movement would then scrutinize the correspondence prompted the Soviet and the Yugoslav leadership to be extremely careful to use the ideologically correct language. The letters were written with the intention of appealing to the global Communist audience. Tito confirmed later that '*when writing these letters we did not write them only for the Soviet Union but for the whole world...We wrote these letters for the progressive public of the world and wrote them in such manner as to be able to publish them if necessary*'.⁹⁰

The Tito-Khrushchev correspondence was also striking for the complexity of the language used. Sometimes, indirect speech and complex syntax served to conceal true meaning or motives. At other times, the multi-faceted syntax helped to gloss over existing disagreements. Both Tito and Khrushchev were well aware of huge differences and mistrust that existed between them. In an effort to reach a basic common understanding, necessary for re-establishment of proper communication, both leaders had to be careful to avoid confrontational language as much as possible. The complex language also served to refute the admission of initiating the normalization. To the Communist parties throughout the world, the initiative for

⁹⁰ Fifth Plenum of LCY CC – Transcripts, 26 November 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/13.

the improvement of relations would equal to the admission of responsibility for the conflict in 1948. This would have meant a devastating blow for the Soviet leadership, which was trying to re-assert its authority within the global Communist movement ever since Stalin's death. An admission of responsibility for 1948 was equally unacceptable for Tito because he was eager to be readmitted into the international Communist movement on his own terms.

Simultaneously with Tito-Khrushchev secret correspondence, Yugoslavia's relations with the West improved significantly after the crisis in mid July. By the end of September, even the biggest stumbling block of these relations, the Trieste question, was on the way to being resolved. Ironically, it was not the signing of the Balkan Pact on 9 August but the debacle of the European Defence Community (EDC) that brought about the resolution of the Trieste problem. On 30 August, the French Parliament had rejected the EDC, effectively killing off the whole idea. As a result, the newly signed Balkan Pact acquired increased significance for the Western European defence. Accordingly, Yugoslavia's strategic role received renewed and immediate recognition. The consolidation of its Southeast European flank became an urgent imperative for the Western Alliance and linkage of its southernmost members, Turkey and Greece with Italy was the most important part of it. The main obstacle, of course, remained the Yugoslav-Italian confrontation over Trieste. At the end of August, the Trieste negotiations in London were bogged down in disputes on minor territorial issues over which neither Italy nor Yugoslavia wished to compromise. In the beginning of September, President Eisenhower demanded from the State Department that something be done '*soon* [with regard to

Trieste], *if for no other reason than to provide some counterbalance for the EDC flop*'.⁹¹ Robert D. Murphy, the Deputy Under Secretary of State, was sent, as President Eisenhower's personal envoy to Belgrade and Rome. Murphy was chosen because of his acquaintance with Tito, which dated back to the war years. He had first met Tito in Naples in July 1944 and then on several occasions on the Yugoslav island of Vis where Tito resided between May and October 1944. The State Department had hoped that the choice of Murphy would appeal to Tito's well-known ease of communicating with fellow war veterans. The Americans also calculated that Eisenhower's personal involvement in recognition of Tito's status, as a world statesman would appeal to the Yugoslav leader's vanity. Furthermore, Murphy brought with him Eisenhower's personal letter for Tito. In it the US President stressed the importance of the Trieste settlement for the US and wider global considerations, and appealed to Tito's statesmanship to help with the resolution of the problem. In one sentence at the very end of the letter, phrased in such a way as not to suggest any 'trade-off', Eisenhower underlined that he was well aware of the economic hardships facing Yugoslavia and that he had instructed Murphy to discuss these problems with Tito *'in the spirit of sympathy'*.⁹² Given all above considerations, the US Administration hoped that Murphy's visit would facilitate Tito's willingness to compromise over Trieste.⁹³

Indeed, Murphy's shuttle diplomacy between Belgrade and Rome, between 15 and 28 September 1954, produced the desired results. The breakthrough that would

⁹¹ The President to the Acting Secretary of State (Smith), 3 September 1954; FRUS, 1952-54, Vol. V, 1145-6.

⁹² President Eisenhower's letter to J.B. Tito, 10 September 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 531-2.

⁹³ The Acting Secretary of State to the President, at Denver, 3 September 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 517. Also, the Ambassador in Yugoslavia (Riddleberger) to the Department of State, 5 September 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 519-20.

eventually lead to the agreement came after Murphy's four-hour meeting with Tito on 17 September. In the leisurely atmosphere of his summer residence on the island of Brioni, after reading Eisenhower's letter and reminiscing with Murphy about the war years, Tito agreed to a crucial territorial compromise.⁹⁴ During the next ten days, Murphy successfully pressed the Italians to accept Tito's compromise. The last minute adjustments were then finalized during Dulles' stay in London between 28 September and 3 October. On 5 October 1954, a Memorandum of Understanding on Trieste was initialled by the representatives of the US, UK, Italy, and Yugoslavia.⁹⁵ It signalled the end to the Trieste dispute. The Western powers' agreement to guarantee the permanence of the final settlement made along zonal lines was crucial to Tito's acceptance. Announcing the Memorandum of Understanding on Trieste, on 5 October 1954, the US Government issued a formal statement in which it undertook an obligation to *'give no support to claims of either Yugoslavia or Italy to territory under the sovereignty or administration of the other'*.⁹⁶ For the West, the Trieste settlement meant the long-awaited consolidation of the important Southeastern flank of European defence. Furthermore, it was a welcome consolation for the EDC debacle. For Yugoslavia, the resolution of the Trieste issue had finally relieved its leadership of a burden that had often and for too long impaired its foreign policy manoeuvrability. Coupled with the increasing prospect of improved relations with the Soviets, the enhanced manoeuvrability was seen by Yugoslav leaders as the opportunity for the country to pursue equidistance from either Bloc.

⁹⁴ The Ambassador in Yugoslavia (Riddleberger) to the Department of State, 17 September 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 543-5.

⁹⁵ FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 570-3.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

From the beginning of September, Moscow intensified its '*normalization offensive*' towards Yugoslavia. On the one hand, the Soviets wanted to counter the Yugoslav-West rapprochement that followed the signing of the Balkan Pact. On the other hand, in an attempt to woo Tito further, Moscow was eager to demonstrate its responsiveness to Tito's demands for '*concrete deeds*' towards the improvement of relations. It was not by chance that the first of Soviet '*concrete*' proposals addressed the reestablishment of Yugoslav-Soviet trade relations. The Soviets were well informed of the severity of Yugoslavia's economic problems and had calculated that Tito would not hesitate to accept initiatives in this field. The Yugoslav-Soviet trade negotiations, conducted in Belgrade during September, were successfully concluded on 1 October. The result was the first commercial agreement between the two countries since 1948, worth US\$4 million. Both sides also agreed to start a new round of negotiations in December, in Moscow, with the aim of increasing volume of trade in 1955 to at least US\$25 million.⁹⁷

On 22 September, in an unprecedented gesture, PRAVDA published excerpts of Tito's Ostrožno speech of 16 September in an article entitled '*A Speech by the Yugoslav President Tito*'. It was the first time since 1948 that the Soviet press had addressed Tito as President and had published excerpts of his speech.⁹⁸ On 7 October, the Yugoslav Ambassador in Moscow, D. Vidić reported that '*Free Yugoslavia*', a Moscow based, anti-Titoist émigré radio station had been taken off

⁹⁷ Memorandum of conversation, Deputy Secretary for Foreign Affairs (Bebler) – the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade (Volkov), 28 September 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F III/SSSR Zab. - 663. Also, DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 1 November 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F IV / II - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten br. 19/54, 22.

⁹⁸ PRAVDA, 22 September 1954, 4.

the air. He further confirmed that the Soviet authorities have stopped jamming Radio-Belgrade broadcasts in Russian.⁹⁹ Moreover, by the end of September, anti-Yugoslav propaganda in the USSR and the Satellites, except in Albania, was stopped.¹⁰⁰ Following the 22 September article in PRAVDA, the Soviet and the Satellite press, apart from Albania, started publishing news of economic achievements in Yugoslavia. The official Soviet news agency, TASS, had also started circulating Yugoslav press commentaries on various international issues, choosing, of course, excerpts that coincided with the Soviet views. All these changes represented unprecedented developments in Yugoslav-Soviet relations.¹⁰¹ In an article on 20 October, on the tenth anniversary of the liberation of Belgrade from the Germans, a joint Yugoslav-Soviet military operation, PRAVDA wrote of the '*comradeship in blood*' forged between the Soviet and Yugoslav peoples during the Second World War. It was the first time since 1948 that Moscow acknowledged the true contribution of the Yugoslav partisan armies in the war against the Nazis.¹⁰²

Further '*concrete proof*' of genuine intent to improve relations with Yugoslavia came from Moscow after the signing of the Trieste Agreement. According to the Peace Treaty with Italy of 10 February 1947, the USSR, as a co-signatory, should have been part to any negotiations on the amendments to the Treaty, such as the change of the status of the Free Territory of Trieste. However, Moscow was never

⁹⁹ The Yugoslav Ambassador in Moscow (Vidic) to DSIP, 7 October 1954; SMIP, PA, 1954, F 88/16, SSSR, 413193.

¹⁰⁰ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 15 October 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F IV / II - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten No. 18/54, Prilog.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² PRAVDA, 20 October 1954, 3.

invited to London nor consulted at any stage of the negotiations that took place over the period of nine months. Nevertheless, on 12 October, in response to the signing of the Trieste agreement in London, Moscow handed an official Note to the UN Security Council stating that since the Trieste agreement would contribute to the relaxation of tensions in Europe, the Soviet Government took '*cognisance of the agreement*'.¹⁰³ Moscow obviously hoped that its supportive behaviour over an issue of the greatest importance to Yugoslavia would be understood in Belgrade as yet another confirmation of the sincerity of Soviet intentions to improve relations. After a year of very limited real change, the reestablishment of trade relations, termination of anti-Yugoslav propaganda and the ban on the activities of Yugoslav émigrés, and positive recognition of Yugoslavia in the Soviet media were important signs to Tito and his associates that Moscow was indeed truly eager to improve relations between the two countries.

The gradual improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations was followed by improvement of Yugoslavia's relations with the Peoples' Democracies but at a much slower pace and much more limited in scope.¹⁰⁴ Between August and October 1954, a full year after Moscow and Belgrade had exchanged Ambassadors, Yugoslavia established normal diplomatic relations with Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Albania. Following the successful conclusion of Yugoslav-Soviet trade talks on 1 October, similar arrangements were signed with

¹⁰³ Memorandum by John C. Campbell of the Policy Planning Staff to the Director of Staff (Bowie), 29 October 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, pp. 586-8.

¹⁰⁴ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 15 October 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F IV / II - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten br. 18/54, Prilog / DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 1 November 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F IV / II - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten br. 19/54, 22. / DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 15 November 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F IV / II - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten No. 20/54, 1-4.

Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany. Negotiations with Poland, Rumania, and Bulgaria were also scheduled to start before the end of the year.¹⁰⁵ The anti-Yugoslav propaganda in the media was wound down in this period and all publications containing now '*unacceptable*' anti-Yugoslav formulations were removed from bookshops and libraries throughout Eastern Europe.¹⁰⁶

The conduct of the Satellite countries was important to Belgrade for several reasons. Moscow exercised absolute control over Satellite relations with Yugoslavia. In this context, the behaviour of the Satellites served Belgrade as a barometer of Soviet sincerity. Furthermore, a positive change in the attitude of the Satellites would signal to the Yugoslavs that the Soviet declarations of intent have been translated into operational policies towards Yugoslavia. This, in turn, would be a definite confirmation that normalization was a long-term strategic shift and not a tactical manoeuvre. Moreover, in the autumn of 1954, armed incidents were still a daily occurrence on Yugoslavia's borders with Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Albania. Belgrade was vitally interested in eliminating the constant threat to Yugoslavia's security. For this reason, Tito had insisted in his letter to Khrushchev on 11 August that Yugoslav-Soviet normalization had to include normalization of Yugoslav relations with the Satellites.¹⁰⁷ However, there is no evidence to suggest that at the time the Yugoslav leadership had established closer contacts with a leadership of any of the Peoples' Democracies. On the one hand, Moscow

¹⁰⁵ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 1 November 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, F IV / II - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten br. 19/54, 22.

¹⁰⁶ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 15 October 1954; SMIP, SPA, 1954, FI V / II - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten br. 18/54, Prilog.

¹⁰⁷ LCY CC EC letter, signed by Josip Broz Tito, to the CPSU CC, addressed to Khrushchev (Tito's first letter), 11 August 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-50.

maintained a tight grip on the Satellites' relations with Yugoslavia. On the other hand, there was limited enthusiasm among the leaders of the Satellites to improve relations with Tito, given their record of actively carrying out Stalin's hostile policies against Yugoslavia. At the same time, Tito and his associates were equally unenthusiastic in establishing relations with the existing Satellite countries' leaders. Most of them had come to power after fabricated anti-Titoist trials between 1948 and 1953, which had been orchestrated by Moscow. Thousands of Communists throughout Eastern Europe, falsely accused of being 'Titoist' or 'Tito's spies', had been imprisoned. Among them had been popular national leaders, such as Władisław Gomułka in Poland or Janosz Kádár in Hungary. Others, such as Laszlo Rajk in Hungary, or Robert Slansky in Czechoslovakia had been executed. Tito regarded some of Satellite leaders, namely the Hungarian leader, Matyas Rakosi, and the Albanian, Enver Hoxha, as deplorable and could not even bring himself to communicate with them.¹⁰⁸

Tito's next communication to Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership was sent on 16 November 1954, a full month and a half after Khrushchev's last letter. It was partly a response to Khrushchev's letters of 23 and 27 September and partly a reaction to two events that had occurred only days before the letter was sent to Moscow. The first was a speech by Maxim Saburov, a member of the Soviet Party Presidium, delivered on 6 November at the session of the Moscow City Soviet marking the 37th anniversary of the October Revolution. Saburov's speech was sensational for the unprecedented attention it devoted to the improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet

¹⁰⁸ Tito's speech before the LCY officials of Istria and representatives of the Yugoslav National Army and his responses to questions – Transcript; Pula, 11 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/XIX, I – 3.

relations.¹⁰⁹ The second event was a conversation between the Yugoslav Ambassador in Moscow, Vidić, and Khrushchev the following day, during a formal reception in the Kremlin.¹¹⁰ At one point during the reception, Khrushchev invited the Yugoslav Ambassador to join the group of highest-ranking Soviet officials. Khrushchev was surrounded by almost half of the Presidium, including Malenkov, Bulganin, Kaganovich, and Saburov. This was Vidić's first encounter with Khrushchev. To the Yugoslav Ambassador's huge surprise, Khrushchev immediately started berating the Yugoslav leadership for being indecisive with regard to normalization.¹¹¹ As proof, he pointed to Yugoslavia's reluctance to agree to the re-establishment of party relations. Khrushchev further accused the Yugoslavs of failing to respond to decisive Soviet initiatives over recent months. The Soviet leader then contemptuously compared Yugoslavia's attitude to the normalization between the two countries to '*corn trading*'.¹¹² Turning to the Balkan Pact, Khrushchev stressed that it was incongruous for a country, which claimed to be building Socialism to maintain close relations with the US. He then added in a derogatory manner that Yugoslavs '*would like to sit on two stools at the same time*', but would eventually have to choose sides.¹¹³ In his letter of 16 November, Tito singled out this accusation and responded that he wished to '*assure [Khrushchev] that [Yugoslavs] are determined to sit on one stool only – their own*'.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ The Yugoslav Ambassador in Moscow (Vidić) to DSIP, 12 November 1954; SMIP, PA, 1954, F 86/21, SSSR, 414956.

¹¹⁰ Fifth Plenum of LCY CC – Transcripts, 26 November 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/13.

¹¹¹ Ibid. Also telegram from K. Popović to the Yugoslav Ambassador in Moscow (Vidić), 16 November 1954; SMIP, Kabinet Državnog Sekretara Koče Popovića, F I, 1954 / 6.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ The LCY CC letter, signed by Tito, to the CPSU CC, addressed to Khrushchev (Tito's second letter), 16 November 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-53.

Tito's letter of 16 November was conciliatory. It differed from his first letter in that it contained fewer pamphlet-like declarations. This indicated that by this time Tito had become fully convinced that the Soviet initiative was not a manoeuvre; he judged it important for the continuation of the dialogue to communicate with the Soviets on a more receptive basis. Tito attributed Khrushchev's outburst in front of Vidić to Soviet leadership's frustration with the delay in the Yugoslav response. Tito assured Khrushchev that the delay was not intentional but a result of '*objective domestic considerations*'.¹¹⁵ He also praised the latest Soviet steps towards normalization, in particular the termination of anti-Yugoslav propaganda. He then addressed the issues to which Khrushchev kept returning - the normalization of party relations and of the meeting between the Yugoslav and Soviet leaders. Tito opined that the hitherto improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations had confirmed the success of their correspondence. He then agreed that the time had come '*for the most significant questions that still stand as an obstacle between us to be clarified and cleared*'. In this context, Tito allowed for a possible meeting between representatives of the Yugoslav and the Soviet Governments but not of their Parties, as the Soviets wanted. Tito declared the renewal of Party contacts to be premature.¹¹⁶ To pacify Soviet frustration regarding Yugoslavia's refusal to compromise on the renewal of party relations, Tito appealed for the Soviet leaders to understand that Belgrade was compelled to put off the renewal of party relations with the Soviet Union because of the negative impact it might have on Yugoslavia's relations with the West. He underlined that after the Soviet blockade in 1948,

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Yugoslavia had survived largely thanks to Western economic aid and was still dependant on it. Tito skilfully took the opportunity, once again, to remind the Soviet leadership that the memory of the 1948 blockade had deeply traumatized the Yugoslav people. In the end, Tito proposed that a meeting of highest Government representatives of the two countries be arranged after his return from the forthcoming trips to India and Burma.¹¹⁷ Tito's letter of 16 November reveals clearly that he was manoeuvring to avoid the renewal of Party contacts with the Soviets while, at the same time, doing his best to keep alive Moscow's initiative for the normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet Government relations.

The Fifth Plenum of the LCY CC was convened in Belgrade on 26 November 1954 to address the normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations.¹¹⁸ The Plenum offered the first opportunity for the Central Committee of the Party to be made aware of the existence of the five-month long Tito-Khrushchev correspondence. As was customary at LCY Plenums or the meetings of the Executive Committee, Tito opened the proceedings at the Plenum. In his introductory address he gave the chronology of the Soviet initiative after which the exchanged letters were read to the members of the Central Committee. Following on his opening address, the participants were then invited to express their opinion. Tito's closest associates, Kardelj, Ranković, Vukmanović-Tempo and Koča Popović, as always dominated the discussion. At the end, Tito summarized the debate and proposed conclusions, which, as was always the case, were accepted unanimously.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Fifth Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcripts, 26 November 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/13.

In his address, Tito singled out Khrushchev's letter on 22 June 1954 as a threshold in the normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. Tito then pointed out that after his reply of 11 August, Moscow had demonstrated that their initiative was not a manoeuvre. Tito admitted that he and his associates had been suspicious at first that Khrushchev's initiative was a ploy. This was also the reason, as Tito explained, for the extended delays between Yugoslav responses. He added that *'we did not rush, we did not embrace them with both arms, we looked with caution at what they would do'*.¹¹⁹ Only once he and his associates had become convinced that the correspondence was part of a genuine change in Soviet policy did they decide to familiarize the wider leadership of the country with the exchange. Tito concluded his opening address by declaring that both the Soviet initiative and the content of their letters represented an ideological victory for Yugoslavia *'because it confirmed that what [the Soviets] were saying and have slandered us with [in 1948 and ever since] was untrue...they have admitted that we are building Socialism in our own way'*.¹²⁰

The Fifth Plenum articulated Yugoslav understanding of the Soviet initiative for the normalization of relations and defined Yugoslavia's tactics. Members of the Central Committee were read Vidić's report on his meeting with Khrushchev on 7 November. Tito stressed that the Khrushchev-Vidić conversation revealed that [the Soviet leaders] *do not think in precisely the same manner as they write in their letters. They believe that we should join their family, their 'lager', although we have*

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

*made it clear that we would not go into a 'lager'.*¹²¹ Veljko Mićunović added that it had become obvious that remnants of Stalinist thinking remained strong in the Kremlin. Their presence was not evident in the letters but had surfaced in Khrushchev's conversation with Vidić.¹²² Mićunović also informed the members of the Central Committee that the Yugoslav leadership had learned that the Soviets had sent a letter to the Satellites informing them of the correspondence.¹²³ Kardelj reminded the Plenum that the obvious Soviet goal was to drive a wedge between Yugoslavia and the West. He pointed out that, at the same time, a positive tendency was emerging in the USSR. The change of Soviet policy towards Yugoslavia was proof of this tendency. In this context, Kardelj insisted that members of the present Soviet leadership should not be judged harshly. He stressed that these people had lived under Stalin's shadow and had been faced with the choice either to *'serve that system or go to the gallows. They chose to serve that system. This does not mean that they accepted everything that happened in that system'*.¹²⁴ However, Kardelj repeated that parallel to the positive tendencies appearing in the USSR, Stalinist forces opposing them were still strong. The best way Yugoslavia could help to contain these forces was by asserting its *'good will and readiness to cooperate [with the USSR], but making it also clear to [the Soviet leadership] that we will refuse to accept uncritically the manifestations of the old thinking'*.¹²⁵ In conclusion, Kardelj, aided by Tito, defined the essence of Yugoslavia's tactics vis-à-vis normalization with the Soviets:

¹²¹ Fifth Plenum of LCY CC – Transcripts, 26 November 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/13.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Kardelj: *We must not bring ourselves into such a position in which we would destroy what we have built in our relations with the West, because then we would not be able to influence positively the course of the development of our relations with the Soviets...*

Tito: *...but would weaken our position...*

Kardelj: *...and give support to those hegemonic elements in the USSR who would say, "Yugoslavia is now separated from the West and we should now impose our conditions upon relations with it." We, on the contrary, should force them...*

Tito: *...to be the other way around...*

Kardelj: *...to force them to cooperate with us on equal terms on the basis of the policies that we carry out today'. ¹²⁶*

Kardelj's address served to reiterate the decision taken by Tito and the Executive Committee on 19 July to respond positively to the Soviet initiative. At the same time, he reminded members of the Central Committee that Yugoslavia's receptivity to the Soviets must never jeopardize its independent position.

In his closing address at the Plenum, Tito defined the postulates that were to guide Yugoslavia through the next stages of the normalization of relations with the USSR. He reminded members of the Central Committee that the 1948 rupture was not caused by ideological disagreements between the Yugoslav and the Soviet Party but because [the Soviets] *wanted to make us one of their Satellites. They used the ideological aspect to exert pressure on us by appealing to our Socialist*

¹²⁶ Ibid.

consciousness and using it to enslave us as a state'.¹²⁷ He was determined not to allow the Soviets to present the conflict with Yugoslavia as a purely ideological discord. In Tito's opinion, a hurried reestablishment of party relations, immediately after first contacts between the two Governments, would signal just that. For this reason, he insisted that the normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations should, for the time being, be limited to Government relations. Nevertheless, as Tito added, talks between the two Parties were unavoidable, at some point in the future, because the Communist parties were the leading political forces in both Yugoslavia and the USSR. However, he underlined that the subject of any such talks will not be the return of Yugoslavia back into the *'Cominform family. This is out of the question... that would only serve their purpose to enmesh us again through Party discipline... to loose our independence*'.¹²⁸ Tito expressed his opinion that the Soviets *'believe that we should join their family, their "lager"'* and that this was their ultimate goal. Having this in mind, according to him, in dealings with Moscow the Yugoslavs must make sure that [Yugoslavia] *maintained the status of an independent country with an independent foreign policy... of a country that is nobody's Satellite... It is only on this foundation that we will base normalization with the USSR*'.¹²⁹ Tito recognized the re-establishment of party relations as a trap set by the Soviets to draw Yugoslavia back into the *'lager'*. In conclusion, the Fifth Plenum approved unanimously Tito's correspondence with the Soviet leadership. It also endorsed Yugoslavia's future strategy in pursuit of normalization of relations with the Soviets, as outlined by Tito and Kardelj.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Discussions at the LCY November Plenum confirm that Tito and the Yugoslav leadership, although apprehensive of the Soviets, were, at the same time, cognisant of the prospects that the normalization with the Soviets offered. They were fully aware of the Soviets' intentions, first to distance Yugoslavia from the West and, eventually, to draw it into the '*lager*'. At the same time, several considerations encouraged them to respond positively to the Soviet initiative. Improved relations with the USSR would further diminish the threat of the Soviet and Satellite aggression. In addition, the re-establishment of economic cooperation with the Eastern Bloc could reduce Yugoslavia's dependence on Western economic aid. Moreover, Moscow's initiative offered to end Yugoslavia's excommunication and isolation from the international Communist movement. It opened the door for Yugoslavia's return to the movement, while still remaining outside the '*lager*'. Normalization with Moscow would confirm that accusations levelled by Stalin against the Yugoslav leadership in 1948 were untrue. The correspondence with the Soviet leaders so far, as well as its gestures since August, suggested to Tito and his associates that Moscow was ready to accept relations with Yugoslavia on the basis of equality. Founded on such an understanding, normalization with the USSR would represent a moral and ideological victory for Yugoslavia. Finally, normalization with the Soviets was creating a strategic opening for Yugoslavia. It could enable Belgrade to maximize its opportunities by playing one Bloc against the other. In this respect, as the discussion at the Plenum suggests, the Yugoslav leadership was also conscious

that the strength of their position vis-à-vis Moscow was founded on their special relations with the West.

The Plenum also endorsed the new Yugoslav foreign policy orientation, a neutralist position between the two Blocs. Members of the Yugoslav Central Committee fully supported Tito's assertion that *'the position that [Yugoslavia] now has, [namely] good relations with both the Soviet Union and the West, is the most beneficial for us and enables us to pursue the goals we have put before ourselves – the building of our country and Socialism'*.¹³⁰ What had appeared only as a faint possibility a year earlier, during the meeting at Kardelj's residence, on 20 October 1953, had at the Plenum acquired the form of Yugoslavia's new foreign policy strategy – equidistance from either Bloc. It was not accidental that this new orientation was outlined at the Plenum. Only a few days after the conclusion of the Plenum, Tito was scheduled to leave on his first trip to India and Burma. However, at this stage, the new policy was still far from being fully conceptualised.

The Fifth Plenum and the Yugoslav leader's subsequent trip to India and Burma came at a time when Yugoslavia had achieved its most favourable strategic position since Tito's ascension to power. The length of his absence from home, two full months, speaks by itself about the confidence with which he viewed his country's position in the international system. Relations with the West were at their zenith. Yugoslavia had just attained three of its long-term strategic goals. In addition to the signature of the Balkan Pact on 9 August, on 5 October, the final

¹³⁰ Ibid.

settlement of the Trieste dispute was successfully negotiated. On 22 November, after ten days of gruelling negotiations in Washington, the Yugoslav delegation led by Vukmanović – Tempo successfully negotiated huge US economic assistance. The US agreed to grant Yugoslavia 450,000 tons of wheat, in addition to the 400,000 tons already committed. This would eliminate Yugoslavia's wheat deficit accrued after two consecutive droughts. The US also promised help and assistance with the Yugoslav request for a loan from the Exim Bank that would liquidate its short-term debt. Furthermore, Washington promised Belgrade its support at the forthcoming Creditors Conference on Yugoslavia for the reprogramming of Yugoslavia's medium-term debt. The aid and financial assistance obtained from Washington secured crucial relief for Tito's regime. It staved off the threat of economic collapse.¹³¹ On the other hand, after initial hesitation and uncertainty surrounding Khrushchev's offer for normalization, Moscow's actions since August had confirmed that its initiative was genuine. As a result, the threat to Yugoslavia from the East was rapidly diminishing with prospects of it being eliminated altogether.

On 30 November, only three days after the Plenum, Tito departed aboard his yacht 'Galeb' on a trip to India and Burma. He returned on 5 February 1955, more than two months later. On his return voyage, Tito made a stopover in Suez where he met, for the first time, Colonel Gamaal Abdel Nasser of Egypt. The trip to India and Burma helped Tito and his associates to conceptualise Yugoslavia's aspirations

¹³¹ Author's interview with Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, 12 February 2000. Also, Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, *Revolucija...*, 211-22. Also, The Director of the Foreign Operations Administration (Stassen) to the Embassy in Yugoslavia, 23 November 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 1426-7.

towards neutralism and non-engagement. There is no doubt that the metamorphosis of Yugoslavia's position towards equidistance from either Bloc was made possible only once relations with the USSR had improved sufficiently to minimize the risk of Soviet aggression against Yugoslavia. On 7 January 1953, two months before Stalin's death, after a long meeting with Tito, the US Ambassador in Belgrade, Allen, reported that '[Tito] *had stated solemnly that [isolationism and neutralism] were abhorrent both to him and to his people. He very earnestly repeated that he wished to take this occasion to state solemnly not only that he would not, even if he could, return to the COMINFORM fold, but that also any form of neutralism or isolationism was a practical and moral impossibility for his people*'.¹³² Less than two years later, during his trip to India and Burma, Tito would publicly declare his opposition to both Blocs and Yugoslavia's adherence to non-engagement. Thus within just two years, Yugoslavia had developed a new foreign policy strategy.

Unfortunately, the limitations imposed by this thesis do not allow due attention to be given to Tito's trip to India and Burma. It was the first of the two trips that helped shape Yugoslavia's new strategic road. The second trip would take place at the same time a year later when Tito visited Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt. The visit to India and Burma was of great importance because it helped Tito realize that he was not the only one aspiring to achieve the position of equidistance from both Blocs. He would find out that there was a dormant force within the international system, represented by populous, newly liberated countries of Asia and Africa that

¹³² The Ambassador in Yugoslavia (Allen) to the Department of State, 8 January 1953; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 1333-5.

were capable and interested in following independent policies. The four rounds of talks that Tito had with the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, represented the meeting of the like-minded. The congruence of views between Tito and Nehru, born during this trip, would pave way for their meeting with Nasser in July 1956 in Brioni, and the eventual creation of the Non-aligned movement.¹³³

II.3 The Impasse

For four months following Tito's letter of 16 November no further correspondence took place between the Yugoslav and the Soviet leaderships. The process of normalization between the two countries descended into an impasse. Two factors can explain this apparent stalemate. Firstly, for two months Tito was in India and Burma, which made secret correspondence with Moscow impossible. More importantly however, during December 1954 and January 1955, the final stages of the leadership contest between Khrushchev and Malenkov had paralysed the Kremlin. Neither contender wished to expose himself to risk by making initiatives on an issue of such contentious and divisive issue, as the relations with Yugoslavia. It was a supreme irony that among the members of the Soviet Presidium, it was Khrushchev and Malenkov who were closest in the belief that the normalization with Yugoslavia was a necessity. In all encounters with the

¹³³ Collection of memoranda and transcripts of talks, related to Tito's trip to India and Burma, 30 November 1954 – 5 February 1955; From the AJBT and SMIP Archive collections, prepared by the author for his paper '*Meeting of the Like-minded: Tito's First Trip to India and Burma, 30 November 1954 – 5 February 1955*', delivered at the Budapest Conference, 30 October – 2 November 2003.

Yugoslavs, Malenkov had come across as the most willing among the Soviet leaders to support the improvement of relations between the two countries.¹³⁴

Despite the lack of new initiatives during these months, Moscow was, at the same time, careful not to suspend nor jeopardise the level of Yugoslav-Soviet normalization already achieved. On 5 January 1955, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union signed a trade agreement for 1955, worth US\$ 20 million. Although of modest volume, it was nevertheless five times larger than the trade exchange of the previous year. However, the trade talks had lasted for well over a month and were suspended on several occasions due to Soviet obstruction, suggesting Moscow's reduced willingness to cooperate.¹³⁵ During the trade negotiations, Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership met Mijalko Todorović-Plavi, the Head of the Yugoslav delegation and a member of the Yugoslav Central Committee on two occasions. He was the first member of the top Yugoslav leadership to have been met by Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders since the start of the process of normalization. Although the result of the already achieved improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations, both encounters were however, highly confrontational and reflected Kremlin's new inflexibility towards Yugoslavia.

In the beginning of December, through its Ambassador in Moscow, the Government of the People's Republic of China initiated the establishment of diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia. At the time of the Communist victory in China,

¹³⁴ Fifth Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcripts, 26 November 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/13. Also, Memorandum of conversations, between M. Todorović – Plavi and N.S. Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership, 29 and 30 December 1954; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1954, I - 5 - v.

¹³⁵ The Deputy Foreign Secretary (Mićunović) to the Foreign Secretary (Popović), aboard 'Galeb', 2 January 1955; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1955, I - 5 - v.

on 1 October 1949, Yugoslavia had already been excommunicated from the Communist movement and diplomatic relations between the two countries had never been established. Within weeks after the Chinese Ambassador's initiative in December 1954, the two Governments exchanged statements on 14 December 1954 and 2 January 1955 formally establishing diplomatic relations.¹³⁶ The move by the Chinese Government could not have come without Moscow's consent. It was not a coincidence that the first contact between China and Yugoslavia had been established through the Chinese Ambassador in Moscow. As shown, despite an apparent impasse between November 1954 and February 1955, the process of Yugoslav-Soviet normalization was never fully suspended.

During the months of the impasse, beside the lack of new initiatives the Soviet leaders persistently demonstrated inflexibility in their contacts with the Yugoslavs and eagerness to confront them ideologically. The two meetings between Todorović, Vidić, and the Soviet leadership in December 1954 reveal the important role that relations with Yugoslavia played in the leadership contest in the Kremlin. The meetings also illustrate the extent of Khrushchev's political mimicry in his campaign against Malenkov. Discussions during both meetings were highly charged and heated. The first meeting was organised at a private dinner at Ambassador Vidić's residence on 26 December 1954. On the Soviet side, Khrushchev, Malenkov, Mikoyan, and Saburov were present. According to Todorović and Vidić's report, as soon as the dinner had begun, Khrushchev posed the question of the establishment of Yugoslav-Soviet party relations in a

¹³⁶ D. Bekić, *Jugoslavija u hladnom ratu: Odnosi sa velikim silama, 1949 - 1955* [Yugoslavia In the Cold War: Relations With Big Powers, 1949 – 1955], (Zagreb: Globus, 1988), 670.

confrontational manner.¹³⁷ Todorović replied that, for the time being, the normalization should be limited to state relations because of the mistrust between the two leaderships, accrued after 1948. When Todorović mentioned the need for a dialogue with the Social-Democratic parties, Khrushchev interrupted calling those parties '*bourgeois lackeys*'. He was particularly antagonistic towards the British Labour party calling Bevin and Atlee '*royal Socialists waiting for knighthoods*'.¹³⁸ When Todorović attacked the destructive role of the COMINFORM, Malenkov reminded him that Yugoslavia had played a prominent role in establishing the organisation. Khrushchev himself strongly opposed any notion of winding down the '*only organisation of the Socialist forces*'. Todorović responded that many people in the West, although against Capitalism, were equally opposed to Stalin's Socialism. At this point, according to the report, Khrushchev reacted in an extremely angry manner. He shouted that Stalinism did not exist, that Stalin had been lazy, but that he had lived and died as a true Communist. The discussion at this point became extremely heated and Malenkov assisted Todorović in calming it down.

After a short digression into European issues, Khrushchev once again returned to Yugoslav-Soviet relations. He declared that, as he saw it, there were only two paths for the two countries to follow. They would either live as good neighbours or as brothers, ready to sacrifice themselves for each other or for the common cause. Todorović responded that it was better to live like a good neighbour than a bad brother. He then added that the Yugoslavs did not recognise the monopoly of any

¹³⁷ Memorandum of conversation, Mijalko Todorović-Plavi and Dobrivoje Vidić with the Soviet leaders in Moscow (the first dinner, 26 December), 27 December 1954; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1954, I - 5 – v.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

party to determine what the common goal for the Socialist countries was, or how it should be achieved. According to the report, a very unpleasant discussion followed during which Khrushchev repeated '*old, Cominform type argumentation*'.¹³⁹ During this part of the discussion, Khrushchev, Malenkov, and Saburov lit cigarettes, remarking wryly that they had not smoked since the war. The dinner ended in an atmosphere that was less than cordial.

The Soviet leaders met Todorović and Vidić again on 30 December, at Molotov's dacha '*Spyridonovka*'. On this occasion the Soviet side included Khrushchev, Malenkov, Molotov, Mikoyan, and Saburov - nearly half of the Soviet Party Presidium. According to Todorović and Vidić's report, the Soviets started the conversations by commented sarcastically on Kardelj's views about '*democratic Socialism*', outlined during his recent speech in Sarajevo.¹⁴⁰ Khrushchev insisted that Kardelj was simply inventing different *Socialisms* and that the term '*democratic Socialism*' was a favourite of Western Socialists. In his view, Kardelj was using such terminology only to please the Americans. Khrushchev then asserted that the core issue of Yugoslav-Soviet relations was the re-establishment of party relations. He informed Todorović and Vidić that the Soviet Party Presidium had met after their first meeting to assess what had been discussed and had concluded that Todorović's explanations were '*so, so*'.¹⁴¹ In fact, as Khrushchev had put it, the Presidium was not sure anymore '*who the Yugoslavs wish to be with*'. He then stated openly that the main Soviet goal was to draw Yugoslavia back into the

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Memorandum of conversation, Mijalko Todorović and Dobrivoje Vidić with the Soviet leaders in Moscow (the second dinner, 30 December), 31 December 1954; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1954, I - 5 - v.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

Socialist camp, even to the COMINFORM – *'if not right away then at a later date'*.¹⁴² Khrushchev went further and asserted that the COMINFORM had played a positive role during the conflict with Yugoslavia because it preserved the unity of the Communist movement at the time when the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict threatened to destroy it. He declared that the Soviet interest in Yugoslavia was motivated

[by] the need for a monolithic and strong camp; [by] the extraordinarily favourable implication that the return of Yugoslavia back into the fold would have on the international proletarian movement; [by Yugoslavia's] thirty divisions of good soldiers; and [by] benefits [to the Socialist camp] arising from exploiting Yugoslavia's influence on the Southeastern Europe and Europe in general'.¹⁴³

The brutal crudeness of Khrushchev's assertions shocked Yugoslavs. Todorović's response that future relations between the two countries could not be based on the *'old type of relations'* was met with loud Soviet opposition, in particular from Khrushchev. He expressed Soviet readiness to address questions related to the 1948 conflict. Khrushchev placed all blame on Beria who, he argued, had skilfully deceived an already aged Stalin. Khrushchev admitted that within this context, given his own participation in the leadership at that time, he and his colleagues felt guilty for the 1948 schism and could thus understand why Yugoslavs still did not trust them. He assured Todorović that when the time came for the settling of accounts with Beria *[the Soviet leadership's] hand did not quiver'*.¹⁴⁴ Khrushchev continued that the main problem in Yugoslav-Soviet relations were not different paths to Socialism. He insisted that different paths already existed in China and

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

Poland and this did not present a problem in their relations with the USSR. According to Khrushchev, the main question before the Soviet leadership was whether they could reach an agreement with the Yugoslavs on their return to the '*Socialist camp*'. He underlined that the Soviet leadership had concluded from the conversations with Todorović so far that the answer to this question of crucial importance to the '*unity of the Socialist camp*' was, for the moment, inconclusive. The Soviet leadership, Khrushchev added, would continue its efforts to achieve the goal of bringing Yugoslavia back into the '*lager*' and would wait patiently until there would be a meeting of minds between the two leaderships.¹⁴⁵ According to the Todorović and Vidić's report, much like the first dinner, the second one ended in an equally subdued tone.

The course of the two meetings between the Soviet leadership and Todorović and Vidić suggests several conclusions. Khrushchev, as the leading speaker among the Soviets, had conducted the meetings in a highly confrontational manner. Such behaviour was apparently in service of his approaching showdown with Malenkov. Normalization with Yugoslavia, largely Khrushchev's brainchild, was now a liability for him. He thus had to disengage himself temporarily from this policy. This was the price for securing support of the conservative members of the Presidium, namely Molotov, Kaganovich, Suslov, and Voroshilov against Malenkov. All four of these men were known opponents of improvement of relations with Yugoslavia. In this context, it is highly possible that Khrushchev had staged meetings with Todorović to reassure the conservatives in the Presidium that he would never give in to the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

Yugoslavs. The dinners provided Khrushchev with the pulpit to demonstrate his ideological firmness against Tito. This explains why both meetings were attended by almost half of the Presidium. They were his audience and his witnesses.

The Yugoslav-Soviet meetings in December also suggest that the Soviet leadership had by that time raised expectations of what it wished to achieve from the normalization with Yugoslavia. As elaborated in Chapter I, the Soviet letter of 31 May 1954 informing '*fraternal parties*' of the forthcoming Soviet initiative insisted that the sole aim of normalization with the Yugoslavs was to prevent Yugoslavia from sliding into a closer alliance with the West. Five months later, an internal Soviet Foreign Ministry report, dated 21 October 1954, concluded that Yugoslav behaviour in the period between July and October confirmed that '*the Soviet Union's policy towards Yugoslavia has produced serious positive results*'. According to the report, this opened the door for '*measures for further development of Soviet-Yugoslav relations that would force the Yugoslav government to come closer to the USSR*'.¹⁴⁶ In this context, Khrushchev's brutal admission during the dinner on 30 December that the main Soviet goal was to get Yugoslavia back in the '*camp*' confirms that within several months after the initiation of normalization with Yugoslavia and once Tito had positively responded to it, the Soviet leadership began to see the normalization as a tool to achieve Yugoslavia's return to the '*lager*'.

¹⁴⁶ Edemskii, A, *The Turn in the Soviet-Yugoslav Relations, 1953-1955*, in the Cold War International History Project Bulletin, Issue 10, March 1998, 138.

Belgrade's reaction to the behaviour of the Soviet leaders during the two meetings with Todorović was restrained. This was not merely because Tito was at the time away in India and Burma. Yugoslav documents confirm that Tito was informed promptly about both dinners, as indeed about any other developments relating to Yugoslav-Soviet relations.¹⁴⁷ The Yugoslav leadership was aware that normalization would not be a smooth process. They understood this to be the result of the lack of agreement in the Soviet Presidium regarding policies towards Yugoslavia but also as the result of the ongoing power struggle in the Kremlin. Tito and his associates were convinced that internal tensions within the Soviet leadership would inevitably be reflected on relations with Yugoslavia.¹⁴⁸

By the end of January 1955 however, Belgrade was becoming increasingly apprehensive about the power struggle that was developing in the Kremlin. On 1 February, DSIP requested from Vidić an urgent appraisal of developments in Moscow. Belgrade's anxiety was triggered by, as it saw it, signs of discontinuity in the Soviet foreign and domestic policies compared to the positive trends during the several months before November 1954. To the Yugoslav leadership, this suggested that 'o/d', Stalinist forces might be prevailing in the Soviet leadership battle.¹⁴⁹ Belgrade's main concern was that the victory of the hard-liners in Kremlin could spell an end to the normalization of the Yugoslav-Soviet relations. The Yugoslav leadership had correctly anticipated an imminent showdown within the

¹⁴⁷ V. Mićunović to Tito on board 'Galeb', 31 December 1954 (report on the first dinner of 26 December) and 2 January 1955 (report on the second dinner of 30 December and conclusion of Yugoslav-Soviet trade talks); AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1954, I - 5 - v.

¹⁴⁸ Fifth Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcripts, 26 November 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/13.

¹⁴⁹ DSIP to the Ambassador in Moscow (Vidić), 1 February 1955; SMIP, PA, 1955, Sovjetski Savez F62/2 – 41282.

Soviet leadership. Indeed, on the last day of the CPSU CC Plenum on 31 January 1955, Khrushchev executed the coup against Malenkov.¹⁵⁰ The Plenum relieved Malenkov of the post of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers. The resolution of the Malenkov-Khrushchev confrontation became public on 8 February 1955 when Malenkov formally resigned at the session of the Supreme Soviet.¹⁵¹

The Yugoslav leadership saw Malenkov's political demise as proof that the conservative wing of the Presidium had won.¹⁵² At this time, Khrushchev was still an unknown for the Yugoslav leadership. Tito and Kardelj's statements at the Fifth Plenum reveal that the Yugoslav leadership regarded Khrushchev as a member of a conservative group within the Soviet leadership.¹⁵³ Khrushchev's behaviour during meetings with Todorović and Vidić only confirmed this assessment.¹⁵⁴ Belgrade saw Malenkov as more sympathetic to the form of relations that the Yugoslavs sought to achieve with the Soviets.¹⁵⁵ This may very well have been an additional reason behind Tito's insistence, in his letter of 16 November, that the first meeting between Yugoslav and Soviet leaders should be between the two heads of governments; at the time, Malenkov was the President of the Council of Ministers of the USSR.

