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COMMITTEE OF POLITICAL ADVISORS

YUGOSLAVIA'S POSITION IN EASTERN EUROPE

Note by the Canadian Delegation

The major consequence in Eastern Europe of the defeat of the "conservatives" in the Soviet Praesidium has been a new effort by Khrushchev to establish close relations with Yugoslavia. Tito has responded to these overtures with the result that the centre of interest in the foreign relations of the Eastern European countries has now shifted to the Balkans.

2. The initiative at each stage in Soviet-Yugoslav relations has been taken by the Soviet Union, but Tito's responses have been rapid. The reconciliation achieved by the June 1956 Declaration was speedily frustrated by the Soviet Central Committee's letter of warning about Yugoslavia to the satellite states. The downward spiral which this act set off was greatly aggravated by the position which Yugoslavia took over the Soviet intervention in Hungary, i.e. Tito's speech at Pula and the accepting of Hungarian political refugees. The low point was reached with Foreign Minister Popovic's speech of 26th February. Apparently Soviet leaders recognised the futility of returning to the Stalinist position vis-a-vis Yugoslavia. On 17th April the first step was taken to improve relations, when Khrushchev and Nexha declared during the visit of an Albanian party delegation that they desired better relations with Yugoslavia. Two days later Tito responded favourably in a speech at Brioni. Yugoslavia also agreed to General Gosnjak paying a visit to the Soviet Union, though Tito made a speech in late June at the opening of the first Congress of Workers' Councils complaining about continuing criticism of Yugoslavia. Khrushchev's victory in the Praesidium a few days later changed the situation completely and within days Rankovic and Kardelj made a "private" trip to the USSR. The next significant step was the meeting of Tito and Khrushchev in Rumania. Since neither were willing to visit the other in his country, a compromise was reached to meet on a ship in the Danube in Rumania. Subsequently, the Soviet Union agreed to renew all of the credits which had earlier been frozen, Yugoslavia invited Marshal Zhukov to return the visit of General Gosnjak and the USSR has invited Tito to attend the 40th Anniversary of the Russian revolution.

Reasons USSR and Yugoslavia are interested in reconciliation

3. It will be seen from this survey that both sides have made active efforts to draw closer together. As early as 1955 both recognised that there were considerable advantages to be gained from settling their differences.

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For the Soviet Union these were:-

- (a) To end the disruptive force of Yugoslavia among the satellites.
- (b) To consolidate communism in the Balkans.
- (c) To break up the Balkan Pact.
- (d) To attract Tito's neutralist foreign friends.

For Yugoslavia better relations had similarly attractive possibilities:-

- (a) Tito's opposition to Stalin would be fully vindicated.
- (b) The Yugoslav leaders regard themselves as communists and wish to be accepted by the communist world.
- (c) Yugoslavia could reduce its very heavy defence expenditure.
- (d) Yugoslavia could secure economic help and the credits would be unblocked.
- (e) The pressures from the Albanian, Macedonian and Hungarian minorities would be relieved.

4. The present attempt to achieve reconciliation is impelled by the recent developments which have had their effect on both sides and which explain why the progress has been so rapid. The first of these has been the uprising in Hungary. For the Soviet Union the question has posed itself in very simple terms: the pressing need to recover stability in Eastern Europe. Yugoslavia, bordering directly on four of her satellites and particularly on Hungary, could, by re-entering the Bloc, help enormously to consolidate communism in the Balkans. It would aid too by ending the independence of policy which has complicated the Soviet Union's problem in Eastern Europe. For Yugoslavia, Hungary presented a more complicated issue. At first it seemed there was a genuine fear that war might result or that Soviet troops might intervene in Yugoslavia. At the least, there was concern over the deployment of large numbers of Soviet troops in the plains immediately north of Yugoslavia. But as the months passed this concern was superseded by a realisation that the greater significance of the uprising in Hungary was: (1) the relative instability of communist regimes, and (2) the danger of a similar uprising in Poland or East Germany leading to war. These fears have convinced the Yugoslav leaders of the need for a significant adjustment of the Soviet Union's relations with the communist states of Eastern Europe, lest similar uprisings should completely discredit communism or lead to war. It was with these fears in mind that the Yugoslav leaders responded to the second important development, namely, Khrushchev's victory over the Soviet conservative leaders.

5. A major importance from the Soviet point of view of the defeat of Khrushchev's opponents was that he was now free to proceed vigorously with his policy of settling Soviet differences with Yugoslavia. This policy was based on Khrushchev's conviction that "it was completely possible to have prevented the rupture of relations with Yugoslavia" (Secret speech at the 20th Congress.) It

was further motivated by the desire to achieve a diplomatic success, which would help him to consolidate his position. The Yugoslav leaders saw in Khrushchev's victory an opportunity to achieve the re-alignment in relations in Eastern Europe which they considered essential for the maintenance of communism and the peace of the world. There seems to be little doubt that Tito is aware of Khrushchev's opportunism, and regards him only as the best that can be hoped for in the present situation in the Soviet Union. Yugoslav support for Khrushchev is given additional urgency by their belief that Khrushchev's position in the Soviet Union is still insecure, and that if he fails he could easily be replaced by the now defeated conservatives. Finally, of course, the Yugoslav response can be understood in terms of their pretensions. They have always sought to play an important role in world politics, and the thought that they can be the means of tempering the Soviet Union and saving the world for socialism is very tempting.