¹⁵⁰ Plenum of the CPSU CC, 25-31 January 1955 - Transcript of the 31 January (ninth) session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Полиг 6221, Дело 127 (microfilm). Also, *Plenum Transcripts, 1955-1957: Central Committee Plenum of the CPSU, Ninth Session, Morning, 31 January 1955*, in the Cold War International History Project Bulletin, Issue 10, March 1998, 34-7.

¹⁵¹ PRAVDA, 9 February 1955, 1-4.

¹⁵² Memorandum of conversation, V. Mićunović – the British Ambassador in Belgrade (Sir Frank Roberts), the US Ambassador (James Riddleberger), and the French Chargé (Burrin des Roziers), 10 February 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F II / Jug., Zabeleške I – 48.

¹⁵³ Fifth Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcripts, 26 November 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/13.

¹⁵⁴ Memorandum of conversations, Mijalko Todorović and Dobrivoje Vidić with the Soviet leaders in Moscow (26 and 30 December 1954), 27 and 31 December 1954; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1954, I - 5 - v.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

At the session of the Supreme Soviet on 8 February, which relieved Malenkov of his posts, Molotov gave a speech on Soviet foreign policy. Its tone confirmed Yugoslav fears that Malenkov's resignation signalled a victory for the conservatives in the Presidium. Speaking of relations with Yugoslavia, Molotov underlined that the Soviet Union had done everything possible to improve them and that it was now Yugoslavia's turn to demonstrate the initiative. The Soviet Foreign Minister added that it was obvious that in recent years Yugoslavia had strayed from the course it pursued in the first few years after the Second World War.¹⁵⁶ This indicated to Belgrade that Moscow had resumed the habit of passing judgment on the degree of Yugoslavia's 'loyalty' to Marxism-Leninism. Molotov's statement also suggested to the Yugoslavs that the Soviets wished the responsibility for the 1948 rupture to be shared equally and expected the Yugoslav leadership to recant its mistakes in 1948.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, during the same session of the Supreme Soviet, Molotov told Vittorio Vidali, the Trieste Communist Party Secretary that before relations between the two countries could improve, both the USSR and Yugoslavia have to undergo 'self-criticism'.¹⁵⁸ In their first response to Khrushchev's letter, in August 1954, the Yugoslav leadership had already firmly rejected any notion of self-criticism, which to them would be tantamount to accepting shared responsibility for the 1948 conflict. Belgrade was alarmed by Molotov's views on

¹⁵⁶ PRAVDA, 9 February 1955, 2-4. Also, the report from the Yugoslav Ambassador in Moscow (Vidić), 9 February 1955; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II-39.

¹⁵⁷ BORBA, 10 February 1955, 3.

¹⁵⁸ Giuseppe Boffa *Povijest Sovjetskog saveza* [The History of the Soviet Union], Vol. II, *Od domovinskog rata do položaja druge velesile: Staljin i Hruščov, 1941-1964* [From the Great Patriotic War to the Position of the Second Superpower: Stalin and Khrushchev, 1941-1964] (Opatija: Otokar Keršovani, 1985), 370.

Yugoslav-Soviet relations; Khrushchev's victory was seen as a discouraging turn of events.¹⁵⁹

The official Yugoslav response to changes in Moscow had to await Tito's return from Asia. The Yugoslav leader approached this latest and precarious turn in Yugoslav-Soviet relations with the utmost care. In one of his first public speeches upon his return from Asia, at a rally in Belgrade on 12 February, Tito stressed that the changes in Moscow need not be for the worse. He then reproached the West for being partly responsible for Malenkov's defeat. According to Tito, the West's uncompromising policies towards Moscow played into the hands of the conservatives in the Soviet leadership.¹⁶⁰ Tito's statements acknowledged that the change in Moscow could mark a shift in Soviet foreign policy towards a more inflexible, conservative position. At the same time, however, by accusing the West of a lack of responsiveness to the post-Stalin leadership, Tito offered a hand to the victorious Khrushchev. Belgrade's conciliatory approach to Khrushchev's victory against Malenkov was dictated by Yugoslavia's desire to preserve the process of Yugoslav-Soviet normalization

By the beginning of March Tito had decided to respond more forcibly to Molotov's speech of 8 February and openly challenge the Soviet leadership. On the one hand, this was the result of Belgrade's frustration with the complete absence of new initiatives from Moscow. It was an attempt by the Yugoslav leadership to

¹⁵⁹ Memorandum of conversation, V. Mićunović – the British Ambassador in Belgrade (Sir Frank Roberts), the US Ambassador (James Riddleberger), and the French Chargé (Burin des Rozières), 10 February 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F II / Jug., Zabeleške I – 48. Also, Despatch From the Embassy in Yugoslavia to the Department of State, 21 February 1955; FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XXVI, 615-22.

¹⁶⁰ BORBA, 13 February 1955, 1.

provoke the Soviets into resuming the course of normalization. On 7 March, in a foreign policy exposé before the Federal Assembly, Tito sharply criticized tendencies '*by some*' in the USSR and the Satellites to convince their party and citizens '*of a nonsense*' that Yugoslavia, having now realized its delusions of 1948, was making efforts to correct itself. This, according to Tito, raised doubts in Yugoslavia '*about the sincerity of statements made in direct contacts by the most responsible persons in those countries concerning the unjust accusations made against our country in 1948*'. Tito then directly accused Molotov as one of those responsible for such '*efforts, which threatened to stop the normalization halfway*'. He also openly declared Soviet Foreign Minister's speech of 8 February as '*not corresponding to the truth*'.¹⁶¹ Tito's reference to '*statements made in direct contact*' was a reminder to Khrushchev of their secret correspondence in 1954. Tito thus threatened to suspend normalization should Soviet leaders renege on their conciliatory positions taken in the correspondence. The uncharacteristic hostility and openness of Tito's rebuttal of Molotov was surprising. However, the absence of any further polemical debate from Belgrade confirms that Tito's attack was a calculated move designed to put normalization back on track and not to endanger it. By naming Molotov, Tito avoided intimidating the new leader - Khrushchev. On the other hand, by attacking Molotov Tito hoped to reach to those in the Kremlin who still believed in normalization with Yugoslavia. Tito was appealing to Khrushchev, the signatory of the letters in 1954 to continue the process.

¹⁶¹ BORBA, 8 March 1955, 1-3. Also, Stephen Clissold (Ed.), *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union 1939-1973: A Documentary Survey* (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975), 249.

Tito was soon proven correct in his assessment of the balance of power in the Soviet Presidium. On 10 March, in an article '*Speech by President Tito at a session of the Yugoslav Parliament*', *PRAVDA* published excerpts from Tito's speech. In an unprecedented gesture, the official Soviet Party organ had published without commentary a speech of a foreign statesman, which was critical of a member of the highest Soviet leadership.¹⁶² Moreover, it was a statement by Tito, hitherto regarded the ideological archenemy. Two days later, *PRAVDA* again returned to Tito's speech in a surprisingly conciliatory tone.¹⁶³ Moscow's reaction to Tito's criticism confirmed that Molotov's views were not representative of the majority opinion in the Soviet leadership. Furthermore, *PRAVDA*'s articles confirmed that the apparent winner in the leadership battle in the Kremlin, Khrushchev, was opposed to Molotov. The Soviet Foreign Minister had been publicly humiliated. Tito's accusations in the 7 March speech provided Khrushchev with the opportunity to fire the first salvo in his confrontation with Molotov, his ally in the battle against Malenkov. Once again, the issue of relations with Yugoslavia became the tool for the settling of accounts in the Kremlin. Moscow's reaction to Tito's speech also reveals that the new round of confrontation in the Kremlin, this time between Khrushchev and Molotov, had started barely a month after the resolution of the previous clash between Khrushchev and Malenkov. This confirms the extraordinary speed with which Khrushchev moved to solidify his control of the Presidium.

¹⁶² *PRAVDA*, 10 March 1955, 4.

¹⁶³ Stephen Clissold (Ed.), *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union...*, 250.

CHAPTER III

COMRADESHIP

1955 (March) - **1956** (May)

After months of impasse, in March 1955 the process of Yugoslav-Soviet normalization was suddenly reactivated. In a dramatic exchange of letters over the next six weeks, Tito and Khrushchev agreed to meet in Belgrade at the end of May. Khrushchev's historic visit to Yugoslavia from 26 May till 2 June 1955 shocked the world. The visit ended with the signing of the so-called '*Belgrade Declaration*'. It was a unique document. It outlined not only the guidelines for future Yugoslav-Soviet relations but also formulated principles of relations between small countries and the Superpowers, and between Socialist countries and the Soviet Union. Khrushchev's visit marked the end to the seven-year confrontation between the Soviet Bloc and Yugoslavia. It also signalled an end to Yugoslavia's excommunication from the international Communist movement; Yugoslavia, however, resolutely refused to return back into the Soviet '*camp*'.

The Yugoslav-Soviet summit in Belgrade normalized relations between the two Governments. The talks between the two delegations confirmed a high degree of agreement on international issues. However, the discussions also revealed the unbridgeable ideological chasm between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. As a result, party contacts between the CPSU and the LCY were not re-established. The experience of the visit and the policy of normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations, articulated at the Plenum of the CPSU CC in July, had a profound impact on developments in the Soviet Union, on liberalization in the Soviet Bloc, and on relations within the international Communist movement. From July, the improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations acquired a breathtaking momentum. All aspects of relations between the two countries - economic, political, and cultural - experienced a transformation that would have been unthinkable only six months before. By the beginning of 1956, Yugoslav-Soviet relationship entered a rapprochement. Khrushchev's '*secret speech*' at the end of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in February 1956 removed the last remaining impediment to the restoration of relations between the two countries, namely the final Soviet admission of responsibility for the 1948 rupture and of Stalin's role. The speech inaugurated a period of comradeship between the two countries and paved the way for the re-establishment of relations between the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

III.1 Khrushchev's Visit to Yugoslavia

The pro-conservative shift in the Kremlin at the end of 1954, which enabled Khrushchev to eliminate Malenkov as a leadership contender had also produced an impasse in the Yugoslav-Soviet normalization process. However, Khrushchev's tactical alliance with Molotov and other hardliners proved purely temporary. Within three weeks of Malenkov's removal, the Soviet leadership initiated a continuation of the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia. On 23 February 1955, the Presidium of the CPSU sent its Resolution as a letter to *'fraternal parties'* informing them of its decision to continue the dialogue with Belgrade.¹ The letter underlined that *'the proclivity of the Yugoslav leaders to sit on two stools, their proclaimed adherence to the so-called independent position between two "lagers" can only be explained... by the distancing of the LCY leaders from Marxism-Leninism.'* The Presidium then concluded that *'in our relations with the Yugoslav leaders we must exercise necessary caution and vigilance.'*² This ideological anathema served as a warning to the Satellites and other members of the Communist movement not to engage in renewing relations with Yugoslavia on their own. It made clear that only Moscow could determine the pace and form of relations with Yugoslavia. To justify its decision to resume contacts with Yugoslavia, Moscow stressed that *'in the*

¹ Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU CC), 4-12 July 1955, Report of the First Secretary, N.S. Khrushchev on the results of the Soviet-Yugoslav talks, Transcript of the 9 July 1955, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6225, Дело 143. Also, Ibid, Molotov's address, Transcript of 9 July 1955, evening session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 158.

² Plenum of the CPSU CC, 4-12 July 1955, Transcript of the 9 July, evening session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 158, 49.

future, we need to patiently and steadily continue to work on breaking Yugoslavia away from the Imperialist camp or at least to weaken Yugoslavia's ties with that camp'.³ It did not, however, specify the forms of future contacts with the Yugoslavs. This reveals that there was still disagreement within the Presidium on the course of the future action. The letter reiterated the imperative goal of normalization of relations with Yugoslavia – the weakening of Belgrade's ties with the West. It did not, however, suggest the more ambitious goal of returning Yugoslavia to the '*Socialist camp*'. The Presidium's letter of 23 February was drafted with Molotov's consent.⁴ This may account for its ambiguity and lack of any hint of a possible meeting between the Yugoslav and the Soviet leaderships.

On 17 March 1955, the Soviet leadership sent a letter to Tito, the first since September 1954.⁵ Writing as if no time had elapsed since their last communication, Khrushchev replied to Tito's proposal of 16 November for the meeting of the highest representatives of two Governments. He declared the Soviet leadership's readiness for such a meeting and asked Tito to propose the date and the venue.⁶ The uncharacteristic brevity of the letter and the fact that it addressed only one issue, the meeting at the highest level, suggested Moscow's eagerness for the summit to happen as soon as possible. It represented a stark contrast to the non-committal character of the Presidium's letter to the '*fraternal parties*' of 23 February, less than a month earlier. It illustrates Khrushchev's resolve and cunning

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The letter from the CPSU CC, signed by Khrushchev, to the Executive Committee of the LCY CC, addressed to Tito, 17 March 1955; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1955, I - 5 – v.

⁶ Ibid.

and is evidence that he had outmanoeuvred Molotov in stages. Determined to continue normalization with Yugoslavia and yet still in need of Molotov's consent in the first weeks after Malenkov's removal, Khrushchev pushed for the resolution of 23 February. In the following weeks, as his position vis-à-vis Molotov strengthened, Khrushchev felt sufficiently secure to resume the dialogue with Tito. His letter to Tito of 17 March proposing a meeting suggests that after the removal of Malenkov, Khrushchev had succeeded in further enhancing his leading position within the Presidium with startling speed.

The exchange of letters that ensued between the Yugoslav and Soviet leaderships following Khrushchev's letter of 17 March resulted, within only two months, in the Soviet leader's historic trip to Belgrade. On 16 April, Tito replied to Khrushchev.⁷ In a very short letter, Tito proposed that the Yugoslav-Soviet meeting take place between 10 and 17 May, *'on the Danube, on the ship, or, if you are in accordance, in Belgrade.'* Tito underlined that the meeting should be open and in public and have the character of a meeting of heads of Governments. He also proposed that a declaration or *'something similar'* be issued at the end of these talks. Tito then informed the Soviets that, as the President of the Republic, he would head the Yugoslav delegation and expected the same level of representation from the Soviet side.⁸ Tito's letter of 16 April reveals that Tito's agreement to meet Soviet leaders in the immediate future was conditional. He had ruled out Moscow as the venue for the meeting. Tito did not want the meeting to look as if he was asking Moscow for

⁷ Letter from the EC of the LCY CC, signed by Tito, to the CPSU CC, addressed Khrushchev, 16 April 1955; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1955, I - 5 – v.

⁸ Ibid.

forgiveness and returning to its embrace. He was not about to lose the ideological victory against the Soviets that now looked so near. Tito's insistence on the state character of the meeting confirmed his determination not to engage in party normalization. The '*open and public*' character of the talks that he also set as a condition was to ensure that the meeting did not undermine Yugoslavia's relations with the West.

Within three weeks, in a letter of 6 May, Khrushchev confirmed to Tito that the Soviet delegation would be '*authorised to discuss any question*', meaning that it would be of the highest level.⁹ Khrushchev confirmed that he would personally be heading the Soviet delegation, which would include also Nikolai Bulganin, the new President of the Council of Minister. However, Khrushchev used the opportunity to insist that the interest of the '*international proletarian movement*' demanded that the '*two parties urgently achieve mutual understanding*.'¹⁰ Khrushchev accepted Belgrade as the venue of the meeting and suggested 23 May as the date for the beginning of the visit; he did not specify the end date though. Khrushchev further accepted Tito's proposal that the meeting should be open and public and that a declaration should be issued at the end of talks.¹¹ Khrushchev's reply, in particular his agreement to come to Belgrade, which was only one of Tito's proposals, confirms that by this time Molotov was already unable to obstruct Khrushchev's

⁹ The letter from the CPSU CC, signed by Khrushchev, to the Executive Committee of the LCY CC, addressed to Tito, 6 May 1955; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-54.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

actions towards Yugoslavia.¹² Khrushchev's letter of 6 May also demonstrates his and the Soviet leadership's determination to pressure the Yugoslavs into accepting the re-establishment of party relations.

Khrushchev's historic visit to Yugoslavia was arranged with bewildering haste. The official press release, issued simultaneously in Moscow and Belgrade on 14 May, named members of both delegations but only stated that the meeting would take place in Belgrade in the end of May.¹³ The duration of the visit and the agenda of the meeting were only fixed by Mićunović and the Soviet Ambassador, Volkov, on 20 May - less than a week before Khrushchev's scheduled arrival.¹⁴ The organisational aspects of the visit were determined at the very last moment not because of disagreements between the two sides. On the contrary, both sides were extremely flexible and eager. It was simply because the time span between the agreement to hold the meeting and the scheduled date was extremely short. On the one hand, the haste with which the Soviets arranged the meeting with Tito was a result of the consolidation of Khrushchev's victory in the leadership contest. After months of tactical delay imposed by his confrontation with Malenkov, Khrushchev felt free to pursue the improvement of relations with Yugoslavia. He genuinely and deeply believed it to be one of the priorities of Soviet foreign

¹² Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC CPSU), 4-12 July 1955, Molotov's address, Transcript of the 9 July (evening) session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 158, 20-56.

¹³ Official press release on the forthcoming visit of the delegation from the USSR to Yugoslavia, 14 May 1955; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1955, I - 5 - v.

¹⁴ Memorandum of conversation between V. Mićunović and the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade (Volkov), 20 May 1955; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1955, I - 5 - v / 490.

policy.¹⁵ On the other hand, the haste was also the result of Moscow's wish for Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation to precede the talks on strategic cooperation between Yugoslavia and the three Western powers, scheduled for the end of June in Belgrade. An additional reason for the Soviet hurry to have the visit as soon as possible was the 'Big Four' summit due to be held in Geneva between 18 and 22 July. Khrushchev always believed that the conflict with Yugoslavia had inflicted irreparable damage to the Soviet prestige in the world.¹⁶ However, with the conflict with Yugoslavia resolved and the Austrian Treaty signed, the Soviet delegation would arrive at the Geneva summit with its image greatly enhanced. Reconciliation with Yugoslavia would also add to the personal prestige of Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, the new Soviet leader who was stepping on the global stage for the first time. Indeed, the Austrian Treaty was signed on the eve of the Belgrade meeting, on 15 May. From their side, the Yugoslavs were happy to have Khrushchev's visit sooner rather than later. After the experience of the impasse at the end of 1954 and weary of possible similar future tremors in the Kremlin, the Yugoslav leadership was eager not to miss any opportunity for a real improvement of relations with the Soviets. It believed that a meeting with top Soviet leaders would ensure the continuity of the Yugoslav-Soviet normalization of relations.¹⁷

At the same time, the Yugoslav leadership was determined not to allow the Soviets to use Khrushchev's visit to disrupt Yugoslavia's relations with the West and for the meeting to be interpreted as Yugoslavia's return to the '*lager*'. On 13 May, one day

¹⁵ Н. С. Хрущев, *Воспоминания...*, Кн. 3, 146-52.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Fifth Plenum of LCY CC – Transcripts, 26 November 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/13.

before the official announcement, K. Popović informed the Ambassadors of the US, Britain, France, Greece, and Turkey of Khrushchev's forthcoming visit. At the same time he asked them to do everything possible to discourage comments in the media that the Yugoslav-Soviet meeting in Belgrade signalled Yugoslavia's return to Moscow's orbit.¹⁸ Yugoslav concerns about the interpretations of Khrushchev's visit increased dramatically when on 14 May, on the same day when Khrushchev's visit was officially announced in Moscow and in Belgrade, representatives of the Soviet Union and its Satellites formally signed in Warsaw the '*Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Aid*', the so called Warsaw Pact. Tito reacted swiftly to reassert Yugoslavia's opposition to Blocs and to reaffirm its independent position in the forthcoming talks with the Soviets. At a rally in Pula on 15 May, a day after the formation of the Warsaw Pact, Tito criticised the creation of another Bloc in Europe and emphasized that

*[Yugoslavia] would not join a Bloc of any kind... different policies should be pursued, not the policies of Blocs or the policies of ideological division of the world...In preparing for this meeting [with Khrushchev] we have made it clear [to the Soviets] ... that we want to talk on the basis of equality, that we want to talk as an independent country, that we wish to remain independent in future, as we are today, that we do not wish anyone to interfere in our own affairs... We will confer [during Khrushchev's visit] in front of the whole world... we have no intention of secretly manoeuvring or plotting against anyone...'*¹⁹

On 13 May, a meeting of the Executive Committee of the LCY CC was held in Belgrade. Kardelj chaired the meeting because Tito was on a state visit in France. Most of the members of Yugoslavia's highest leadership were informed for the first

¹⁸ Memorandum of conversation between K. Popović and the Ambassadors of US, Britain, France, Greece, and Turkey, 13 May 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F II / SAD, Zab. – 229.

¹⁹ BORBA, 16 May 1955, 1-2.

time about Khrushchev's visit at this meeting.²⁰ The fact that Yugoslavia's top leadership learned of Khrushchev's visit only hours before the Western Ambassadors were informed is evidence of Tito's absolute monopoly on decisions regarding relations with the Soviet Union. At the meeting, Kardelj summarised Tito's understanding of Soviet motives behind the visit. He stipulated that *'by coming to Belgrade with such [senior] line-up, the Russian goal is to exert the strongest possible political and ideological influence on us... It is important that we will not give them any concessions with regard to the COMINFORM structure nor with regard to the policy of confrontation between the Blocs'*.²¹ Kardelj's interpretation confirms that the Yugoslavs were under no illusions about Soviet intentions but were determined to hold their independent position.

Khrushchev and the Soviet delegation landed at Zemun airport in Belgrade on 26 May 1955 at 5 p.m. Beside Nikolai A. Bulganin, the President of the Council of Ministers and the nominal head of the Soviet delegation and Khrushchev, the delegation also included Anastas I. Mikoyan, the Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and member of the CPSU Presidium, Dimitri T. Shepilov, member of the CPSU CC and the Chief Editor of PRAVDA, and Andrey A. Gromyko, the First Deputy Foreign Minister. The Soviets were greeted by Tito, the highest Yugoslav leadership, and the diplomatic corps. The sensational arrival of the Soviets in Belgrade was also watched by hundreds of foreign correspondents. It was indeed a world sensation: a manifestation of a very rare occurrence – the humbling of the

²⁰ Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Council, LCY CC, 13 May 1955; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/64.

²¹ Ibid.

Superpower by a small country. Again, symbolism played a very important part in the communication between Tito and Khrushchev. To emphasize the importance of the party relations, Khrushchev, who was only a Party Secretary, stood next to Bulganin, the head of the Soviet Government, during the ceremoni^{al} greeting reserved for visiting heads of Government. From his side, to underline that this was strictly a state visit, Tito greeted the Soviet delegation in his Marshal's uniform.²²

Khrushchev was also the one who, on behalf of the Soviet delegation, went to the microphones and read the speech. He began by reminding those present of the strong ties that exist between peoples of Yugoslavia and the USSR, and in particular of bonds forged between them during the common struggle against the Fascist aggressors.²³ This opening statement served to underline that these deep bonds were stronger than any '*misunderstandings*'. He then continued that after a period of excellent relations immediately after the Second World War, relations between the two countries were '*later spoiled. We sincerely regret for what happened and resolutely reject everything that was accumulated in that period.*' Without naming the year or calling it 'the rupture', he attributed responsibility for the 1948 break-up to Beria, Abakumov and other '*unmasked enemies of the people*'. Khrushchev expressed the belief that this period between the two countries was behind them and promised that '*from our side, we are ready to do whatever is necessary to remove all obstacles to full normalization of relations between our*

²² V. Dedijer, *Novi Prilozi...*, 564-7; Also, Darko Bekić *Jugoslavija u hladnom ratu: Odnosi sa velikim silama 1949-1955* [Yugoslavia In the Cold War: Relations With the Big Powers 1949-1955], (Zagreb: Globus, 1988), 707.

²³ Transcript of the speech by N.S. Khrushchev at the Belgrade airport, 26 May 1955; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1955, I - 5 - v.

states and to further strengthening of friendly relations between our peoples'. Although pinning the blame on Beria, these statements represented the closest that the Soviets could come to an apology for the 1948 conflict. Khrushchev then pledged that Yugoslav-Soviet relations in future would be based '*on principles of peaceful co-existence, equality between the states, non-interference and respect of sovereignty and national self-determination*'.²⁴ By listing these principles Khrushchev hoped to reassure Tito. He also acknowledged Yugoslavia's independent role and expressed Soviet understanding for Yugoslavia's desire to develop relations with both the East and the West. At the end of his speech however, Khrushchev insisted on the need for the re-establishment of party relations between the CPSU and the LCY. He reminded the Yugoslavs that Lenin, to whom Yugoslav Communists continued to swear allegiance, was the founder of the CPSU.²⁵

Khrushchev's speech at Zemun airport would also be remembered for the subsequent incident. According to the accounts by those who were present, Tito could hardly conceal his anger at the contents of Khrushchev's speech. He was particularly unhappy with Khrushchev's explanation of who was responsible for 1948 and his insistence on the re-establishment of party relations, which gave the impression that this would be the subject of the talks. This was contrary to the spirit expressed in their letters during the previous months and the agreement on the Agenda of the meeting, reached by Mićunović and Volkov on 20 May. After

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

Khrushchev had finished, Tito, in defiance of the protocol, declined to speak. Moreover, he did not allow Khrushchev's speech to be translated, instead telling the Soviet leader that those present could understand Russian. Tito simply invited the stunned and humiliated Khrushchev to the waiting limousine.²⁶

During the first day of official talks, Khrushchev felt compelled to explain to Tito and the Yugoslavs that his speech at the airport was approved by the Presidium and was intended for the Soviet public and the '*fraternal parties*'. According to Khrushchev, the Soviet leadership was apprehensive that people could be asking themselves whether [the new Soviet leadership] *is selling out, as well... because we have claimed that you have sold yourselves* [to the Capitalists].²⁷ The Soviet leader's frank admission reveals the extent of the Soviet anxiety with which they had arrived in Belgrade. Khrushchev later admitted that he found it necessary to apologise for his speech to Tito on the first day of the talks; he had realized that attributing blame to Beria sounded hollow.²⁸

The first round of Yugoslav-Soviet talks took place on 27 May. According to the previous agreement, this day was dedicated to the first of the two points on the agenda - the international situation. The second point, bilateral relations, was to be addressed during the second day of official talks.²⁹ The place chosen for the official Yugoslav-Soviet talks was '*Dom Garde* [The House of the Guards]', a hall inside

²⁶ Dedijer *Novi Prilozi...*, 567.

²⁷ Transcript of Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Belgrade, 27, 28 May and 2 June 1955; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-56.

²⁸ Н. С. Хрущев, *Воспоминания...*, Кн. 3, 148-50.

²⁹ Memorandum of conversation between V. Mićunović and the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade (Volkov), 20 May 1955; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1955, I - 5 - v / 490.

the Presidential Guard compound, close to Tito's Belgrade residence. The choice of this Hall as the venue for the meeting signalling the end of the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict that had started in 1948 was highly symbolic. It was in this Hall, in July 1948 that the Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia took place. The Congress, conveyed after the COMINFORM resolution against Yugoslavia, gave overwhelming support to Tito in his stand against Stalin.

Tito spoke first. In his opening address, he mentioned the *'misunderstandings of the past'* only in passing, expressing hope that they would be overcome if addressed openly in direct talks.³⁰ Tito's conciliatory tone suggested that he had decided to brush aside Khrushchev's airport speech and focus on the success of the talks that could consolidate Yugoslav-Soviet normalization. In the first sentence of his introductory speech, Khrushchev emphasized that the Soviet delegation was authorized by the Government of the USSR and the Central Committee of the CPSU to discuss any question with the Yugoslavs. The necessity to assert their credentials revealed Khrushchev and his colleagues' awareness that they lacked Stalin's authority. The Belgrade meeting was Khrushchev's first true international outing and venture outside the parameters of the *'collective leadership'*. Khrushchev continued by emphasizing how difficult it was for the Soviet leaders to come to Belgrade. According to him, they had to face the opposition from those who were against normalization, as well as that of the majority of Soviet people

³⁰ Transcript of Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Belgrade, 27, 28 May and 2 June 1955; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-56.

whose perceptions of Yugoslavia had been during the years of anti-Yugoslav propaganda.

Khrushchev then went on to elaborate upon the international issues. He singled out Germany as the most important question of the day. In Khrushchev's view, after West Germany's accession to NATO, the agreement on the future of Germany had become impossible. Khrushchev insisted that this cancelled any talk on the unification of Germany because this would simply '*add ten million East Germans*' to NATO's forces. However, Khrushchev confirmed that the Soviets were eager to establish normal relations with West Germany and would like to see relations established between the two Germanys. On disarmament, Khrushchev stated that the Soviets were genuinely in favour of the reduction of armaments and armies, and were ready to sign a realistic agreement immediately. However, he was very pessimistic about the outcome of the forthcoming Geneva summit of the Big Four. He was convinced that the Americans did not want the summit to succeed. Knowing that it would appeal to Tito, Khrushchev then declared Soviet readiness to disband the newly created Warsaw Pact, if the West would dismember NATO. Tito interrupted Khrushchev at this point with a question whether this meant that the Soviets would agree to the liquidation of Blocs. Khrushchev confirmed this. To Tito's question about the Bandung Conference, which had just ended, Khrushchev replied that the Soviets would gladly sign under many of the Conference's conclusions. With regard to the Far East, Khrushchev condemned American policy towards the People's Republic of China. He then informed the Yugoslavs that during his recent trip to China, he had established excellent relations with the

Chinese leadership, in particular with Mao Zedung and Zhou Enlai. Khrushchev also confirmed that the USSR was providing all necessary economic and '*other*' support to Ho Chi Minh to consolidate his power in North Vietnam.

Turning to Yugoslavia's relations with the '*lager*', Khrushchev pointed out that the Soviet initiative for normalization with Yugoslavia was not a joint action with '*Peoples' Democracies*' but that they had been informed of it in advance. He underlined that the Soviet leadership received endorsement for the improvement of relations with Yugoslavia from all '*fraternal parties*', as well as from Mao.³¹ This statement again confirmed the Soviet leadership's lack of confidence in its authority in the international Communist movement. Khrushchev then asserted that the situation in the Peoples' Democracies was '*solid*'. Concluding his overview of the international situation, Khrushchev underlined his opinion that despite tensions between the USSR and the US, the current situation in the World *[did] not smell of war*' to him. At the end, Khrushchev could not resist firing a shot at the Yugoslavs. He reminded them that they should be under no illusion that the American aid to Yugoslavia was designed to serve US strategic interests.³²

Tito then presented Yugoslavia's outlook on the international issues. At the start of his speech, he stressed that in its relations with the West and the US Yugoslavia had never compromised its independence, nor its resolve to build Socialism based on Marxism-Leninism. Tito then addressed the issue that he knew would be of

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

special interest to the Soviets but which Khrushchev, for obviously tactical reasons, had not even mentioned in his address – the Balkan Pact. After reminding the Soviets of the circumstances in which Yugoslavia was compelled to seek an alliance with Greece and Turkey, Tito went on to minimize the military aspect of the Alliance. He declared that [the Balkan Pact] *will now be given, before all else, the cultural, economic, and political dimension*'.³³ Tito's statement on the Balkan Pact was an obvious tactical move to eliminate a potential stumbling block in the further course of the talks.

In continuation, Tito spoke at length and with enthusiasm about his recent trips to India and Burma. He stressed how impressed he was by Indian strides towards industrialisation and with Nehru as a visionary politician. Khrushchev admitted to Tito that the Soviets knew very little of India, even less of Burma. He described how, during his recent trip to China, he had asked Mao about India and Burma and that Mao admitted knowing little about them. Khrushchev then underlined that, prompted by Tito's comments, the Soviet leadership would now await Nehru's forthcoming visit to Moscow, scheduled for June, with even more eagerness. Concluding his account of his trip to Asia, Tito referred to his one-day meeting with Nasser in Suez. He admitted to having formed a very positive impression of Nasser and was convinced that the Egyptian leader would play an important role in the Near and the Middle East. He expressed anxiety about Nasser's precarious position vis-à-vis the traditional colonial powers. Within this context, Tito advised the Soviets to assist the Egyptian leader, but not in an open fashion because this

³³ Ibid.

could trigger a violent reaction from the colonial powers.³⁴ Khrushchev confided in Tito that the Soviet Union was already supplying Nasser with weapons to which Tito replied that Yugoslavia was doing the same. This highly confidential exchange revealed both countries' engagement in one of the strategically most important regions in the World. It is extraordinary that it occurred during the very first day of the first meeting between leaders of two countries that have barely re-established their diplomatic relations. It is remarkable evidence of how ideological proximity led to a proximity of outlook on international issues despite the conflict that raged between the two countries until only recently. It also revealed the ease with which Tito and Khrushchev could transcend ideological differences and accumulated animosity between their countries and find common ground on issues of joint interest.

In the continuation of the first day of talks, the discussion at one point turned unavoidably towards ideological questions. Kardelj presented a case for the cooperation between the Communist, Socialist, and Social Democratic parties in Western Europe. In this context, he stressed that no form of Socialism should be imposed on others. Kardelj openly allowed for a possibility of parliamentary evolution as the form of transition to Socialism in Western Europe. He also advocated that Communists should support nationalist and anti-colonial movements, which were not of Communist affiliation. Kardelj's opinions immediately drew a heated response from the Soviets. Khrushchev argued that the Social Democrats' amity towards Yugoslavs was only part of the Western strategy

³⁴ Ibid.

to distance Yugoslavia from true Marxism-Leninism and from the Soviet Union. Tito immediately replied that the distancing that had occurred between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union was not the responsibility of the Social Democrats but the result of the 1948 rupture. At this point, the exchange became confrontational. Khrushchev proposed that a commission be formed from members of the two delegations that would address all disputed ideological questions and suggest ways to resolve them. Khrushchev insisted that '*on cardinal questions there cannot be two approaches*'.³⁵ Members of the Soviet delegation declared Kardelj's views on the evolutionary rather than revolutionary transformation to Socialism in Western Europe as being contrary to the teachings of Marxism-Leninism. Tito, on the other hand, did not even acknowledge Khrushchev's proposal for the appointment of a commission that would rule on ideological discord between Yugoslavia and the USSR.³⁶ He was careful not to fall into the trap; the creation of such commission would give legitimacy to the existence of only one truth about possible roads to Socialism. It would also confirm that the conflict between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union was only a family dispute caused by ideological disagreements. In contrast to discussions on international issues, as soon as the conversation turned towards ideological questions, the two sides ceased to look for common ground and reverted to their entrenched positions. The ideological chasm between the two sides remained unbridgeable.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

The second day of the official Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Belgrade, on 28 May, was devoted to the Yugoslav-Soviet bilateral relationship.³⁷ Tito spoke first and immediately addressed the causes of the 1948 schism. He insisted that the disagreements between the two sides had started before 1948 and could be traced back to the Second World War years. Tito reminded all present how offended the Yugoslavs had felt when they heard of the Stalin-Churchill October 1944 percentage agreement on Yugoslavia. According to Tito, the main cause of the 1948 rupture was the *'erroneous Soviet approach to the relations between Socialist countries'*. He pointed out that *'certain'* Soviet leaders at the time simply denied the existence of individual particularities in the development of Yugoslavia and other countries. Tito underlined that the Soviet hegemonic aspirations and Yugoslavia's desire to preserve its sovereignty and independence were the root of the 1948 split. Within this context, he added that *'there is no need for special ties, for artificial discipline that would hold together states, peoples, and, in particular the Communist parties... what is important is the unity of the goal... There is no single method [for achieving the goal of building Socialism that is] applicable for all countries'*.³⁸ With this statement, Tito defined his opposition to all forms of supranational organisations empowered to secure cohesion within the Communist movement.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

Turning then to Western aid to Yugoslavia, the subject of frequent Soviet jibes, Tito reminded the Soviets of the hardships that Yugoslavia had had to endure because of the economic blockade imposed by the Soviet Union and the Peoples' Democracies after 1948. He underlined that the aid received from the West, particularly the US, had helped Yugoslavia to survive. Furthermore, according to Tito, when the USSR and the Peoples' Democracies threatened to attack it, Yugoslavia had been obliged to seek military aid from the West to defend itself. He accentuated that throughout this period of dependency on the West, Yugoslavia had preserved its national and ideological principles. Tito however, added that of late Yugoslavia and the West were increasingly *'following divergent paths'* due to *'Yugoslavia's new concepts of foreign policy, [namely its] position against both Blocs'*. For this reason, he accentuated that Yugoslavia was seeking to free itself from the dependence on Western aid and that he hoped that it would be able to do so in a year or so.³⁹ To underline the sincerity of his remarks regarding Western aid, Tito disclosed to the Soviets true figures on the amount of aid Yugoslavia had hitherto received from the West. He stated that between 1950 and 1955, Yugoslavia had received approximately US\$1.5 billion, of which approximately US\$600 million was economic aid and the remainder military assistance.⁴⁰

Tito's statements were obviously designed to appeal to the Soviet delegation; he was deliberately optimistic in forecasting the termination of Western aid. On the

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

one hand, this was aimed at helping Khrushchev and those in the Soviet leadership who supported the improvement of relations with Yugoslavia to counter accusations from those opposed to normalization that Western aid was a proof of Yugoslavia's selling-out to the West. On the other hand, such statements reflected Tito's genuine desire to reduce Yugoslavia's dependence on Western aid. Since receiving Khrushchev's first letter in June 1954, the Yugoslav leadership saw improvement of relations with the Soviets as a chance of acquiring an alternative source of economic assistance.⁴¹ During the Belgrade meeting, Tito wished to entice the Soviets to enter into substantial economic cooperation with Yugoslavia.

In continuation, Tito and his associates provided the Soviet delegation with detailed accounts of their grievances regarding Soviet attitude towards Yugoslavia prior to 1948. They singled out the workings of '*Joint-stock companies*', the role of Soviet military and civil advisers, and the conduct of the Soviet intelligence in Yugoslavia. Khrushchev and his colleagues gave the impression of being genuinely interested in learning the truth. Khrushchev insisted that it was essential for him and his comrades '*to become acquainted with the past [in order] to prevent such occurrences in the future*'.⁴² Within this context, Khrushchev mentioned Stalin for the first time. He admitted that there were different opinions on Stalin and that some of his actions were '*uncomfortable*'. Khrushchev insisted, however, that Stalin always remained faithful to the interests of the proletariat. He spoke of

⁴¹ The meeting of the LCY CC Executive Committee (Extended) – Transcript, 19 July 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/62a.

⁴² Transcript of Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Belgrade, 27, 28 May and 2 June 1955; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-56.

Stalin's genius and of the clarity of his thoughts. However, after uttering these praises, Khrushchev added that since Stalin's death the Soviet leadership had done much to "*amend*" some of the things he had done. Khrushchev nevertheless, insisted that this '*amending*' did not mean that the Soviet leadership was '*correcting Stalin... because it would [weaken] our Marxist-Leninist camp*'.⁴³ Although at the time of his visit to Yugoslavia he was becoming increasingly aware of crimes committed during Stalin's leadership, Khrushchev could not discard Stalin's postulate that strong control by the state apparatus domestically, and the Soviet hegemony in the '*lager*' were the essential foundations of Socialism. The point Khrushchev had made on the second day of talks in Belgrade reveals the limit of his questioning of Stalin's legacy. Indeed, apart from the brief period preceding and following his '*secret speech*' in 1956, this limitation would be apparent throughout his tenure as the Soviet leader. It would determine his transformation during and after the Hungarian events in 1956.

Further discussions during the second day focused on how in 1948 it had been possible for accusations against Yugoslavia to escalate into the full-blown confrontation between the two countries. Khrushchev explained that once the conflict had started, the fact that Yugoslavia was receiving Western aid seemed to confirm that Yugoslavia had '*sold out to the Capitalists*'. In an emotional tone, Tito interrupted Khrushchev exclaiming that there was something very wrong with the Soviet leaders' logic if they could believe this nonsense, in particular because he

⁴³ Ibid.

and his associates never ceased to claim publicly that they were Communists. Tito exclaimed emotionally, *'not even the Devil himself could force me to go towards another system... how could I betray myself... I consider myself part of the idea of Marxism-Leninism'*. Khrushchev replied that it was easy for Tito to speak as he did, but that he should try to put himself in the position of Khrushchev and his associates in 1948. He then added that what had happened could not be rectified but that the Soviet leadership was now showing courage. He insisted that [he and the Soviet delegation] *did not come [to Yugoslavia] because of [their] weakness... We cursed you, called you Fascists and Devil knows what else, and then we came to you...We understood that it would not be possible for you to take the initiative'*.⁴⁴

With these catharsis-like exchanges, the second day of talks concluded in a comradely atmosphere. As has been shown, the two sides had engaged in soul searching with surprising candour. This unexpected openness had made it possible for the Yugoslavs and the Soviets to look back at 1948 rupture and the ensuing conflict without threatening the meeting itself. It removed layers of mutual distrust and enabled them to conclude successfully their first encounter since 1948.

After two days of talks in Belgrade, the Soviet delegation joined Tito in his summer retreat, the island of Brioni. No official talks were held during the one-day stay on the island. The only available account of the informal conversations in Brioni was provided by Khrushchev at the Plenum of the CPSU CC, a month after his visit to

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Yugoslavia.⁴⁵ In Brioni, the Soviets finally managed to have an exchange with Tito on Party normalization. During the talks in Belgrade, whenever Khrushchev initiated conversation on the re-establishment of Party relations, Tito would remind him of the official agenda which did not include this issue and would add that they would have time in Brioni to address this question. According to Khrushchev's account, during their stay in Brioni, Tito took him and several other members of the Soviet delegation and drove them around the island. During this drive Tito finally addressed the issue of the re-establishment of Party relations. Khrushchev emphasized the fact that Tito was without other Yugoslavs, without '*witnesses*', which as he was convinced, allowed Tito to speak more openly to the Soviets.⁴⁶ According to Khrushchev, Tito confirmed explicitly that the two sides would eventually reach an agreement on ideological questions. The Soviets then drew Tito's attention to one of his speeches in May during which he appealed to Yugoslav Communists to remain faithful to the ideas of Marxism-Leninism. They remarked to Tito that this speech had led them to conclude that he was debating with someone in the LCY leadership. According to Khrushchev, Tito confirmed that this had indeed been the case. He admitted that hardly a week passed that he did not have to fight against those within the Yugoslav leadership who opposed the establishment of contacts between the two parties on ideological grounds.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC CPSU), 4-12 July 1955, Report of the First Secretary, N.S. Khrushchev on the results of Soviet-Yugoslav talks; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Роллик 6225, Дело 143, 37-47.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

According to Khrushchev's account, Tito further insisted that relations between the two parties should be improved gradually, step by step. He then pointed out that, although he and his colleagues '*will spare no effort*' to bring forward the re-establishment of party contacts, there existed circumstances that prevented this from happening quickly. He mentioned that after years of conflict the Yugoslav people and Party needed to be prepared for a change. Furthermore, a hasty re-establishment of party relations with the USSR would put Yugoslavia in a difficult economic situation, given its dependence on US and Western economic aid. Tito then proposed to Khrushchev that the best way to reconcile existing ideological differences and to bring forward the re-establishment of Party relations would be through the further exchange of letters between two Central Committees. He promised to send such a letter to the CPSU CC in the immediate future.⁴⁸ Tito's conversations with the Soviets in Brioni were a calculated manoeuvre on his side to avoid debates on the re-establishment of Yugoslav-Soviet party relations. On the one hand, as has been shown earlier, Tito did not wish party relations to be re-established so early in the process of normalization. On the other hand, he knew that discussions on this subject had to be preceded by discussions on ideological differences between the CPSU and the LCY. Tito feared that such debates would be highly confrontational and could endanger the prospects of a full Yugoslav-Soviet normalization of government relations that he hoped would result from Khrushchev's visit.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

On 2 June, the last day of the visit, the Declaration and the Joint Communiqué were signed and the Soviet delegation left Belgrade. The draft of the Declaration, henceforth better known as the *Belgrade Declaration*, was prepared by the Yugoslavs. The Soviets had accepted it with very few minor changes. Khrushchev and the Soviet delegation were eager to bring their first meeting with Tito to a successful conclusion. The Belgrade Declaration remains a unique document of the Cold War. It codified relations between a small country and a Superpower, and between a Socialist country and the cradle of Socialism - the Soviet Union.⁴⁹

The Belgrade Declaration consisted of three parts. The largest part was devoted to general principles that should govern relations between states. The smallest part recapitulated the Yugoslav and Soviet positions on the international issues discussed during the meeting. The remaining section addressed the process of normalization between the two countries. The part, which dealt with international issues was conspicuous for its shortness and absence of many important international issues of the day, such as the German question or disarmament. Given the expressed closeness of views of the two sides on these issues, Tito had obviously wished to avoid accusations from the West that he was supportive of the Soviets on issues that were at the time hotly contested by the two Superpowers.

The section of the Declaration, which stipulated principles that should govern relations between states was largest and by far the most important. It declared that

⁴⁹ Belgrade Declaration, 2 June 1955; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1955, I - 5 – v.

respect for the sovereignty, independence, integrity and equality should govern relations between the states. The Declaration also emphasized that states with different political systems could and should co-exist in peace. It also promoted mutual respect and non-interference into affairs of other states, whether of political, economic or ideological nature. The Declaration underlined that the nature of the political and social system, and the choice between different forms of Socialism were exclusive prerogatives of the people of each country. Finally, it rejected any form of aggression or attempt to impose political or economic hegemony over another country.

In the part related to the normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations and its future prospects, the Declaration stipulated that after a period of bad relations, the two countries were determined to improve their relations on the basis of principles defined in the Declaration. It then listed various fields where this improvement was possible and needed. Most prominence was awarded to economic cooperation.⁵⁰ The wording and the contents of the Belgrade Declaration revealed why the Yugoslavs had insisted on it. Tito and his associated hoped that a document stipulating principles on which relations between the two states would be conducted, once publicly accepted and signed by the Soviets would prevent future 'misunderstandings' and confrontation between the two countries. They expected it to guarantee the continuity of the improvement of relations and lead to the establishment of fully normalized Yugoslav-Soviet relations.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

The content of Yugoslav-Soviet talks held during Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia between 27 May and 2 June 1955 point to several conclusions. First and foremost, the visit signalled an end to the seven-year conflict between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Bloc. It also implied that the relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union were normalized. Although a common Yugoslav and Soviet approach to most international issues had manifested itself, the meeting failed to bridge the ideological divide that existed between the two countries. Relations between the LCY and the CPSU were not re-established. Although, the visit meant an end to Yugoslavia's isolation from the international Communist movement, Tito and the Yugoslav leadership had resolutely refused to return to the Soviet *'lager'*. The visit would also provide the impetus for further improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. The talks between the Yugoslav and Soviet leaders also reveal that Tito, as in 1948, had once again subordinated his ideological affiliation to demands of statesmanship. He placed Yugoslavia's sovereignty and the integrity of the Yugoslav Communist party before the devotion and loyalty to his dogma. Furthermore, eager to use normalization with the USSR to achieve equidistance from either Bloc, Tito was determined to do everything necessary to ensure the favourable outcome of the Belgrade meeting. For this reason, he manoeuvred the Soviets successfully, in particular during the Brioni exchanges, into abandoning their demands for the discussion on the re-establishment of relations between the CPSU and the LCY. Tito wanted Khrushchev's visit to bring irreversibility into the process of the improvement of relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR. The Declaration signed at the end of talks was aimed at securing precisely this goal.

Although the ideological chasm between the two sides remained too wide to be bridged, the two leaders had manifested tolerance and openness in their exchanges. Tito's determination to make the talks a success explains the absence of confrontational responses to some of Khrushchev's rigid positions expressed during the talks. Tito's absolute control of the Yugoslav leadership enabled him to manage well the atmosphere as well as the course of the talks.

Khrushchev, on his side, was as determined as Tito to make the talks in Belgrade a success. Too much of his political capital had been staked on normalization with Yugoslavia for him to allow his visit to Yugoslavia to fail. This, rather than stupidity or political naiveté, can explain his readiness to go along with Tito's manoeuvring and agreement to the Declaration. It is worth noting that it was Bulganin and not Khrushchev who had signed the Belgrade Declaration. At the same time, the meeting and talks with Tito had forced Khrushchev for the first time to confront Stalin's role and his legacy.⁵¹ Khrushchev's behaviour during talks in Belgrade confirm his inability to overcome an inherent ambivalence; he was still afraid to challenge Stalin for fear that it might result in the weakening of the Marxist-Leninist dogma. The full impact of the visit to Yugoslavia on Khrushchev and his associates would become evident during the course of the forthcoming Plenum of the CPSU CC, held in Moscow between 4 and 12 July.

⁵¹ Н. С. Хрущев, *Воспоминания...*, Кн. 4, 189.

III.2 Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee

Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia and the reconciliation with Tito reverberated throughout Eastern Europe and the international Communist movement. Poisoned by years of fierce anti-Yugoslav propaganda, most people in the Soviet Bloc greeted the events in Belgrade with shock and disbelief. Many however, saw Khrushchev's trip as the Soviet surrender to Yugoslavia on matters of ideological principles.⁵² After the conclusion of their visit to Yugoslavia and the signing of the Belgrade Declaration, Khrushchev and the Soviet delegation did not return immediately to Moscow. Instead, on 2 June 1955 they flew to Sofia and then on to Bucharest where the leaders of Czechoslovakia and Hungary joined them. Khrushchev and his companions conferred with the Satellite leaders before they briefed their own Presidium. Khrushchev admitted that *'it was deemed necessary to visit several countries of the Peoples' Democracies'* in order for the *'fraternal parties and peoples to understand us correctly'*.⁵³ In addition, on 25 June the CPSU CC also sent a letter to all *'fraternal'* parties containing the account of the talks in Yugoslavia.⁵⁴ The need to explain and justify the visit to its allies, immediately after it had taken place, suggests that Moscow feared opposition and

⁵² Review of Reports from East European Countries on Reactions to [Khrushchev] Visit and the Belgrade Declaration; No date [probably around 15 June 1955]; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/IV-98 / Transcript of Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Belgrade, 27, 28 May and 2 June 1955; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-56.

⁵³ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 4-12 July 1955, Report of the First Secretary, N.S. Khrushchev on the results of Soviet-Yugoslav talks, Transcript of 9 July 1955, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6225, Дело 143, 49.

⁵⁴ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 4-12 July 1955, Mikhail Pervuhin's address, Transcript of 11 July, evening session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 160, 91.

confusion among the Satellites towards the reconciliation with Tito. It also confirmed, once again, that the Soviet leadership feared that it lacked Stalin's undisputed authority in the international Communist movement.

Belgrade's immediate assessment of the results of Khrushchev's visit was restrained. This reflected Belgrade's reluctance to succumb to euphoria and its sober belief that the visit represented only a beginning, albeit a hugely important one, of true improvement in Yugoslav-Soviet relations. In his circular, informing Yugoslav Ambassadors on 4 June of the results of Khrushchev's visit, Koča Popović stressed that the visit represented *'an admission by the USSR, although not a full one, of mistakes done towards Yugoslavia.'* He also underlined that it signified Soviet recognition of Yugoslavia's independent road to Socialism.⁵⁵ With regard to party relations, according to Popović, the Soviets had hoped to establish co-operation *'based on common ideology, in fact on ideological compromises from our side... It seems that the Russians still lack realism in their approach...to our bilateral relations and are not yet capable of profound understanding of the implications of the policies pursued by Stalin...'*⁵⁶ In the end, he concluded that the visit had made it clear that Yugoslav-Soviet relations would depend on future developments in the USSR and would *'progress at a slow pace'*.⁵⁷

Yugoslavia's foreign policy actions following Khrushchev's visit confirmed its new tactical approach of playing one Bloc against the other in pursuit of the position of

⁵⁵ Koča Popović to Yugoslav Ambassadors, 4 June 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F II / SSSR I – 253.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

equidistance. Between 24 and 27 June 1955, only three weeks after Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia, a meeting of representatives of the Yugoslav Government and the Ambassadors of the United States, United Kingdom and France took place in Belgrade. The so-called Ambassadorial Conference represented the continuation of strategic coordination talks between Yugoslavia and the three Western powers, first held in November 1952 during General Handy's visit to Belgrade, and then in August 1953 in Washington. On the one hand, the convening of the Ambassadorial Conference manifested Belgrade's determination to uphold the existing level of relations with the West. To this end, the official Communiqué of the Conference emphasized '*cordiality and mutual trust*' between Yugoslavia and its Western partners.⁵⁸ With the Conference being held within weeks of Khrushchev's departure, the Yugoslavs also wished to remind Moscow that the improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations would not be allowed to jeopardise Yugoslavia's independent foreign policy and its relations with the West. On the other hand, during the Conference Yugoslavia refused to commit itself to further strategic coordination talks with the West. However, it insisted that current levels of Western military aid be maintained.⁵⁹ This was a tactical manoeuvre; Belgrade wished to keep all options open until the attitude of the Soviet leadership towards the future course of Yugoslav-Soviet relations became clearer.

⁵⁸ Transcript of the Ambassadorial Conference in Belgrade and related documents, 24-27 June 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F III / Jug II – 340. Also, Telegram From the Embassy in Yugoslavia to the Department of State, 28 June 1955; FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XXVI, 659-60.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

To counterbalance the holding of the Ambassadorial Conference, the Yugoslav leadership acted to assure Moscow of its interest in maintaining the momentum created by Khrushchev's visit. The day after the Conference had adjourned on 28 June, Belgrade issued the official press release announcing that Tito had accepted Khrushchev's invitation, extended to him during the meeting in Belgrade, to visit the USSR at some future date.⁶⁰ On 29 June, the Yugoslav Deputy Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Srdja Prica, called in the Soviet Ambassador, Volkov, and informed him, albeit in very general terms, of the contents of the Conference. Prica pointed out to the Ambassador that during the Conference, Yugoslavia had not undertaken new military commitments with the Western alliance.⁶¹ It was the first time since 1948 that the Yugoslavs had informed the Soviets of their dealings with the West. On the same day, 29 June, Tito also met the Soviet Ambassador.⁶² After making sure that Prica had briefed Volkov, Tito pointed out that the positive tone of the joint Communiqué released after the Conference did not reflect accurately the fact that the Americans were very unhappy with its outcome. Yugoslavia, according to Tito, had decided to hold the Conference *'in order to disperse Western illusions regarding their relations with Yugoslavia'*.⁶³ He also talked at length to Volkov about disagreements that had arisen of late between Yugoslavia and Turkey, its Balkan Pact ally. The two countries were growing increasingly at odds with each other because of Yugoslavia's intention to underplay the military aspect of the

⁶⁰ Memorandum of Conversation with President Tito, 29 June 1955; Report by the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade (Volkov); АВП, РФ, Фонд 0144, Опись 40, Папка 163, Дело 4, 131-5.

⁶¹ Memorandum of conversation between Srdja Prica and the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade (Volkov), 29 June 1955; SMIP, PA, 1955, SSSR, F64/6-48704.

⁶² Memorandum of conversation with President Tito, 29 June 1955; Report by the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade, V. Volkov; АВП, РФ, Фонд 0144, Опись 40, Папка 163, Дело 4, 131-5.

⁶³ Ibid.

Pact. Tito's indiscretion was obviously intended to reconfirm assurances he had given to Khrushchev during talks in Belgrade that the Balkan Pact would not serve as a threat to the USSR. The Yugoslav leader then underlined Yugoslavia's desire to increase substantially economic cooperation with the USSR. ^{The} Transcript of Khrushchev's closing address at the July Plenum of the CPSU CC confirms that Tito had achieved his goal. Khrushchev was so impressed that he read to the Plenum the Ambassador's report of his meeting with Tito in its entirety.⁶⁴

During their meeting on 29 June, Tito handed Volkov a letter for the CPSU CC in which he addressed the issue of the re-establishment of relations between the two parties.⁶⁵ It was the fulfilment of his promise given to Khrushchev in Brioni.⁶⁶ The letter was also part of Tito's desire to maintain the momentum of the Khrushchev visit. In the letter Tito acknowledged that the achieved level of normalization between Yugoslavia and the USSR had made possible the establishment of contacts between their two parties. He insisted however, that these contacts should be in the form of letters, contacts between institutions and, ambiguously - *'personal contacts'*. Tito then used the opportunity to reiterate his ideological postulates. He stressed that individual forms of Socialism had emerged as a result of different levels of economic, social and cultural development of individual

⁶⁴ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 4-12 July 1955, Khrushchev's closing address, Transcript of 12 July 1955, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 161, 187-192.

⁶⁵ The letter from the EC LCY CC, signed by Tito, to the CPSU CC, addressed to Khrushchev, 29 June 1955; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-55.

⁶⁶ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 4-12 July 1955, Report of the First Secretary, N.S. Khrushchev on the result of Soviet-Yugoslav talks, Transcript of 9 July 1955, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6225, Дело 143, 37-47.

countries. Tito further accentuated that cooperation between Communist parties should be voluntary, based on the principles of equality and non-interference into the affairs of others; relations between Communist parties should never be subordinated to any supranational organisation that would act like an ideological arbiter and impose solutions on individual parties. The rebuttal of COMINFORM was more than evident. Furthermore, Tito again endorsed cooperation between the Communist and the Socialist and Social Democratic parties.⁶⁷ Tito's letter of 29 June confirms that, although he was eager to keep the momentum of Khrushchev's visit alive, Tito was equally determined not to make compromises and concessions to Moscow on pivotal ideological positions, which defined Yugoslavia's independence from the Soviet Bloc. Furthermore, Tito's letter demonstrated his intention to keep the inevitable ideological polemics within the benign confines of the exchange of letters.

Khrushchev's responded promptly to Tito, on 7 July 1955.⁶⁸ Addressing the question of individual forms of Socialism, Khrushchev acknowledged that *'it is possible that different countries can apply different forms and methods of building Socialism'*. He named examples of such *'different'* forms as those practiced in China, Poland and Czechoslovakia.⁶⁹ In continuation, Khrushchev identified the point of true incompatibility with the Yugoslavs. Referring to the cooperation between the Communist parties and the Social Democrats, Khrushchev insisted

⁶⁷ The letter from the EC LCY CC, signed by Tito, to the CPSU CC, addressed to Khrushchev, 29 June 1955; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-55..

⁶⁸ The letter from the CPSU CC, signed by Khrushchev, to the LCY CC, addressed to Tito, 7 July 1955; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-57.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

that relations between the Communist parties *'must be tighter'* because the interests of the working class required from these parties *'closer co-ordination of action'*.⁷⁰ Khrushchev's argumentation suggests that different forms of Socialism caused disagreement between the LCY and CPSU only when, as interpreted by Yugoslavia, it implied non-compliance with the membership to the *'lager'*. The divergence of Socialist forms, per se, was not totally unacceptable to Khrushchev, as long as the Communist parties conformed to the *'unity in action'*, in accordance with Moscow's foreign policy goals. Yugoslavia's refusal to rejoin the *'camp'* represented the line of ideological demarcation between the two leaders and the two parties.

From 4 until 12 July, while the latest correspondence between Tito and Khrushchev was taking place, the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist party of the Soviet Union was in session in Moscow. The last three days of the Plenum, from 9 to 12 July were dedicated to the results of the visit of the Soviet delegation to Yugoslavia. Khrushchev delivered a report on the visit. Molotov, who had been attacked in the report for opposing the Presidium's policy towards Yugoslavia, spoke after Khrushchev. He not only rejected Khrushchev's accusations but, in turn, condemned the whole policy of normalization with Yugoslavia as the *'betrayal of principles of Marxism-Leninism'*. After Molotov, Bulganin addressed the Plenum. Point by point, he rebuffed Molotov's arguments. On 11 July, the next working day of the Plenum, the remaining members of the Presidium, including Suslov and Malenkov, spoke one after the other in support of

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Khrushchev, adding accusations against Molotov. On the last day, Khrushchev delivered a closing address.⁷¹

The July Plenum of the CPSU CC represented a threshold of the Soviet post-Stalin transition and was of profound significance for the further improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. The process of the Yugoslav-Soviet normalization and Khrushchev's trip to Yugoslavia in May 1955 inspired the Plenum and determined its course and the conclusions set in its Resolution. The Plenum, in turn, had a profound impact on the developments that went beyond Yugoslav-Soviet bilateral relations. The spirit and the conclusions of the Plenum would also accelerate improvement of the Yugoslav-Soviet relations. At the Plenum the new goal of Soviet policy towards Yugoslavia would be re-asserted – to draw Belgrade into the Soviet *'lager'*. The Plenum would define the ideological identity of the post-Stalin leadership aimed at asserting its authority at home and within the international Communist movement. It would also provide the stage for Khrushchev to isolate Molotov. The Plenum would confirm Khrushchev as the new Soviet leader. The July Plenum of the CPSU CC would also articulate the first challenge to Stalin's legacy and authority conducted outside the confines of the Soviet party Presidium. As such, it would initiate the process of de-Stalinization in the Soviet party and within the Communist movement. Within this context, the Plenum would mark the beginning of the process of liberalization in Eastern Europe that ended tragically less than a year later in Hungary, in November 1956.

⁷¹ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 4-12 July 1955, Transcripts and Accompanying Documents and Resolutions; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролики (Rolls) 6225, 6227, and 6228 (microfilms).

The first priority for Khrushchev and his supporters at the Plenum was to justify the visit to Yugoslavia. In the first sentences of his opening report, Khrushchev acknowledged that *'many have said that by going to Belgrade we would make concessions to Yugoslavs and hurt the prestige of the USSR.'* He explained that the Soviet leadership had concluded that the trip to Belgrade offered the best opportunity for *'open and direct discussion with Yugoslavia's leaders'*.⁷²

Khrushchev then explained the motives behind the Soviet leadership's decision to initiate full normalization of relations with Yugoslavia. He stressed that the continuation of the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict increased the possibility that the *'West would succeed in overturning [Yugoslavia's] Socialist regime'*.⁷³ After distancing Yugoslavia from the Socialist *'camp'*, the West would then, according to Khrushchev, create a *'breach'* in the Communist front and *'attract to this road other countries of Peoples' Democracies'*.⁷⁴ However, Khrushchev singled out detaching Yugoslavia's military potential from the Western alliance as the most important motive behind the Soviet initiative for the normalization with Yugoslavia. Khrushchev pointed out that by acquiring Yugoslavia, the West would succeed in cutting off the Soviet bloc from the Mediterranean Sea.

⁷² Plenum of the CC CPSU, 4-12 July 1955, Report of the First Secretary, N.S. Khrushchev on the result of Soviet-Yugoslav talks, Transcript of 9 July 1955, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6225, Дело 143, 23.

⁷³ Ibid, 1.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 2

A new and much more ambitious goal of the Soviets policy towards Yugoslavia was promoted at the Plenum – the return of Yugoslavia into the *'lager'*. This was a direct result of the successful outcome of Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia and of Tito's letter of 29 June. Khrushchev declared that the Presidium was of the opinion that

'first results have been achieved and conditions have been created for further improvement of contacts and togetherness between the LCY and the CPSU ... and a more forceful influence of fraternal parties on the Yugoslav people and the LCY'.⁷⁵

Speaking after Khrushchev, Molotov insisted that the Yugoslav-Soviet relations should be limited to cooperation in foreign policy issues only. Khrushchev interrupted him exclaiming *'we want more!'*⁷⁶ He explained what he meant by *'more'* later in the session when he accentuated that [the Soviet leadership] *has to create such relations with Yugoslavia so that it would, in time, join our "lager", or in case it doesn't, to be our ally or a fellow traveller.*⁷⁷ In the closing part of his introductory address, Khrushchev informed the Plenum that the Presidium had just received a letter from Tito and considered it to be a serious step towards the creation of links between the LCY and the CPSU. Admitting that ideological differences still existed between Yugoslav Communists and the *'international proletarian movement'*, Khrushchev argued that the Soviet party must continue to work on establishing party contacts with Yugoslavs in order to bring them back into

⁷⁵ Ibid, 48.

⁷⁶ Ibid, Molotov's address, Transcript of 9 July 1955, evening session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 158, 51.

⁷⁷ Ibid, Report of the First Secretary, N.S. Khrushchev on the result of Soviet-Yugoslav talks, Transcript of 9 July 1955, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6225, Дело 143, 43.

the '*Socialist camp*'.⁷⁸ The concluding part of Khrushchev's opening address was not included in the official Plenum material. It was only to be found in the transcript of the Plenum discussions. This confirms that Khrushchev added this part of his report after the original text had already been submitted to the Secretariat, undoubtedly after receiving Tito's letter of 29 June. Khrushchev's optimism about the future of party relations with Yugoslavia was a result of Tito's letter, despite the fact that in the letter the Yugoslav leader had reiterated Yugoslav ideological postulates, certainly not to Moscow's liking. At the time, of much greater importance to Khrushchev was the fact that by sending the letter Tito confirmed that the party contacts would be re-established. It allowed Khrushchev to claim at the Plenum that his policies towards Yugoslavia were successful.

The debate at the Plenum on Yugoslav-Soviet ideological differences enabled Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership to assert their ideological authority at home and in the international Communist movement. It helped them to define their ideological standing. Much of Khrushchev's opening report at the Plenum focused on ideological differences between the Yugoslav party and the CPSU. He identified points on which the Yugoslavs had departed from Marxism-Leninism.⁷⁹ According to Khrushchev, the Yugoslavs regarded the Soviet economic model as state capitalism. The Yugoslavs had also '*publicly and slanderously*' asserted that Soviet foreign policy was imperialistic. Moreover, Khrushchev accused the Yugoslav leaders of revising the '*fundamental principle of the Marxism-Leninism* –

⁷⁸ Ibid, 90

⁷⁹ Ibid, 37-8.

the leading role of the Party'.⁸⁰ He added that the LCY leaders were also propagating a revisionist theory of a peaceful evolution to Socialism in developed Western countries. Khrushchev also emphasized that the Yugoslav leaders had '*openly expressed disagreement with the position, adopted by the whole international workers' movement, of the existence of two "lagers" – the Socialist one and the Capitalist one.*' Khrushchev concluded by pointing to Belgrade's key ideological digression. He stressed that,

*[the Yugoslavs] were preoccupied with searching for a theoretical basis of their "own road to Socialism" ... It is an absolute theoretical nonsense that there is a Russian, or Chinese, or a Yugoslav [road to Socialism]... Forms can be different but the essence is one. Socialism cannot be based on different principles... It is not impossible that some Yugoslav cadres have altogether departed from the Marxism-Leninism... By disregarding Marxist-Leninist principles, [the Yugoslavs] propagate false views that Yugoslavia can develop as a Socialist country independently from other countries of the Socialist "lager"; that it needn't coordinate its struggle with the countries that are building Socialism'.*⁸¹

Khrushchev's accusations suggest that the Soviet opposition to the Yugoslav concept of '*different roads to Socialism*' was not because it threatened to create different forms of economic and political organisation. After all, these differences already existed in Communist-run countries. In contrast to the Soviet Union, limited private ownership of land existed in Poland and Czechoslovakia, as it did in Yugoslavia. At the same time however, in crucial aspects Yugoslav Socialism was very much alike the Soviet system. The dominant form of ownership of the means of production in Yugoslavia, the so-called 'self-management' system, was only a variant of state ownership. Similarly, in the political sphere, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia held firmly the political monopoly in the country, much

⁸⁰ Ibid, 37.

⁸¹ Ibid, 39-40.

like the CPSU in the Soviet Union or Communist or Workers' parties in Satellite countries. After several Commissions appointed by the Presidium in the previous two years had confirmed that Yugoslavia qualified as a Socialist country, the Soviet leadership was not in any doubt about the Socialist character of the Yugoslav regime. The Kremlin's fierce opposition to Yugoslavia's concept of '*separate roads to Socialism*' arose, first and foremost, from the fear that it could represent a theoretical foundation for disassociation of Socialist states from the Soviet Bloc. The concept, as propagated by Yugoslavia, threatened the cohesion of the Socialist '*camp*' by demonstrating to member states that they could maintain a Socialist orientation outside Soviet hegemony. Yugoslavia's existence challenged the '*lager*'. This explains Khrushchev's persistent attempts to persuade Tito during the talks in Belgrade, as well as in their correspondence, to accept that the only reality in the World was the reality of two '*camps*' - the Socialist and the Capitalist one. Accordingly, the Soviets argued that the '*building of Socialism*' was possible only within the Socialist '*camp*'. If stranded outside their natural alliance, Socialist states would inevitably fall prey to the ideologically opposed imperialist '*camp*'. Thus, for Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership the defining of ideological differences with Yugoslavia at the Plenum served the purpose of preventing Yugoslavia from exerting undue influence on the Soviet Party and the Satellites following the Yugoslav-Soviet normalization. This explains Moscow's decision to immediately despatch both Tito's letter of 29 June and the Presidium's reply of 7 July to all '*fraternal*' parties together with an accompanying Resolution. In the

Resolution, the Presidium '*drew [fraternal parties'] attention to serious deficiencies and shortcomings in [Tito's] letter*'.⁸²

At first glance it may seem paradoxical that while doing their best to convince the Party of the success of their policy towards Yugoslavia and justifying further efforts at establishing party relations with the LCY, Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership resorted to harsh ideological criticism of Yugoslavia. In fact the '*ideological differentiation*'⁸³ with Yugoslavia, carried out at the Plenum, helped Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership to define the ideological identity of the post-Stalin leadership. It was the essential but hitherto missing part of their effort to reaffirm their authority and hegemony in the international Communist movement, in particular among its Satellites. The Soviet leadership identified their own ideological postulates and the guidelines for permissible behaviour of other Communist parties as the opposing poles to the Yugoslav ideological '*deviations*'.

The discussions at the July Plenum suggest that the process of de-Stalinization in the USSR started a full eight months before Khrushchev's '*secret speech*' in February 1956. The '*Yugoslav question*' thus contributed to the appearance of first cracks in Stalin's legacy. When addressing the issue of normalization of relations with Yugoslavia, the Plenum was inevitably drawn into the debate on the responsibility for the 1948 conflict. This forced members of the Central Committee for the first time to question Stalin's role. Disagreements between Molotov and the

⁸² Ibid, 90.

⁸³ Term used by Communist officials, part of Marxist terminology, to depict the process of defining ideological differences with the enemies of Socialism.

rest of the Presidium over the responsibility for the 1948 Yugoslav-Soviet break-up represented the first challenge to Stalin's myth outside the confines of the Presidium. In his opening report, Khrushchev acknowledged *'that there were no reasons for such a complete rift'*. He then introduced the *'official'* interpretation that *'Beria and Abakumov secretly supplied Stalin with false information'* naming them thus as the main culprits for the 1948 rupture.⁸⁴ In the address that followed Khrushchev's opening exposé, Molotov unmasked the *'official'* explanation of the responsibility for the Yugoslav-Soviet split. The following exchange between Molotov and Khrushchev demonstrates the manner in which the debate over Yugoslavia would digress into revelations about Stalin's role:

'Molotov: *From a real acquaintance with the materials, one can, however, establish that [Khrushchev's] statement, which tries to explain the reason for the rupture in relations with the CPY in large part by the hostile intrigues of Beria and Abakumov, does not fit with the factual situation. Beria and Abakumov's intrigues without doubt played a certain role here, but this was not of chief importance... In a discussion on this issue in the Presidium, some doubt was expressed in relation to the awkwardness and incorrectness of the given explanation. However, the following arguments were given in defence of the given explanation of the reasons for the rupture: that if we did not say that the main reason was Beria's and Abakumov's intrigues, then the responsibility for the rupture would fall on Stalin, which we cannot allow. These arguments should not be accepted.*

Khrushchev: *[The responsibility should fall] On Stalin's and Molotov's [shoulders].*

Molotov: *That's new.*

Khrushchev: *Why is it new?*

Molotov: *We signed the letter on behalf of the party Central Committee.*

Khrushchev: *Without asking the Central Committee.*

Molotov: *That is not true.*

Khrushchev: *That is exactly true.*

Molotov: *Now you can say whatever comes to your mind.*

Khrushchev: *...Without even asking the members of the Politburo. I am a member of the Politburo, but no one asked for my opinion.*

Molotov: *Comrade Khrushchev is not speaking the truth.*

⁸⁴ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 4-12 July 1955, Report of the First Secretary, N.S. Khrushchev on the result of Soviet-Yugoslav talks, Transcript of 9 July 1955, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Рोलик 6225, Дело 143, 5-20.

Khrushchev: I want once again to repeat: I was not asked although I was a member of the Politburo'.⁸⁵

Undoubtedly, by opposing Khrushchev's interpretation, Molotov wished to show that the conflict against Yugoslavia had Stalin's personal imprint and, as such, was incontestable. Ironically however, Molotov had inadvertently implicated Stalin. Khrushchev, as was shown, skilfully manipulated Molotov into disclosing Stalin's wrongdoing. By stressing *'the real acquaintance with materials'*, Molotov admitted that Beria and Abakumov were not the creators of the conflict with Yugoslavia in 1948. He revealed that the Presidium overrode evidence and knowingly created a lie that implicated Beria and Abakumov. This exposed the *'official'* interpretation as a fabrication. More importantly however, Molotov admitted that the reason for this manipulation was to cover up Stalin's role. This was the first accusation against Stalin. With his replication, *'on Stalin and Molotov'*, Khrushchev slyly agreed with Molotov's claim; he never challenged allegations made by Molotov. By adding that even the members of the Politburo, let alone the members of the Central Committee, were not consulted on such crucial issue, Khrushchev further exposed Stalin's despotism.

Speaking after Molotov, Bulganin further implicated Stalin as the main culprit for the conflict with Yugoslavia. He addressed Molotov's accusations against Yugoslavia one by one. Although Bulganin never openly accused Stalin, it was more than evident from his interpretation of events that no one but Stalin stood

⁸⁵ Ibid, Molotov's address, Transcript of 9 July 1955, evening session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 158, 23-4.

behind critical decisions that precipitated the confrontation with Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, due to limitations of space, only two of Molotov's accusations against Yugoslavs and Bulganin's responses will be presented here as illustrations. Responding to Molotov's accusation that, prior to the 1948 split, Yugoslavs had slid towards '*nationalism*', Bulganin stated that

'there were no facts to the effect that the Yugoslavs were creeping away from a Marxist-Leninist position, from internationalism, and were taking a nationalist path... Comrade Molotov wrote [letters that started the conflict in March and April 1948] at Stalin's dictation.

Khrushchev: *And the main material for this came from the blue sky, it was fabricated.*

Bulganin: *Yes, it was a fabrication. It was then that they made fabrications about Marxism-Leninism and nationalism... That is how the confrontation with Yugoslavia began...'*⁸⁶

Bulganin addressed another crime that Molotov attributed to the Yugoslavs - the intention to create the Balkan Federation together with Bulgaria:

'Bulganin: *Comrade Molotov is ascribing now the Balkan Federation to Tito. But, the issue was first raised by Stalin in a conversation with Dimitrov: "What if", he said, "you united the Balkans and created a federation? You would be supported", Stalin said to Dimitrov, "try talking with Tito." Dimitrov went home, visited Tito, spoke with him, and then [the federation] got underway'.*⁸⁷

The importance of events addressed by Molotov and then Bulganin was that they represented the '*crimes*' of which Tito was accused in the letters from Stalin and Molotov in March and April 1948. These accusations had then led to the COMINFORM Declaration on 28 June 1948 and the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Communist movement. Bulganin's address exposed Stalin's responsibility and

⁸⁶ Ibid, Bulganin's address, Transcript of 9 July 1955, evening session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 158, 90-100.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

fabrication of each and every one of these accusations. Beria was never mentioned.

The Plenum debates, inspired by the question of responsibility for the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict, brought about the first condemnation of Stalin's autocracy. It signalled the beginning of the process within the Presidium that would eventually lead to Khrushchev's '*secret speech*' in February 1956. At the Plenum, Khrushchev used the question of responsibility for the Yugoslav-Soviet break-up as a tool to challenge Stalin. Speaking a day before Khrushchev's closing address, Shepilov boldly observed that '*after years of not meeting, the Plenum of the Central Committee meets regularly once again... For thirteen years the Congress of the CPSU did not meet... The party work is alive once again... The most dangerous enemy of the construction of Communism – the personality cult is defeated. Collective leadership really functions*'.⁸⁸ This was the first mention of the '*personality cult*'. Shepilov, Khrushchev's protégé, was attacking Stalin's legacy by comparing the present work of party institutions with lack of it during Stalin. Given Shepilov's proximity to Khrushchev and the boldness of his address, it is possible that Khrushchev was using him as a trial balloon to test the reaction of the Central Committee. Indeed, in his closing address, Khrushchev questioned Stalin's legacy for the first time. He reproached Molotov for boasting that he had sat in the Politburo for 34 years and added that '*it is about time that the Plenum of the CC takes the position it deserves, the role of the хозяин [the head] of the party, that of*

⁸⁸ Ibid, Shepilov's address, Transcript of 11 July 1955, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 159, 123.

the leader of the party and the country and assumes its responsibilities... the Party is led by the CC and not by Molotov or Khrushchev, or anybody else... We need to rejuvenate the Presidium'.⁸⁹ Khrushchev then went even further and added that *'we all respect and will continue to respect comrade Stalin... However, in his last years, when Stalin was greatly incapacitated, many wrongs have happened. True, we have now rectified things, but how many honest people have we lost?'*⁹⁰ Although with caution, Stalin's infallibility had been openly questioned for the first time.

Khrushchev and his supporters used the Plenum to enhance his standing and authority in the Party. In his opening address, Khrushchev declared that the meeting with Tito, as well as the policy of normalization of relations with Yugoslavia, were successful. He stated that *'the CPSU and the Soviet government have performed a huge task – the first step has been achieved towards disengagement of Yugoslavia from the Imperialist "lager"'*.⁹¹ Khrushchev told the Plenum that Tito had assured them during talks in Yugoslavia that the military component of the Balkan Pact would be phased out. As proof, he then read Volkov's report of his meeting with Tito on 29 June during which the Yugoslav leader confirmed limitation of Yugoslavia's commitment to the Pact.⁹² Khrushchev also triumphantly declared that the Soviet initiative for the normalization with Yugoslavia had liquidated the conflict between the two countries, which continued

⁸⁹ Ibid, Khrushchev's closing address, Transcript of 12 July 1955, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 161, 198-201.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 196-7

⁹¹ Ibid, Report of the First Secretary, N.S. Khrushchev on the result of Soviet-Yugoslav talks, Transcript of 9 July 1955, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6225, Дело 143, 49.

⁹² Ibid, 33.

to inflict huge damage to the prestige and strategic interests of the USSR. He assured members of the Central Committee that *'the Soviet-Yugoslav negotiations [in Belgrade] created a fundamental turnaround in Yugoslav-Soviet relations. The abnormal situation created in 1948 was liquidated'*.⁹³ Khrushchev's supporters, Bulganin, Saburov, and Shepilov praised Khrushchev for being the driving force behind the initiative for the improvement of relations with Yugoslavia. Even those who opposed Khrushchev, namely Malenkov, Suslov, Kaganovich, and Molotov admitted Khrushchev's crucial role in the new policy towards Yugoslavia.⁹⁴ Consequently, the success of the policy could only be credited to Khrushchev. This further promoted an image of Khrushchev as a visionary leader.

The July Plenum provided the stage for Khrushchev to isolate Molotov and consolidate his own leadership position. The proclaimed success of the policy of normalization with Yugoslavia proved an ideal tool for this task. Molotov's opposition to the improvement of relations with Yugoslavia offered Khrushchev and his supporters the pretext to launch an attack on Molotov.⁹⁵ At the end of his opening exposé, Khrushchev *'reluctantly'* felt *'obliged'* to report to the Plenum of Molotov's opposition *'throughout the [process] of resolving questions related to normalization with Yugoslavia'*. Khrushchev underlined that *'as it is clear to*

⁹³ Ibid, 36.

⁹⁴ Ibid, Molotov's address, Transcript of the 9 July, evening session; Ibid, Ролик 6228, Дело 158, 56; Kaganovich's address (evening, 11 July), Ibid, Дело 160, 7; Saburov's address (evening, 11 July), Ibid, Дело 160, 112.

⁹⁵ Ibid, Transcripts, Accompanying Documents, and Resolutions; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролики (Rolls) 6225, 6227, and 6228 (microfilms).

everyone, the progress of talks with Yugoslavs had demonstrated the incorrectness of comrade Molotov's position on the Yugoslav question'.⁹⁶

Ominously, Khrushchev concluded that Molotov's stance [did] *not coincide with the interests of the Soviet State and the Socialist "lager" and with the principles of the Leninist policy*'. During Stalin's era, such qualification would have condemned a member of the leadership to imprisonment, even death. However, unlike in the past, Molotov was given an opportunity to respond to accusations as the first speaker after Khrushchev.

Molotov defended his opposition to the visit to Yugoslavia on the grounds that it debased the authority and prestige of the Soviet leadership. He firmly believed that the Yugoslav leadership was equally responsible for the split, if not more, because in 1948 Belgrade had departed from Marxism-Leninism and had succumbed to '*nationalism*'. According to Molotov, in the years since the 1948 break-up, the Yugoslav leadership had further slipped away from its initial Communist orientation. As proof, he pointed to the huge military aid Yugoslavia was receiving from the West and to its revisionist amiability towards Social Democrats.⁹⁷ However, Molotov was fighting a losing battle. Following a clearly pre-arranged script, other members of the Presidium addressed the Plenum after Molotov and, one by one, supported Khrushchev's accusations. Even Suslov, who was hardly sympathetic to the normalization with Yugoslavia, attacked Molotov for

⁹⁶ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 4-12 July 1955, Report of the First Secretary, N.S. Khrushchev on the result of Soviet-Yugoslav talks, Transcript of 9 July 1955, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6225, Дело 143, 49.

⁹⁷ Ibid, Molotov's address, Transcript of the 9 July, evening session; Ibid, Ролик 6228, Дело 158, 1-65.

undermining *'the only correct policy of the CPSU'*.⁹⁸ Malenkov, for his part, pointed to the fact that Molotov had openly sabotaged the instructions of the Presidium when he refused to initiate talks on further normalization during his meeting with the Yugoslav Ambassador in Moscow, Vidić, on 21 January 1954.⁹⁹ The rally against Molotov thus turned into the declaration of allegiance to the new leader - Khrushchev.

However, policy towards Yugoslavia was not the true motive behind Khrushchev's attack on Molotov. Rather, it was the overt rivalry for the leadership, the disagreement between the two contenders over the future role of the Party, and the need to dismantle Stalin's legacy, which dictated Khrushchev's behaviour. Again, Khrushchev allowed his supporters to formulate the line of demarcation with Molotov. Bulganin asserted that Molotov disagreed with the rest of the Presidium not only on the issue of Yugoslavia, but also *'on all important issues of [Soviet] foreign policy'*.¹⁰⁰ To underline the depth of the rift between Molotov and the rest of the leadership, Bulganin added that *'even with regard to domestic policies [there were] similar disagreements'*.¹⁰¹ Saburov accused Molotov of promoting an *'incorrect position'* that the head of the Ministerial Council should be the leader of the country and not the First Secretary of the Party. He also added that Molotov had opposed the initiative for normalization with Yugoslavia only because it was Khrushchev's brainchild. According to Saburov, Molotov had offered the same resistance to Khrushchev's other initiatives, such as the Austrian compromise in

⁹⁸ Ibid, Suslov's address, 132.

⁹⁹ Ibid, Malenkov's address, Transcript of the 11 July, evening, session, Ibid, Полик 6228, Дело 160, 79.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, Bulganin's address, Transcript of 9 July 1955, evening session; Ibid, Дело 158, 113.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 116.

the beginning of 1955.¹⁰² Shepilov, who had declared that the '*personality cult*' was defeated, accused Molotov of opposing the new course, which the Party had introduced after Stalin's death.¹⁰³ In his closing speech, the day after Shepilov and Saburov's addresses, Khrushchev accused Molotov of refusing to accept that the Party is lead by the Central Committee and not by powerful individuals.¹⁰⁴ This was a bold new statement from Khrushchev not only against Molotov, but also against the usurpation of power during Stalin's leadership. The successful sidelining of Molotov at the July Plenum represented a step towards the consolidation of Khrushchev's leadership. It is very doubtful whether without this reinforcement of his position at the July Plenum Khrushchev would have been able to orchestrate the decisive challenge against Stalin at the end of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, in February 1956.

The July Plenum, inspired by the debate on Yugoslav-Soviet normalization, had also challenged, for the first time, the relations within the Soviet Bloc and within the international Communist movement. At the end of the Plenum, its conclusions were issued in the form of a Resolution. The document approved the work of the Soviet delegation during the talks in Yugoslavia and declared the visit a success. It also condemned Molotov for opposing the rest of the Presidium on the issue of normalization with Yugoslavia. Most significantly, addressing relations within the Socialist '*camp*', the Resolution stipulated that

¹⁰² Ibid, Saburov's address, Transcript of the 11 July, evening, session, Ibid, Дело 160, 112-114.

¹⁰³ Ibid, Shepilov's address, Transcript of 11 July 1955, morning session; Ibid, Дело 159, 123.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 198-201.

*'the Plenum of the CPSU CC had concluded that, based on the lessons of the Yugoslav-Soviet relations between 1948 and 1953, it is necessary to draw conclusions for the improvement of all aspects of relations between the Soviet Union and other countries of the Socialist lager, as well as for the further improvement and strengthening of bonds with fraternal Communist parties... In all our relations with the countries of the Peoples' Democracies, as well as with fraternal Communist and proletarian parties, the Soviet Government and Party organs, as well as our representatives abroad are obliged to be strictly governed by Leninist principles of Socialist internationalism, by full equality, recognition of national sovereignty, and by taking into consideration the national individuality of corresponding countries... [With regard to the question of the construction of Socialism] the historical experience of the Soviet Union and countries of Peoples' Democracies demonstrated that in different countries, together with the unanimity regarding the most important task of securing the victory of Socialism, it is possible that different forms and methods of solving specific problems of the building of Socialism can be introduced, according to historical and national particularities'.*¹⁰⁵

The concepts promoted by the Resolution regarding relations in the Soviet Bloc and in the international Communist movement were ground breaking. It was Stalin who had imposed the existing form of these relations. As such, Communists throughout the world regarded it as the immutable postulate of Marxism-Leninism. In the Resolution of the July Plenum, for the first time since Stalin's accession to power, an official Soviet Party document had promoted equality in relations between Socialist countries and called for an end to Soviet hegemony. Also for the first time, an official Soviet party Resolution acknowledged that individual roads to Socialism could exist. In its opening statement, the Resolution explicitly cited as its source the experience of the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict in 1948. Khrushchev's statements during the debates at the Plenum reveal that he had come before the Central Committee with a clear set of concepts that he wished to introduce and

¹⁰⁵ Ibid; The Resolution of the Plenum: *The Results of the Soviet-Yugoslav Talks*; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6225, Дело 143, 205-6.

promote; the Resolution had articulated them. When speaking of the need for vigilance against bourgeois nationalism as the enemy of proletarian internationalism, Khrushchev also stressed the danger from *'state chauvinism'*. This was an implicit acknowledgment of Soviet hegemony within the Socialist *'camp'*. Again using *'the Yugoslav case'* as the pretext, Khrushchev underlined that

'at the time of 1948, the Soviet Government... seized upon methods and activities that negated national feelings of Yugoslavs. Thus, the USSR, a huge power, which now with China represents a vast part of the World that is building Socialism, has a responsibility to be very alert and careful towards the national feelings of peoples, in particular smaller peoples... This is important for the strengthening of the Socialist "lager"'.¹⁰⁶

Khrushchev insisted that Soviet flexibility and sensitivity to the experiences of other Socialist countries would enhance the cohesion of the *'lager'*.¹⁰⁷ Formulations used by Khrushchev during the Plenum on this subject sound almost identical to those used by Tito during their talks in Belgrade. The concepts of equality and respect for national particularities and different cultural heritage of individual nations and parties within the international Communist movement were re-introduced at the July Plenum for the first time since Lenin's era. The further significance of this was that these new concepts were stipulated in the official Resolution of the Plenum. This ensured that other Communist parties would look upon them as part of the new official ideological line sanctioned by Moscow, the highest ideological authority. The inclusion of new concepts in the Resolution confirms Khrushchev

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, Report by the First Secretary, N.S. Khrushchev on the results of the Soviet-Yugoslav talks, Transcript of 9 July, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6225, Дело 143, 60-2.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 63.

and his supporters' determination to introduce a new, more liberal course in relations between the Soviet Union and other countries.

The importance of the July Plenum of the CPSU CC went beyond Yugoslav-Soviet bilateral relations. At the Plenum, which took place eight months before the '*secret speech*', Khrushchev and his supporters initiated the dismantling of Stalin's legacy. By tactically probing the causes of the rupture with Yugoslavia in 1948, Khrushchev and his supporters provided evidence of Stalin's despotic rule. For the first time since Stalin's death, Khrushchev admitted to the members of the Central Committee, a relatively wide audience, that '*many good comrades were lost*' during Stalin's time. Only once the first hurdle had been successfully surmounted at the Plenum could Khrushchev and his supporters start the crucial battle in the Presidium for the open denunciation of Stalin in February 1956. The '*secret speech*' would probably never have happened if Khrushchev had not won his prior victory through the support of the Central Committee at the July Plenum. The '*secret speech*' thus signalled the end of the battle in the Kremlin and Khrushchev's final victory - not the beginning of this process.

Khrushchev and his supporters used the rupture with Yugoslavia in 1948 as the pretext to question Stalin's postulates that regulated Soviet relations with the Satellites and other Communist parties. The Resolution of the Plenum promoted equality in relations between the Socialist countries and between Communist parties. This invited national awakening throughout Eastern Europe. The process of liberalization in the Satellite parties thus started at the July Plenum, much earlier

than has hitherto been acknowledged. Khrushchev's '*secret speech*' represented only the final act that would officially empower liberal members of local national leaderships to remove Stalin's appointees. This explains how it was possible for the situation in Poland and Hungary to reach boiling point only months after Khrushchev's '*secret speech*'.

The first questioning of Stalin's infallibility, initiated at the July Plenum, was brought forward by questions forced upon the Soviet leaders by the normalization with Yugoslavia and talks they had held with Tito and his associates in Belgrade. By the time the Plenum took place, Khrushchev had become convinced of the inevitability and the necessity of dismantling Stalin's legacy. Nothing else can explain Khrushchev's gamble at the Plenum in challenging Stalin, at the time when he had already outmanoeuvred Malenkov and Molotov, his main leadership contenders. Furthermore, as Khrushchev later revealed, the visit to Yugoslavia and exchanges with Tito had had a profound impact on himself and his comrades. He admitted that *[he] realized the falsehood of [the Soviet leadership's] position [regarding Stalin] for the first time and in earnest when [he] arrived in Yugoslavia and spoke with Tito and other comrades there*.¹⁰⁸ At meetings with Tito and the Yugoslavs, Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders had for the first time been exposed to ideological debates with another Communist party on equal basis. Moreover, during these exchanges, they had had the opportunity for the first time in their lives to hear theoretical views opposed to Stalin's doctrine, not from someone they

108 Н. С. Хрущев, *Воспоминания...*, Кн. 4 [Vol. 4], 189.

considered a 'class enemy' but from someone they recognised as a proven Communist. Exchanges with Tito and other Yugoslav officials forced Khrushchev to face the truth about Stalin. He revealed that

*'it was from the Yugoslavs that I had heard an open criticism of Stalin for the first time. It knocked me off my feet and made me feel dejected ... Subconsciously, I agreed [with the Yugoslav accusations] but was still under the spell of Stalin's authority to be able to call things their true names...We were still not ready, we had not yet liberated our spirit from the slave-like dependence that we lived in under Stalin .'*¹⁰⁹

Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia made the July 1955 Plenum of the CPSU CC possible. The Plenum, in turn, opened the way for the process of de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe.

III.3 Rapprochement

Khrushchev's trip to Belgrade and the endorsement given to the normalization with Yugoslavia by the July Plenum of the CPSU CC had a profound impact on further progress of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. The hitherto sporadic pace of normalization gave way to an accelerated improvement and true rapprochement. In the months that followed the Plenum, every aspect of relations between the two countries - political, economic, and cultural - developed beyond recognition. The initiatives for this acceleration came largely from Moscow. It followed up on Khrushchev's pledge

¹⁰⁹ Н. С. Хрущев, *Воспоминания...*, Кн. 3 [Vol. 3], 148-50.

at the Plenum that no effort should be spared by the Communist parties to act as an *'irresistible pulling force for the healthy elements in the LCY and for the peoples of Yugoslavia'*.¹¹⁰

Economic relations between the two countries registered the most dramatic improvement. Cognisant of Yugoslavia's economic problems, Moscow had recognized that economic relations could prove to be the strongest *'pulling force'* that would induce links between Yugoslavia and the rest of the Socialist world. Yugoslavia, for its part, was more than eager to develop economic cooperation with the USSR as a means of easing its catastrophic economic situation but also as a way to decrease its inordinate dependence on US aid. At the very beginning of the Yugoslav-Soviet normalization Tito had stressed that [Yugoslavia] *needs to trade with the Russians*'.¹¹¹ By May 1955, the US economic assistance and aid delivered to Yugoslavia since 1950 amounted to US\$503.2 million. Almost all of this was in the form of grants, well over half of which consisted of shipments of food and other agricultural surplus commodities. Economic assistance from the UK and France in the same period amounted to a further US\$ 77 million. On top of this economic assistance, in the same period, the equivalent of US\$ 787.7 million of military aid was allocated to Yugoslavia, of which about US\$ 432.9 million had

¹¹⁰ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 4-12 July 1955, Report of the First Secretary, N.S. Khrushchev on the result of Soviet-Yugoslav talks, Transcript of 9 July 1955, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6225, Дело 143, 48.

¹¹¹ The Meeting of the LCY CC Executive Committee (Extended) – Transcript, 19 July 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/62a. Also, Fifth Plenum of LCY CC – Transcript, 26 November 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/13.

been delivered by May 1955.¹¹² US assistance to Yugoslavia surpassed assistance provided through the European Recovery Programme to many European states.

Despite new political willingness following Khrushchev's visit, there still remained an obstacle to the re-establishment of full economic cooperation between Yugoslavia and the USSR. This was the question of mutual financial claims that had arisen from the 1948 break-up. The Soviet claims derived from the military assistance the USSR had delivered to Tito's partisans in the closing stages of the Second World War and then to the Yugoslav Army in the period between 1945 and the break up of relations in 1948. Yugoslavia, from its side, demanded compensation for the unilateral Soviet cancellation in 1948 and 1949 of existing commercial contracts and state agreements between Yugoslavia and the USSR. During Khrushchev's visit to Belgrade, the two parties had only agreed to postpone discussion of the problem because of its complexity.¹¹³ However, on 29 June during his meeting with the Soviet Ambassador, Volkov, Tito proposed a way to cut the Gordian knot. He suggested that both sides simultaneously renounce their claims.¹¹⁴ To demonstrate his eagerness for truly substantial improvement of economic cooperation with the USSR, Tito specified to Volkov that Yugoslavia would, among other things, seek Soviet economic assistance in the construction of

¹¹² Progress Report on NSC 5406/1 United States Policy Towards Yugoslavia, 13 April 1955; FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XXVI, pp 632-5. Also, Memorandum From the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Murphy) to the Secretary of State, 16 September 1955; FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XXVI, 666-7. In the Memorandum from Murphy, the total amount of programmed military aid was slightly smaller, US\$ 772.2 million.

¹¹³ Transcript of Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Belgrade, 27, 28 May and 2 June 1955; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-56.

¹¹⁴ Memorandum of conversation with President Tito, 29 June 1955; Report by the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade, V. Volkov; АВП, РФ, Фонд 0144, Опись 40, Папка 163, Дело 4, 131-5.

metallurgical, aluminium, and electricity plants.¹¹⁵ On 8 July, a day after he had responded to Tito on the re-establishment of party relations, Khrushchev sent another letter to the Yugoslav leader informing him of the decision of the CPSU CC to cancel the outstanding Yugoslav debt to the Soviet Union of 528 million Roubles (approximately US\$ 90 million). In the letter, Khrushchev emphasized that the decision to cancel Yugoslavia's debt reflected the Soviet desire to clear the way for the development of full economic cooperation between the USSR and Yugoslavia. He underlined that this decision was in response to Tito's appeal expressed during his meeting with the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade on 29 June.¹¹⁶

Khrushchev's letter of 8 July provided an immediate boost to economic cooperation between the two countries. On 30 July, both countries agreed to double in volume the existing Trade exchange protocol for 1955 signed in Moscow on 5 January, worth US\$ 20 million.¹¹⁷ On 1 September, after only eight days of smooth negotiations in Moscow, Vukmanović-Tempo, and his Soviet counterpart and host, Mikoyan, signed an Agreement of intent. The two sides declared their desire to conclude, as soon as possible, several ambitious agreements to augment their existing economic cooperation between them. Mikoyan and Vukmanović-Tempo also agreed to increase the volume of their trade exchange in the forthcoming year to US\$ 70 million, minimum. This was an almost twofold increase on the already

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Letter from the CPSU CC, signed by N. S. Khrushchev, to the LCY CC, addressed to Tito, 8 July 1955; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-58.

¹¹⁷ Report by the First Department of DSIP on Relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR and East European Countries in 1955, 20 December 1955; SMIP, PA, 1955, SSSR, F63/5-18764.

revised protocol signed only a month earlier, on 30 July, and a fourfold increase on the original trade protocol signed in the beginning of the year.¹¹⁸

Indeed, within several months, in the beginning of 1956, the Tempo-Mikoyan agreement was translated into a series of contracts. On 6 January, a Protocol on Trade for 1956, worth US\$ 70 million was signed. The '*commodity lists*' stipulated by the Protocol, which specified the type and quantities of goods to be exchanged between the two countries, reflected mostly Yugoslavia's demands. In an agreement signed on 12 January, the Soviets provided a loan for the financing and construction of several industrial plants in Yugoslavia worth US\$110 million. On 2 February, Yugoslavia and the USSR signed further loan agreements. The Soviets granted Yugoslavia a loan of US\$ 54 million for purchases of raw materials in the USSR in the next three years. Moscow also approved a US\$30 million loan in gold or in convertible currencies. Both were ten-year loans with a 2% annual interest rate. The loan conditions were more favourable than the current market rates. In addition the Soviets also agreed in February to finance a copper processing and two aluminium plants in Yugoslavia, and expressed interest in ordering vessels from Yugoslav shipyards worth US\$ 400 million.¹¹⁹ On 28 January, the two countries signed an Agreement of cooperation in the field of commercial use of atomic energy. It stipulated that the Soviets would help Yugoslavia build its first

¹¹⁸ DSIP Memo on Relations with the USSR after Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia; Part of the materials prepared for Tito for his trip to USSR in June 1956; No date, probably second half of May 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, SSSR, F87/2-423244.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. Also, Report by the First Department of DSIP on Relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR and East European Countries in 1955, 20 December 1955; SMIP, PA, 1955, SSSR, F63/5-18764.

commercial nuclear reactor.¹²⁰ Given the strategic importance of nuclear technology, this agreement exceeded ordinary economic cooperation. It hinted at 'special relations', an impression that the Soviets certainly were only too happy to promote. Moscow's interest in increasing economic cooperation with Yugoslavia and the generosity it manifested in awarding unusually favourable terms in the commercial agreements signed in the beginning of 1956, did not escape Belgrade's attention. The Yugoslav leadership was fully aware that this unprecedented Soviet goodwill was an expression of Moscow's strong political interest and intent to draw Yugoslavia into its orbit.¹²¹ However, as no political conditions were for the moment attached to the commercial agreements, the Yugoslavs were eager to exploit the situation for the fulfilment of their own strategic goal - the reduction of economic dependency on the West.

Parallel to the upsurge in economic cooperation, an equally remarkable expansion of political, military, cultural, and other contacts between the two countries occurred in the months that followed Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia and the July Plenum of the CPSU CC. As with the economic relations, the initiatives largely came from Moscow. From 1 to 10 July, at the invitation of the Soviet Air Force, a very senior Yugoslav Air Force delegation, headed by General Zdenko Ulepić visited the USSR. The visit represented the first Yugoslav-Soviet military contact since 1948. At the end of July, a delegation of editors of the most prominent Yugoslav

¹²⁰ The Chronology of Yugoslav-Soviet Relations (1953-1956) – Report prepared by DSIP for Tito's visit to the USSR, June 1956; No date, second half of May 1956 (the last entry in the document was for 18 May and Tito departed for Moscow on 1 June 1956); AJBT, KPR, I-2/7-1, 683-717.

¹²¹ DSIP Memo on Relations With the USSR-Part of the materials prepared for Tito for his trip to USSR in June 1956; Second half of May 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, SSSR, F87/2-423244.

newspapers visited the USSR. A delegation of Soviet editors returned the visit almost immediately, in the second half of September. Between 1 and 21 August, at the invitation of the Soviet Supreme Soviet, a high level delegation of the Yugoslav Federal Assembly visited the USSR. As with the earlier visit by newspaper editors, this visit was returned very quickly, in October.¹²² The haste with which the return visits were carried out manifested a pronounced effort on the Soviet side to accelerate the political normalization between the two countries. The Soviets were also only too happy to fuel Western anxiety that an unusually rapid improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations could suggest the re-establishment of *'fraternal'* closeness between Moscow and Belgrade.

Between 17 September and 5 October, Mikoyan, one of Khrushchev's closest collaborators and a member of the Soviet Party Presidium, spent an extended holiday in Yugoslavia. Apart from a few days spent in Brioni with Tito, Mikoyan travelled extensively throughout Yugoslavia. His busy itinerary and schedule, set up on his own request, took him to all parts of Yugoslavia, where he met ordinary citizens, as well as Yugoslav officials.¹²³ Given Mikoyan's intimacy with Khrushchev, the character of this visit points to Khrushchev's keen interest to acquire first-hand information on all aspects of life, and social and political organization in Yugoslavia. For the same reason, in the beginning of September

¹²² Report by the First Department of the DSIP on Relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR and East European Countries in 1955, 20 December 1955; SMIP, PA, 1955, SSSR, F63/5-18764.

¹²³ Detailed report on Mikoyan's visit, 26 October 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F II / SSSR I – 334.

Nikolai Firubin replaced Volkov as the new Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade.¹²⁴ The appointment of Firubin also served to send several messages to Belgrade. The Soviet leadership wished to elevate its relations with Belgrade by appointing a higher calibre envoy. Firubin belonged to the top echelon of the Soviet MID and was the husband of Iakaterina Furtseva, the Moscow Party Chief and the Candidate member of the Party Presidium. Firubin's appointment also reflected Moscow's desire to receive higher quality reports from Belgrade. Moreover, the change of Ambassadors represented Khrushchev's gesture to Tito who was not happy with Volkov's ideological rigidity.¹²⁵

By the end of 1955, Yugoslav-Soviet government relations were fully '*normalized*' and could easily have been characterized as cordial. However, relations between the CPSU and the LCY remained non-existent. Tito and Khrushchev did not communicate further on the subject after their exchange of letters in early July. On 25 December, from his yacht 'Galeb' en route from Ethiopia to Egypt, Tito instructed Kardelj in Belgrade to decline the Soviet invitation for a LCY delegation to attend the forthcoming Twentieth Congress of the CPSU '*for obvious reasons*'.¹²⁶ Four days later, following Tito's instructions, Kardelj called in the new Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade, Nikolai Firubin, and asked that the invitation not be sent to Belgrade because it was '*premature*'.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Memorandum of conversation, V. Mićunović – new Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade, Nikolai Firubin, 15 September 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F II / SSSR Zab. – 313.

¹²⁵ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 4-12 July 1955, Khrushchev's closing address, Transcript of 12 July 1955, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 161.

¹²⁶ Cable from Tito, on board 'Galeb', to Kardelj, 25 December 1955; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1955, I-5-v.

¹²⁷ Memorandum of conversation between Kardelj and the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade (Firubin), cabled to Tito, on board 'Galeb', 29 December 1955; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1955, I - 5 - v.

Improved government relations between Moscow and Belgrade did not, however, lead to the improvement of relations between Yugoslavia and the Satellite countries. Throughout 1955, normalization between Yugoslavia and countries of Peoples' Democracies was limited to fulfilment of the trade protocols agreed a year earlier.¹²⁸ However, by the end of 1955, with the exception of Poland, trade between Yugoslavia and the Satellite countries failed to reach even the agreed levels.¹²⁹ Contacts between Yugoslavia and the Satellites were limited to the signing of protocols regulating transport, communications and visa regimes and to sporadic exchanges of visits by artists and sports teams. Tito expressed his frustration with the progress of normalization with the Satellites in the cable to Kardelj on 25 December 1955. He demanded that Kardelj make it clear to the Soviet Ambassador that, during his forthcoming visit to the USSR, Tito wished to discuss with the Soviets the issue of the attitude of the Satellite countries towards Yugoslavia.¹³⁰

The lack of progress in Yugoslav-Satellite relations can be attributed to several factors. On the one hand, the leading elites in the Satellite countries were against improvement of relations with Yugoslavia. They were afraid that it would force them to confront questions related to the 1948 break-up with Yugoslavia. This would inevitably open debates within their countries that could seriously undermine their

¹²⁸ For more on these trade agreements please refer to the previous Chapter.

¹²⁹ Report by the First Department of the DSIP on Relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR and East European Countries in 1955, 20 December 1955; SMIP, PA, 1955, SSSR, F63/5-18764..

¹³⁰ Cable from Tito, on board 'Galeb', to Kardelj, 25 December 1955; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1955, I-5-v.

own position. Most of the leaders in these countries had come to power by fabricating trials against their own Party comrades, based on accusations of their being *'Titoists'*. On the other hand, the Soviets were reluctant to allow the Satellites to establish closer links with Yugoslavia fearing Belgrade's corrosive influence on their allegiance to Moscow.¹³¹ Finally, Tito and the Yugoslav leadership harboured strong personal animosity towards many Satellite leaders for the role they had played in spearheading hostilities and propaganda campaigns against Yugoslavia after 1948. Of some, such as Matyas Rakosi of Hungary and Enver Hoxha of Albania, Tito spoke with unveiled contempt. En route to Moscow in June 1956, Tito travelled by train through Rumania, a much longer route than the usual one through Hungary. He purposefully chose this route to avoid meeting Matyas Rakosi, the Hungarian leader. Speaking in November 1956, Tito admitted that because of Rakosi, he did *'not go through Hungary, even if it might have meant a three times shorter journey... To me, [Rakosi and his henchmen] are the most dishonest people in the world'*.¹³²

In 1955, Yugoslavia's relations with the West had established a pattern of counter proportionality to the level of warmth in Yugoslav-Soviet relations. This was particularly true in the first months after Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia. The West was growing increasingly apprehensive not only about the improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations, but also about Yugoslavia's pronounced neutralist

¹³¹ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 4-12 July 1955, Report of the First Secretary, N.S. Khrushchev on the result of Soviet-Yugoslav talks, Transcript of 9 July 1955, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6225, Дело 143, 90.

¹³² Tito's speech before the political leadership of Pula and the discussions that followed - Transcript, 10 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/XIX, I - 3.

orientation, in particular after Tito's return from Asia. In a series of contacts with the US and British Ambassadors in Belgrade, Tito and other Yugoslav officials did their best to dispel these anxieties.¹³³ However, as shown earlier in the Chapter, the Ambassadorial Conference in Belgrade in June, which ended without Yugoslavia's commitment to further strategic cooperation with the West, did not help restore the shaken rapport. For the next several months Yugoslavia's relations with the West were at their lowest since the start of the improvement in Yugoslav-Soviet relations. As the result of Washington's frustration with the accelerated improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations after Khrushchev's visit, US military aid to Yugoslavia was suspended in during the summer of 1955.¹³⁴

However, from early September Belgrade and Washington, realizing the danger of further deterioration undertook steps towards mending their relations. Once again, the Under Secretary of State, Robert Murphy was dispatched to Belgrade as President Eisenhower's personal envoy. The Agreement of Understanding on the continuation of US military assistance and additional economic aid to Yugoslavia was signed after several days of talks between Murphy and Tito.¹³⁵ As a result, relations between the West and Yugoslavia became once again cordial. The improvement was such that on 6 November 1955, during a break in the Four Power Foreign Ministers Meeting in Geneva, Dulles spent a day with Tito in Brioni.

¹³³ Memorandum of conversation between Tito and the British Ambassador in Belgrade (Sir Frank Roberts), 21 April 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F II / Engl. I – 215. Also, Memorandum of conversation between Tito and the US Ambassador in Belgrade (Riddleberger), 25 April 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F II / SAD Zab. – 213.

¹³⁴ Memorandum of Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State, August 11, 1955; FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XXVI, 660-1. Also, Memorandum of Conversation Between Srdja Prica and the US Ambassador (Riddleberger), 20 July 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F II / SAD Zab. – 291.

¹³⁵ Memorandum of Two Conversations Between President Tito and the US Undersecretary of State, Robert Murphy, 27 and 29 September 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F II / SAD Zab. II – 345; Confidential Memorandum of Understanding, 1 October 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F III / SAD I – 332 I, 306-12.

During the three hours of official talks and during informal conversations in a speedboat driven by Tito or in Tito's private villa, the two statesmen addressed all important foreign policy issues of the day.¹³⁶

Tito's talks with Dulles illustrate his determination to manoeuvre Yugoslavia into a position in-between the two Blocs. He genuinely believed in much of what he had said to Dulles. However, in order to convince the US that the Yugoslav-Soviet normalization would inevitably accelerate the weakening of the Soviet grip on the 'lager', Tito deliberately sounded more optimistic about the prospect of liberalization in Eastern Europe and of Yugoslavia's crucial role in this process. The Yugoslav leader thus wished to reaffirm Yugoslavia's undiminished importance to the West vis-à-vis the Soviets. He was well aware that this was essential if he wished to take advantage of the East-West rivalry and maintain a position of independence from both. This explains why Tito demonstrated his agreement with Dulles at the press conference held at the end of their meeting. During the conference, the Secretary of State had stressed that both sides had '*reached accord on recognizing the importance of independence of [the Satellites], non-interference from the outside in their internal affairs and their right to develop their own social and economic order in ways of their own choice*'. When asked directly whether he agreed with Dulles' statement, Tito confirmed this to be the case.¹³⁷

The Yugoslav leader had agreed this summarization with Dulles in advance, before

¹³⁶ Record of the Meeting Between President Tito and the US Secretary of State (Dulles) on Brioni, 6 November 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F II / SAD Zab. II – 362. Also, Record of the Meeting Between Secretary of State Dulles and President Tito on the Island of Vanga [Brioni Archipelago], November 6, 1955, 3-5:40 p.m.; FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XXVI, 680-97.

¹³⁷ Note 5; FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XXVI, 699.

the press conference.¹³⁸ When reporting on his visit to Brioni, at the meeting of the National Security Council on 21 November, Dulles described his talks with Tito as *'illuminating'*. He added that the joint statement regarding the Satellites, issued at the press conference at the end of the visit *'was in itself worth the whole trip'*.¹³⁹

The meeting with Tito in Brioni had a lasting impact on Dulles. Upon his return from Brioni, in his message to President Eisenhower, Dulles wrote that *'the day with Tito was one of the most interesting I have ever spent'*.¹⁴⁰ All available evidence points to the conclusion that Dulles developed a unique rapport with Tito during this short and what turned out to be their only meeting. Thus, one of the staunchest anti-Communists of the time, John Foster Dulles, came to trust one of the most prominent Communist leaders of the time, Josip Broz Tito. Dulles believed that Tito would remain independent from Moscow and, as such, would continue to be a permanent corrosive influence for the cohesion of the Soviet Bloc. He also understood that for this reason Tito and Yugoslavia remained one of the more important US assets in the effort to subvert Soviet control over the global Communist movement. This explains Dulles' unwavering backing for continued and undiminished US support of Tito's regime, through military and economic aid, in all subsequent re-evaluations of US policy towards Tito, even during the Hungarian crisis in November 1956.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Record of the Meeting Between President Tito and the US Secretary of State (Dulles) on Brioni, 6 November 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F II / SAD Zab. II – 362.

¹³⁹ Memorandum of Discussion at the 267th Meeting of the National Security Council, 21 November 1955; FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XXVI, 703-4.

¹⁴⁰ Message From the Secretary of State to the President, at Denver, 7 November 1955; FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XXVI, 698-9.

¹⁴¹ Memorandum of Discussion at the 267th Meeting of the National Security Council, 21 November 1955; FRUS, 1955-1957, Vol. XXVI, 703-4.

During 1955, Yugoslavia had all but completely lost interest in the Balkan Pact, a military alliance it had done its utmost to create only a year before. Several factors were responsible for this. The threat of the Soviet aggression, the main rationale for the creation of the Pact, had disappeared. At the same time, the new Yugoslav foreign policy orientation, non-alignment, was incompatible with membership in a military alliance that was part of one of the Blocs. Less than a year after it was signed in Bled, Yugoslavia, in August 1954, the Pact began to fragment. The slow demise of the Pact was determined as much by Yugoslavia's growing disinterest as by the growing animosity between the Greeks and the Turks. Frictions between Yugoslavia and other two members of the Pact first appeared during the Conference of the Council of Ministers of the Balkan Pact, held in Ankara between 28 February and 3 March 1955. The disagreements were a consequence of Yugoslavia's view that the sources of the tensions in the world were diminishing as a result of the changes in the Soviet policies. The second source of friction was continuous pressure from Greece and Turkey, resolutely rejected by Belgrade, for closer coordination of defence plans between the Balkan Pact and NATO.¹⁴² Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia only exacerbated Yugoslavia's relations with its Balkan Pact partners, in particular with Turkey. In the aftermath of Khrushchev's visit, Belgrade increasingly promoted '*cultural and economic*' aspects of the cooperation within the Pact, rather than the military one. In September, the Pact was rendered a final blow by the bloody anti-Greek riots in Istanbul and Izmir. In

¹⁴² Relations In the Balkan Alliance After the Ankara Conference, 1 September 1955; Top Secret DSIP Bulletin, 1 September 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F IV / Fasc. I / I - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten No. 16/55, 7-9

the months that followed, a paralysis developed in relations between Greece, Turkey, and Yugoslavia.¹⁴³ By the end of 1955, the Balkan Pact had lost its purpose and would soon peter out in complete insignificance.

III.4 The Comradeship

On the eve of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, a report from the Yugoslav Embassy in Moscow suggested that Khrushchev had still not fully secured his position. It asserted that Khrushchev and Bulganin depended heavily on the support of Marshall Georgy Zhukov and the Red Army. They had been instrumental in liquidating Beria and had decisively helped Khrushchev against Malenkov. The report underlined that the Army had imposed itself as a new power broker in the Kremlin.¹⁴⁴ The Yugoslav leadership concluded that Khrushchev was in need of support and felt obliged to offer some. Kardelj articulated this when he explained to the British Ambassador, Sir Frank Roberts, that '*Mr. Khrushchev and his group deserve encouragement... Mr. Khrushchev must show success in his policies, and it was particularly important that the Yugoslavs, as the main beneficiaries so far, should not be hesitant in welcoming any progressive steps*'.¹⁴⁵

During his visit to Belgrade, Tito and his associates have learned that Khrushchev

¹⁴³ Top Secret DSIP Bulletin, 1 December 1955; SMIP, SPA, 1955, F IV / Fasc. I / II - DSIP Strogo Pov. Bilten No. 22/55, 3-6.

¹⁴⁴ Report From the Yugoslav Embassy in Moscow, 9 February 1956; AJ, ACKSKJ, 507/IX, 119/II-40.

¹⁴⁵ Report by the HM Ambassador in Belgrade (Sir Frank Roberts) of a Conversation With E. Kardelj, 9 March 1955; PRO, FO 371 Series, File No. 124289, Doc. RY 10338/16, Telegram No. 35.

was the main force behind the Yugoslav-Soviet normalization and the conciliatory Soviet foreign policy in general. It was than logical to expect that, having initiated such policies, Khrushchev would be the most determined among the Soviet leaders to pursue them in future. Mindful of this, Tito had sent a letter of greetings to the Soviet Congress, the first such gesture from the Yugoslav leadership since the break up in 1948.¹⁴⁶ Khrushchev read Tito's telegram at the plenary session of the Congress on 18 February, a custom otherwise reserved only for the '*fraternal*' parties. Tito made sure that the Soviet leadership also received a pouch from him during the Congress. It contained a detailed account of Tito's visits to Egypt and Ethiopia two months earlier.¹⁴⁷

The Twentieth Congress of the CPSU was held between 14 and 25 February 1956. Khrushchev held his famous speech '*On the Personality Cult And Its Negative Implications*' on 25 February. It became known as the '*secret speech*' because it was delivered before a closed session of the Plenum of the Congress, few hours after the Congress was formally adjourned. On 8 March, Khrushchev sent two copies of the speech to Tito and the Yugoslav leadership. Barely concealing his triumphalism, Khrushchev wrote in the covering letter that he was '*presuming that [Yugoslav leaders] are interested in familiarizing [themselves] with this speech*'.¹⁴⁸ There is no evidence to suggest that the Yugoslav leadership had any

¹⁴⁶ The Letter From the CC LCY, signed by Tito, to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, 11 February 1956; AJ, 507/IX, 119/I-62.

¹⁴⁷ Letter from Tito to Khrushchev and the CC CPSU, Belgrade, 20 February 1956; AJ, ACKSKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-63.

¹⁴⁸ Copy of the '*Secret speech*' by N.S. Khrushchev and the accompanying cover letter, 8 March 1956; AJ, ACKSKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-65. Also, Josip Vrhovec, Zlatko Čepo (eds.), *Tajni referat N.S. Hruščeva* [The Secret Report by N.S. Khrushchev], (Zagreb: Stvarnost, 1970), 15-93.

foreknowledge that Khrushchev would deliver his historic '*secret speech*'. In his speech, Khrushchev openly condemned Stalin's despotism and named him as responsible for the mass liquidations before and after the Second World War, as well as for the catastrophic loss of Soviet lives during the War. In the part devoted to the causes of the Soviet-Yugoslav rupture in 1948, Khrushchev asserted that

*'Stalin's role was shameful. "The Yugoslav Affair" did not contain a single problem that could not have been dealt with in a comradely discussion...this does not mean that the Yugoslav leaders did not make mistakes, or that they were without fault. However, these mistakes were blown up by Stalin to monstrous proportions, which brought about the rupture of relations with a friendly country'.*¹⁴⁹

Khrushchev then provided an account of a meeting he had had with Stalin at the beginning of the 'Yugoslav affair'. Stalin boasted that it would be enough for him to move his little finger and Tito would disappear. According to Khrushchev this illustrated that [Stalin] *had completely lost the sense of reality; he demonstrated his suspicion and arrogance not only towards his countrymen but towards all other parties and nations.*' Khrushchev concluded that '[the Soviet leadership] *had examined the case of Yugoslavia and had made the only proper decision... the liquidation of the abnormal relationship with Yugoslavia was done in the interest of the whole Socialist camp, for the strengthening of the peace in the world*'.¹⁵⁰ In the '*secret speech*' Khrushchev unequivocally admitted Soviet responsibility for the conflict with Yugoslavia. He also established that the full normalization of relations with Yugoslavia was a necessity. Above all else, Khrushchev named Stalin as the main culprit behind the rupture of Yugoslav-Soviet relations in 1948.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

Khrushchev's '*secret speech*' prompted an immediate and enthusiastic reaction from the Yugoslav leadership. Belgrade's attitude towards Moscow was soon stripped of last vestiges of hesitation or reservations. Several factors contributed to this. In the '*secret speech*', Khrushchev admitted Soviet responsibility for the 1948 rupture. Moreover, he acknowledged that Stalin had played the key role in this conflict. The truth about Stalin's role was the one hurdle that the Soviets had not been ready to cross during Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia. For the sake of establishing normal government relations between the two countries and eliminating the Soviet threat, the Yugoslav leadership had accepted the Soviet initiative for normalization without their full admission of responsibility for 1948 and of Stalin's role. However, the failure to acknowledge full Soviet culpability led Tito and his associates to rebuff Soviet attempts at re-establishing Party relations between the CPSU and the LCY. Khrushchev's '*secret speech*' finally fulfilled the last Yugoslav condition. In addition, the Yugoslav leadership was now confident that the process of de-Stalinization, inaugurated by the '*secret speech*', would ensure the continuity of improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. At the Plenum of the LCY Central Committee, Tito expressed his optimism that '*events in the Soviet Union have evolved much faster than we could have expected... From now on, I believe, it will be easier to talk with them...*'.¹⁵¹ The new course in the Kremlin promised that future changes in the power balance in the Kremlin need not mean a change in the Soviet attitude towards Yugoslavia.

¹⁵¹ Sixth Plenum of the LCY CC, Belgrade, 13-14 March 1956 - Transcripts; AJ, ACKSKJ, 507/II/14.

The overwhelming opposition and dangers that Khrushchev had had to confront in order to deliver the '*secret speech*' inspired Tito and his associates with awe and respect for the Soviet leader. As an old COMINTERN disciple himself and a survivor of Stalin's purges in 1938, Tito was aware of the risks that Khrushchev had undertaken. The strength and courage shown by Khrushchev in initiating the process of de-Stalinization fully convinced the Yugoslav leadership that he was the only one in the Kremlin willing and able to fulfil this gargantuan task. At the LCY CC Plenum in March, Tito exclaimed in exaltation that '*[the Soviet leaders] have a very difficult situation. But, what that group has done to date – this includes Khrushchev, Bulganin and Mikoyan, and the others as well – are very important and brave deeds; what they have done at the Twentieth Congress was more courageous than their trip to Belgrade*'.¹⁵² This explains why the Yugoslavs, '*beneficiaries*' of Khrushchev's bold policies as they admitted to Sir Frank Roberts, felt obliged to support him.¹⁵³ Following the '*secret speech*', the Yugoslav leadership felt encouraged and safe to enter into comradeship with the Soviets.

The Sixth Plenum of the LCY CC on March 13 and 14 1956 confirmed that Yugoslav-Soviet relations had indeed entered a higher phase of closeness.¹⁵⁴ Several important considerations prompted Tito to convene the Plenum so quickly after the Soviet Twentieth Congress. Khrushchev's speech had introduced a new quality into the relations between the two countries. The Plenum served Tito to inform members of the Central Committee of the latest developments in Moscow

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Report by the HM Ambassador in Belgrade (Sir Frank) of a Conversation With E. Kardelj, 9 March 1955; PRO, FO 371 Series, File No. 124289, Doc. RY 10338/16, Telegram No. 35.

¹⁵⁴ Sixth Plenum of the LCY CC, Belgrade, 13-14 March 1956 - Transcripts; AJ, ACKSKJ, 507/II/14.

and to secure their support for the new closeness with the USSR. After years of close relations with the West, in the face of Stalin's threat, it is likely that Tito felt the need to remind his Party members of their true Marxist allegiance. According to the figure he had given to Khrushchev during talks in Belgrade, 83% of Party members in 1954 have joined the Party after 1948.¹⁵⁵ This was a result of anti-Stalinist purges that took place in Yugoslavia and the LCY between 1948 and 1953. Many of the Yugoslav top Party officials came to prominence after 1948 on the wave of anti-Stalinism. In 1956, the vast majority of the members of the Yugoslav top leadership, the Party Executive Committee and the LCY Central Committee were in their thirties. In the previous fifteen years of their young lives these people had either fought a guerrilla war against the Germans or had had to cope with a very real Soviet military threat and economic blockade. Anti-Stalinist indoctrination in Yugoslavia during the conflict had very often digressed into anti-Sovietism, in particular at times of heightened danger of Soviet attack. Tito, who was in his early sixties, was the oldest among Yugoslavia's leaders; Kardelj was in his late forties. More importantly, Tito and Kardelj were among the very few who had spend some time in the USSR and had acquired the classic Bolshevik indoctrination. At the Plenum he acknowledged that some party members were still suspicious of the Soviets, afraid of being cheated once again. Tito underlined that it would be disastrous should Party members have divergent views on developments in the USSR. He asked for unity among members and a single and very clear

¹⁵⁵ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 4-12 July 1955, Mikoyan's address, Transcript of the 11 July, morning session; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6228, Дело 159, 61.

policy of the LCY toward the Soviet Party.¹⁵⁶ In other words, Tito demanded full compliance with his new course towards Moscow.

On 2 April, the meeting of the Executive Committee of the LCY Central Committee further endorsed Yugoslavia's new comradeship towards the Soviets. Tito set the agenda by stressing that if hesitation and reservations towards the Soviet leadership were understandable during and after the Belgrade talks in 1955, the situation had changed after the Twentieth Congress. *'For us it is clear that [the developments after the Twentieth Congress] are not a result of new tactics or a manoeuvre but represent true intentions. We should give support to the Khrushchev group... Excessive reservations from our side will only feed bureaucratic, Stalinist elements in the USSR'*.¹⁵⁷ Accordingly, Tito demanded from the Executive Committee to redefine Yugoslavia's foreign policy priorities. He was of the opinion that Yugoslavia should cancel further US military aid. In his view, the US had already reduced deliveries of military equipment and was regularly imposing new conditions. In the context of new developments in the USSR, Tito posed a rhetorical question before the Committee, *'who are we now arming ourselves against'*?¹⁵⁸ On the other hand, according to him, Yugoslavia should continue to receive US economic aid, unless the Americans chose to stop sending it. Once again, as during the meeting of the same body on 19 July 1954, after Khrushchev's first letter, Tito's statements confirmed that relations with the West

¹⁵⁶ Sixth Plenum of the LCY CC, Belgrade, 13-14 March 1956 - Transcripts; AJ, ACKSKJ, 507/II/14.

¹⁵⁷ Meeting of the Executive Committee of the LCY CC - Transcript, April 2, 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/66.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

had never interfered with Yugoslavia's determination to pursue a course it saw fit with the Soviets. At the same time, however, Tito insisted that there was no basis for the existence of an organization such as the COMINFORM assigned to 'coordinate' relations between the Communist countries.¹⁵⁹

The record of discussions at the Executive Committee meeting reveal that the process of de-Stalinization that had begun in Moscow aroused unprecedented enthusiasm among the Yugoslav leaders. They now looked with almost naïve optimism at future relations within the Communist movement. Kardelj was convinced that the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe was in full progress and that Yugoslavia should be aiding this process. According to Kardelj, since Yugoslav initiatives had been well received by Moscow, Yugoslavia should be more active in developing cooperation with the Soviets. In the changed circumstances, Yugoslavia should reassess certain steps that it had to take for tactical reasons during the existence of the Soviet threat. Kardelj suggested that Yugoslavia should leave the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, as it was definitely an ideological organization of the West. He underlined that, *[Yugoslavia is] not joining the Russian fold, but [is] in the Socialist 'lager' of the whole world... We are, and have always been in the Socialist 'lager' but not in the context of the policies of the Blocs*'.¹⁶⁰ Kardelj's deliberations confirm that the Yugoslav leadership came to believe that in the new circumstances, created after the 'secret speech', the Soviets would finally abandon the role of a hegemon in the Communist movement.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

This belief gave the Yugoslav leadership the confidence to move closer to the Soviets. They finally felt free to join the Socialist world to which they had always belonged.

The transcript of the EC meeting and other available documents confirm that the newfound comradeship with the Soviets did not mean that Yugoslavia was willing to relinquish its independence and align itself with the Soviet Bloc. Yugoslavia's independent orientation never came in question. The new opportunities created by the de-Stalinization in the USSR were seen by the Yugoslav leadership as a friendlier environment that would enable Yugoslavia to engage fully in its policy of non-engagement and non-alignment. Time and again during the meeting, speakers underlined Yugoslavia's independence from the two Blocs. Tito repeatedly stated that the COMINFORM was baseless; Kardelj made it very clear that being part of the Socialist *"world"* did not mean membership of the *'lager'*. He also added that Yugoslavia should maintain relations with both Blocs while maintaining a safe distance from both. With regard to economic cooperation, he insisted that Yugoslavia should be careful not to be excessively dependent on either side.¹⁶¹ Koča Popović, the Foreign Minister, emphasized that the global prestige of Yugoslavia was higher than ever before and stressed that it must remain outside the Blocs. He also condemned Soviet intentions to pull non-engaged countries, such as India and Burma into the *'lager'*.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

The course of the April meeting of the LCY Executive Committee also confirm that developments in Moscow re-ignited the feeling of self-righteousness among the Yugoslav leadership. The '*secret speech*' acknowledged the correctness of their positions in the conflict with Stalin. The Yugoslav leaders believed that this had earned them the right to share the place of ideological authority, a position occupied so far by Moscow alone. Addressing the meeting of the Executive Committee, Vukmanović – Tempo stressed that the Russians, as well as the Satellites, did not know how to achieve the desired goals of '*Socialist construction*'. In his view, Yugoslav assistance would be essential and should be given.¹⁶³ In the interview given to the author, Vukmanović-Tempo confirmed that at the time the Yugoslav leadership shared an overwhelming enthusiasm with regard to the future of relations with the Soviets and within the Communist movement. They genuinely believed that they had been proven right, and, as true Communists, felt an obligation to help their comrades in the USSR and in East Europe. The Yugoslavs believed that they were ideologically and theoretically ahead of the rest in the Communist movement. According to Tempo, '*we felt as if we have won. We have been proven right. We believed that they should come to us, not the other way around*'.¹⁶⁴

The debates at the meeting of the Executive Committee illustrate well the dualism of Yugoslavia's foreign policy orientation. On the one hand, the Yugoslav leadership saw themselves as the authority of one of the two ideologies that

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Author's interview with Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, 12 February 2000.

constituted and defined the two confronted global Blocs. On the other hand, it tried hard to maintain a distance from both Blocs. This paradox would repeatedly frustrate the Soviets and irritate the West.

The meeting of the LCY Executive Committee, in April 1956 offers several additional conclusions. Yugoslav leaders were unanimous that the Soviet leadership, and Khrushchev in particular, deserved unreserved Yugoslav support. Considering themselves as the most experienced in post-Stalinist restructuring, they believed that they should award all necessary help to the Soviets and the Satellites. It was also concluded at the meeting that the threat from the Soviet Union had definitely been removed. Consequently, further US military aid was unnecessary and Yugoslavia's relations with the West could be more evenly balanced. Moreover, the threat of the reduction or cancellation of Western economic aid to Yugoslavia, as the consequence of much improved Yugoslav-Soviet relations, had had no influence whatsoever on the decisions taken by the Yugoslav leadership regarding the course or pace of the Yugoslav rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the Yugoslav leaders had concluded at the meeting that the de-Stalinization process in the Satellites was lagging behind the process in the USSR. On one hand, they were adamant not to initiate reconciliation with the Eastern European countries. The Yugoslavs believed that any approaches to the Satellites were futile as long the Stalin-era leadership was still in place. It implied Yugoslavia's interest in having these leaderships removed. Indeed, this would be manifested in Yugoslavia's active support to Gomulka in Poland and Nagy in Hungary later in the year.

In the months after Khrushchev's '*secret speech*', the Yugoslav leadership enjoyed a period of revolutionary enthusiasm and awakened hope of new unity in the Communist movement based on equality. In such atmosphere, Belgrade looked forward to Tito's forthcoming June visit to the USSR to provide further impetus to the improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. It was expected to crown on the newly found comradeship between the two countries.

CHAPTER IV

CONFRONTATION

1956 (June) – **1957** (February)

Tito visited the USSR between 2 and 23 June 1956. Jubilant masses greeted the Yugoslav leader wherever he went. The trip turned into Tito's personal triumph and, at its conclusion, a Moscow Declaration was signed, establishing relations between the Soviet and Yugoslav Communist parties. This led many Western observers to view this as a sign of Yugoslavia's return to the '*Socialist lager*'.¹ Although some of the feting of the Yugoslav leader was staged by the Soviets for propaganda purposes, there was genuine popular adulation of Tito, the acclaimed war hero and a man who stood up to Stalin. At the Mamaiev Kurban in Stalingrad, the place where unknown thousands of the defenders of the city lay buried, crowds broke through Soviet security cordons and joined in a spontaneous, warm encounter with Tito and Khrushchev.²

¹ The British Ambassador in Moscow (Sir William Hayter) to the Foreign Office, Telegram No. 849, June 20, 1956; The National Archives (PRO), FO 371 Series, File No. 124290, Doc. RY 10338/63.

² V. Mićunović, *Moskovske godine...*, 87-9

However, in the aftermath of Tito's visit, under the pressure of mounting crises in Eastern Europe, there appeared signs of growing dissension in Soviet-Yugoslav relations. At the end of September, Khrushchev and Tito spent two weeks together, on '*holiday*', first in Yugoslavia and then at Yalta. The '*holidaying*' represented the culmination of unsuccessful Soviet efforts to draw Yugoslavia into the '*lager*' and to engage it in harnessing the increasingly precarious developments in Poland and Hungary.

Tito's tacit support of Soviet military intervention in Hungary on 4 November came as a surprise to many. Furthermore, only hours after the Red Army's onslaught, the Yugoslav and Soviet leaderships became entangled in the imbroglio created by Imre Nagy's asylum in the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest. However, in a speech in the Yugoslav town of Pula, before the Nagy '*affair*' inflicted damage on Yugoslav-Soviet relations and only a week after the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising, Tito publicly criticised the Soviet policies and its leadership. This marked the beginning of an open Yugoslav-Soviet ideological confrontation. By February 1957, after two months of public polemics and recriminations, the Yugoslav-Soviet altercation threatened to repeat the 1948 rupture. Neither leadership would allow the conflict to go as far. However, Yugoslav-Soviet relations would never recover the level of enthusiastic comradeship that existed between the two countries in the first half of 1956 - between Khrushchev's '*secret speech*' and Tito's trip to the USSR.

IV.1 Tito's Visit to the USSR

It may seem paradoxical that the Chapter dealing with the deterioration of Yugoslav-Soviet relations begins with the presentation of Tito's triumphant visit to the USSR in June 1956. This was perceived to be the culmination of the rapprochement between the two countries. Many Western observers in Moscow, such as the British Ambassador, Sir William Hayter, saw Tito's visit as the confirmation of Yugoslavia's return to the Soviet '*camp*'.³ The truth however, could not have been more different. Underneath the pomp, crowd jubilations, and manifestations of comradeship, the talks between two delegations resembled a battle between irreconcilable adversaries. Tito's trip to the USSR in June 1956 was in fact the beginning of the next Yugoslav-Soviet confrontation.⁴

Tito's visit lasted three weeks, from 2 to 23 June 1956. It was his first trip to the Soviet Union since 1946 and included visits to Leningrad, Kiev, Stalingrad, and the Kuban region. Ahead of the visit, the Soviets made gestures intended to impress Tito. On 22 May, Khrushchev sent Tito a detailed account of the April visit to Moscow by French Socialists, led by the French Prime Minister Guy Mollet.⁵ The Mollet visit was the first official Soviet contact with a major Western Socialist party. During Khrushchev's visit to Belgrade, a year earlier, the Yugoslavs had urged the

³ The British Ambassador in Moscow (Sir William Hayter) to the Foreign Office, Telegram No. 849, June 20, 1956; FO 371 Series, File No. 124290, Doc. RY 10338/63.

⁴ Dobrovoje Vidić, Deputy Federal Secretary for Foreign Affairs, to Yugoslav Ambassadors – 'On the Origins Of the Recent Worsening Of Relations With the USSR', 8 January 1957; SMIP, SPA, 1957, F II / SSSR I – 8.

⁵ Letter by Khrushchev and the CC CPSU to Tito and the CC LCY, May 22, 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-68.

Soviets to establish contacts with the Socialist and Social Democratic parties of Western Europe. This confidence about talks with Guy Mollet thus served to demonstrate to Tito that his suggestions were being taken seriously in Moscow. Furthermore, a day before Tito's arrival, Molotov's resignation from the post of Foreign Minister was officially announced in Moscow. Although the resignation was most certainly part of Khrushchev's consolidation of his leadership position, the announcement was conveniently timed to 'soften' Tito ahead of the talks with the Soviet leaders. The Soviets were aware of Yugoslav animosity towards Molotov. In March and April 1948, together with Stalin, Molotov co-signed the letters that had announced the beginning of the conflict with Yugoslavia. Finally, the same calculated motive may have been behind the timing of the announcement of the dissolution of the COMINFORM, on 18 April, six weeks ahead of Tito's visit. The stage was thus set, as was certainly hoped in the Kremlin for Tito to feel more responsive towards Soviet demands during the forthcoming talks.

Four rounds of official Yugoslav-Soviet talks were held during Tito's visit, all in the Kremlin.⁶ The Yugoslav delegation consisted of Tito, Kardelj, Koča Popović and Micunović, the Yugoslav Ambassador in Moscow. The Soviet side was headed by Khrushchev and consisted of Voroshilov, Mikoyan, Bulganin, Molotov, and Shepilov, the new Soviet Foreign Minister.

The first round of official Yugoslav-Soviet talks was held on 5 June and was devoted to foreign policy issues and economic cooperation. In his opening

⁶Official Yugoslav-Soviet talks in the Kremlin - Transcripts, 5, 9, 18, and 20 June 1956; AJBT, KPR, I-2/7-1, 732 - 801.

statement, Tito emphasized Yugoslavia's interest in increasing economic cooperation with the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries. He focused on Yugoslavia's desire to build aluminium plants with Soviet assistance. However, Tito insisted that the economic cooperation was to be strictly on a bilateral basis. His obvious aim was to pre-empt possible Soviet efforts to channel the cooperation through the '*lager*' institution – the COMECON. Addressing international issues, Tito underlined the convergence of the Soviet and Yugoslav positions on many foreign policy issues. Speaking about the Middle East, Tito urged the Soviets to provide more aid to the countries of the region - in particular, to Nasser. He stressed that his intelligence reports suggested that some Western countries were plotting to overthrow Nasser.⁷

In his opening exposé, Khrushchev reiterated that he fully shared Tito's views on many foreign policy issues. In a conciliatory tone, when addressing Western economic aid to Yugoslavia, Khrushchev commented that '*one should be reasonable and take advantage of possibilities offered to Yugoslavia by its current international position*'.⁸ At the end of this round of talks, Tito returned to the issue of the US economic and military aid. He declared that Yugoslavia had informed the Americans that it would prefer commercial loans, rather than aid. Tito explained that this would eliminate Yugoslavia's moral indebtedness to the US. He also downplayed US military aid, characterizing it as obsolete and symbolic. However, according to Tito, Yugoslavia for political reasons was not in the position to cancel it presently. He also underlined that Yugoslavia had never made political

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

concessions to the Americans in return for their aid. Accentuating that he trusted the honesty and friendship of Yugoslav comrades Khrushchev nevertheless, remarked sarcastically that *'capitalists never give to anyone unless it is to their benefit. If they gave help to the Yugoslavs without political preconditions, it meant that Yugoslavia, as it was, was of use to them'*.⁹ Tito's effort to trivialise the importance of the US economic and military aid to Yugoslavia was obviously intended to circumvent expected clashes with the Soviets on this question.

During this first round of talks the two sides devoted most of their attention to the question of Germany. Khrushchev repeatedly insisted that the German issue was the most important current foreign policy problem. According to him, it was an issue through which the West would try to exert a blow against Socialism. He underlined that *'for this reason, the USSR doesn't even contemplate giving in. A special effort will be made, together with the countries of Eastern Europe, for a speedy development of East Germany'*.¹⁰ Khrushchev added that East Germany (GDR) should be the showcase that would demonstrate the advantages of the Socialist system. For this reason, according to him, all necessary economic resources would be made available for GDR's rapid development.

Addressing Yugoslavia's standing with Peoples' Democracies, Tito remarked that relations were improving with Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Rumania, but not with Bulgaria and Hungary. With regard to Albania, Tito was bitter and insisted that reconciliation with Enver Hoxha was impossible. Khrushchev mentioned the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

situation in Hungary only in passing. He admitted that things were very difficult there and asserted that *'undesirable forces are mushrooming [in Hungary]'*. Khrushchev was convinced that it was not Rakosi but Stalin who was responsible for the present difficulties in that country. He then informed Tito that the Soviet leadership, worried about developments in Hungary, had decided to dispatch Suslov to Budapest within a couple of days.¹¹

During this first day of talks, Tito also informed the Soviets about his visit to France in May and Khrushchev responded with a detailed account of his visit to the UK, also in May. He described how the Soviets were insulted by Eden's cool reception and condescension. According to Khrushchev, at one point, he and Bulganin had decided to leave but were persuaded at the last moment to stay after a sudden positive change in Eden's attitude. On the issue of disarmament, the two sides were in agreement that efforts should be made for the substantial reduction, especially in nuclear weapons. Kardelj revealed later that when talking off-the-record about disarmament [the Soviets] *always added: "Nevertheless, the conflict [with the capitalists] will unavoidably happen one day and we have to arm ourselves. Throughout history, disarmament has always been a fiction"*.¹² Kardelj's account illustrates the extent to which the post-Stalin Soviet leaderships' foreign policy outlook was moulded by ideological postulates. At the end of the first day of talks, having agreed that there was high degree of symmetry in their views on

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² President Tito reporting before the Federal Executive Council on his visits to France, Rumania, and USSR - Transcript, Belgrade, 10 July 1956; AJBT, KPR, I-2/7-1,130-70.

international issues, the two delegations concluded that there was no need for further discussions on the subject.

The second round of official Yugoslav-Soviet talks was held on 9 June. Together with the subsequent discussion, it was scheduled to be dedicated to relations between the CPSU and the LCY. The transcript of talks reveals unease and hesitation at the beginning of this session and that *'it seemed as if no one was ready for the discussion on Party matters. For this reason, almost forty minutes of the meeting was spent in conversations about Leningrad from where Comrade Tito returned this morning, on Stalingrad and Kuban where he is going tomorrow, or on the reactions to this visit in the World'*.¹³ The Yugoslav and the Soviet leaderships were reluctant to broach the topic they knew would be contentious. At one point, however, Khrushchev mentioned the word *'lager'*. Tito seized the opportunity and stated that he disliked the term *'lager'* because it implied Soviet hegemony. He insisted that it was impossible and wrong to confine Socialism within the boundaries of the *'lager'*. Tito concluded that *'Yugoslavia will not formally join the "lager" although [it] is part of the Socialist world'*.¹⁴ His elaboration immediately triggered a debate about the role of the *'lager'*. Khrushchev responded to Tito that the actions of the Socialist countries needed to be coordinated because the *'Capitalists'* intention was to break their association and then deal with them one by one. As proof, he pointed to Western activities in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. Khrushchev insisted that *'discipline is needed'*. Within this context, he

¹³ Official Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Kremlin - Transcripts, 5, 9, 18, and 20 June 1956; AJBT, KPR, I-2/7-1, 732 - 801.

¹⁴ Ibid.

emphasized that the COMINFORM had played a progressive role after the 1948 Soviet-Yugoslav rupture. It preserved the unity of the Socialist *'lager'* by securing and maintaining the cohesion of the international Communist movement behind the USSR. Although he immediately added that the conflict with Yugoslavia was fabricated and would not happen again, *'a number of members of the Yugoslav delegation loudly protested'*.¹⁵ Mikoyan and Shepilov intervened at this point to calm the atmosphere.

In continuation, Tito stressed that for the sake of Socialism's global appeal certain issues need to be addressed during the talks - the issue of the manner in which the Communists act in the international system and of the form of relations between the Socialist countries. Khrushchev immediately responded by asserting that autonomy of action of individual Socialist countries was unacceptable because

*'a middle position between Capitalism and Socialism is impossible. [Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union] have achieved much regarding [their] government relations and cooperation, but need to agree on Party [cooperation] as well. Because of Yugoslavia's special position between the Socialist and the Capitalist worlds, we could agree on a tactical role of Yugoslavia - for the benefit of our common goal. It does not mean however, that we could do the same with other countries'.*¹⁶

Kardelj responded that Communists should take advantage of all forms of social developments, whether evolutionary or revolutionary. He also made clear that although [the Yugoslav leadership] *never believed that COMECON or the Warsaw Pact should be mechanically disbanded...* [it is] *convinced that it would not be in*

¹⁵ Official Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Kremlin - Transcripts, 5, 9, 18, and 20 June 1956; AJBT, KPR, I-2/7-1, 732 - 801.

¹⁶ Ibid.

[Yugoslavia's] *interest to join these organisations.*' Molotov interrupted that there could be no reservations that *'there exist two "lagers"'*.¹⁷

Tito intervened again and stressed that it was not Yugoslavia's intention to weaken the existing organizations and institutions of the Socialist countries. He added that he was aware of the stories circulating in the West that Yugoslavia aimed to disassociate the Peoples' Democracies from the Soviet Union; Tito dismissed them as *'stupid'*. He emphasized that Yugoslavia's good relations with the West and with the Social-Democratic parties were not aimed at harming the Soviet Union. Equally, according to Tito, *'[Yugoslavia's] relations with Poland, Rumania, Hungary and other East European countries should be regarded in this way. We do not intend to interfere in their internal affairs'*. Within this context, Tito underlined that he did not believe that existing agreements and arrangements between the Soviet Union and East European countries should be dismantled. On the contrary, according to him, reactionary elements still existed in these countries and the Communists there were facing serious difficulties. In Tito's opinion, this was due to the fact that unlike Yugoslavia, where Socialism was inaugurated through an indigenous revolution, circumstances in Eastern European countries *'were different'*. He concluded that *'the essential thing is not to deviate from the Socialist road'*. Tito however, insisted that on the question of *'how [Socialism] should be built and in what form is something still to be discussed and agreed upon'*. He also rebuked Molotov for his earlier statement that there exist only two camps – the

¹⁷ Ibid.

Socialist and the Capitalist, as a harmful oversimplification. At this point Khrushchev concluded the meeting.¹⁸

The third round of the Yugoslav-Soviet talks took place on 18 June and was scheduled to deal with the documents that the two delegations were to sign at the conclusion of the visit. Prior to this session, the Yugoslav delegation had submitted draft proposals of the official Communiqué and of the Declaration on relations between the CPSU and the LCY. The Soviets accepted the Communiqué with minor corrections. The proposed Yugoslav draft of the Declaration however, provoked a continuation of the fierce ideological confrontation that had erupted during the previous round of talks. The Soviet side expressed '*grave disappointment*' with the Yugoslav draft. Khrushchev went as far as to say that '*to accept [the Yugoslav draft] would mean to yield to the Social Democrats and to all those who promote the revision of Marxism-Leninism*'. Addressing Tito personally, he asked whether he was correct in presuming that '*the opposition of Yugoslav comrades to the Soviet views results from [the Yugoslav] desire to remain outside the 'lager'*'? Tito replied unequivocally that '[Yugoslavia is] *not outside the Socialist front, but [is] outside the Eastern Bloc*'.¹⁹ Aware that the continuation of the discussion would not bridge the existing gap between the two sides, it was decided that two teams, one from each side and headed by Kardelj and Mikoyan would continue work on a compromise draft of the Declaration.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

A final round of Yugoslav-Soviet talks took place on the morning of 20 June. Mikoyan and Kardelj presented a draft of the Declaration on which they had worked around the clock since the previous meeting on 18 June. Mikoyan expressed Soviet dissatisfaction with the existing document pointing at three contentious issues on which the two teams could not agree. According to him, contrary to Soviet suggestions, the Yugoslavs continued to insist that the Declaration should specifically mention only bilateral relations between the CPSU and the LCY. Furthermore, the Yugoslavs had rejected the Soviet text on the theory of '*scientific Socialism*' agreeing only for it to be mentioned in one sentence in the draft. The final point of contention, according to Mikoyan, was that the Yugoslavs had rejected the Soviet proposal that the Declaration include a declaration of support of the Communist parties towards the anti-colonial movements and to accentuate the need for their closer cooperation.

The irreconcilable positions that prevented a compromise on the Declaration brought to the fore the extent of the Yugoslav-Soviet ideological incompatibility. The Yugoslav leaders insisted that the re-establishment of relations between the CPSU and the LCY be limited to the bilateral level. They wished to avoid becoming associated with the '*lager*'; hence their insistence on not allowing any mention in the Declaration of multilateral cooperation, coordination, or need for closer relations between the Communist parties. Furthermore, by rejecting the inclusion of the term '*scientific Socialism*' in the Declaration, the Yugoslav leadership refused to acknowledge the Soviet system as the official form of Socialism. Finally, by declining to sign the appeal for closer cooperation between the Communist parties

and the anti-colonial movements, Tito and his associates had forestalled the Soviet attempt to hijack Yugoslavia's growing stature among the non-engaged countries and to link the non-aligned group of nations to the '*lager*'. They particularly wished to avoid this because Tito was only weeks away from hosting a tripartite meeting with Nehru and Nasser – the first multilateral grouping of the non-aligned countries. The meeting was to be an important step in his effort to formalize and strengthen Yugoslavia's position of equidistance from both Blocs. Yugoslavia's firmness not to compromise on certain positions, even to the point of not signing the Declaration, confirms Tito's determination to return from Moscow with his independence untarnished.

Following Mikoyan's elaboration, a very tense atmosphere engulfed the two delegations. According to the Yugoslav transcript of this last round of official Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Moscow, after several heated exchanges that only confirmed the futility of further attempts at reaching a compromise on the Declaration draft '*Khrushchev, after consulting through eye-contact other members of the Soviet delegation, declared that he would reluctantly accept the stand of the Yugoslav comrades citing an old Russian proverb that one cannot embrace what is impossible to embrace*'.²⁰ Khrushchev's reaction implies that the Soviets had accepted the draft-proposal of the Declaration only because the time was running out. The official signing of both the Communiqué and the Declaration was scheduled for midday, immediately after the conclusion of the last round of talks. At a press conference, at 1:00 p.m., Koča Popović was expected to brief numerous

²⁰ Ibid.

foreign journalists on the results of the visit. Finally, Tito's official departure from Moscow was scheduled for 3:00 p.m. on that same day. The finale of discussions on the Declaration suggests that the Soviet leadership had concluded that it was impossible to achieve a higher degree of understanding with the Yugoslavs. An unplanned continuation of talks, resulting in the postponement of Tito's departure would have made public the existence of disagreements between the two sides. Such a development would compromise the Soviet aim of presenting the visit as a confirmation of the convergence of views between Moscow and Belgrade. Furthermore, a conclusion of talks without party relations being re-established would publicly reveal the failure of the Soviet policy of normalization with Yugoslavia. This would undermine the authority of the Soviet post-Stalin leadership, in particular that of Khrushchev, within the 'lager' and in the global Communist movement. The Soviet leadership was aware that such an outcome would further enhance the corrosive impact of Yugoslavia's independence on the *Socialist camp* at a time of growing crises in Poland and Hungary.

On 20 June 1956, Tito and Khrushchev signed the '*Declaration on Relations Between the LCY and the CPSU*', better known as the '*Moscow Declaration*'.²¹ While the Belgrade Declaration stipulated principles of government relations and announced true normalization of relations between the two countries, the Moscow Declaration established Yugoslav-Soviet party relations and laid down principles which were to govern them. Both Declarations reveal the Yugoslav leadership's clear intention to give those documents a character that transcended Yugoslav-

²¹ Official text of the Moscow Declaration, 20 June 1956; AJ, ACKSKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-69.

Soviet bilateral relations.²² The Yugoslavs wanted a publicly declared framework for both state and party relations with the USSR. In their belief, this would safeguard relations between the two countries from Moscow's attempts to impose its hegemony. Tito and his associates feared and were proven right during talks in Moscow that the Soviets had not abandoned hope of getting Yugoslavia back into the '*lager*'. At the same time, the Yugoslav leadership needed normal relations with the USSR in order to diminish Yugoslavia's dependence on the West and establish a truly equidistant position from both Blocs.

The Moscow Declaration was much shorter than the Belgrade one. This reflected lack of agreement between the two sides on issues regarding the nature of party relations between Communist countries. Nevertheless, the Moscow Declaration declared that relations between the CPSU and the LCY would be voluntary and based on equality; this would guarantee comradely exchange of views on all contentious issues that existed between the two parties. The Declaration also underlined that both sides had accepted that forms of Socialism in various countries could differ; both sides condemned the practice of imposing a single model of Socialism on others. Furthermore, the document recognised the right of every party to pursue contacts with '*other Communist and workers' parties*'. The latter was an euphemism for Labour and Social-Democratic parties. The Declaration also specified that cooperation between Communist parties should be democratic, open, public, based on equality, and that '*each participant [of such cooperation] would retain the freedom of action*'. This was a rebuff of the Soviet

²² Tito's speech before the LCY officials of Istria and representatives of the Yugoslav National Army and his responses to questions – Transcript; Pula, 11 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 1 – 3.

demands for closer '*coordination*' between Communist parties and Socialist countries.²³ The Moscow Declaration clearly represented a victory for the Yugoslavs. It clearly affirmed principles promoted by the Yugoslavs and publicly confirmed that Belgrade did not yield to Moscow's pressure to join the '*lager*'. The Declaration was thus challenging the concept of '*lagerism*'. The significance of this is even more accentuated given that such a challenge appeared at a time of increasing demands throughout Eastern Europe for de-Stalinization and liberalization of relations in the '*lager*'; it appeared at a time when the crises in Poland and Hungary were threatening the cohesion of the Soviet bloc. The Moscow Declaration offered the ideological rationale behind demands for democratisation in Eastern Europe in 1956. It is not surprising then, as will be shown in the subsequent text, that the Soviet leadership did its best to bury the Declaration in the aftermath of Tito's visit.

For the understanding of further development of Soviet-Yugoslav relations, it is essential to assess factors that induced the Soviet leadership, after two years of patiently wooing Tito, to exert crude pressure on the Yugoslav leader in Moscow and turn the talks into a confrontation. The unravelling crises in Poland and Hungary were the first and foremost factor. The Soviet leadership believed that Yugoslavia's return to the '*lager*' would diffuse the nationalist revival and slow down the runaway liberalization processes in these two countries. The force and crudeness of the Soviet pressure on Yugoslavs marked Khrushchev's departure from the strategy he had pursued so far in relation to Tito. As shown in the

²³ Ibid.

previous Chapter, the discrepancy between the public and private side of Yugoslav-Soviet exchanges, in particular with regard to the ideological issues, was also present during Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia in 1955.²⁴ However, in Belgrade Khrushchev did not allow Soviet pressure on Yugoslavs to lead to a confrontation. Kardelj, who negotiated with both Stalin and Khrushchev, observed that the latter differed from Stalin in that he did not rush in stubbornly to achieve a pre-conceived goal. According to him, [Khrushchev] *tried but, when he failed, he withdrew and for the time being accepted whatever policy went furthest towards securing normal relations*'.²⁵ The overt pressure exercised during the Moscow talks confirmed the Soviet leaders' growing frustration with the Yugoslavs. The deteriorating situation in Poland and Hungary imposed urgency to their efforts to get Yugoslavia on board. There was no time left for subtleties.

Prior to Tito's departure for Moscow, Western observers in Belgrade speculated that he would be able to influence Moscow to allow further liberalization in Eastern Europe.²⁶ However, as has been shown, Tito was not in a position to do so. During talks in Moscow, he was himself at pains to defend his own independent position and resist Moscow's pressure. As the transcript of the talks confirms, Tito was very careful not to antagonise the Soviets. He did his best to convince the Soviets that Yugoslavia did not intend to interfere in the crises in Eastern Europe. This was eased by Tito's own Communist beliefs that shaped his views on the Satellites. He

²⁴ Transcript of Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Belgrade, 27, 28 May and 2 June 1955; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-56..

²⁵ Edvard Kardelj, *Reminiscences: The Struggle For Recognition and Independence: The New Yugoslavia, 1944-1957*, (London: Blond and Briggs, 1982), 132-3.

²⁶ Telegram No. 51 from the British Ambassador in Belgrade (Sir Frank Roberts) to the Foreign Office, 26 May 1956; PRO, FO 371 Series, File No. 124289, Doc. RY10338/43.

regarded Socialism in these countries to be less than firmly established. To him, this justified the existence of '*supervisory*' relations between the USSR and the Satellites. Whilst supporting wholeheartedly the need for Stalinists regimes in Eastern Europe to be replaced with democratic and independent ones, Tito was not ready to see the Socialist regime in these countries to be replaced by Capitalism.

A factor that also contributed to the confrontational course of the Yugoslav-Soviet talks in June 1956 was the apparent weakening of Khrushchev's position within the Soviet leadership. Observing the behaviour of the Soviet leaders during talks, Tito and his associates became convinced that Khrushchev was under pressure. On 10 July, speaking before the Federal Executive Council, Tito pointed out that '*a second faction is now present [in the Kremlin], a very strong faction, which pushes a little more to the right [dogmatism]. [During talks in Moscow], whenever a [ideological] question was discussed, Khrushchev would immediately look at the others. On the other hand, on government matters he would decide alone*'.²⁷ The Yugoslavs understood that Khrushchev and his policies, which culminated in the deconstruction of Stalin at the Twentieth Congress, were being blamed by the hard-liners in the Presidium for the crises in Eastern Europe. Before Tito's visit, Mićunović had anticipated that, instead of being '*softer*' in the forthcoming talks '*Khrushchev would be "harder" because he is not strong and would, for this reason, demand Yugoslav support in a way that corresponds to what the Russians are*

²⁷ President Tito reporting before the Federal Executive Council on his visits to France, Rumania, and USSR - Transcript, Belgrade, 10 July 1956; AJBT, KPR, I-2/7-1,130-70.

looking for'.²⁸ What the Soviets were looking for, of course, was Yugoslavia's return to the '*lager*'. Khrushchev, the main force behind the process of de-Stalinization and normalization with Yugoslavia stood to benefit most should Tito agree to it; thus the pressure on Yugoslavs.

Tito's belief that Khrushchev's leadership was under threat explains his public support for the Soviet leader during the visit, even in the face of obvious Soviet manipulation. On a number of occasions the Soviets carefully orchestrated Tito's presence to project an impression of his compliance with the Soviet policies. On 19 June, a rally was organised at the Dynamo stadium in Moscow during which both Khrushchev and Tito spoke. The Soviet leader used the occasion and his speech to launch an exceptionally vitriolic attack on the West. Tito, who spoke after Khrushchev, did not publicly rebuke the Soviet leader. Tito's refusal to confront Khrushchev publicly could partly be attributed to his manoeuvring to secure a favourable compromise on the Declaration, which, at that very moment, was being negotiated behind the scenes by Kardelj and Mikoyan. More probably however, Tito's lack of response resulted from his awareness that a public rebuttal would humiliate Khrushchev and was likely to further weaken his leadership position.

Tito's reluctance to shun Khrushchev is confirmed by another incident during the visit. The Yugoslav leader did not publicly denounce an obviously intentional misinterpretation of a statement, which he had made during his visit to Stalingrad. The statement attributed to Tito was published in the Soviet press and immediately

²⁸ Veljko Mićunović, *Moskovske godine...*, 78.

picked up by foreign journalists. It caused an uproar in the West. According to the Soviet press, Tito had stated in Stalingrad that in a future war the Yugoslavs and the Soviets would *'walk hand in hand'*. On 5 June however, after returning from Stalingrad, at the beginning of the second round of talks, Tito protested to Khrushchev about *'the misinterpretation of his speech in Stalingrad in which he had said that it "was possible for us to cooperate in peace, because the Yugoslav and the Soviet peoples have together shed blood in the [Second World] War"'*. Khrushchev did not offer any explanation nor apologise ^{did he} for the fabrication.²⁹ Tito's protest confirms that the Yugoslavs were fully aware that the Soviets were trying to use the visit to project an impression of Yugoslavia's extraordinary proximity to the Soviet Union. The British Ambassador in Belgrade, Sir Frank Roberts, reported that during the visit, several very senior Yugoslav officials had complained to him of Soviet manipulation. In a report to London, he offered an explanation for Tito's reluctance to rebuff Khrushchev openly. Sir Frank observed that *'it would be unrealistic to expect Tito to reflect any such doubt in public, especially in Moscow since his policy, as explained to me [during a meeting with Tito on 4 May] is public encouragement of "Soviet better tendencies"'*.³⁰

Tito had reason to declare the visit to the USSR a success.³¹ The Moscow Declaration had confirmed Yugoslavia as a Socialist country, something it had been denied since 1948. At the same time, the document recognised Yugoslavia's

²⁹Official Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Kremlin - Transcripts, 5, 9, 18, and 20 June 1956; AJBT, KPR, I-2/7-1, 732 - 801.

³⁰Telegram No. 407 from the British Ambassador in Belgrade (Sir Frank Roberts) to the Foreign Office, 23 June 1956; PRO, FO 371 Series, File No. 124290, Doc. RY 10338/70.

³¹President Tito reporting before the Federal Executive Council on his visits to France, Rumania, and USSR - Transcript, Belgrade, 10 July 1956; AJBT, KPR, I-2/7-1, 130-70.

unique independent position in the Communist movement, allowing it to remain outside the '*lager*'. For the first time in the post-October 1917 history, relations between two Communist parties and states were established on the basis of equality. Tito's great dream, ever since the rupture of 1948 that Yugoslavia would be accepted back into the Communist community on its own terms, was fulfilled. Furthermore, Khrushchev had promised to assist with a further increase in the economic cooperation between Yugoslavia and the USSR.

The Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Moscow in June 1956 however, signalled an end to the rapprochement between the two countries. The Soviet leadership regarded the outcome of talks with Tito as unsuccessful. According to Tito, it was immediately obvious that [the Soviets] *were not very happy with how [the talks] ended and with the Declaration*'.³² The Soviets did not achieve the goal they deemed critical for the settling down of worrying developments in Poland and Hungary – to pull Yugoslavia into the '*lager*'.

IV.2 '*Containment*' of Yugoslavia

Following talks with the Yugoslav leadership, Moscow embarked on a policy of '*containment*' of Yugoslavia and its isolation from the Satellite countries. The Soviet leadership adopted a two-tier strategy towards Belgrade. Convinced that

³² Ibid.

Yugoslavia's example was an important generator of demands for liberalization in Eastern Europe, the Soviets embarked upon isolating Yugoslavia from the Satellites. Simultaneously, Moscow sought to employ the very same things it wished to suppress, Yugoslavia's prestige with the public and the rehabilitated '*cadres*' in Eastern Europe, to slow down developments in Peoples' Democracies.

The Soviet leadership took immediate steps to limit the impact of the Moscow Declaration on the cohesion of the '*lager*'. The Yugoslav-Soviet rapprochement started losing its radiance even before Tito had left the territory of the USSR. On 21 June, while Tito's train, on its return journey to Yugoslavia was being greeted with adulation by local inhabitants in the Ukraine, the leaders of the Satellite countries were summoned to a closed Conference in Moscow. Mićunović reported that the meeting addressed cooperation within the '*lager*' in the aftermath of the dissolution of the COMINFORM.³³ According to Mićunović, Khrushchev informed the Satellite leaders that relations between the LCY and the CPSU had been normalized and that Tito had promised to do the same with other parties in the '*lager*'. The report also stated that the Conference had concluded that the Declaration was a tactical move by the Soviets and that relations within the '*lager*' had to be based on different principles.³⁴ The speed with which the meeting of the Satellite leaders had been convoked reveals Moscow's concerns that the form of relations stipulated in the Moscow Declaration could have a damaging impact on developments in Eastern Europe. The Declaration was a public document and it

³³ V. Mićunović's report to Tito on the Soviet policies in the period June-August 1956, in preparation for Khrushchev's visit, 8 September 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, SSSR, F91/13 - 423481.

³⁴ Ibid.

promoted the very same principles of relations within the Soviet Bloc, which the anti-Stalinist opposition throughout Peoples' Democracies was demanding. During the second round of talks in Moscow on 9 June, Khrushchev openly told Tito that *'what was allowed to the Yugoslavs would not be allowed to the others'*.³⁵

Indeed, the Yugoslav-Soviet normalization had enhanced Yugoslavia's influence on the Satellites. The Yugoslav-Soviet normalization made information on Yugoslavia increasingly available throughout Eastern Europe. Yugoslavia's ever-increasing influence in the Satellite countries was not due to its miraculous propaganda abilities, nor clandestine infiltration. In this respect, Belgrade's presence in these countries remained very limited. What made a difference however, was the suspension of anti-Yugoslav propaganda in the Satellites, a direct result of improved Yugoslav-Soviet relations. In addition, the press in the Satellites began publishing an increasing number of objective and positive articles and news about Yugoslavia. What particularly appealed to national feeling in the East European public was that with Khrushchev's trip to Yugoslavia and in particular with the signing of the Moscow Declaration, Yugoslavia was recognised as a Socialist country and yet remained independent from the Soviet *'lager'*. Moreover, the public in the Satellite countries could see the economic benefits that good relations with the West had brought to Yugoslavia. Finally, the rehabilitated *'cadres'* were being reinstated by popular demand throughout Eastern Europe during the summer of 1956. Between 1948 and 1953, many of these people had been imprisoned as Titoists. Moscow was certainly uneasy about the fact that

³⁵ Official Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Kremlin - Transcripts, 5, 9, 18, and 20 June 1956; AJBT, KPR, I-2/7-1, 732 - 801.

Władisław Gomułka in Poland, and Imre Nagy and Janos Kádár in Hungary were at the centre of the most worrying developments in Eastern Europe.

Within a week of Tito's departure from Moscow, the Soviet leadership distanced itself still further from the policy of de-Stalinization. The news of the tragic events in Poznań, on 28 June, was received with shock in Moscow. According to Mićunović, the Soviet leadership, as well as ordinary citizens were convinced that the Poznań riots were a result of '*Western subversion*'.³⁶ Although it did not openly criticise the Polish regime, the Yugoslav government's interpretation of events was diametrically different from the Soviet version. The official LCY organ, BORBA, asserted that the reason behind Poznań lay in the workers' discontent with their living conditions and in public demands for greater democratisation.³⁷

On 30 June, the Central Committee of the CPSU issued a *Postanovlenie*³⁸ entitled '*On Overcoming the Cult of Personality and its Consequences*'.³⁹ The document was undoubtedly written earlier, as a response to a worldwide release by the US State Department, on 4 June, of the English translation of Khrushchev's '*secret speech*'.⁴⁰ However, the timing of the publication of the *Postanovlenie* and its hard-line tone, only two days after the Poznań riots, represented a signal from Moscow to its Satellites. The *Postanovlenie* attacked the bourgeois '*slandorous anti-Soviet campaign*' based '*on certain facts related to the condemnation of the cult of J. V.*

³⁶ Veljko Mićunović, *Moskovske godine...*, 94.

³⁷ BORBA, 1 July 1956, 1.

³⁸ Resolution or Decree.

³⁹ PRAVDA, 2 July 1956, 1-2.

⁴⁰ Paul E. Zinner (ed.), *Documents On American Foreign Relations, 1956*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 201 (Note 1) and 207.

Stalin by the CPSU and offered an 'objective' appraisal of Stalin's contributions to the cause of Socialism.⁴¹ The aim of the *Postanovlenie* was to water down crucial accusations brought against Stalin in the 'secret speech'. It sought to pass a definitive judgment on Stalinism declaring that the process of de-Stalinization was thus completed.⁴² The document signalled the resurrection of the hard-line faction within the Soviet Presidium. Mićunović reported to Belgrade that Suslov, the silent opponent of normalization with Yugoslavia, was the chief architect of the *Postanovlenie*.⁴³ The document also confirmed that the Soviet leadership had judged that the circumstances developing in Eastern Europe demanded urgent consolidation of the international Communist movement around uniform ideological postulates.

Although it never openly mentioned Yugoslavia, the *Postanovlenie* warned others in the Communist movement against associating with Belgrade. In an unprecedented way, it attacked Palmiro Togliatti, the Italian Communist Party leader, for stating that deviations in the Soviet system were a result of Stalin's policies. Togliatti had made this comment several days after he had returned from Belgrade at the end of May. He was the first leader of a major Western European Communist Party to visit Tito since 1948.⁴⁴ Khrushchev later admitted that accusations against Togliatti were not accidental. He directly attributed Togliatti's

⁴¹ PRAVDA, 2 July 1956, 1-2.

⁴² V. Mićunović's report to Tito on the Soviet policies in the period June-August 1956, in preparation for Khrushchev's visit, 8 September 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, SSSR, F91/13 - 423481.

⁴³ Telegram from V. Mićunović to DSIP, 5 July 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, SSSR, F87/2-411016.

⁴⁴ PRAVDA, 2 July 1956, 1-2. On Togliatti's visit, see also DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 19 June 1956; SMIP, SPA, 1956, F III / Fasc. I, Strogo Pov. Bilten br. 11/1956, 25-33.

comments to Yugoslav influence.⁴⁵ During the weeks that followed the publication of the *Postanovlenie*, the leaders of all major West European Communist Parties were, one after the other, summoned to Moscow for bilateral '*consultations*'.⁴⁶

The new, hard-line Soviet political stance became apparent in the weeks after the *Postanovlenie* was published. On 6 July, at a reception in Kremlin, Mićunović went to greet Khrushchev. To the amazement of the Yugoslav Ambassador, Khrushchev started berating the Yugoslav leadership for '*duplicity*'. He claimed that the official Yugoslav papers had not published the full text of his speech at the Dynamo stadium rally on 19 June, during Tito's visit. During the tirade, Khrushchev was in the company of Molotov and Voroshilov. However, once these two had left, Khrushchev revealed to Mićunović that every member of the Presidium had received the report on the Yugoslav gesture. He added that because of this, '*the whole Presidium is watching me. For the moment, they are still not saying anything, just watching me...*' The '*indiscretion*' implied that Khrushchev's rant against the Yugoslav leadership was forced upon him by the Presidium. The Yugoslav Ambassador also concluded that the disproportional reaction of the Soviet leadership to a minor incident revealed the Kremlin's desire to pick a fight with Belgrade at that particular point.⁴⁷ Within two days, Koča Popović, through Firyubin, the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade, offered assurances to the Soviet leadership that the decision for only excerpts from Khrushchev's speech to be printed was taken by the editors and did not represent Yugoslav Government's

⁴⁵ Н. С. Хрущев, *Воспоминания...*, Кн. 4 [Vol. 4], 154.

⁴⁶ V. Mićunović's report to Tito on the Soviet policies in the period June-August 1956, in preparation for Khrushchev's visit, 8 September 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, SSSR, F91/13 - 423481.

⁴⁷ Veljko Mićunović, *Moskovske godine...*, 103.

position.⁴⁸ The above incident however, confirmed to Belgrade that the hard-line policy shift in Moscow was the result of the strengthening of the conservatives within the Presidium, namely Molotov, Voroshilov, and Suslov. It also suggested that, in order to undermine Khrushchev's authority further, this group blamed the crises in Eastern Europe on his policy of de-Stalinization and on his failure to bring Tito to '*compliance*'.⁴⁹

Only days after the *Postanovlenie* was published, Belgrade registered with increasing anxiety the growing evidence of a backlash against anti-Stalinists throughout Eastern Europe.⁵⁰ The concerted campaign unleashed in the Soviet and Satellite press confirmed to the Yugoslav leadership that the Kremlin was introducing a tougher course in response to the growing crises in the Satellite countries.⁵¹ Belgrade understood that the quick succession of visits by leaders of Western European Communist parties to Moscow was the result of the Kremlin's desire to impose ideological conformity or '*unity of action*' on '*fraternal parties*'.⁵² The Yugoslavs remembered earlier similar '*mobilizations*' that followed disruptions in the power balance in the Kremlin, such as during the early 1955, before Malenkov's fall. The first consequence of such shifts had been the hardening of Moscow's attitude towards Yugoslavia. In mid-July, on the occasion of the visiting East German Government delegation, Khrushchev made a speech in the Kremlin

⁴⁸ Telegram from K. Popović to V. Mićunović on his meeting with the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade (Firyubin), 9 July 1956; SMIP, SPA, 1956, F II / SSSR I – 164.

⁴⁹ V. Mićunović's report to Tito on the Soviet policies in the period June-August 1956, in preparation for Khrushchev's visit, 8 September 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, SSSR, F91/13 - 423481.

⁵⁰ DSIP Top Secret Bulletin, 6 July 1956; SMIP, SPA, 1956, F III / Fasc. I, DSIP Dtrogo Pov. Bilten br. 12/1956, 8-19

⁵¹ Ibid. Also, DSIP Memorandum on the Soviet Press Coverage on Yugoslavia in July and August 1956, 9 September 1956; SMIP, PA, SSSR, 1956, F87/2-414829.

⁵² V. Mićunović report to A. Ranković (for Tito) on conversation with Khrushchev, 13 July 1956; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1956, I - 5 - v.

in which he reproached 'some' for using the concept of '*different roads to Socialism*' as a tool to break-up the '*lager*'. According to him, this would only enable '*imperialists*' to subjugate Peoples Democracies one by one. On 21 July, at a rally in Warsaw, Bulganin underlined that no one should '*disregard efforts being made to weaken bonds within the Socialist camp under the banner of "national particularities"*'.⁵³ Being the main proponents of '*different roads to Socialism*' and of '*national particularities*', the Yugoslavs recognised themselves as the target of these accusations.⁵⁴ It was becoming increasingly apparent to the Yugoslav leadership that Moscow was treating Belgrade as a pariah and was doing everything to isolate Yugoslavia from the Peoples Democracies and the Communist movement.

Indeed, on 13 July, the CPSU CC issued a secret Resolution named '*The Information On The Results Of The Soviet-Yugoslav Talks, Held In June 1956*'.⁵⁵ It was never made public. In strictest confidence, the document was read at the closed Soviet Party meetings and was sent to the leaderships of '*fraternal parties*'. The Resolution gave an account of the Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Moscow in June. This was done in a way to discredit Yugoslavia's positions as anti-Marxist and destructive to the cohesion of the '*lager*'. The Resolution revealed that the first draft of the Moscow Declaration, submitted by the Yugoslavs, was resolutely rejected by the Soviet delegation because it contained a number of '*incorrect postulates*' that would have led to '*disorientation*' among Communist parties. The document then

⁵³ Report on Khrushchev and Bulganin's speeches, 25 July 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/III-8.

⁵⁴ V. Mićunović's report to Tito on the Soviet policies in the period June-August 1956, in preparation for Khrushchev's visit, 8 September 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, SSSR, F91/13 - 423481.

⁵⁵ Resolution of the CPSU CC: *The Information On the Results of Soviet-Yugoslav Talks, held in June 1956*, 13 July 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-69.

listed these *'incorrect'* Yugoslav ideological positions. The Yugoslavs had asserted that Marxist dogma was falling behind in interpreting new global realities in the last ten years. According to the Resolution, the Yugoslav leadership had also rejected the Soviet stance that cooperation between the LCY and the CPSU should be aimed at strengthening *'unity of the action of the international proletarian movement'*. In addition, the Yugoslavs did not differentiate between the form of relations that existed between parties following true Marxism-Leninism and the one applicable to their relations with the Socialist and Social-Democratic parties. They did not accept that the links between the Marxist-Leninist parties should bind them into a much closer and stronger association. Within this context, according to the Resolution, the Soviet delegation had reproached the Yugoslavs for initiating close relations with the Socialist, Social Democratic and Labour parties in France, Great Britain, Belgium and Norway whilst, at the same time, disregarding relations with the Communist parties in these countries. At this point the Resolution quoted Kardelj promising that the Yugoslav leadership would meet representatives of other Communist parties and do everything possible to improve their relations. The quotation was intended to suggest a Yugoslav admission of guilt and recantation on their previously held erroneous positions.⁵⁶

The Resolution concluded that the Soviet side had reluctantly accepted a compromise on the Moscow Declaration in order not to inhibit further improvement of relations with the LCY. It underlined that the talks in Moscow had confirmed that although Yugoslav leaders were coming nearer to the *'correct'* positions, they still

⁵⁶ Ibid.

remained estranged from true Marxism-Leninism. For this reason, the Resolution concluded that

'the CPSU CC asserts that the characterization of comrade Tito as being a Leninist, given by comrade Bulganin [in the toast] during lunch in Moscow, on 5 June, was premature because such qualification could hamper the process of further improvement of understanding with Yugoslav comrades on ideological questions and could mislead the fraternal Communist parties and members of the CPSU'.⁵⁷

By spelling out Belgrade's *'incorrect ideological postulates'*, the CPSU CC Resolution of 13 July identified ideological heresies promoted by Yugoslavia that threatened the existence of the *'lager'*. It thus signalled an end to rapprochement with Yugoslavia. By distributing the Resolution to *'fraternal parties'*, the Soviet leadership had taken a step further, from passively ignoring the Moscow Declaration to actively pursuing a policy of *'containment'* of Yugoslavia. The unprecedented humiliation of the member of the highest Soviet leadership and one of Khrushchev's closest allies, Bulganin, had a dual purpose. On the one hand, the intention was to inform *'fraternal parties'* that Yugoslavia remained an outcast from the international Communist movement. On the other hand, it served as a warning to Khrushchev himself. The hard-liners in the Presidium demonstrated that they had become strong enough to issue reprimands to Khrushchev. Belgrade first learned of the Resolution from Mićunović on 18 August.⁵⁸ The Yugoslav leadership would receive the full text of the document only months later. Provoked by Mićunović during one of their heated exchanges in the aftermath of the Hungarian events, Khrushchev had the Resolution dispatched to Tito on 4 December.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ V. Mićunović's report from Moscow, 18 August 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-69.

⁵⁹ Pouch from the CPSU CC, signed by N. S. Khrushchev for Tito and the LCY CC, 4 December 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-69.

As the crisis of the Hungarian leadership deepened in July, Moscow continued with the tactics of simultaneously exerting pressure on the Yugoslav leadership and wooing it. On 13 July, during a reception in the Kremlin, Khrushchev took Mićunović aside for a '*confidential conversation*'.⁶⁰ Khrushchev asked the Yugoslav Ambassador to inform Tito that the situation in Hungary '*was very complex*'. According to him, acting on Suslov's recommendation the Soviet leadership had decided to fully support Rakosi. Khrushchev underlined that, knowing Tito's animosity towards Rakosi, he wished to avoid possible disagreements between Moscow and Belgrade over this decision. He also wanted the Yugoslav leader to understand correctly that, in the circumstances, the Soviets had no other policy alternatives. Khrushchev then informed the Yugoslav Ambassador that Mikoyan was leaving for Budapest the next day to inform the Hungarian leadership of Moscow's decision. Ominously, Khrushchev added that, should the situation in Hungary deteriorate further, Moscow would not hesitate to use '*all available means*' to suppress the crisis.⁶¹ Mićunović was in no doubt that Khrushchev's words were intended as a warning for Tito not to meddle in Hungarian affairs.⁶²

Three days later, at a reception at the French Embassy, Khrushchev arranged another tête-à-tête with Mićunović.⁶³ He asked the Yugoslav ambassador to inform Tito that, as a result of Mikoyan's work in Budapest, '*we have fared better than*

⁶⁰ V. Mićunović report to A. Ranković (for Tito) on conversation with Khrushchev, 13 July 1956; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1956, I - 5 – v. Also, Veljko Mićunović, *Moskovske godine...*, 106-9.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² V. Mićunović, *Moskovske godine...*, 107.

⁶³ Ibid, 109.

*expected... The Hungarian comrades have decided that Rakosi should resign.'*⁶⁴

This second Khrushchev-Mićunović encounter came two days before the session of the Plenum in Budapest on 18 July, during which Rakosi was indeed forced to resign. Informing Tito ahead of the events, in particular with regard to Rakosi, was a calculated move by Khrushchev to woo the Yugoslav leader. At the end of his conversation with Mićunović, Khrushchev proposed that Mikoyan fly from Budapest to Brioni in the next few days and personally brief Tito on events in Hungary.⁶⁵ The two-tier Soviet strategy towards Yugoslavia was evident in the fact that the Khrushchev-Mićunović conversations at the reception in Kremlin and in the French Embassy took place at the time when the CPSU CC was issuing and distributing the secret Resolution on Yugoslav-Soviet talks.

Mikoyan visited Brioni on 21 and 22 July. Tito was at first reluctant to agree to this visit.⁶⁶ The Soviet ploy was all too evident. Mikoyan's meeting with Tito immediately after he had engineered Rakosi's removal would suggest to Satellite leaders and the public that the change in Budapest was a result of a joint Yugoslav-Soviet action. This fitted well with the Soviet tactics of convincing anti-Stalinist forces in Eastern Europe of Belgrade's collusion with Moscow. It would also imply that by participating in *'united action of the Socialist forces'*, Yugoslavia had, de facto, joined the *'lager'*. There is no evidence of coordination of strategy between Belgrade and Moscow over Rakosi's removal. Based on Khrushchev's information of 13 July, the Yugoslav leadership could only assume that the Soviets

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 110.

were firmly behind the Hungarian leader; however, by 16 July, this was plainly not the case. Furthermore, it was very clear that during the meeting on 13 July, Khrushchev explicitly warned Tito against becoming involved in Hungarian affairs.

At the same time, the Yugoslavs were unhappy with the timing of Mikoyan's visit because it coincided with the first tripartite conference between Tito, Nehru and Nasser in Brioni. The Conference, held on the 18 and 19 July, was a pinnacle of Yugoslavia's efforts to lay the foundations of the non-alignment partnership. Belgrade was understandably anxious that Mikoyan's visit during the Conference, as Khrushchev first suggested, could raise suspicions among Tito's new allies about Yugoslavia's true independence from the Soviet Bloc. The Yugoslav leader finally agreed that Mikoyan should come to Brioni on 21 July, two days after Nehru's departure. Tito agreed to the visit in the belief that to reject Khrushchev's personal request could further weaken his standing in the Soviet leadership.

For the most part, Mikoyan's visit to Brioni on 21 and 22 July was indeed, nothing more than a Soviet propaganda ploy. In a cable informing Mićunović of these discussions, Popović angrily remarked that exchanges with Mikoyan were '*empty*'. On the subject of Rakosi's removal, Mikoyan had only told the Yugoslav leadership what it could have read in the Soviet and Hungarian press.⁶⁷ However, the Soviet leadership aimed to achieve additional goals with Mikoyan's visit. They were interested in silencing the Yugoslav press, which supported the opposition in

⁶⁷ Cable K. Popović to V. Mićunović, 26 July 1956; SMIP, Kabinet Državnog Sekretara Koče Popovića, FI, 1956-2 / 41.

Hungary.⁶⁸ Moscow was also irritated by the active role being played by Yugoslavia's diplomats in Hungarian events and wished to stop it. Ever since the CPSU Twentieth Congress, Nagy's associates regularly visited the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest to exchange information. They also used the services of Yugoslav diplomats to convey Nagy's messages to the Hungarian leaders.⁶⁹ Finally, the new Hungarian leadership under Ernő Gerő considered Tito's endorsement to be crucial for securing domestic popular support. They repeatedly demanded that Moscow put pressure on Tito to do so.⁷⁰ On 21 July, during Mikoyan's visit, the Hungarian Ambassador in Yugoslavia, Sándor Kurimszky, handed Tito a letter from Ernő Gerő. In it, Gerő officially recanted '*mistakes*' made by the earlier Hungarian leadership against Yugoslavia since 1948 and pleaded for the re-establishment of party relations and for a meeting between representatives of the two parties.⁷¹

Mikoyan's mission however, failed on all fronts. Tito refused to meet Gerő whom he considered little better than Rakosi. He responded to Gerő's letter on 11 September, nearly two months after having received it.⁷² Although he made a concession to Khrushchev by agreeing to see Mikoyan, Tito refused to rescind his support for the democratisation and de-Stalinization processes in Hungary. The Yugoslav press continued to openly support the democratic opposition in Hungary

⁶⁸ Report of the Soviet Ambassador in Budapest (Andropov), 9 July 1956, as quoted in Leonid Gibianskii, *Soviet-Yugoslav Relations and Hungarian Revolution, 1956*, in *Jugoslovenski Istorijski Časopis* [Yugoslav Historical Journal], 1996, Issue 1-2, 156.

⁶⁹ Note 309, in Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne, János M. Rainer, (eds.) *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents* (Budapest, New York: CEU Press, 2002), 351.

⁷⁰ Reports from the Yugoslav Ambassador in Hungary (Dalibor Soldatić), 19 and 23 July 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, F 51 / 121-3- 411988.

⁷¹ Document No. 18: Letter from Ernő Gerő to Josip Broz Tito, July 19, 1956, in Csaba Békés, et al (eds.) *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution....*, 157-8.

⁷² Ibid. (Introductory Note).

and its demand for Nagy's return.⁷³ According to a report from Yuri Andropov, the Soviet Ambassador in Budapest, the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest continued to actively '*propagate the Yugoslav way*' at meetings with intelligentsia and with workers in factories, as well as maintaining contacts with opposition leaders. More alarming for Moscow was Andropov's observation that an increasing number of members of the Hungarian Central Committee were now looking upon Yugoslavia as the model to be emulated.⁷⁴

During the second half of September the most dramatic act of the Yugoslav-Soviet manoeuvring over the crises in Eastern Europe took place. On 19 September, Khrushchev arrived to Yugoslavia for a '*holiday*', as the visit was officially announced. On 27 September, at the end of his visit, Tito accompanied the Soviet leader to the Crimea for another week of joint '*holidaying*'. Khrushchev's '*holiday*' in Yugoslavia was at Tito's original invitation made at the beginning of August.⁷⁵ With increasingly evident signs of Moscow's hard-line shift that could endanger the desired improvement in Yugoslav-Soviet relations, Tito hoped that a tête-à-tête exchange with Khrushchev would help maintain the momentum of rapprochement between the two countries. Initially, Khrushchev accepted the invitation for September. However, several weeks later, the Soviet leader conditioned the visit by insisting that, at the end of his stay in Yugoslavia, Tito accompany him back to

⁷³ BORBA, 20 July 1956, 3; 23 July 1956, 1; 23 August 1956, 3. Also, Document No. 19: Report from Ambassador Yuri Andropov on Deteriorating Conditions in Hungary, August 29, 1956, in Csaba Békés, et al (eds.) *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution...*, 159-67.

⁷⁴ Document No. 19: Report from Ambassador Yuri Andropov on Deteriorating Conditions in Hungary, August 29, 1956, in Csaba Békés, et al (eds.) *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution...*, 159-67..

⁷⁵ Report on the meeting with the Yugoslav President, Comrade J.B. Tito, 9 August 1956; АВП, РФ, Фонд 0144, Опись 41, Папка 169, Дело 5, 65-8.

Crimea.⁷⁶ The Yugoslavs, who now found themselves in a quandary, delayed their response for more than a week.⁷⁷ The extended '*holiday*' with Khrushchev carried with it the danger of damage to Belgrade's relations with the West. The Suez crisis was increasingly threatening. At the same time, the release of future US economic and military aid to Yugoslavia was dependent on President Eisenhower's statement to the US Congress, due in mid-October. The President was due to confirm to Congress that Yugoslavia was outside the Soviet Bloc and that it remained an ally of the United States. Although so much was at stake, after some hesitation Tito had nevertheless, accepted Khrushchev's condition and decided to follow him to Yalta.⁷⁸ The Yugoslav leader hoped to exert a positive influence on the Soviet attitude towards developments in Poland and Hungary by maintaining a dialogue with Khrushchev.⁷⁹ Tito believed that the crises in Eastern Europe could determine the future of Socialism as a global system.

Tito's decision to follow Khrushchev to Yalta, regardless of consequences, confirms that throughout 1956 relations with the USSR and the unravelling crises in Eastern Europe preoccupied Tito and the Yugoslav leadership and took precedence over relations with the West. At the same time, the Yugoslav leadership had ^{early} consciously neglected relations with the West throughout 1956, despite Yugoslavia's persisting dependence on American economic assistance. This suggests confidence among Tito and his associates that the achieved level of

⁷⁶ Veljko Mićunović, *Moskovske godine...*, 123.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 125-6.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Seventh Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcript, 1 February 1957; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

normalization with the USSR had enabled them to acquire, for the time being mostly political, equidistance from both Blocs.

Khrushchev arrived in Brioni on 19 September. The Yugoslav leadership was keen to hear Khrushchev's explanation about the 13 July Resolution and *'why Moscow had buried the Moscow Declaration even before the ink on it had dried'*. However, contrary to expectations, throughout his stay in Yugoslavia, Khrushchev avoided discussions on any of the contentious issues.⁸⁰ Although the [debate] was *'hanging in the air'*, Tito, for tactical reasons, did not initiate it himself.⁸¹ It was only during the evening before his departure, on 26 September, that Khrushchev initiated the discussion with the Yugoslav leadership for the first and only time during his stay.⁸² In a toast during dinner at Tito's residence in Belgrade, Khrushchev addressed the controversial issues, which then provoked an impassioned debate between him and the present top Yugoslav leadership.⁸³ He pointed out that the Soviet Union and the Peoples Democracies were in the process of repairing Stalin's mistakes but wished to do so in a way *'that would result in the strengthening and not in the weakening of the lager'*. The Soviet leader then reproached the Yugoslavs for using terms, such as *'de-Stalinization'* and *'democratisation'* when they discussed current developments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

⁸⁰ Telegram from S. Prica to Yugoslav Ambassadors on Khrushchev's visit, 28 September 1956; SMIP, SPA, 1956, F II / SSSR II – 242.

⁸¹ Seventh Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcript, 1 February 1957; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

⁸² Cable from S. Prica to Yugoslav Ambassadors on Khrushchev's visit, 28 September 1956; SMIP, SPA, 1956, F II / SSSR II – 242.

⁸³ Memorandum of discussion during the dinner at comrade Tito's, given in Khrushchev's honour, 26 September 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-73.

During his speech, Khrushchev identified three reasons, which, in his view, demanded that Yugoslavia and the USSR bury their disagreements. Firstly, by championing the example of Yugoslavia in Eastern Europe, the West was deliberately seeking to fuel dissension in the Socialist '*camp*'. Secondly, various '*counter-revolutionary*' elements in Eastern Europe had adopted Yugoslavia as their banner. Finally, for the sake of the '*unity of action of the Socialist forces*' there should be no competition between Yugoslavia and the USSR over their influence on countries, such as Bulgaria, Rumania, or Hungary.⁸⁴ In continuation, Khrushchev emphasized that the world was divided into the '*clean*' - Socialist, and '*unclean*' - Capitalist countries. According to him, countries such as India and Burma were '*half clean*'.⁸⁵ Khrushchev's metaphor provoked laughter and ridicule among his Yugoslav audience, prompting the Soviet leader to cut short his speech. In the conclusion, Khrushchev reminded the Yugoslavs of his contribution to Yugoslav-Soviet normalization and of the personal risks he had taken in coming to Yugoslavia in May 1955. Khrushchev ended by emphasizing that he was demanding full ideological unity between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union for the good of Socialism.⁸⁶

In his speech, Khrushchev had for the first time pointed to an aspect of Yugoslav-Soviet confrontation that neither side had hitherto acknowledged – namely, their rivalry for the primacy within the Communist movement. Confirming that this was indeed an issue of genuine consternation in the Kremlin, Khrushchev later admitted

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

that both he and the rest of the Soviet leadership were at this point convinced that *'Tito wished to obtain a special role for Yugoslavia. He nurtured the hope of weakening the influence of the CPSU on fraternal Communist parties and increasing the influence of the LCY. To a certain extent he succeeded in this.'*⁸⁷

The rivalry for the leadership of the international Communist movement was an underlying constant of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. However, both sides were careful to never publicly admit its existence. In continuation of his address on 26 September, Khrushchev underlined that under the dictates of history and because other Communist parties demanded it from Moscow, the USSR occupied the position of the leader of the *'lager'*. He insisted that Moscow and Belgrade agree on this.⁸⁸ This meant the subordination of Yugoslavia to Soviet leadership.

In his reply to Khrushchev's address, Tito confirmed that the two sides differed, among other things, on whether there were *'permissible'* forms of Socialism and on the question of cooperation with Socialist and Social-Democratic parties.⁸⁹ Tito notably left out the issue of the coordination of Yugoslavia's actions with that of the *'lager'*, as demanded by the Soviets. As his other encounters with Khrushchev confirm, he never initiated this question; he would only refute Khrushchev's pressure. In this way, Tito hoped to make the Soviets understand that it is a *'non-issue'*. At the same time, he avoided Soviet accusations of wishing to break-up the *'lager'*.

⁸⁷ Н. С. Хрущев, *Воспоминания:...*, Кн. 4 [Vol. 3], 154.

⁸⁸ Memorandum of discussion during the dinner at comrade Tito's, given in Khrushchev's honour; 26 September 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-73.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

In continuation of his response to Khrushchev, Tito remarked that compared to the period immediately after the Twentieth Congress, a stagnation of the process of de-Stalinization was evident in the USSR and in Eastern Europe. He insisted that de-Stalinization and democratisation must continue because this would strengthen the cause of Socialism. The Soviets should not look at the events in Poznań as the '*end of the world*'. Tito also pointed out that a mistake had been made when Nagy was expelled from the Hungarian leadership; for this reason he must now be reinstated.⁹⁰ At this point Khrushchev interrupted by repeating that the West was using good relations with Yugoslavia to undermine the unity of the '*lager*'. A heated exchange then ensued between Khrushchev and his Yugoslav hosts. The Soviet leader accused the Yugoslav leadership of sympathising with the anti-regime elements in the Peoples Democracies. Tito, Ranković, Kardelj, and Koča Popović reproached Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership for duplicity and for the first time mentioned the Resolution of 13 July. Taken by surprise, Khrushchev admitted the existence of the Resolution and tried to justify it. Alluding to the Resolution, Tito concluded the debate by stressing to Khrushchev that no one had the right to judge whether he and his comrades, after a lifetime of revolutionary struggle and after leading a successful Revolution, were true Marxist-Leninists or not.⁹¹ The discussion between Khrushchev and the Yugoslav leadership on 26 September ended on a highly confrontational note. There was no coming together of views on any of the contested ideological issues. As never before, Khrushchev was explicit in his demand that Yugoslavia conformed to the ideological unity of the '*lager*'.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia and Tito's subsequent trip to Crimea were officially declared as '*holidays*' and no official talks were held. This provided the two leaders with an opportunity to confer in private and at length.⁹² Unfortunately, no account of the exchanges between Tito and Khrushchev in Yalta exist. According to Mićunović's report on the Crimean visit, Tito and Khrushchev, accompanied occasionally by Ranković and Bulganin, would walk out into the park and confer.⁹³ Tito later confirmed that the discussions in the Crimea took place over dinner or during walks.⁹⁴ Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia in the end of September and Tito's stay in Yalta represented the culmination of Soviet efforts to draw Yugoslavia into the '*lager*'. According to Tito, during his stay in the Crimea, Khrushchev made a concerted push to persuade him to reintegrate Yugoslavia into the '*lager*'. Tito's final rebuke caused open consternation and frustration among the Soviet leadership.⁹⁵

The failure of Khrushchev's offensive was soon evident. On 29 September, after Khrushchev and Tito had left for Yalta, the official spokesman of the Yugoslav Secretariat for Foreign Affairs, Branko Drašković, confirmed at a press conference that '*open questions and differences of view*' existed between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.⁹⁶ In an editorial published on 12 October, after Tito's return from the Crimea, BORBA confirmed that there remained '*outstanding questions and*

⁹² Veljko Mićunović, *Moskovske godine...*, 141.

⁹³ Report by V. Mićunović on conversations with Bulganin, Firyubin, Voroshilov, and Kirichenko during the visit to Crimea, 6 October 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-74.

⁹⁴ Seventh Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcript, 1 February 1957; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/III/15.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1 January 1955 -31 December 1956, Vol. IX, (Bristol: Keesings Publications), 15188.

differences of views [between the CPSU and the LCY]'.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Yugoslavia continued to support Nagy and the opposition in Hungary. On 27 October, the official Yugoslav Foreign Ministry spokesman acclaimed the appointment of Nagy as the new Hungarian Prime Minister and the replacement of Gerö by Kádár, as the new First Secretary of the Hungarian Workers Party. He also characterised the Soviet military intervention of 23 – 24 October as '*tragic and unnecessary*'.⁹⁸

However, Tito had to make some concessions in the Crimea. The Yugoslav leader had agreed to re-establish relations with the Satellite parties. Relations with the Polish United Workers Party had already been established on 2 September. This however, was a demonstration of Yugoslavia's support for the reforms in Poland and not the result of Soviet pressure. As a direct result of the Tito-Khrushchev talks in the Crimea, successive delegations of the Bulgarian, Rumanian, and the Hungarian parties flocked to Belgrade. On 7 October, at the conclusion of the visit to Belgrade of the delegation of the Bulgarian Communist Party, led by its First Secretary, Todor Zhivkov, the re-establishment of Yugoslav-Bulgarian party relations was announced. During the visit by the delegation of the Hungarian Workers' Party, led by its First Secretary, Ernő Gerö, between 15 and 23 October, relations were established between the Hungarian and the Yugoslav parties. On 28 October, at the end of an eight-day visit by the Rumanian Workers Party (RWP) delegation, headed by its First Secretary, Gheorgiu Dej, a joint declaration was issued; it formally established relations between the LCY and the RWP.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ BORBA, 28 October 1956, 3.

⁹⁹ Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1 January 1955 -31 December 1956, Vol. IX, (Bristol: Keesings Publications), 15188

During the months after his trip to the USSR, Tito did everything possible to sustain rapprochement with the USSR despite the signals of Soviet duplicity. Numerous Yugoslav delegations were dispatched to the USSR, from high-level military personnel to representatives of the Young Pioneers' Organization. In the first week of August, an irritated Mićunović registered sixteen Yugoslav delegations in Moscow. On occasion, two or three groups would arrive on the same train from Belgrade. For many of them Mićunović could see no logical purpose.¹⁰⁰ In August, two members of the LCY Executive Committee, Blažo Jovanović and Lazar Koliševski, spent their '*holidays*' in the Crimea. This was part of the practice agreed during the Moscow talks, to promote party contacts.¹⁰¹

It is important to investigate why, given the pressure he endured during talks in Moscow, Tito continued to maintain the semblance of good Yugoslav-Soviet relations. If not before, then certainly after 18 August when Mićunović had sent an extensive report on the CPSU CC Resolution of 13 July, Tito and his associates were fully aware of the Soviet clandestine campaign to discredit Yugoslavia.¹⁰² Several factors can explain Tito's behaviour. He did everything in his power to preserve the rapprochement with the Soviets precisely because he understood it to be under threat. Good relations with the Soviets were essential if the threat of Soviet invasion, a real possibility for five years after 1948, was to be eliminated for good. Good relations were also essential if Yugoslavia was to decrease its

¹⁰⁰ Veljko Mićunović, *Moskovske godine...*, 115.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 116.

¹⁰² V. Mićunović's report from Moscow, 18 August 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-69.

dependence on Western aid. Both were fundamental conditions of Yugoslavia's strategic orientation to achieve equidistance from either Bloc. The signing of the 'Aluminium' contract between Yugoslavia, USSR, and East Germany on 1 August 1956 appeared to justify Tito's tactics. According to this contract, the Soviet Union, together with East Germany, was to build a huge aluminium plant in Yugoslavia with supporting hydroelectric power plants. This aluminium plant was a founding block of Tito's dream to build his own armaments industry, which he considered essential for true independence from both Blocs.¹⁰³

Tito's readiness to accommodate Khrushchev in the months after his visit to the USSR was also the result of his assessment that Khrushchev's position as leader was under threat. The hard-line shift in Moscow after the Presidium's *Postanovlenie* of 30 June confirmed Tito in the belief that Khrushchev was indeed in danger. To the Yugoslavs, Khrushchev personified the normalization between the two countries. As has been shown, Tito regarded Khrushchev to be the main force behind de-Stalinization within the Soviet leadership. Furthermore, the vacillation of the Soviet leadership over Hungary, manifested in their U-turn in early July, from total support of Rakosi to his removal, all within three days, suggested the existence of a dangerous deadlock in the Kremlin between the hard-liners and Khrushchev. If sustained over a longer period it could result in delayed Soviet reactions to subsequent unforeseen events, which would then be followed by erratic actions. This would inevitably increase international tensions and would

¹⁰³ Transcript of talks held between the President Tito and the Prime Minister of Burma, U Nu, on board the ship 'Mindon', 14 January 1955, at 15:30; AJBT, KPR, I-2 / 4-2.

endanger not only Yugoslav-Soviet relations but also peace in Europe and in the World. In this respect, the strengthening of Khrushchev's position seemed the best way out of the dangerous paralysis of the Soviet leadership.

In order to maintain Yugoslavia's presence in developments in Eastern Europe, Tito was also eager to sustain the rapprochement with the Soviets during the summer of 1956. The Yugoslav leadership hoped to play a role in encouraging the process of de-Stalinization in the Satellites. It was in Yugoslavia's strategic interest to help the anti-Stalinist and the pro-Yugoslav leaders in Eastern Europe to come to power. This represented the best guarantee against the resumption of tensions on Yugoslavia's borders. At the same time, the Yugoslav leadership regarded it as part of their internationalist Communist duty to help the Peoples' Democracies to liberate themselves from the Stalinist yoke.¹⁰⁴ Having been granted access to the Satellite countries, as a consequence of the normalization with the USSR, Tito was reluctant to let this opportunity slip. As he had explained to the Director of the US Foreign Operations Administration, Harold Stassen, in October 1954, Yugoslavia's influence on the Satellites was proportional to its presence in these countries and normalization provided the opportunity to establish such presence.¹⁰⁵

Finally, Tito's efforts to prevent the deterioration of Yugoslav-Soviet relations during this period was the result of the build-up of tensions due to the threat of war in the Eastern Mediterranean following Nasser's decision to nationalize the Suez

¹⁰⁴ Fifth Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcripts, 26 November 1954; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/13.

¹⁰⁵ Memorandum by the Director of the Foreign Operations Administration (Stassen) to the Secretary of State, 1 November 1954; FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, 1414-16.

Canal on 26 July. On 9 August, during his meeting with the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade, Tito devoted most of the time to the Suez crisis.¹⁰⁶ In his memoirs, Mićunović also confirmed that the Suez crisis dominated his communication with Belgrade in August.¹⁰⁷ With the unravelling of a global crisis over Suez and with the threat of a major war in the vicinity, Tito was eager to avoid conflicts with the Soviets.

IV.3 Deterioration of the Yugoslav-Soviet Relations

Following the first Soviet military intervention on 23 and 24 October, Yugoslavia gave its full support to changes that took place in Hungary. Imre Nagy took over as Prime Minister and János Kádár replaced Ernő Gerő as First Secretary of the Hungarian Workers Party. Much to Moscow's consternation, Yugoslavia officially described demonstrations in Budapest on 23 October as a '*justified popular revolt*' and the subsequent Soviet military intervention as '*tragic*'.¹⁰⁸ Belgrade attributed the '*bloodbath*' in Budapest on 23 and 24 October to the absence of true de-Stalinization and democratisation in Hungary and to the lack of responsiveness of its leadership to genuine public demands.¹⁰⁹ This interpretation differed sharply from the Soviet view that the '*counterrevolutionary riot*' was the result of the

¹⁰⁶ Report on the meeting with the Yugoslav President, Comrade J.B. Tito, 9 August 1956; АВП, РФ, Фонд 0144, Опись 41, Папка 169, Дело 5, 65-8.

¹⁰⁷ Veljko Mićunović, *Moskovske godine...*, 118-26.

¹⁰⁸ Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1 January 1955 -31 December 1956, Vol. IX, (Bristol: Keesings Publications), 15188.

¹⁰⁹ Instructive cable from K. Popović to Yugoslav Ambassadors on the official position on events in Hungary, 26 October 1956; SMIP, SPA, 1956, F II / Madj. I – 260.

'subversive activity by the imperialist states'.¹¹⁰ On 29 October, Tito sent a public letter of support to the new Government and Party leadership in Budapest.¹¹¹ Tito's letter was also in response to a plea for support from Nagy and Kádár.¹¹² The Hungarian request came with the full approval of the Soviet leadership. At its emergency session on 28 October the CPSU CC Presidium, which had decided to back the new Nagy Government in Budapest, authorised a telegram to Belgrade appealing for Tito's public endorsement of the new Hungarian leadership.¹¹³

By 2 November however, Tito became convinced that Nagy was no longer in control of the situation in Hungary. Two developments contributed to his change of heart - the increasingly anti-Communist character of the Hungarian uprising and the decision of the Nagy Government to leave the Warsaw Pact. On 28 October, a day before he had sent a public letter of support to Nagy, Tito expressed his first doubts about the events in Hungary. During a reception for the visiting delegation of the Soviet KOMSOMOL, Tito observed that a terrible bloodbath was taking place in Hungary, citing that in one town over twenty Communist officials had been hanged. His comments revealed deep dismay and repugnance.¹¹⁴ On 31 October, Koča Popović instructed the Yugoslav Ambassador in Budapest, Dalibor Soldatić to express to the Nagy Government Belgrade's '*concern*' that the situation in

¹¹⁰ Document No. 41: Soviet Foreign Ministry and CPSU CC Presidium Instructions to Yuri Andropov [Soviet Ambassador in Budapest] and Arkadii Sobolev [Soviet Ambassador in the UN], October 28, 1956, in Csaba Békés, et al (eds.) *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution...*, 270-1.

¹¹¹ BORBA, 30 October 1956, 1.

¹¹² Telegram from the Yugoslav Ambassador in Budapest (Soldatić) to DSIP, 27 October 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, F 50 / Madjarska II – 417907.

¹¹³ Document No. 40: Working Notes from the CPSU CC Presidium Session, October 28, 1956, in Csaba Békés, et al (eds.) *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution...*, 262-9. In the footnote No. 166 to the above quoted document, Békés et al assert that, in the end, Moscow had never sent the telegram to Belgrade.

¹¹⁴ Memorandum of conversation between President Tito and the KOMSOMOL Delegation, 28 October 1956; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1956, I - 5 - v.

Hungary was sliding towards the '*right*' and advised that '*no further concessions should be made*'.¹¹⁵ Tito increasingly feared for the fate of Socialism in Hungary.

The second event that contributed to Tito's change of heart about Nagy was the Declaration of Hungarian neutrality, broadcast by the Nagy Government on 1 November. Tito called it a '*stupid manifesto*', and regarded it as proof that the Nagy Government was losing touch with reality and was by then following the most unrealistic demands of the mob. He believed that Hungary's unilateral departure from the Warsaw Pact would destabilize the balance of power between the two Blocs in Europe and provoke war.¹¹⁶ Thus, before Khrushchev arrived in Brioni on 2 November, Tito was already convinced that Nagy was unable to control events in Hungary in a way Gomulka had succeeded in steering developments in Poland away from the precipice.¹¹⁷

On the evening of 2 November, following the decision of the CPSU CC Presidium of 31 October, which also authorised military intervention in Hungary, Khrushchev and Malenkov arrived in Brioni in circumstances of strictest secrecy. They had come to secure Tito's support for the Soviet military intervention.¹¹⁸ Fittingly, the Soviet leaders' small two-engine IL-14 turboprop plane landed at Pula airport amidst a hurricane, after what Khrushchev later described as the '*most harrowing*

¹¹⁵ Document No. 55: Instructions from Koča Popović, Yugoslav Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to Ambassador Dalibor Soldatić, October 31, 1956, in Csaba Békés, et al (eds.) *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution...*, 312.

¹¹⁶ Tito's speech before the LCY officials of Istria and representatives of the Yugoslav National Army and his responses to questions – Transcript; Pula, 11 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/XIX, I – 3. Also, S. Prica to the Yugoslav Ambassador in Paris (Bebler), 9 November 1956; SMIP, SPA, 1956, F II / Madj. I – 275.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Document No. 53: Working Notes and Attached Extracts from the Minutes of the CPSU CC Presidium Meeting, October 31, 1956, in Csaba Békés, et al (eds.) *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution...*, 312.

flight of my life'.¹¹⁹ From Pula, through the roughest seas and in pitch darkness, the Soviets were ferried by a Yugoslav Navy launch to the island of Brioni where the meeting took place. Together with Khrushchev, Malenkov, and Tito only Kardelj, Ranković, and Mićunović were present at the meeting. There were no translators and both sides agreed not to take notes. The meeting lasted through the night and was concluded at 5 a.m. on 3 November, after ten hours of discussions.¹²⁰ The Soviets expected a long and difficult meeting, comparable to the one they had conducted the previous day with Gomulka in Brest. According to Khrushchev's account, after a very cordial welcome at the pier in Brioni and after having been told by the Soviet leader of the reasons for their arrival, Tito immediately expressed agreement with the Soviet military intervention against the 'counterrevolution' in Hungary. Mićunović's account and the Yugoslav Memorandum of conversation do not mention Khrushchev's exchange with Tito at the pier. According to Mićunović and the Yugoslav Memorandum of conversation, once in Tito's residence, instead of a coherent analysis of developments in Hungary, Khrushchev gave an emotional account of events. He exclaimed that '[the counter-revolutionaries] *are killing, slaughtering, and hanging Communists*'. Khrushchev informed the Yugoslavs that the Soviet leadership had already held consultations with the Czechs, Rumanians, Bulgarians, and the Chinese and that all had given their support for the proposed military action. Khrushchev admitted that only talks with Gomulka had ended without a clear endorsement.

¹¹⁹ Memorandum of conversation between comrades Tito, A. Ranković, E. Kardelj, and V. Mićunović with N. S. Khrushchev and G. M. Malenkov during the night of 2-3 November 1956, (compiled from memory on the next morning, 3 November, by Mićunović, on Tito's orders); AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1956, I - 5 - v. Also, H. C. Хрущев, *Воспоминания*..., Кн. 3 [Vol. 3], 257-8. Also, Veljko Mićunović, *Moskovske godine*..., 156-64.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

The Soviet leader then continued that because a '*restoration of Capitalism*' was taking place in Hungary there was no other remaining option but to use troops to quash the revolt. He emphasized that Soviet reluctance to act decisively would be understood in the West as a sign of either weakness or stupidity, which, for Khrushchev, was '*one and the same*'. According to the Memorandum, Tito at this point interrupted Khrushchev and expressed reservations about the use of troops. Although in agreement that Hungary was sliding towards '*reactionary restoration*' and that something had to be done, Tito suggested that workers councils should be encouraged to take a leading role in armed action. Khrushchev however, insisted that there was no time for other measures and that urgent action needed to be taken. He declared that the Red Army would require only two days to '*stop this development in Hungary*'.

Khrushchev then pointed out to the Yugoslavs that the Soviet leadership was forced to take military action for domestic reasons as well. He explained that unless it acted decisively, the Soviet leadership would come under threat from forces in the USSR that could come together under the slogan that while in Stalin's era everything in the '*lager*' was in order and under control, the new post-Stalin leadership had allowed it to disintegrate. Khrushchev singled out the Red Army as the force that would be among the first to embrace such reasoning.¹²¹ Khrushchev's elaboration betrays the pressure being exerted by the Soviet military and Zhukov. It further suggests that, at this point, Khrushchev feared an army coup

¹²¹ Memorandum of conversation between comrades Tito, A. Ranković, E. Kardelj, and V. Mićunović with N. S. Khrushchev and G. M. Malenkov during the night of 2-3 November 1956, 3 November 1956; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1956, I - 5 – v.

in case of further indecisiveness of the Party leadership. This can explain his sudden change of mind between the meeting of the CPSU CC Presidium of 30 October, when it was decided that a Declaration should be issued and a peaceful resolution pursued in Hungary, and the Presidium meeting on the next day, 31 October, at the beginning of which Khrushchev immediately asked for the reconsideration of the previous day's decision and demanded a military solution in Hungary.¹²²

Khrushchev's explanation of the hitherto completed military preparations for action in Hungary convinced the Yugoslavs that the intervention was imminent and inevitable. From that point onwards, the Yugoslavs resigned themselves to the inevitability of the intervention as the '*lesser evil*' and concentrated instead on actions that would minimize its negative implications.¹²³ Tito reminded the Soviets that the uprising in Hungary came as the result of Rakosi's policies and argued that if military intervention was '*unavoidable*', it should be conducted in conjunction with political actions. He suggested that simultaneously with the military operations, a new Revolutionary Government should be formed in Hungary that would issue a Declaration addressing grievances that had brought people out on to the Budapest streets in the first place. After these words, which signalled Tito's endorsement of intervention, Khrushchev, reacted '*as if a huge burden was lifted from his*

¹²² Document No. 53: Working Notes and Attached Extract from the Minutes of the CPSU CC Presidium Meeting, October 31, 1956, in Csaba Békés, et al (eds.) *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution...*, 307-10.

¹²³ Memorandum of conversation between comrades Tito, A. Ranković, E. Kardelj, and V. Mićunović with N. S. Khrushchev and G. M. Malenkov during the night of 2-3 November 1956, 3 November 1956; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1956, I - 5 - v.

shoulders'.¹²⁴ A discussion then focused on the choice of the new Hungarian leader. Khrushchev favoured Ferenc Münnich while Yugoslavs backed Kádár.¹²⁵

In continuation, Mićunović, probably in coordination with Tito, initiated the question of Nagy's fate. He suggested that Nagy's resignation and his statement condemning the slide of the Revolution towards the Right could help reduce armed resistance to Soviet troops and minimise the '*bloodshed*'. Khrushchev and Malenkov immediately accepted this idea. Tito then disclosed to the Soviets that Zoltán Szántó and Géza Losonczy, members of Nagy's innermost circle, had approached Yugoslav diplomats in Budapest inquiring whether Yugoslavia would grant Nagy and his associates asylum in case of '*reprisals by the reactionaries*'. Tito emphasized to Khrushchev that, by not seeking refuge in the West, Nagy and his group were proving to be good Communists. According to the Memorandum, '*it was then concluded that the Yugoslavs should explore this avenue of action since the Russians do not have such possibilities*'. In the ensuing conversation, it was mentioned several times that '*Nagy should be isolated*'. Yugoslavs promised to do as much as possible but mentioned that they were not clear yet as to what exactly could be done. According to the Memorandum, Yugoslav reservations arose from the fact that they still did not know when the Soviet intervention would begin. Khrushchev and Malenkov however, avoided divulging its timing. At this point, Tito asked Khrushchev directly about the position of other members of the Presidium with regard to the military intervention in Hungary. After a short pause, both

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Khrushchev and Malenkov replied that there was absolute unity on this question in the Presidium.¹²⁶

Despite agreeing in Brioni on the need for the military intervention in Hungary, the Soviet and the Yugoslav leaders remained divided over the causes of the uprising in Hungary. The Yugoslavs regarded the initial uprising to have been a justified popular rebellion against the Stalinist Rakosi regime. They also believed, as Tito repeated several times to the Soviets in Brioni, that stubborn Soviet support of Rakosi until July contributed hugely to the postponement of the necessary reforms beyond the point when it could have prevented a bloody outcome. Khrushchev and Malenkov persisted that the main instigators of the Hungarian uprising were the '*counterrevolutionaries*' and '*reactionaries*'.¹²⁷ In the Memorandum of conversation, Mićunović observed that it was blatantly obvious that Khrushchev and Malenkov's conciliatory manner during the discussion was the result of their desire to acquire at all costs Tito's endorsement for the intervention. The Memorandum also confirms that the Soviets had agreed with the Yugoslav idea to isolate Nagy from the '*reactionaries*', the anti-Communist part of the leadership of the Uprising. The aim was to blunt the armed resistance of the Hungarian nationalists, minimise casualties, and secure the success of the Soviet military operation.

The outcome of the Brioni meeting was a big relief to the Soviet leadership.¹²⁸ On 4 November, only hours after the beginning of military operations in Hungary, the

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Н. С. Хрущев, *Воспоминания* : ..., Кн. 3 [Vol. 3], 258.

Yugoslav News Agency, TANJUG, broadcast an official statement by the Yugoslav Government. The statement emphasized that in light of the latest deterioration of the situation in Hungary, which threatened a bloodbath, the removal of Socialism, and the serious destabilization of the balance of power in Europe, Yugoslavia had decided to support the newly formed Kádár Government in its efforts to stabilize the situation in the country.¹²⁹ Tito's endorsement was very important to the Soviet leadership because of the prestige Yugoslavia enjoyed in the world, in particular among the non-engaged countries and among the liberal elements in the Peoples' Democracies. Indeed, on 4 November, within hours of the beginning of Soviet military action, the Indian Ambassador in Belgrade, Dayal, acting on instructions from Nehru, requested a Yugoslav explanation of developments in Hungary. The Deputy Yugoslav Foreign Secretary, Vidić, immediately obliged, justifying the Soviet intervention as the lesser of two evils in the circumstances.¹³⁰ The very next day, Tito sent a personal letter to Nehru with a detailed chronology of the Hungarian crisis and justification of the Soviet intervention.¹³¹ His intervention had directly influenced the change in Nehru's position towards the Soviet intervention in Hungary, from initial doubts to tacit support, as expressed in his address to the Indian Parliament on 19 November.¹³²

Yugoslavia's endorsement also influenced the stance adopted by the Polish leadership towards the Soviet intervention in Hungary. At the meeting with

¹²⁹ Telegram from S. Prica to the Yugoslav Embassy in New Delhi – paraphrase of the TANJUG statement, 9 November 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, F 50 / Madjarska X – 419045.

¹³⁰ Memorandum of conversation between D. Vidić and the Indian Ambassador in Belgrade (Dayal), 4 November 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, F 50 / Madjarska V – 418445.

¹³¹ Memorandum of conversation between D. Vidić and the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade (Firubin), 6 November 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, F 50 / Madjarska VII – 418778.

¹³² Letter from the LCY CC, signed by Tito, to the CPSU CC, addressed to Khrushchev, 1 December 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-83.

Khrushchev, Malenkov, and Molotov in Brest on 1 November, Gomułka and the Polish leadership neither endorsed nor condemned the forthcoming Soviet intervention.¹³³ Throughout the day, on 4 November, Korolczyk, a member of the Polish Central Committee called repeatedly the Yugoslav Ambassador in Warsaw, asking for Belgrade's position on the Soviet intervention. He informed the Ambassador's secretary that he had to obtain the information before 6 p.m. when Gomułka was to address the local party secretaries on developments in Hungary.¹³⁴ Indeed, Gomułka's position stated at the conference coincided in every detail with TANJUG's statement. On 5 November, all Polish papers published TANJUG's statement in full.¹³⁵ On the same day, at the urging of his Government, Pietrusiński, the Polish Chargé in Belgrade, called on Vidić seeking the latest Yugoslav position on Hungary [for the purpose] of *preparing the [Polish] position in the UN*.¹³⁶ The Yugoslav backing during the first hours and days following the Soviet military intervention provided vital justification of Soviet action for those in Eastern Europe and in the Third World who would otherwise have opposed it.

The Soviet military intervention produced a by-product that would contribute further to the deterioration of Yugoslav-Soviet relations – the so-called Nagy 'affair'. In the early hours of 4 November, immediately after the commencement of Soviet military operations, Imre Nagy and fifty-two of his associates and their families escaped into the Yugoslav Embassy where they were granted asylum. During the following

¹³³ Н. С. Хрущев, *Воспоминания:...*, Кн.3 [Vol. 3], 257.

¹³⁴ Telegram No. 614 from the Yugoslav Ambassador in Warsaw (Milatović) to DSIP, 5 November 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, F 50 / Madjarska VI - 418571.

¹³⁵ Telegram No. 615 from the Yugoslav Ambassador in Warsaw (Milatović) to DSIP, 5 November 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, F 50 / Madjarska VI - 418570.

¹³⁶ Memorandum of conversation between D. Vidić and the Polish Chargé in Belgrade (Pietrusiński), 5 November 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, F 50 / Madjarska VI – 418551.

three weeks, the Yugoslav Government, first through its Ambassador Soldatić and then through Dobrivoje Vidić who was dispatched from Belgrade on 18 November, tried to negotiate out of this situation with the Kádár Government. Finally, on 22 November, after Vidić had received a written undertaking from Kádár the previous evening guaranteeing their safe passage home, Nagy, his colleagues and their families left the Yugoslav Embassy. However, several hundred yards outside the Yugoslav compound, Soviet intelligence officers abducted them.

Nagy's asylum in the Yugoslav Embassy was a result of a failed and bungled attempt by the Yugoslavs and the Soviets to neutralise Nagy and facilitate the instalment of the Kádár Government thus securing the success of the Soviet intervention. During the afternoon of 3 November, Belgrade instructed Soldatić, its Ambassador in Budapest, to respond positively to the request for asylum submitted by Zoltán Szántó a day earlier on Nagy and his associates' behalf.¹³⁷ The Yugoslav leaders believed they were acting in accordance with the agreement reached with the Soviets in Brioni to extract, or '*isolate*' Nagy from the control of the '*reactionaries*'.¹³⁸ Ranković's instructive cable to Soldatić of 4 November reveals that the Yugoslavs planned to evacuate the whole group to Yugoslavia before the start of the Soviet intervention. As had been agreed during the previous day with Szántó, the Yugoslavs were expecting Nagy's final response in the morning of 4 November. However, the beginning of the Soviet military operations in the early

¹³⁷ Instructive telegram from A. Ranković to the Yugoslav Ambassador in Budapest (Soldatić), 4 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, IX - 75 / I - 37, 7.

¹³⁸ Report from the Soviet Ambassador in Yugoslavia (Firyubin) to the Presidium of the CPSU CC, 4 November 1956; РГАНИ, Фонд 89, Опись 45, Дело 25, 1-4

hours of 4 November foiled the evacuation plans.¹³⁹ This would suggest that the Yugoslav leadership had no prior knowledge of the precise timing of the intervention. The Soviet reluctance to inform Yugoslavs in advance of the beginning of their military operations, and the total confusion and lack of communication between the two sides once the intervention had started, triggered a chain of events that left both parties with the least expected and desired outcome – Nagy being granted asylum in the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest.

In the morning of 4 November, Kardelj called in Firyubin, the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade, and informed him that Nagy, twelve other Hungarian leaders, and their families had been granted asylum in the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest, *'as has been agreed with comrade Khrushchev'*. Kardelj also asked for instructions from the Soviet leadership on whether a statement, as discussed in Brioni, was still necessary from Nagy.¹⁴⁰ Moscow replied on the same day that *'there was no further need for any statement [from Nagy]'*. The Soviet Presidium also requested that the Yugoslavs hand Nagy over to Soviet troops.¹⁴¹ On 5 November, Khrushchev sent a euphoric cable to Tito informing him that the *'counterrevolution was crushed on 4 November, at noon'*. He underlined that Tito's endorsement of the intervention had been well received by the Soviet Presidium.¹⁴² In light of

¹³⁹ Instructive telegram from A. Ranković to the Yugoslav Ambassador in Budapest (Soldatić), 4 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, IX - 75 / I – 37, 7. Also, Letter from the Yugoslav Federal Executive Council to the Hungarian Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government, signed by E. Kardelj, 18 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, IX-75/I-37, 15-18.

¹⁴⁰ Report from the Soviet Ambassador in Yugoslavia (Firyubin) to the Presidium of the CPSU CC, 4 November 1956; РГАНИ, Фонд 89, Опись 45, Дело 25, 1-4

¹⁴¹ Instructions from the CPSU CC Presidium to the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade (Firyubin), 4 November 1956; РГАНИ, Фонд 89, Опись 45, Дело 25, 1-4

¹⁴² Letter from the CCPSU CC, signed by Khrushchev to the LCY CC, addressed to Tito, 5 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-76.

developments involving Nagy, this served as a reminder to Tito that Moscow expected his continued cooperation.

On 5 November, Tito sent a telegram to Moscow asking that Nagy and his group be given free passage to Yugoslavia.¹⁴³ Khrushchev's response came two days later and shocked Belgrade. It showed complete disregard for Yugoslavia's predicament. Its '*vulgar and crude*' language and open threats caused consternation among the Yugoslav leadership.¹⁴⁴ In a threatening and angry tone, devoid of any diplomatic niceties, Khrushchev implied that by providing shelter to Nagy, Belgrade had confirmed to the whole world that Nagy had been a Yugoslav agent all along. He stated that while the Brioni agreement had put aside suspicions about Yugoslavia's role in Hungarian events, '*now that Nagy and his cohorts have found refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy, our assessment of the causes of the developments in Hungary would require a revision. This fact would certainly introduce suspicion into our relations and would inflict an irreparable damage upon them*'. Khrushchev concluded his missive with an ominous and open threat that '*the sooner Nagy and his group were handed over to Hungarian authorities, the better it would be for all of us*'.¹⁴⁵ Tito later confirmed that this '*vulgar*' letter, as he had called it, triggered alarm among the Yugoslav leadership as the first sign of a Yugoslav-Soviet confrontation.¹⁴⁶ In their subsequent exchange of letters, on 8 and 10 November however, Tito and Khrushchev managed to calm the situation

¹⁴³ As paraphrased in Khrushchev's letter to Tito, 7 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-77.

¹⁴⁴ Seventh Plenum of the LCY CC—Tito's address, 1 February 1957; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

¹⁴⁵ Letter from the CCPSU CC, signed by Khrushchev to the LCY CC, addressed to Tito, 7 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-77.

¹⁴⁶ Seventh Plenum of the LCY CC—Transcript, 1 February 1957; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

created by the Nagy 'affair'.¹⁴⁷ As a result, from 8 November the Nagy problem was delegated to negotiations between the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest and the Kádár Government. In the two weeks that followed, a number of proposals and counterproposals, ranging from the evacuation of Nagy and his group to Yugoslavia or Rumania, to their safe return home with a granted pardon from the Kádár Government, were discussed.¹⁴⁸

On 21 November, three rounds of negotiations between Kádár and Vidić produced a resolution to the Nagy affair. The new Hungarian Government gave a written undertaking for Nagy and his group guaranteeing their safe return home.¹⁴⁹ On the evening of 22 November, according to the Vidić - Kádár agreement, Nagy and his group, together with two Yugoslav diplomats acting as their escorts, boarded a special bus in front of the Yugoslav Embassy. At the last moment, a Soviet officer jumped into the bus. Several cars belonging to the Soviet military intelligence followed behind. Minutes after the motorcade had left the Embassy, the Soviet officer in the bus ordered the two Yugoslav diplomats out. The bus was then driven to the building of the Soviet Military Command from whence Nagy and several members of his group were flown the same evening to Rumania.¹⁵⁰ Yugoslavia's rigorous protests and two official Notes to the Hungarian Government on 24

¹⁴⁷ Letter from the LCY CC, signed by Tito to the CPSU CC, addressed to Khrushchev, 8 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/III-15, Prilog 3 / Letter from the CCPSU CC, signed by Khrushchev to the LCY CC, addressed to Tito, 10 November 1956; РГАНИ, Фонд 89, Опись 45, Дело 38, 2-4.

¹⁴⁸ Collection of documents on the Nagy affair, 3-22 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, IX - 75 / I - 37. Also, *Politika Jugoslavije prema Mađarskoj i slučaj Imre Nadja (Bela knjiga)* [The Policy of Yugoslavia Towards Hungary and the Case of Imre Nagy (The White Book)], (Belgrade: Sekretarijat za informacije, SIV - The Secretariat for Information, Federal Executive Council, 1959) [Henceforth: The White Book...].

¹⁴⁹ Memorandum of conversation between D. Vidić and Imre Nagy, Géza Loszonczy, Donáth, and Haraszi in the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest, 19 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, IX - 75 / I - 37, 19-20 / Memorandum of conversations between D. Vidić and János Kádár on: 19, 21, and again on 21 (20:30 - 00:30) November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, IX - 75 / I - 37, 21-32 / Letter from János Kádár to the Yugoslav Federal Executive Council, 21 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, IX - 75 / I - 37, 33-6.

¹⁵⁰ Report from the Yugoslav Ambassador in Budapest (Soldatić), 22 November 1956; The White Book..., 148

November and 6 December, as well as to the Soviet Government demanding that the agreement between the Hungarian Government and the Yugoslav Government of 21 November be honoured and Nagy and his group returned home, produced no result.¹⁵¹

Available Soviet documents confirm that the plan for Nagy's arrest was conceived as early as 17 November. Thus, Kádár had given his Government's guarantees on 21 November in the knowledge that the arrest of Nagy was planned.¹⁵² There is however, no evidence of Yugoslav complicity in the abduction. This is apparent in Tito's continued pleas for Nagy's return to Hungary in subsequent correspondence with Khrushchev.¹⁵³ Tito also repeatedly addressed this topic in his conversations with the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade in the end of November and the beginning of December.¹⁵⁴ On the other hand, Kádár's '*admission*' before the Hungarian Party leadership in December that the Yugoslavs were informed in advance, verbally that the written guarantee would not be honoured, as quoted in Békés' book, cannot be taken at face value.¹⁵⁵ The above-mentioned meeting took place only a month after the uprising and Kádár was aware that many of those present still harboured secret sympathies towards Yugoslavia. Moreover, his words have to

¹⁵¹ Yugoslav Note to the Hungarian Government, 24 November 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, F 50 / Madjarska XVI – 420207 / Yugoslav Note to the Hungarian Government, 6 December 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, F 50 / Madjarska XVIII – 420849 / Soviet Note to the Government of Yugoslavia, 6 December 1956; РГАНИ, Фонд 89, Опись 45, Дело 56, 4-5

¹⁵² Document No. 98: Report by Georgii Malenkov, Mikhail Suslov, and Averki Aristov on Hungarian-Yugoslav Negotiations, November 17, 1956 in Csaba Békés, et al (eds.) *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution...*, 435-6.

¹⁵³ Letter from the LCY CC, signed by Tito, to the CPSU CC, addressed to Khrushchev, 1 December 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-83.

¹⁵⁴ Memorandum of conversation between Tito and A. Ranković and the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade (Firyubin), 29 November 1956; АЖБТ, КРР, СССР, 1956, I - 5 – v. The same meeting also from the report by Firyubin, 29 November 1956; АВП, РФ, Фонд 0144, Опис 41, Папка 169, Дело 5, 115-120. Also, Report by the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade, Firyubin on the conversation with the Yugoslav president Tito and A. Ranković, 5 December 1956; АВП, РФ, Фонд 0144, Опис 41, Папка 169, Дело 5, 123-6

¹⁵⁵ Introductory note to Document No. 101, in Csaba Békés, et al (eds.) *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution...*, 445.

be taken within the context of the fierce anti-Yugoslav campaign that had just been unleashed in the *'lager'* aimed at discrediting Yugoslavia's prestige among the public of Peoples' Democracies.

IV.4 Confrontation

Even before the successful conclusion of the Soviet military intervention in Hungary and before the scandalous abduction of Nagy, other developments destroyed the pretence of the Yugoslav-Soviet rapprochement. They brought into the open the unbridgeable divide that had been reopened in Yugoslav-Soviet relations since Tito's visit to the USSR in June. These developments took absolute primacy over the Nagy *'affair'* and would, more than anything else, contribute decisively to the transformation of Yugoslav-Soviet relations from accord to open confrontation. They would further confirm that neither the Hungarian events nor the Nagy *'affair'* were the cause of the fierce ideological confrontation that erupted between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the next few months. On the contrary, the true causes lay concealed under the gloss of normalization, ever since the beginning of it.

Khrushchev's '*vulgar*' and threatening letter of 7 November alarmed and upset the Yugoslav leadership. They regarded it as an ominous sign.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, on 8 November, an article entitled '*Fifteen Years of the Albanian Workers' Party*', signed by the Albanian leader Enver Hoxha, appeared prominently in PRAVDA.¹⁵⁷ Although it never mentioned them by name, the article was a thinly veiled attack on Tito and the Yugoslav leadership. Among other things, Hoxha criticized *'those who claim to have invented "new forms" and "organisations" of the Socialist system, who aspire to impose it on others and preach departure from the example and experience of the Soviet Union'*. Hoxha indirectly accused Tito of '*cultivating [his] own personality cult*' under the pretext of fighting against that of Stalin.¹⁵⁸ As the article was published in PRAVDA, Yugoslavs were in no doubt that it had been sanctioned by the Soviet leadership. Furthermore, given the well-known animosity that existed between Tito and the Albanian leader, the Yugoslav leadership concluded that Moscow wished to add insult to injury and to inflict maximum pain on the Yugoslavs.

Belgrade decided to respond to the veiled attacks from Hoxha and Moscow. On 11 November Tito gave a speech in Pula before a closed meeting of the LCY officials of Istria and Army representatives.¹⁵⁹ On 16 November, the speech was published in the official party organ BORBA. This unprecedented gesture confirmed Yugoslav intention to bring differences with the Soviets into the open. Tito's Pula speech represented a watershed in the Yugoslav-Soviet relations. It marked the Yugoslav

¹⁵⁶ Seventh Plenum of the CPSU CC – Transcript, 1 February 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

¹⁵⁷ PRAVDA, 8 November 1956, 3.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Tito's speech before the LCY officials of Istria and representatives of the Yugoslav National Army and his responses to questions – Transcript; Pula, 11 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/XIX, I – 3.

leadership's departure from the pretence that relations between the two countries were good. The speech announced the resolve to challenge openly the Soviet leadership. As such, it inaugurated an open Yugoslav-Soviet confrontation. Opening his speech in Pula, Tito declared that he wished to respond to the 'slander' against Yugoslavia from 'quasi-Marxists' such as Hoxha and to provide Yugoslav Communists with insights into the most recent events in Hungary, Poland, and the Middle East.¹⁶⁰

In his speech, Tito devoted considerable attention to the state of Yugoslav-Soviet relations during the preceding months. He revealed that the disagreements between the CPSU and the LCY had existed for some time. Tito emphasized that at the Twentieth Congress the Soviets had condemned Stalin's conduct but had *'wrongly addressed it as the question of a personality cult and not as a question of the system. In truth however, the personality cult was a product of the system'*.¹⁶¹

The roots of the personality cult, according to Tito, lay in the Soviet bureaucratised system. He then stressed that for a time normalization with the Soviets had progressed well, resulting in the Belgrade and Moscow Declarations. Tito confirmed that these Declarations had aimed to transcend bilateral Yugoslav-Soviet relations and provide guidelines for relations between Socialist countries in general. However, it soon had become evident that the Soviets wanted these Declarations to apply to Soviet-Yugoslavs relations alone. After Poznań, according to Tito, [the Soviet leaders] *became much colder* [towards Yugoslavia]. He then revealed that talks with Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders in the Crimea in the

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

beginning of October, demonstrated that the Soviet leadership *'harboured a wrong understanding of the causes of the developing crises in Poland and Hungary'*. It was evident, Tito emphasized, that part of the Soviet leadership, which *'still stands... on the Stalinist positions'* had imposed such an interpretation of events on those in the leadership who *'wished to promote further democratisation and elimination of Stalinist methods'*.¹⁶²

In continuation, Tito gave his evaluation of the events in Hungary. He opined that, as the situation in Hungary had become more complex during the summer, the Yugoslav leadership had not done enough to exert pressure on the Soviet leadership to remove Rakosi and Gerö earlier. Tito admitted that he and his associates had feared that their intervention could provoke a confrontation with the Soviets. He then defined the 23 October demonstrations in Hungary as a justified popular revolt against Rakosi and Gerö. However, tragically and wrongly, Soviet troops intervened on 24 October opening the way for the *'reactionary forces'* to usurp what was until then a justified *'peoples' revolt'*. As a result, within days, this revolt turned into the *'general peoples' revolt against Socialism and against the Soviet Union'*.¹⁶³ In Tito's view, things rapidly spiralled out of control in Hungary and as a result of *'that stupid manifesto'*, Nagy's Declaration of neutrality of 1 November, there came the second Soviet intervention. Tito then posed a rhetorical question on whether the second Soviet intervention had been necessary. According to him, the first intervention, *'which was ordered by Gerö was absolutely wrong'*. Tito however, insisted that on the eve of the second intervention

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

*'the prospect of a bloodbath and of a horrific civil war became very real. As a result, Socialism would have been buried and a Third World War could have followed... The mob went into houses and killed Communists... In Soprony, they hanged twenty Communists... The Government of Nagy did nothing to stop this... but issued that manifesto, the declaration that it would leave the Warsaw Pact'.*¹⁶⁴

In these circumstances, Tito underlined, the second Soviet intervention was the *'lesser of two evils'*. Furthermore, *'if, as a result, Socialism will be saved in Hungary, then comrades we could say... that the Soviet intervention was necessary'*.¹⁶⁵ However, in concluding his speech Tito reminded the Soviet and East European leaders that had they corrected their mistakes in time, intervention would not have been necessary. He also warned them against believing that military might could resolve everything.

After months of maintaining appearances to keep the rapprochement with the Soviets alive, why did Tito publicly challenge the Soviets in Pula and precipitate a full-blown confrontation with Moscow? Tito had made his Pula speech precisely because the Yugoslav-Soviet confrontation had been developing for some time. He had judged that by continuing to keep up pretences amidst the Soviet surreptitious anti-Yugoslav campaign this would seriously undermine Yugoslavia's prestige and eventually its strategic position. Tito's Pula speech and the decision to bring the existing Yugoslav-Soviet disagreements into the open were prompted by external and internal considerations. As part of external considerations, the Yugoslav leadership felt compelled to distance Yugoslavia from the *'lager'*, to respond to the ongoing Soviet campaign to isolate Yugoslavia, to provide support to Khrushchev

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

and to reaffirm Yugoslavia's independent position and mend relations with the West. The most important internal considerations that prompted Tito to make the Pula speech were the need to justify his endorsement of the Soviet intervention in Hungary before the Yugoslav public and to diffuse the threat of open dissent among the Yugoslav working class.

Tito used his speech in Pula to justify his support of the second Soviet intervention. As the principal reason for support, he identified the fear of the overthrow of Socialism in Hungary. Throughout his speech, Tito kept repeating this explanation. He had supported democratisation in Eastern Europe because he believed that it was the only way for Socialism to preserve itself in these countries and to prevail as the dominant global system. However, whenever democratisation threatened to challenge the Socialist system itself or, as he believed to have been the case in Hungary, was *'hijacked'* by *'reactionary forces'*, he was willing to apply the brakes in order to preserve Socialism. Sir Frank Roberts, the British Ambassador in Belgrade called it Yugoslavia's *'remarkable ambivalence'*.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, Tito harboured more selfish motives. He was certainly afraid that the defeat of Socialism in Hungary could create a precedent that would encourage Yugoslavia's domestic anti-Communist opposition and the West to undermine his regime.

The goal of Tito's Pula speech was also to distance Yugoslavia from the Soviet Bloc. Moscow had imposed upon the Communist movement the *'official'* truth that the Hungarian uprising was an organised attempt by the *'reactionary forces'*,

¹⁶⁶ Dispatch from Sir Frank Roberts in Belgrade to the Foreign Office, 17 August 1956; PRO, FO 371 Series, File No. 124275, Doc. RY 1022/83.

inspired and backed by the West, to replace the existing Socialist system with the Capitalist one. Since it had supported Soviet intervention, Yugoslavia had succumbed to the danger of being identified in Eastern Europe and in the West as part of the Socialist '*camp*'. For this reason, Tito and the Yugoslav leadership felt compelled to declare openly and quickly that their endorsement of the Soviet intervention was only conditional, that fundamental ideological differences remained between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, and that Yugoslavian endorsement was not part of the coordinated action of the '*lager*'. After months of evasive manoeuvring designed to resist Soviet pressure to rejoin the '*lager*' while maintaining the process of rapprochement, the Yugoslav leadership had obviously concluded that further continuation of that strategy would only undermine Yugoslavia's position. In this context, the Pula speech was meant to be a definitive and public Yugoslav rebuttal of Soviet efforts to draw it back into the '*lager*'. In his report of the meeting he had with Khrushchev on 3 December, on the subject of the Pula speech, Mićunović concluded that [with the Pula speech, Yugoslavia] *had now definitely and publicly broken off with speculations that [it] would rejoin the "lager". It seems that this was something the Russians have not stopped hoping for until Pula*'.¹⁶⁷

Tito's condemnation of the Soviets, delivered in Pula, was also a response to the ongoing anti-Yugoslav campaign in the '*lager*', engineered by the Soviets ever since Tito's visit to the USSR. Tito's intention was to fend off the Soviet tactics of isolating Yugoslavia from the rest of the Communist movement by blaming it for the

¹⁶⁷ Memorandum of conversation between V. Mićunović and N. S. Khrushchev, 3 December 1956; SMIP, Ambasada u Moskvi, 1956, FI / Strogo pov. – 162.

crises in Poland and Hungary. In February 1957, at the Seventh Plenum of the LCY CC, Tito explained that the anti-Yugoslav campaign, reinvigorated after the frustrated Soviet attempts in the Crimea, in October, to draw Yugoslavia into the 'lager' confirmed that

*[the Soviets] have been preparing for a long time and very meticulously for an ideological fight against Yugoslavia. [At the time of the Nagy 'affair', the Soviets] went even further. Through their cronies they started insinuating that Yugoslavia was responsible for Poznan, as well as for Hungary; that we have been doing the same thing as the reactionary forces from the West, only in a more perfidious manner. All in all, the aim was to discredit Yugoslavia.'*¹⁶⁸

The Yugoslav leadership understood that, having learned the lesson of 1948, the Soviets had resorted to more subtle methods in their latest anti-Yugoslav campaign. The Soviets publicly promoted good relations with Yugoslavia, whilst in private they made every effort to discredit Yugoslavia and rally the Peoples' Democracies and other Communist parties against it.¹⁶⁹ To achieve the much-desired cohesion of the Bloc in the face of the unravelling crises in Poland and in Hungary, the Soviets needed to rally the 'lager'. To do so, they had created, like in 1948, a common enemy, the traitor – Yugoslavia; hence accusations against Yugoslavia for the Hungarian developments. The Yugoslav leadership had judged that to remain quiet would have meant an admission of culpability and further corrosion of Yugoslavia's prestige and influence in the Communist movement. Deprived of channels of access to other Communist parties that the Soviets commanded, Tito and the Yugoslav leadership were left with the only available avenue to counter Soviet intrigues – to bring everything into the open. The Pula speech did just that. After an initial reluctance, Tito was persuaded by his

¹⁶⁸ Seventh Plenum of the CPSU CC – Transcript, 1 February 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

associates to allow the publication of the speech. He later admitted that he was *'not sorry that [the Pula speech] was published because [it enabled] the whole thing to come out of the confines of narrow-minded scribbling and to become public'*.¹⁷⁰

With his Pula speech, Tito also hoped to provide support to Khrushchev and his supporters in the Soviet leadership. As shown, he believed that the crises in Poland and in Hungary had made Khrushchev vulnerable to the attacks from hard-liners; hence his reference in the speech to the existence of *'Stalinists'* and *'non-Stalinists'* in the Soviet leadership.¹⁷¹ Tito emphasised to the Soviet Ambassador, Firyubin, that by pointing to the divisions in the Soviet leadership, he wanted to help those *'who are thinking in a "new way"'*.¹⁷² Tito was particularly concerned about possible pressure from the Red Army that would force Khrushchev to adopt more rigid policies. Tito was alert to the suspect role of the Soviet Army since the beginning of the year. Reporting on the eve of the CPSU Twentieth Congress, on 9 February 1956, Vidić, the Yugoslav Ambassador in Moscow at the time, asserted that in the struggle against the hard-liners, Khrushchev had had to rely more and more on the support of the Army. This, according to the Yugoslav Ambassador, was increasingly placing the Army in the centre of the power battle in the Kremlin and its influence seemed to be growing by the day.¹⁷³ Again, during the meeting in Brioni on 2-3 November 1956, Khrushchev had admitted to Tito that unless the

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Tito's speech before the LCY officials of Istria and representatives of the Yugoslav National Army and his responses to questions – Transcript; Pula, 11 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/XIX, I – 3.

¹⁷² Memorandum of conversation between president Tito, A. Ranković and the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade (Firyubin), 29 November 1956; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1956, I - 5 – v.

¹⁷³ Yugoslav Ambassador in Moscow (Vidić) to DSIP, 9 February 1956; AJ, 507/IX, 119/II-40.

leadership acted decisively in Hungary, the Army might stage a coup.¹⁷⁴ Mićunović's report on his conversation with Khrushchev on 11 November confirmed that Khrushchev was indeed under pressure from the Army. Khrushchev had admitted to Mićunović that

*'there are people even within [the Soviet] party who think that the Twentieth Congress was to blame for such developments [in Poland and Hungary]... Such accusations are evident in particular in the Army... the Army is an important political factor in the USSR, above all with regard to the question of Stalin and preservation of the Socialist lager... Such forces... are against the legacy of the Twentieth Congress and [the Soviet leadership] is forced, because of them, to make compromises that are in the opposition to the spirit of Congress'.*¹⁷⁵

According to Mićunović, when talking about these things, *'Khrushchev looked insecure and vulnerable'*.¹⁷⁶ The growing insecurity of his leadership position arising from his continuous reliance on the Army's support may explain Khrushchev's decision to remove Zhukov from the position of the Defence Minister in October 1957. Khrushchev had struck as soon as he felt sufficiently secure, which was after having got rid of Molotov, Malenkov, and Kaganovich. Ironically, Zhukov was instrumental in their removal.

However, Tito had made a miscalculation if he hoped to support Khrushchev with the Pula speech. All available evidence suggests that by this time, as a result of developments in Hungary, Khrushchev had experienced a damascene conversion. It would appear that the Soviet leader had come to believe that demands for democratisation and independence in Eastern Europe could lead to the break-up of

¹⁷⁴ Memorandum of conversation between comrades Tito, A. Ranković, E. Kardelj, and V. Mićunović with N. S. Khrushchev and G. M. Malenkov during the night of 2-3 November 1956, 3 November 1956; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1956, I - 5 – v

¹⁷⁵ Report by V. Mićunović on the meeting with Khrushchev, 11 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-80.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

the *'lager'*; this in turn would lead inevitably to the collapse of Socialism as a global system. This realisation had made Khrushchev unwilling to cut the last remaining strings that attached him to Stalin's legacy although having parted at the Twentieth Congress with Stalin, the usurper and despot. Khrushchev seemed to have accepted Stalin's postulate that the strength of Socialism as the global system was dependant on the ideological uniformity of the *'lager'*. Scared and scarred by the Hungarian experience, he re-embraced the necessity of the tight cohesion of the *Socialist camp* under the hegemony of the Soviet Union. During their meeting on 11 November, Khrushchev admitted to Mićunović that *'as the initiator of the policies of the Twentieth Congress [he] now accepted the thinking [of those in the Soviet leadership who were sensitive] to the question of Stalin and the preservation of his legacy'*.¹⁷⁷ After his meeting with Khrushchev on 3 December, Mićunović had concluded that

'during many conversations that I have had with him these days, it is becoming clear that Khrushchev and Bulganin are most critical of Tito's speech in Pula... It is clear what tendencies are strengthening here, now under the leadership of Khrushchev and Bulganin, no matter how strange it may look'.¹⁷⁸

Khrushchev's increasingly conservative stance was certainly due in part to his manoeuvring to keep his leadership position in the face of his opponents' accusations that his policies were responsible for the chaos in Hungary. However, the tenacity of his pressure on Tito to return to the *'lager'* in September and October, when the two conferred alone, and his push for the Stalinist unity of the Communist movement at the Conference of the Communist parties in Moscow in

¹⁷⁷ Report by V. Mićunović on the meeting with Khrushchev, 11 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-80.

¹⁷⁸ Report by V. Mićunović on the meeting with Khrushchev, 3 December 1956; SMIP, Ambasada u Moskvi, 1956, FI / Strogo pov. – 162.

November 1957, at the time when his leadership was unchallenged, confirm that Khrushchev's views had undergone a transformation during the crises in Poland and Hungary.

Tito's Pula speech was also intended to reaffirm Yugoslavia's independent position and help mend its relations with the West. Throughout the year, preoccupied with the rapprochement with the Soviets and later with developments in Hungary and Poland, Yugoslavia had neglected its relations with the West. At no time in 1956 had relations with the West influenced Yugoslav conduct towards the Soviets. Likewise, the Soviet attitude towards Yugoslavia in 1956 was determined solely by the developments in Eastern Europe. However, faced with increasing isolation in the East, Tito and his associates had come to fear that the ideological confrontation with the Soviets might lead to the repetition of 1948.¹⁷⁹ In such circumstances, the concentration of Soviet troops in Hungary after the invasion was seen in a new light. In a telegram to Yugoslav Ambassadors abroad, Koča Popović underlined that

'the Soviet military operations [in Hungary]... because of their breadth have themselves become an element of increasing tension (huge number of troops and armour in Hungary, strengthening of [Soviet] contingent in Rumania, news of the arrival of Soviet troops in Bulgaria, renewal of the Potsdam regime in East Germany, etc). [The Soviet military measures] are aimed at establishing Soviet control over the East European theatre and as a warning to the West. However, because of their closeness to our borders, they also act as an element of pressure on [Yugoslavia]'.¹⁸⁰

This warning by the Yugoslav Foreign Minister was issued only a day before Tito addressed his audience in Pula. In view of the unravelling ideological confrontation

¹⁷⁹ Seventh Plenum of the CPSU CC – Transcript, 1 February 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

¹⁸⁰ Koča Popović to Yugoslav Ambassadors abroad, 10 November 1956; SMIP, SPA, 1956, F II / Jug. II – 278.

with Moscow, massive Soviet military presence on Yugoslavia's border, as a result of Hungarian operations, gave rise to security concerns in Belgrade. It prompted the Yugoslav leadership to seek improvement of relations with the West.

Domestic considerations played an important role in Tito's decision to make the Pula speech and then publish it. Tito felt compelled to justify Yugoslavia's support for the Soviet intervention before the Yugoslav public. He enjoyed enormous personal popularity at home and his regime commanded tight control over the country. However, the Yugoslav public, proud of having withstood the threat of a Soviet attack for five years, were confused seeing its leadership support the Soviet attack on another Socialist country. On many occasions during the following months, Tito stressed that in the first days after the second Soviet military intervention in Hungary, there was a need for a *'thorough explanation of the Hungarian events'* to the *'perplexed'* Yugoslav public.¹⁸¹ Telegrams from Yugoslavia's most prominent diplomats, such as Aleš Bebler, the Ambassador in Paris who until recently had held the position of the Deputy Foreign Secretary, or Jože Brilej, the Yugoslav representative in the UN, reflected the unease among the high Yugoslav officials caused by Yugoslavia's endorsement of the Soviet intervention.¹⁸² Dissent of this kind was previously unknown.

Another domestic factor that prompted Tito to give the Pula speech was the need to address and pre-empt workers' dissent. The decisive role that the workers had

¹⁸¹ Memorandum of conversation between Tito and A. Ranković and the Soviet Ambassador in Belgrade (Firyubin), 29 November 1956; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1956, I - 5 - v / Seventh Plenum of the CPSU CC - Transcript, 1 February 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

¹⁸² Cable J. Brilej to DSIP, 28 October 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, F 50 / Madjarska II - 417965. Also, A. Bebler to DSIP, 3 November 1956; SMIP, PA, 1956, F 50 / Madjarska VI - 418490.

played in Poznań riots and then in the Hungarian uprising was triggered by the misery of their living conditions. This did not escape the Yugoslav leadership's attention. There was a danger of a spill over effect of the Hungarian workers' rebellion to Yugoslavia. The standard of living enjoyed by Yugoslav workers was only slightly better than that of the Hungarians. Tito used the Pula speech to announce immediate measures aimed at addressing the question of living standards.¹⁸³ Indeed, at the meeting of the LCY CC Executive Committee on 6 November, the only point of agenda discussed beside the situation in Hungary was the urgent reallocation of economic resources to the consumer sector.¹⁸⁴ In Pula, Tito informed the audience that the Executive Committee had decided that the priority of the current Five-year Plan must be the living standard of the working class. He announced that salaries would be raised by 5-10% with immediate effect, that production norms would be readjusted, and that additional resources would be allocated to the development of the consumer sector.¹⁸⁵ The speed with which the Yugoslav leadership heeded lessons of Hungary and acted to address the problems of the workers' standard of living reveals the degree of anxiety among the Yugoslav leaders.

Understandably, Tito's Pula speech caused an immediate and furious reaction from the Soviets. On 18 November, during a reception in the Kremlin for the visiting Polish Party and Government delegation and two days after the Pula speech had been published in BORBA, Mićunović was given a demonstration of the Soviet

¹⁸³ Tito's speech before the LCY officials of Istria and representatives of the Yugoslav National Army and his responses to questions – Transcript; Pula, 11 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/XIX, I – 3.

¹⁸⁴ Meeting of the Executive Committee of the LCY CC, 6 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/III-67.

¹⁸⁵ Tito's speech before the LCY officials of Istria and representatives of the Yugoslav National Army and his responses to questions – Transcript; Pula, 11 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/XIX, I – 3.

anger.¹⁸⁶ Throughout the two-hour reception, not a single Soviet official greeted or shook hands with the Yugoslav Ambassador. As Mićunović was leaving, Khrushchev, Bulganin, and Molotov stopped him at the door and asked to talk to him. For an hour, in the corridor, the Soviet leaders berated the Yugoslav leadership in a tempestuous exchange with the Yugoslav Ambassador. After this initial verbal assault, the whole group moved to one of the side rooms where the conversation continued in a calmer tone for another hour. In the end, Khrushchev offered to drive Mićunović home. The two spent a further hour and a half talking alone in Khrushchev's car in front of the Yugoslav Embassy. Khrushchev was furious. He could not understand why Tito had chosen to attack and condemn the Soviets publicly. Khrushchev insisted that the Soviets wanted to discuss disagreements with the Yugoslavs in a '*comradely fashion*', through letters. Now, after Pula, [the Soviet leadership] *would have to fight... there was no other way*'. Khrushchev promised that the Soviet leadership would respond to Tito's attack and that *'it will inevitably start a confrontation'*. He insisted that they would never accept Yugoslav views of Stalin.¹⁸⁷ In response to Khrushchev's direct question about Tito's motives, Mićunović replied that the speech was, on the one hand, an effort to explain the Hungarian events to the Yugoslav public. On the other hand, the speech was a response to Hoxha's article in PRAVDA for which Mićunović blamed Moscow. Khrushchev tried to present himself as Yugoslavia's friend. He disclosed that he had written a very positive report to the Presidium on his and Tito's talks in the Crimea. Khrushchev admitted in a dejected manner that after the Pula speech

¹⁸⁶ Report by Mićunović on his conversation with Khrushchev, Bulganin, and Molotov, 18 November 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-81.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

a confrontation would ensue and *'who knows where it would lead'*? Throughout the four-hour conversation between Mićunović and the Soviet leaders, Nagy, who was at this time in the Yugoslav Embassy, was mentioned only once – when the Soviet leaders agreed with Mićunović that it would have been best if he was allowed to go home in the first few days.¹⁸⁸

On 23 November came the official and public Soviet response to Tito's Pula speech in the form of a very long PRAVDA editorial.¹⁸⁹ The title of the article, *'For Further Rallying of Forces of Socialism on the Bases of Marxist-Leninist Principles'* immediately pointed to the core of the Yugoslav-Soviet dispute. The article first contested at length Tito's view that it was the working class that rose justifiably against the mistakes of the Rakosi regime. It insisted that the Hungarian events were the result of an attack by the *'counterrevolutionary forces'* inspired by the West. In continuation, PRAVDA defined the main points of disagreement with Tito. It strongly objected to Tito's assertion that the personality cult was a result of the deficiencies of the Soviet system. The article underlined that *[Tito's] criticism of the [Soviet] system was aimed at casting a shadow over the system of life of the Soviet people'*. Employing sophisticated arguments, the article pointed out that while no one should deny the Yugoslav people the right to build a system to their liking, it was inappropriate for the Yugoslav leadership *'to attack the Socialist system of other countries and to glorify its own experience as being better than others and of universal value'*.¹⁹⁰ PRAVDA reproached Tito for demanding the independence of

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ PRAVDA, 23 November 1956, 2-4.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

Socialist countries and Communist parties from the Soviet Union. It quoted the Resolution of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and the Presidium's 30 October Resolution as proofs that the CPSU and the Soviet Government were not trying to impose Soviet hegemony on others. In this context, PRAVDA also quoted at length the Resolution on the relations between the USSR and other Socialist parties adopted at the July 1955 Plenum of the CPSU CC.¹⁹¹ PRAVDA also accused Tito of trying to create a rift within the Communist movement by dividing leaders of the Soviet Union and other Communist parties into '*Stalinists*' and '*anti-Stalinists*'. In conclusion, the editorial in PRAVDA defined the essence of the Soviet confrontation with Tito. It pronounced that '*the higher interests of Socialism demand... the removal of everything that could hamper the rallying of the Socialist forces on the basis of Marxism-Leninism*'.¹⁹²

On 1 December, in what he later described as a '*conciliatory*' letter to Khrushchev, Tito made a final effort to steer the Yugoslav-Soviet debate onto a less confrontational track.¹⁹³ In the letter, Tito pointed to the fact that, unlike the Yugoslavs who had published the PRAVDA's article of 23 November in its entirety, the Soviets had still not published Tito's Pula speech. In continuation, he emphasized that '*a campaign is being unleashed against Yugoslavia, similar to the one during the Stalin period, in 1948, and its goal is to isolate Yugoslavia from the Socialist world*'.¹⁹⁴ Tito then explained the motives for his speech in Pula. Among the most important of these, he singled out the anti-Yugoslav campaign by the

¹⁹¹ More on this Resolution in Chapter III.

¹⁹² PRAVDA, 23 November 1956, 2-4.

¹⁹³ Seventh Plenum of the CPSU CC – Transcript, 1 February 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

Albanian, Czech, Bulgarian, and the French parties, started immediately after his visit to the USSR alleging that the whole process of the Yugoslav-Soviet normalization was only a ploy to draw Yugoslavia into the *'lager'*. Tito also pointed to the 13 July Resolution of the CPSU CC, after which the campaign was intensified. Furthermore, he underlined that he had to make the Pula speech to explain to the *'confused'* public in Yugoslavia the causes and the truth behind the events in Hungary. He underlined that what had happened in Hungary *'represented a huge blow to the Socialist world'*. In continuation, Tito appealed to the Soviet leadership to return Nagy home and stop forced deportations that were going on in Hungary. In the end, he warned that *'no one has the right, in the name of some quasi higher interests to slander [Yugoslavia] and to spread false propaganda'*. Although conciliatory in tone, the letter did not offer the Soviets any concessions in the ongoing ideological dispute.¹⁹⁵ It also confirmed the Yugoslavs' resolve not to give in to accusations either coming directly from Moscow or inspired by Moscow.

Only three days after Tito had sent the *'conciliatory'* letter to Khrushchev, the Yugoslav leadership decidedly raised the stakes. On 7 December, before the Yugoslav Federal Assembly, Edvard Kardelj delivered the most devastating attack on the Soviet system.¹⁹⁶ In his speech, Kardelj went much further than Tito had done in Pula. What would anger the Soviets most was Kardelj's attempt to provide a *'theoretical'*, Marxist interpretation of the superiority of the Yugoslav system over the Soviet one. In his speech, Kardelj attributed the causes of the Hungarian revolt

¹⁹⁵ Letter from the LCY CC, signed by Tito, to the CPSU CC, addressed to Khrushchev, 1 December 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-83.

¹⁹⁶ BORBA, 8 December 1956, 1-2. Also, in Robert Bass, Elizabeth Marbury (eds.) *The Soviet-Yugoslav Controversy, 1948-58: A Documentary Record* (New York: Prospect Books for The East European Institute, 1959), 86-105.

to the fallacies of the uncritically copied Soviet system. In continuation, Kardelj subjected the fundamental precepts of the Soviet system to the harshest criticism, using terminology that had not been heard since the 1948 conflict. He insisted that with regard to the economic system, there could be no mention of Socialism, much less of Communism *'as long as the State, as an instrument of force, is the main factor in economic relations [as is in the USSR]'*. His critique of the Soviet political system bordered on revision of Lenin's postulates. Kardelj insisted that *'democracy must be an unconditional factor and element of Socialism'* and suggested that *'a political monopoly, be it of one or of many parties, is incompatible with the decisive role of the working masses through workers' councils in factories and boroughs'*.¹⁹⁷ He then singled out the Yugoslav system, based on self-management of workers' councils as the higher form of Socialist organisation. Kardelj also emphasized that *'to regard the process of Socialist development exclusively... through the clash between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is ideologically absurd and politically reactionary'*.¹⁹⁸ In conclusion, he criticised as faulty the Soviet postulate of the inevitability of the division of the world into two antagonistic Blocs – that of Socialism and of Capitalism. By questioning certain postulates of the Leninist dogma, Kardelj openly challenged Soviet ideological authority.

As has been shown, Tito's letter to Khrushchev of 1 December was an effort to defuse the confrontation. Why then did Kardelj deliver a speech several days later that Tito and his colleagues knew would escalate the row with the Soviets? At the LCY Plenum in February 1957, Tito explained that he and his associates had

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

decided that his Pula speech was not enough and that there was a need for *'theoretical depth'* that would strengthen Yugoslavia's arguments in the polemics with the Soviets.¹⁹⁹ This confirms that Tito and his associates were not interested in quieting down the ideological debate with the Soviets; on the contrary, they wanted to draw a definitive ideological demarcation line between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. In this context, they had assessed that further, decisive criticism of the Soviet system, in addition to Tito's Pula speech, was necessary in order to rebuke, once and for all, the Soviet attempts, present in one way or another and with different intensity ever since Khrushchev's first visit to Yugoslavia in 1955 – to draw Yugoslavia back into the *'lager'*. Kardelj's speech confirmed that the ideological incompatibility created after the 1948 rift between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union had not been healed during the process of normalization.

An additional motive that prompted the Yugoslavs to escalate the confrontation with the Soviets was the desire to disassociate themselves from the consequences of the Soviet military intervention in Hungary. By the end of November, instead of calming down, the repressive actions of the Soviet military authorities in Hungary intensified. The Yugoslav leadership looked upon this as further Soviet violation of the understanding reached in Brioni that the military phase of the intervention should be as short as possible and followed by political action. The abduction of Nagy and the disregard that the Soviets had demonstrated towards Yugoslavia's credibility offended and angered the Yugoslav leadership. Their indignation was

¹⁹⁹ Seventh Plenum of the CPSU CC – Transcript, Tito's address, 1 February 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

further aroused by the introduction of court-martials throughout Hungary, deportations of Hungarian prisoners to the Soviet Union and Rumania, and the crackdown on the workers' councils that would eventually lead to their ban on 9 December.²⁰⁰

The Soviet response to Kardelj's speech was predictably virulent. On 12 December, Khrushchev met Mićunović and for three hours vented his anger over Kardelj's speech. The Yugoslav Ambassador reported to Tito that he had never seen Khrushchev so angry.²⁰¹ The Soviet leader understood Tito's letter of 1 December as an effort to defuse the polemics but insisted that after Kardelj's speech *'there would be a rupture of party relations and a fight'*. In an attempt to justify Kardelj's speech, Mićunović pointed to the fact that the military phase of the Soviet intervention in Hungary was still taking priority over political measures. Khrushchev replied that *'Kádár was soft'* and that the Soviets had now embarked upon crushing the *'counterrevolution'* in Hungary, once and for all.²⁰² He then angrily insinuated that it was highly conspicuous that in the days preceding the 23 October, while the *'counterrevolution'* was being prepared in Hungary, Gerö visited Yugoslavia. According to Mićunović, Khrushchev was so angry that *'the conversation was unpleasant, at times very difficult, almost nonsensical'*. The Yugoslav Ambassador concluded from the conversation that the Soviet leadership had decided that the confrontation with Yugoslavia was now the only option left for

²⁰⁰ Letter from the LCY CC, signed by Tito, to the CPSU CC, addressed to Khrushchev, 1 December 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-83 / Seventh Plenum of the CPSU CC – Transcript, 1 February 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

²⁰¹ Report by V. Mićunović on his conversation with N. S. Khrushchev on 12 December, 13 December 1956; SMIP, Ambasada u Moskvi, 1956, FI / Strogo pov. – 166.

²⁰² Ibid.

them if they wished to maintain the firm cohesion of the Eastern Bloc. Mićunović also forecast that the Soviets would now do their best to rally the Socialist '*lager*' against Yugoslavia and that '*it should be expected that [the Soviets] would force the Rumanians and the Chinese to wake up from their "neutralist" stance towards [the ongoing Yugoslav-Soviet confrontation], which they occupy at the moment*'.²⁰³

Indeed, on 18 December, true to Khrushchev's threat, the Soviet response to Kardelj's speech came in the form of a venomous anti-Yugoslav article in PRAVDA.²⁰⁴ The article accused Kardelj of revisionism, anti-Leninism, and anti-Marxism. It also asserted that the Yugoslavs had escalated the confrontation on purpose, at the time when the '*reaction [was] attacking Communist parties and doing everything to create divisions within the international Communist movement*'. The article accused Yugoslavia of acting as a Trojan horse for the West. As proof, PRAVDA pointed to the recent meeting of the NATO Council during which the West German Foreign Minister, Heinrich von Brentano allegedly proposed that '*the North Atlantic Alliance should promote 'Titoism' among Peoples' Democracies because it brings better results than [Western] encouragement of subversion [in those countries]*'.²⁰⁵ In comparison to the PRAVDA editorial of 23 November, this article was intimidating, full of uncorroborated insinuations, and, at times, insulting towards Kardelj and the Yugoslav leadership. This revealed Moscow's increasing irritation and hostility towards Yugoslavia.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ '*For Whose Benefit*' by J. Pavlov, PRAVDA, 18 December 1956, 2-3.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

As predicted by Mićunović in his report on the 12 December conversation with Khrushchev, there soon came proof that the *'lager'* was rallying behind the anti-Yugoslav campaign. On 29 December, RENMIN RIBAO (People's Daily), the organ of the Communist Party of China Central Committee (CPC CC), published a long editorial under the title *'More on the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat'*.²⁰⁶ The editorial represented a scathing attack on Belgrade. It singled out Yugoslavia as being responsible for the devastating theory of *'many roads to Socialism'*. The article asserted that the experience of the October Revolution should be the only road for the proletariat of all countries to follow. The RENMIN RIBAO editorial attacked Yugoslavia's criticism of Stalin. It claimed that *'Socialism had achieved huge progress during Stalin'*, and that *'Stalin's mistakes [were] not the product of the Socialist system. Consequently, there [was] no need for the "reforming" of the Socialist system'*. The article directly accused Yugoslavs of aligning with the bourgeoisie by creating the term *'de-Stalinization'* and by claiming that there was a clash between *'Stalinists'* and *'anti-Stalinists'* in the Soviet leadership. To avoid any misinterpretation, it declared that *'Stalinism is Communism'*.²⁰⁷ In the conclusion, RENMIN RIBAO provided the most forceful endorsement of the Soviet leading role in the Communist movement. The eulogy of this kind, coming from the Chinese, had become rare after Stalin's death. The article emphasized that

'the strengthening of the international solidarity of the proletariat, in the centre of which is the Soviet Union, is not only in the interest of the global proletariat but also in the interest of the independence movements of all oppressed nations and of the world peace'.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ *'More on the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat'* in RENMIN RIBAO, 29 December 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/III – 12.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

The RENMIN RIBAO editorial provided decisive support for the Soviet leadership in their confrontation with Yugoslavia. It transformed the bilateral Yugoslav-Soviet polemics into an all-out attack of the whole international Communist movement on Yugoslavia.

The Chinese involvement in the Yugoslav-Soviet polemic escalated the anti-Yugoslav campaign. The Soviet leadership welcomed with relief the Chinese condemnation of Yugoslavia. Khrushchev later revealed that the Soviet leadership had asked the Chinese to act in their support and had waited anxiously for a month and a half for the Chinese reaction to Tito's Pula speech.²⁰⁹ For the Soviets, Chinese interference represented confirmation of the correctness of their own ideological position in the debate with the Yugoslavs. Besides being reprinted in PRAVDA the day after it was published in Beijing, the Chinese article was also published in five other Soviet central papers and fifteen main papers in the Soviet Republics. Furthermore, the article was distributed as an offprint in tens of millions of copies.²¹⁰ The Yugoslav leadership was immediately alerted to the Chinese new role. In a telegram to Belgrade in the first days of the New Year 1957, Mićunović concluded that the RENMIN RIBAO article had a more profound effect on Khrushchev than both the resolution of the crisis in Hungary and the normalization of relations between Gomułka's Polish United Workers' Party and the CPSU.²¹¹ For the moment, according to Mićunović, the Soviet leadership seemed not to mind the

²⁰⁹ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 13-14 February 1957; Khrushchev's address - Transcript of the fourth, evening session, 14 February 1957; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6239, Дело 215, 105-24.

²¹⁰ Seventh Plenum of the CPSU CC – Transcript, 1 February 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

²¹¹ Telegram from V. Mićunović to DSIP, 3 January 1957; SMIP, PA, 1957, F 98 / 320-1 – 4168.

huge increase in the prestige of the Chinese CP. He asserted that, although it claimed to support Moscow as the '*centre*' of the Communist world, the Chinese article undermined Moscow's leadership. Mićunović concluded that the Soviet leaders seemed not to have recognised this, but felt strengthened in their ideological confrontation with Yugoslavia.²¹² The RENMIN RIBAO article of 29 December, coupled with Beijing's crucial endorsement of Soviet military intervention in Hungary, established the Chinese in the new role as the arbiter of important questions regarding relations in the '*lager*' at the expense of the Soviets.

The Yugoslav leadership had understood the importance of the Chinese involvement in the Yugoslav-Soviet confrontation. It was awarded due prominence at the LCY CC Plenum in February 1957.²¹³ The Chinese, alone among the major '*fraternal parties*', had published Tito's Pula speech in full and Belgrade was at first under the impression that Beijing might have decided to remain neutral in the Yugoslav-Soviet debate.²¹⁴ The appearance of the RENMIN RIBAO article thus represented a blow to the Yugoslavs. Tito admitted to the February Plenum that *'the [RENMIN RIBAO] article did a huge service to the Soviet Union and, on the other hand made our situation more difficult...[It] has now become the main document for the rallying of support [among the Communist parties] behind the Soviet foreign policy and [the Soviet] ideological line'*.²¹⁵ The Yugoslav leadership had recognised that Chinese support had enabled the Soviets to change the

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Seventh Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcript, Tito and Mićunović's addresses, 1 February 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

²¹⁴ D. Vidić to Yugoslav Ambassadors, 26 November 1956; SMIP, SPA, 1956, F II / SSSR II – 288 / Memorandum of conversation D. Vidić the Chinese Ambassador in Belgrade (Wu), 17 December 1956; SMIP, SPA, 1956, FII/Kina I, pp 176-7 / K. Popović to the Yugoslav Ambassador in Peking (V. Popović), 18 December 1956; SMIP, SPA, 1956, F II / Kina. I – 314.

²¹⁵ Seventh Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcript, 1 February 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

character of Yugoslavia's confrontation with the Soviet leadership into a confrontation between the LCY and the rest of the Communist movement. Belgrade also understood that Chinese support had emboldened the Soviet leaders. Mićunović asserted that the *'Russians believe [that the Chinese article had not only] improved the Soviet positions but had also changed the situation towards further isolation of Yugoslavia'*.²¹⁶ Tito agreed with Mićunović and added a warning that *'thanks to the support obtained from the Chinese, the Soviet comrades are today fairly self assured and believe to have turned the fight against us to their favour'*.²¹⁷ The Yugoslav leadership acknowledged that the Chinese interference had tilted the balance of the Yugoslav-Soviet debate in the Soviets' favour and had helped Moscow to isolate Yugoslavia from other Communist parties. At the same time, Tito and his associates had become convinced that the Chinese action announced a shift in the power structure of the international Communist movement; it marked the ascension of the Communist Party of China alongside the CPSU in the leadership of the movement. As such, the Yugoslavs viewed it as a major degradation of the Soviet prestige.

The Hungarian crisis and the subsequent Yugoslav-Soviet ideological confrontation provided the Chinese with a chance to attain a much more prominent role in the international Communist movement. The Chinese support for the military action on the eve of the second intervention in Hungary had helped the Soviet leadership to

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

stop agonising over it.²¹⁸ Lacking authority and confidence in the aftermath of the Hungarian events once again, the Soviet leaders were anxious to obtain Chinese support in their polemics with the Yugoslavs.²¹⁹ In turn, this had enabled the Chinese to seize upon a role of an arbiter in the '*lager*'. Desperate to repel Yugoslavia's challenge, the Soviet leadership had further undermined its own ideological pre-eminence. The Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai's tour of Eastern Europe, between 7 and 19 January 1957, during which he met with the leaders of the USSR, Poland, and Hungary, affirmed the new Chinese role.²²⁰ On 10 January, Kádár flew for a day to Moscow in order to meet Zhou. The Chinese Prime Minister then made a stopover in Budapest for a day, on 16 January, on his way from Warsaw to Moscow and met with the whole Hungarian leadership. The tone and manner of Zhou's talks with Kádár and the Hungarian leaders during their meeting in Budapest clearly demonstrates the new position of authority that the Chinese came to occupy in the international Communist movement.²²¹

A little known Sino-Soviet initiative in January 1957 for the resolution of the Yugoslav-Soviet confrontation is further illustration of the role the Chinese Communist Party had acquired at the time. During talks with Zhou Enlai in Moscow, in January 1957, the Soviet leaders '*suggested*' that it would be good to

²¹⁸ Memorandum of conversation between comrades Tito, A. Ranković, E. Kardelj, and V. Mićunović with N. S. Khrushchev and G. M. Malenkov during the night of 2-3 November 1956, 3 November 1956; AJBT, KPR, SSSR, 1956, I - 5 - v.

²¹⁹ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 13-14 February 1957; Khrushchev's address - Transcript of the fourth, evening session, 14 February 1957; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6239, Дело 215, 105-24.

²²⁰ Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1 January 1957 -31 December 1958, Vol. XI, (Bristol: Keesings Publications), 15463-4.

²²¹ Document No. 109: Minutes of a Meeting between the Hungarian and the Chinese Delegations in Budapest, 16 January 1957, in Csaba Békés, et al (eds.) *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution...*, 496-503

meet with Tito in order to stop the ongoing polemics.²²² The Soviets asked Zhou to initiate a contact with the Yugoslavs and suggested that representatives of the Chinese, Soviet, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish and *'few other'* parties be also present at the meeting. Zhou telephoned Mao who gave his consent but proposed that the meeting be a Conference of all Communist parties. The Soviets accepted Mao's proposal and Zhou immediately instructed Peng Zhen, at the time in Yugoslavia heading the Chinese Parliamentary delegation, to approach the Yugoslav leader. Tito was non-committal demanding first to know where and when the meeting would take place. Most importantly however, he refused to give a firm response regarding the meeting before the agenda of such meeting was confirmed. Although he would have welcomed a meeting that could diffuse the Yugoslav-Soviet ideological confrontation, Tito was equally adamant not to allow *'another COMINFORM'* – a repeat of the 28 June 1948 Bucharest meeting and the Resolution that it produced.²²³ He informed the Yugoslav leadership of the Chinese initiative at the session of the Executive Committee on 24 January and at the LCY CC Plenum on 1 February. Tito underlined that he would not consider the proposal until further clarifications were provided and expressed opinion that the Soviets probably stood behind the whole idea.²²⁴ The Sino-Soviet initiative did not bring about the meeting with Tito in February or March, as planned, because of Belgrade's lack of enthusiasm.²²⁵ However, the convoking of the Conference of the Communist parties in Moscow in November 1957, on the Fortieth Anniversary

²²² Meeting of the Executive Committee of the LCY CC – Memorandum of discussions, 24 January 1957; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III-68. Also, Plenum of the CC CPSU, 13-14 February 1957, Khrushchev's address - Transcript of the fourth, evening session, 14 February 1957; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6239, Дело 215, 105-24.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Meeting of the LCY CC Executive Committee - Transcript, 24 January 1957; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III-68. Also, Seventh Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcript, 1 February 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

²²⁵ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 13-14 February 1957; Khrushchev's address - Transcript of the fourth, evening session, 14 February 1957; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6239, Дело 215, 105-24.

of the October Revolution, was most probably a result of the Chinese initiative in January 1957.

As a result of the escalation brought by Kardelj's speech of 6 December and encouraged by the Chinese support, the Soviet offensive against Yugoslavia intensified. On 29 December, Khrushchev sent a letter to Tito postponing agreements signed on 12 January 1956 for the construction of fertilizer and electricity plants in Yugoslavia, as well as the agreement signed on 1 August for the construction of the aluminium plant.²²⁶ Tito and the Yugoslav leadership understood this to be motivated not only by economic considerations but, as part of the Soviet tactics in the ongoing confrontation with Yugoslavia.²²⁷ Indeed, at the Plenum of the CPSU CC on 14 February, Khrushchev confirmed that the *de facto* cancellation of the economic assistance agreements with Yugoslavia was politically motivated and was intended to exert additional pressure on Belgrade.²²⁸

On 10 January 1957, Khrushchev sent another letter to Tito, a definitive Soviet response to Tito and Kardelj's speeches.²²⁹ The Soviet leader condemned Yugoslavs for bringing into the open a debate that had hitherto been carried out in a more appropriate form, through the exchange of letters. He renewed suspicions regarding Belgrade's *'true'* role in the Hungarian events. According to Khrushchev, the Yugoslavs had provided support to those in Hungary who *'later became the*

²²⁶ Letter from the CPSU CC, signed by Khrushchev, to the LCY CC, addressed to Tito, 29 December 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-85.

²²⁷ Report by Ambassador Firyubin on the meeting with the Yugoslav President J. B. Tito, 11 January 1957; АВП, РФ, Фонд 0144, Опись 42, Папка 175, Дело 4, 6-11

²²⁸ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 13-14 February 1957; Khrushchev's address - Transcript of the fourth, evening session, 14 February 1957; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6239, Дело 215, 105-24.

²²⁹ Letter from the CPSU CC, signed by Khrushchev, to the LCY CC, addressed to Tito, 10 January 1957; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-92.

transmission of the reaction'. Khrushchev called as absurd Tito's assertion in Pula that the personality cult was a product of the Soviet system. He underlined that *'the question of the Socialist nature of the Soviet system is the fundamental question of Leninism. In a true Marxist party there can be no two opinions on this question'*.²³⁰

Addressing Tito's allegations that there were *'Stalinists'* and *'non-Stalinists'* among the leaders of the CPSU and other parties, Khrushchev accused the Yugoslav leader of interfering in the affairs of others. According to the Soviet leader, *'by propagating such allegations Tito had dealt a blow to the cause of Socialism, to the international workers' movement, and to the Yugoslav-Soviet relations'*. In the conclusion of his letter, Khrushchev accused Yugoslavia of duplicity by falsely claiming to be outside the military Blocs whilst, in reality, it was part of the Northern Alliance through the Balkan Pact. He even issued a veiled threat to the Yugoslavs. The Soviet leader stressed that the Soviet Union looked with dismay at the presence of *'a large US military mission'* in Yugoslavia, which *'under the cover of supervising US military aid to Yugoslavia was, in fact, conducting intelligence surveillance of Socialist countries'*.²³¹ The tone and contents of the Khrushchev's letter, more a long list of accusations against the Yugoslav leadership, corresponded to the vocabulary used in Stalin and Molotov's letters in 1948. Khrushchev's letter of 10 January re-emphasized the depth and hostility of the chasm that had reopened between Yugoslavia and the USSR

The escalation of the anti-Yugoslav campaign after the RENMIN RIBAO editorial and the tone of Khrushchev's letter of 10 January convinced the Yugoslav

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

leadership that the prospect of the repeat of 1948 had become real. On 24 January, Tito summoned a meeting of the LCY CC Executive Committee and informed his closest collaborators that the deterioration of relations between the two countries had come to such a point that it demanded the convening of the Plenum of the Central Committee. He also insisted that the beginning of this deterioration was not tied to the recent developments but could be traced back to the talks held in the Kremlin during his June 1956 visit to the USSR.²³² Within a week, on 1 February, the Seventh Plenum of the LCY CC met in Belgrade. At the beginning of the Plenum, members of the Central Committee were read the correspondence between Tito and Khrushchev since the second Soviet intervention in Hungary, as well as the draft of Tito's response to Khrushchev's 10 January letter.

In his address at the Plenum, Tito gave an extensive analysis of Yugoslav-Soviet relations and of the roots of their deterioration.²³³ He emphasized that he and his closest associates

'had decided to present [the issue of the deterioration of relations with the USSR] before the Plenum because we believe it to be a grave thing, because we have the duty not to be isolated from the masses in [Peoples' Democracies] but, even more so, because we believe that all of us together should carry the responsibility for what might come in the future. [We have also decided to bring this issue to the Plenum in order] for all of us to define our future course and for you to tell us whether we have acted correctly when defending our positions and not allowing to be drawn into that Socialist "lager"'.²³⁴

²³² Meeting of the Executive Committee of the LCY CC – Memorandum of discussions, 24 January 1957; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III-68.

²³³ Seventh Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcript, 1 February 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

²³⁴ Ibid.

The solemnity of Tito's words, the stressing of the shared '*responsibility*' for the future, as well as his insistence that the Yugoslav leadership was '*defending positions*', meaning independence, had not been heard since the conflict with Stalin. Tito further emphasized the gravity of the situation by comparing it directly to 1948. According to him,

*'a campaign is being waged against our LCY, against Yugoslavia, and against leaders of this country, a campaign that is similar to that of 1948, although the form is somewhat different and is not as vulgar...On the one hand, this campaign is aimed at isolating Yugoslavia and the LCY from Peoples' Democracies and, on the other hand, to destroy the credibility of Yugoslavia as a state'.*²³⁵

From among the members of the Central Committee, Tito only invited Veljko Mićunović to address the Plenum because he had recently spoken extensively with Khrushchev on several occasions. Mićunović stressed that

*'the Soviets, having learned from their 1948 experience, have employed different tactics [in the current] conflict with Yugoslavia. They are now more skilful and plan better... than during the conflict of 1948. [The essence of their tactics now is to present] as if, this time, it is them who, out of the blue, have been attacked [by Yugoslavia] and are only defending themselves'.*²³⁶

Mićunović's statement was in a way an admission that the Yugoslav leadership might have made a mistake when it allowed the secret Soviet anti-Yugoslav campaign to go on unanswered for months after Tito's visit to Moscow.

During the Plenum, Tito acquainted members of the Central Committee with the draft of his response to Khrushchev's letter of 10 January. The letter would be

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

handed to the Soviet Ambassador Firubin on 8 February.²³⁷ Its tone and contents confirmed that the Yugoslav leadership had reconciled itself with the inevitability of a new conflict with the Soviets. Before reading the draft, Tito emphasized that, unlike with his letter of 1 December, which was intended to calm down the atmosphere, this time he had purposefully written a letter that he *'was confident would not only make them feel worse but would surely anger them... Although there would certainly be a strong reaction from their side, I believe that it is important for us to say what we think'*.²³⁸ Indeed, it was a lengthy rebuttal of Khrushchev's accusations of 10 January. Unlike in 1954 or even in December 1956, there was no offer from the Yugoslav side of a conciliatory path that could help in sidelining the existing differences between the two leaderships. Tito's letter of 1 February was also a propaganda pamphlet aimed at defending Yugoslavia's case before other Communist parties.²³⁹

Several factors contributed to the severity of the Yugoslav-Soviet confrontation in the end of 1956 and in the beginning of 1957. It came as a result of Moscow's desperate efforts to consolidate its Bloc. By June 1956, the Soviet leaders, including Khrushchev, had arrived at the conclusion that the deconstruction of Stalin's legacy had opened Pandora's box, which threatened the very existence of

²³⁷ Letter from the LCY CC, signed by Tito, to the CPSU CC, addressed to Khrushchev, 1 February 1957; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-95.

²³⁸ Seventh Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcript, 1 February 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

²³⁹ Letter from the LCY CC, signed by Tito, to the CPSU CC, addressed to Khrushchev, 1 February 1957; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-95.

the *'lager'*. It became imperative for them to re-establish its cohesion. To do so, the Soviet leadership reached for a method that, in their opinion, had worked during Stalin's times – ideological uniformity. This could best be achieved by rallying members of the *'lager'* against a common enemy. In 1956, as in 1948, Yugoslavia was cast in the role of the pariah. Belgrade was, after all the most prominent promoter of *'anti-Stalinism'* and the democratisation in Eastern Europe. By the end of June 1956, as the developments in Poland and Hungary were escaping Moscow's control, the Soviet leaders embarked on a two-tier strategy towards Yugoslavia. The goal was either to draw Yugoslavia into the *'lager'* or, if unsuccessful, to *'contain'* its influence and isolate it from the Satellites. As the situations in Poland and Hungary slid further towards a crisis, Moscow's attitude towards Yugoslavia became more uncompromising and less refined.

The second important factor that determined the intensity of the Yugoslav-Soviet confrontation was their ideological rivalry. As has been shown, at the time of the heightened crises in Eastern Europe in 1956, the Soviet leaders believed that the Yugoslavs were challenging their leadership of the Communist movement. In his memoirs, Khrushchev admitted that *'Tito and his comrades aimed at acquiring a leading role in the Communist movement. In any case, that is what I thought then'*.²⁴⁰ The PRAVDA editorial of 23 November alleged that Tito was aiming to impose the *'Yugoslav way'* of building Socialism as the way to be copied by others.²⁴¹ On 3 December, talking to Mićunović, Khrushchev accused Tito of harbouring ambitions to assume a leading role in the Communist movement and to

²⁴⁰ Н. С. Хрущев, *Воспоминания : ...*, Кн. 3 [Vol. 3], 272.

²⁴¹ PRAVDA, 23 November 1956, 2-4.

impose the Yugoslav model upon others.²⁴² Understandably, Tito vehemently denied these accusations at every opportunity.²⁴³ However, the Soviets were partly right. Kardelj's speech of 7 December often sounded as a lecture to the Soviets. He had repeatedly insisted that the way forward in building Socialism was by transforming the economy from state ownership to '*social ownership*' of workers' councils and in the democratisation of the political life through '*self-management*' – all aspects of the Yugoslav model. Kardelj did not recognise as acceptable the Soviet form of economic and political organisation.²⁴⁴ His arrogance matched that of the Soviets. Seeing themselves as victors against Stalin and Stalinism, the Yugoslav leaders shared a common belief that they were responsible for the fate of Socialism and regarded it as their internationalist duty to help other Communists to find their way out of Stalinist deviations. This has been repeatedly shown throughout this thesis. At the Seventh Plenum on 1 February 1957, Tito justified confrontation with Moscow by asserting that it was Yugoslavia's '*duty not to be isolated from the masses in [Peoples' Democracies]*'. The Yugoslav leadership viewed their victory against Stalin as proof of the superiority of their model. This prompted them to support Gomulka in Poland or to demand Nagy's return in Hungary, throughout the summer of 1956. It is understandable why the Soviets found Yugoslav behaviour intimidating and a challenge to their leadership role in the Communist movement.

²⁴² Report by V. Mićunović on his conversation with N. S. Khrushchev on 3 December 1956; SMIP, Ambasada u Moskvi, 1956, FI / Strogo pov. – 162.

²⁴³ Report from the Soviet Ambassador Firubin on the meeting with the Yugoslav President J. B. Tito, 29 November 1956; АВП, РФ, Фонд 0144, Опись 41, Папка 169, Дело 5, 115-120

²⁴⁴ BORBA, 8 December 1956, 1-2. Also, in Robert Bass et al (eds.) *The Soviet-Yugoslav Controversy...*, 86-105.

By February 1957, Yugoslav-Soviet relations reached their nadir. In many respects this state represented a return to the 1948 rupture. The leaderships of the two countries were engaged in a public and very hostile ideological polemic. The ideological confrontation threatened a rupture of state relations. The cancellation of the economic assistance agreements by Moscow, on 29 December 1956, was the step in that direction. At this point relations between the two countries had come the full circle, from the conflict of 1948, through normalization in 1954 and 1955, through rapprochement in 1956, to the renewed break-up of relations by the beginning of 1957. At the Seventh LCY CC Plenum, on 1 February, Tito unequivocally compared the state of the Yugoslav-Soviet relations to the situation in 1948.²⁴⁵ At the Plenum of the CPSU CC, also in February, Khrushchev, for his part, blamed Tito for reneging on the Belgrade and Moscow Declarations and thus causing the latest confrontation. He went as far as to accuse Tito of *'barking at the Socialist "lager" [like an abandoned dog]. As a payback, the Imperialists are feeding him... It is a role of a strike-breaker'*.²⁴⁶

At the last moment however, both leaderships drew back from the precipice and managed to confine the rupture to party relations. Since the party leaderships ran both governments as well, the grave deterioration of party relations at the beginning of 1957 inevitably affected to a degree inter-state relations. However, unlike 1948, there was no rupture of diplomatic relations and Yugoslav-Soviet government relations and economic cooperation survived, albeit at a reduced level.

²⁴⁵ Seventh Plenum of the LCY CC – Transcript, 1 February 1956; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/15.

²⁴⁶ Plenum of the CC CPSU, 13-14 February 1957; Khrushchev's address - Transcript of the fourth, evening session, 14 February 1957; РГАНИ, Фонд 2, Опись 1, Ролик 6239, Дело 215, 105-24.

The Soviets had learned a very important lesson from the 1948 rupture and did not wish to repeat the same mistakes. At the CPSU CC Plenum on 14 February, despite earlier spiteful remarks about Tito, Khrushchev insisted that

[the Soviet Union] should not completely rupture relations [with Yugoslavia], either along party lines or along government lines. That would be of benefit only to our enemies... We should be smart and [responsible] politicians in this question. We should take into account our foreign policy interests. For this reason we must behave sensibly and not allow someone else to make use of the conflict between us and the Yugoslavs'.²⁴⁷

While careful not to surrender in the ideological debate, the Yugoslavs, from their side, were also eager to have the confrontation confined to party relations. On 8 February, during his meeting with the Soviet Ambassador, Firubin, Tito asked him to convey his message to the Soviet leadership that economic and government relations should not be ruptured as a result of the ideological polemics.²⁴⁸ Reporting on his meeting with Khrushchev, on 3 December, Mićunović accurately predicted that

'the Russians would not go for the rupture of the government relations... In the current difficult circumstances, this is not the result of principles or their wish for normal relations rather, a result of tactics... [The Soviet leadership] draws on its negative experience from the past and on Stalin's mistakes in the [1948] conflict with [Yugoslavia] and are planning their current positions with greater caution, with more realism, and more skill although, in essence, they still hold on to the methods that remind of those used during Stalin's times'.²⁴⁹

Although neither side was willing to return to the 1948 rupture, neither were they willing to give in over their ideological differences. For a brief period after Tito and

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Report by Ambassador Firubin on the meeting with the Yugoslav President J. B. Tito, 27 January 1957; АВП, РФ, Фонд 0144, Опись 42, Папка 175, Дело 4, 40-42

²⁴⁹ Report by V. Mićunović on his conversation with N. S. Khrushchev on 3 December 1956; SMIP, Ambasada u Moskvi, 1956, FI / Strogo pov. - 162

Khrushchev had met in Bucharest, in August, the two leaderships tried to bridge their differences and return to the policies of rapprochement. However, the illusion was quickly dispelled. After Yugoslavia's refusal to sign a joint Declaration at the World Conference of the Communist parties in Moscow, in November 1957, Yugoslav-Soviet relations slid back to the nadir of the early months of 1957 never again to return to the *comradeship* that existed for several months after Khrushchev's '*secret speech*' in February 1956.

CONCLUSIONS

The subject of the Yugoslav-Soviet relationship between 1953 and 1957 has been presented in four chronological chapters in this thesis. Chapter I, entitled *Overtures*, began with analysis of the crisis in Yugoslavia's relations with the West, namely the US, at the end of 1952. This analysis is essential for the understanding of Yugoslavia's attitude towards the Soviets in 1953. The American refusal to grant Yugoslavia security guarantees in case of a possible Soviet attack triggered a national security crisis in Belgrade. As a result, during the following months, Yugoslavia frantically sought to create a Balkan alliance with Greece and Turkey. These considerations shaped Yugoslavia's foreign policy priorities for the next year and the half. They also determined Belgrade's lack of responsiveness to subtle Soviet overtures for the improvement of relations between the two countries that appeared soon after Stalin's death on 6 March 1953. As this Chapter has shown, Yugoslavia's pursuit of closer integration into the Western alliance was largely responsible for the decision of the new post-Stalin leadership in Moscow to seek normalization of relations with Belgrade. Yugoslavia's initial lack of enthusiasm towards Soviet initiatives changed after the Trieste crisis in October 1953. The crisis threatened to plunge Italy and Yugoslavia into a war.

In June 1954, almost a year after the normalization of their diplomatic relations, the Soviet leadership made a dramatic move for the improvement of Yugoslav-

Soviet relations. On 22 June 1954 a letter from the Soviet Central Committee, signed by Khrushchev, established direct communication with Tito and opened the way for genuine normalization of relations between the two countries. Chapter II, entitled *Normalization*, analysed this stage of the reconciliation between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, which endured for a year. By November 1954, both leaderships concurred that the achieved level of understanding allowed them to contemplate a meeting at the highest level. However, during the winter of 1954-5, the showdown between Khrushchev and Malenkov, as well as Tito's prolonged trip to India and Burma, created an impasse.

In March 1955, after months of stalemate, the process of the Yugoslav-Soviet normalization resumed at a breathtaking pace. A dramatic exchange of letters between the Soviet and Yugoslav leaderships brought about an unprecedented visit to Yugoslavia by Khrushchev, Bulganin and Mikoyan. At the conclusion of the visit, which took place between 26 May and 2 June 1955, a joint document was signed, the so-called *Belgrade Declaration*, which normalized Yugoslav-Soviet state relations. The visit initiated an era of accelerated rapprochement between the two countries. Chapter III, entitled *Comradeship*, deals with this phase of relations between Moscow and Belgrade. During this period, which lasted a year, all aspects of Yugoslav-Soviet relations, economic, political, and cultural, improved beyond recognition. Khrushchev's *Secret speech* at the end of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU was received in Belgrade as a sign of the Soviet break with Stalinism. It elevated the Yugoslav-Soviet relations to the highest level of closeness. In both countries, hopes were

raised that a true comradeship was indeed possible and that the 1948 rupture could be left behind.

Chapter IV, entitled *Confrontation*, began with Tito's visit to the USSR in June 1956. The visit was envisaged as the affirmation of the new comradeship between the two countries. The joint declaration, known as the *Moscow Declaration*, signed at the end of Tito's three-week long stay, established the relations between the LCY and the CPSU. This confirmed that the normalization had reached its final, highest level – full reconciliation. However, the talks between the Soviet and Yugoslav leaderships held during this visit, demonstrated profound disagreements on the most fundamental ideological questions. They marked the beginning of the end of the process of reconciliation between the two countries. In the aftermath of Tito's visit, the deteriorating situations in Poland and Hungary accelerated the downhill slide of the relations between Moscow and Belgrade. At the end of September, Tito and Khrushchev spent two weeks together in Yugoslavia and at Yalta, in search of a *modus vivendi*. The Soviet leader unsuccessfully tried to secure Tito's support for the imposition of brakes on the runaway process of liberalization in Hungary and Poland.

Although, he had previously fully supported the reformist Government of Imre Nagy in Hungary, Tito endorsed Soviet military intervention on 4 November. His backing however, was conditional on the introduction of genuine reforms that the Soviet leadership promised to implement in Hungary following intervention. At least, this was Tito's understanding of the agreement reached with Khrushchev during their secret meeting in Brioni during the night of 2-3

November 1956. Exacerbated by Nagy being granted asylum in the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest and the duplicitous Soviet anti-Yugoslav campaign among other Communist parties, Yugoslav-Soviet relations soon descended into an open ideological confrontation. By the beginning of 1957 the process of reconciliation between Moscow and Belgrade had collapsed. Relations between the two countries reached a nadir that threatened with the repeat of the 1948 rupture.

This thesis has established a number of pioneering conclusions that contribute to the reinterpretation of the dynamics of the Cold War at this critical juncture. Among other things, it has shown that the process of Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation resulted from an effort by both sides to maximise their own, premeditated agendas. The Yugoslav and the Soviet leaderships pursued the improvement of their relations in the belief that the other was a means through which to achieve their own national foreign policy and strategic goals. As a result, each side was driven by a set of motives, some predetermined and others conceptualised as the normalization progressed.

The most important motive behind the initial Soviet overtures towards Belgrade in 1953 was of a strategic character - to prevent the further integration of Yugoslavia into the Western military alliance. At the time, Yugoslavia was frantically pursuing the creation of the Balkan Pact. The Soviet leadership looked upon this pact as an extension of the NATO alliance and the final link in the encirclement of the *Socialist camp*. In addition, Moscow was eager to rid itself of a five-year conflict that continued to corrode its international prestige. This was of particular importance as the new post-Stalin leadership was

embarking upon a charm offensive promoting its new foreign policy of '*peaceful co-existence*'. Furthermore, once direct communication with Tito had been established in the summer of 1954 and his willingness to join in the normalization of relations between the two countries was confirmed, another motive took precedence in Soviet calculations – to pull Yugoslavia back into the Soviet '*lager*'. Moscow was always terrified of the prospect that Yugoslavia's independence would induce other People's Democracies to break away from the *Socialist camp*. As the crises in Poland and Hungary deteriorated during the summer of 1956, the Soviet leadership increasingly looked upon Yugoslavia's return to the '*lager*' as the tool to preserve the bloc's cohesion. It was also seen by the Kremlin as the way to enhance the appeal of the Soviet Bloc and Socialism among the newly liberated colonies and non-engaged countries. Yugoslavia was already enjoying an impressive standing with these countries.

The Yugoslav leadership's pursuit of normalization with the USSR was dominated by two motives. Firstly, the reconciliation paved way for the elimination of the greatest threat to Yugoslavia's security – the possibility of an attack by the Soviet Union and its allies. This allowed for the reallocation of badly needed resources from inflated military spending into an economy that was on the verge of collapse. Secondly, the Yugoslav leadership regarded improvement of relations with the Soviet Union as the means of decreasing the country's economic and military dependence on the West. This was the essential pre-condition for achieving the desired strategic position – equidistance to both Blocs.

This thesis concluded that Tito and Khrushchev were personally instrumental in the improvement of the Yugoslav-Soviet relations. Furthermore, the whole process of reconciliation from 1953 until its collapse in 1957 was in fact a contest between the two leaders determined to achieve their goals. This contest was at times intricate and subtle, and at times open and crude. Throughout this period, both leaders were simultaneously comrades and rivals; Tito and Khrushchev both understood, as the thesis has clearly shown, that they needed each other for the accomplishment of their goals.

During the ascendant phase of normalization, between 1953 and mid 1956, Tito and Khrushchev's inherently antagonistic goals existed in symbiosis. In this phase, the two leaders served well each other's ambitions and their relation could best be described as a successful '*marriage of convenience*'. The thesis has demonstrated that Khrushchev used normalization with Yugoslavia to win the succession battle in the Kremlin and to eliminate his contenders, one by one – first Malenkov and then Molotov. He also skilfully used the improvement of relations with Yugoslavia to launch the process of de-Stalinization.

From his side, during this initial period of reconciliation with the USSR, Tito created an alternative channel of economic cooperation with the USSR in order to reduce his country's dependence on Western aid. He also used the elimination of the Soviet military threat to extricate Yugoslavia from the strategic alliance with the West. Consequently, Tito was thus able to reassert the new Yugoslav foreign policy orientation – non-alignment with either Bloc.

Simultaneously, Tito and Khrushchev's relations during the process of reconciliation could be characterised as a contest - the goals they wished to achieve through the normalization were intrinsically incompatible. There existed an innate dichotomy in the relations between the two leaders. Despite an ever-accelerating improvement of the Yugoslav-Soviet relations between 1953 and June 1956, an element of denial was always lurking under the surface of cordiality – Tito's constant refusal to pledge himself unconditionally to the rapprochement. The dichotomy in the Tito-Khrushchev relations revealed itself fully after June 1956. From this period onwards, Khrushchev was openly demanding from Tito to re-join the '*l'ager*'. At the same time, the Yugoslav leader's quest for equidistance from both Blocs forced him to challenge the Soviet pressure tacitly at first but, by the end of 1956, openly and publicly.

The thesis has established the crucial importance of ideology during the process of Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation. On the one hand, ideology had determined the confines of the aspirations of the two chief protagonists – Tito and Khrushchev. Both were unable fully to distance themselves from the divergent ideological positions they held at the beginning of the process of normalization. As the thesis has demonstrated, despite having initiated the process of the deconstruction of Stalin's cult, when Khrushchev was faced with the full consequences of the liberalization in Poland and Hungary, the Soviet leader could not make the final leap away from Stalinism. He could not discard Stalin's precept that the cohesion of the Bloc and its ideological uniformity were an essential precondition for Soviet security and the survival of Socialism as the global system. At the same time, Tito regarded any attempt at the establishment

of ideological unity of the global Communist movement as a Soviet effort to impose hegemony over other Communist parties and Socialist countries.

On the other hand, ideology limited the scope of the Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation. It perpetuated the chasm between the two leaderships that was created in 1948 and that would resurface in the end of 1956. From his first letter to the Soviet leadership on 11 August 1954, Tito demanded that the Soviets recognise the existence of independent forms of Socialism. This was a direct challenge to the undisputed superiority of the Soviet model and its imposition upon other states. The Yugoslav-Soviet rupture in 1948 had established the existence of different models; the Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation imposed as an imperative that the highest authority of the global Communist movement – the Soviet Communist Party, formally acknowledged this question. This, however, would prove to be an insurmountable ideological obstacle that overshadowed the whole process of reconciliation and would contribute considerably to its collapse. In the long run, the question of independent models of Socialism would continue to haunt the international Communist movement and would prove to be one of the factors that precipitated its demise. All subsequent Soviet leaderships accepted as indisputable Stalin's premise that only uniform application of the Soviet social and ideological model would secure the cohesion of the Communist Bloc. Because of the symbiosis of the party and the state in the Stalinist model, the ideological uniformity of the '*lager*' led to the imposition of the Soviet hegemony over other Socialist states.

The thesis also concluded that the rivalry for the leadership of the global Communist movement was an underlying constant of the Yugoslav-Soviet

reconciliation. It would be one of the contributing factors to its breakdown. Both leaderships adamantly denied its existence. Seeing themselves as the victors in the ideological battle with Stalin, Tito and his associates believed that this victory had confirmed the superiority of their model over the Soviet version. As true internationalists, the Yugoslav leaders became convinced, as the thesis had abundantly demonstrated, that they were responsible for the fate of Socialism. From their part, they felt obliged to help others to discard Stalinism. From their side, Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership understood this as a manifestation of Belgrade's intention to take up the leadership role of the global Communist movement.

As one of its most important contributions, the thesis had established that the implications of Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation went beyond their bilateral relations and had wider ramifications for the Soviet Bloc and the international Communist movement. Their reconciliation encouraged and aided the processes of liberalization in Eastern Europe that peaked in the autumn of 1956. Significantly, it brought forward the process of de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union and in Peoples' Democracies. Finally, the Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation challenged the existing form of relations in the Soviet Bloc and forever destroyed the *monolithic cohesion* imposed by Stalin. True, the Soviet Party remained the authority within the Communist movement and the USSR continued to dominate its Bloc. However, relations between the Peoples' Democracies and the Soviet Union would become less rigid and the Satellites would make an increasing contribution to the dynamics of the '*lager*'.

Using reconciliation with Yugoslavia as a façade, Khrushchev and his supporters in the Soviet leadership challenged Stalin's legacy for the first time at the July 1955 Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU. As has been established by the thesis, Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia in May 1955 and the talks held with Tito and the Yugoslav leaders had a dramatic impact on the Soviet leader. These encounters made it possible for the Soviet leader for the first time to hear differing opinions on Stalin's legacy and on different concepts of Socialism. As a result, he became convinced of the inevitability of a showdown with Stalin's cult.

The reassessment of the Yugoslav-Soviet rupture in 1948, another result of the normalization of relations with Belgrade, forced the post-Stalin Soviet leadership to reconsider the relations within the *Socialist camp*. It was compelled to acknowledge the need for equality in relations with the Socialist countries and the Communist parties. This in turn had encouraged the liberalization processes throughout Eastern Europe. Yugoslavia had further helped these developments among Peoples' Democracies by the sheer² example of its independence, through its increased presence these countries' media after normalization with the USSR, and through the reinstatement of people sympathetic to Yugoslavia to their leaderships. In the case of Hungary, Yugoslavia was directly involved in supporting popular opposition leaders.

The Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation and factors that brought about its collapse would have important ramifications on historical developments after the end of the period addressed in this thesis. As a result of improved relations with the USSR and the elimination of the Soviet threat, Tito successfully pursued

equidistance from both Blocs and active neutralism. He succeeded in playing one Bloc against the other. The extent to which the Yugoslav leadership, as ^{was} shown in Chapter IV, had neglected relations with the West during 1956, beside their preoccupation with the crises of the Socialist regimes in its neighbourhood, was also evidence of their growing confidence that they had successfully achieved a position of political equidistance from both Blocs. In the subsequent years, Tito actively promoted non-engagement and became a leader of the global Non-aligned movement, the third force in the bi-polar world of the Cold War. Ironically, his policy of neutralism would meet with opposition and frustration from both Superpowers. Tito's strategic orientation endangered the logic of the bi-polar world. Yugoslavia was proving that national sovereignty and existence were not conditioned by membership of one of the ideological camps. The West would be intimidated by Yugoslavia's neutralism. The East would be frustrated by Yugoslavia's '*separate road to Socialism*'.

The ideological polemics and public confrontation between Moscow and Belgrade that marked the end of their reconciliation would decisively contribute to the deepening disunity in the international Communist movement. The convocation of the Conference of Communist parties in Moscow in November 1957 was intended to demonstrate the consolidation of the Communist movement, the rallying of all parties behind the Eastern Bloc, and reaffirmation of the Soviet Party as the undisputed leader and authority. The occasion was also highly symbolic as it was the Fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution. It was envisioned that all party leaders would attend and that at the end of the Conference a joint Declaration would be signed reaffirming the new unity of the Communist movement. It was to be Khrushchev's ultimate triumph,

now the indisputable leader. However, Tito did not go to Moscow and the Yugoslav delegation that attended the Conference refused to sign the joint Declaration. Under the façade of '*unity of action*' many delegations, although having signed the document under enormous Soviet pressure, expressed unease. Discussions over the final draft of the Declaration manifested open disagreements between the Soviets, the Chinese and other parties, namely the Polish and the Italian. The event that in all appearance demonstrated the newly found unanimity of the Communist movement marked in fact the beginning of the debates within it.¹

The renewal of the Yugoslav-Soviet ideological confrontation after the collapse of their reconciliation in 1957 contributed to the deepening of the Yugoslav ideological schism. The resulting exclusion of Yugoslavia from the Communist movement, in particular after the Moscow Conference in November 1957, prompted Tito and his associates to venture to the furthest points of liberal revision of the Marxist dogma. At the VII Congress of the LCY in April 1958, a new Program would be inaugurated. It would be recognised as the most liberal Communist programme that had adopted many Social-Democratic concepts. The Congress, boycotted by the Soviet Party and most other Communist parties because of the new Programme, would provoke fierce and vitriolic accusations from the Communist world. Tito and his associates would be accused of the new sin - Revisionism. The Chinese party became the leader of this new ideological crusade and within few years would use it to challenge the CPSU leadership. On the other hand, the concepts inaugurated in the 1958 LCY

¹ Report by Edward Kardelj on the Conference in Moscow at the Ninth Plenum of the LCY Central Committee - Transcript, 7 December 1957; AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/17.

Programme would become ideological foundations of the Euro-communism in 1970s.

The end of the Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation and beginning of the ideological polemics in the end of 1956 promoted a new role of the Chinese Communist Party. As the thesis concludes, Chinese involvement in the public polemics between Moscow and Belgrade promoted the Chinese party to a position of an ideological authority in the Communist movement. The Soviet leaders, vulnerable after the crisis in Hungary, were only too eager to solicit Chinese support in the confrontation with the Yugoslavs. In the process, they invited the Chinese Party to join them on the pedestal of the Communist movement. Within years, this would facilitate the Chinese boldness to openly challenge the Soviet hegemony.

In conclusion, it is interesting to throw one final glance at the five years of the Yugoslav-Soviet relations presented in this thesis. The process was circular. Looking at relations between the two countries in January 1953, the beginning of this thesis, and in January 1957, the conclusion of it, one might be forgiven for seeing little difference in the state of their relations. Ironically, although seemingly transformed during this period, their leaders remained strangely unchanged. Khrushchev was very much the Stalinist that he was in 1953 and Tito, further detached from the West than in 1953, remained a fervent Communist. And yet, so much, of great importance had happened in the intervening period.

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Translation of Russian Archival terms:

Фонд – Collection

Опис – Series / Record series

Дело – Folder

Папка – File

Ролик – Microfilm roll

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