Soviet efforts to bring about better relations between Yugoslavia and the Satellites

5. The Soviet Union's attempt to achieve reconciliation with Yugoslavia has involved her in an effort to improve relations between the satellites and Yugoslavia. This has included:-

- (a) An attempt to overcome Yugoslav-Albanian animosity. A significant early step in this campaign was the arrangement of a meeting between Hoxha and Kardelj and Rankovic during their visit to the USSR.
- (b) Approval of the visit of Gomulka to Belgrade. (See paragraph 8(a).)
- (c) The Rumanian offer of 10th September for a meeting of Balkan states. The degree of Soviet or Rumanian initiative has not been made clear, although there was speculation in August that such a proposal might be made, on the basis of visits by Yugoslav, Bulgarian and Albanian leaders to the USSR, and the increased publicity given in the Soviet press to Dimitrov. The degree to which Yugoslavia was forewarned is also not known. Although officials claimed to have been surprised, the Turks maintain that the Yugoslav Ambassador in Ankara knew of the proposal the day before the Rumanian note was delivered. Khrushchev may have raised the subject at his meeting with Tito; and General Bodnaras and Mr. Maurer, Rumanian Defence and Foreign Ministers respectively, may have discussed it during a visit to Belgrade in August. Tito's response, indicating sympathy for the principle, but rejecting the invitation unless all Balkan states accepted, would be consistent with his having known about it beforehand. In any event, the choice of Rumania to make the offer was particularly astute. Rumania's relations with Yugoslavia did not sink during the past twelve months to the low point of Yugoslavia's relations with the other Balkan satellites, undoubtedly in part because of the considerable possibilities for economic co-operation between the two states. Finally, the offer appealed

to Tito's greatest weakness, his aspiration to play a dominant role in the Balkans. Even though Yugoslavia declined the invitation, it is probable that Tito was pleased it was extended.

7. This list does not exhaust, however, the steps which the USSR may have to take if she is to satisfy the Yugoslavs. These include:-

- (a) A decision not to bring Nagy to trial. Our Ambassador in Belgrade has reported that Tito requested Khrushchev during their August meeting not to take this step, which could only embarrass Yugoslavia.
- (b) Persuading Czechoslovak leaders to visit Yugoslavia and to unblock their credits. Czech relations with Yugoslavia are one of the more obscure yet intriguing aspects of this question. In May it was announced that Premier Siroky would make a visit to Belgrade in June. Soon after it was reported that the visit had been postponed on account of Khrushchev's visit to Prague. No new date has been set, which may mean that Czechoslovakia looks with suspicion on the Soviet policy of reconciliation with Yugoslavia. Too little is known to make it possible to do more than formulate further questions. Is this hesitation an indication that Czechoslovakia is able to follow an independent course on a matter of this importance? Does it mean that the Czech leaders are doubtful whether Khrushchev can retain power? Or is it because they are concerned that a party and state visit to Yugoslavia at a time when Tito is again in Soviet favour might have unsettling repercussions on the domestic situation in Czechoslovakia?
- (c) Encouraging the Bulgarians to show more friendliness to Yugoslavia. There has been speculation that Chervenkov, the anti-Titoist unofficial leader of Bulgaria (he was demoted from the First Secretaryship of the Party after the 20th Congress to satisfy Tito, but retained effective control of the Government) may be removed from control. This would give Tito much pleasure.

Yugoslavia's response in matters affecting relations with Satellites

8. We have seen above that Yugoslavia sees a number of advantages to be gained from better relations with the USSR. An analysis of Yugoslavia's handling of a number of related issues - Gomulka's visit, the recognition of East Germany, the trial of Djilas and the debate on Hungary at the United Nations - suggests that the paramount consideration has again been national interest.

- (a) The interest of Poland and Yugoslavia in Gomulka's visit to Belgrade is understandable. The meeting was important to both party leaders as a demonstration of what they regard as the appropriate bilateral relationship between Eastern European communist



parties; both are opposed to the re-establishment of any form of central communist agency (in contrast with Czechoslovakia, for example, which seems to favour it). In spite of the very evident determination to avoid any suggestion of an alliance of "national communists", the warmth of the Yugoslav reception showed that Tito regards Gomulka as the prototype of the communist leader in Eastern Europe and was anxious to help him. The link with Yugoslavia gives some satisfaction to the Polish people, and Yugoslav support for the Oder-Neisse line is a very popular move. Tito is conscious of this, and has certainly been persuaded to take this step, in spite of its unpopularity with Germany, in order to strengthen the Polish Government. It is probable that the Yugoslavs, whose resistance to the Germans during the war was as fierce as that of the Poles, sincerely believe, along with the Poles, that the Oder-Neisse is the appropriate eastern border of Germany. From this it would seem that Yugoslav policy on this matter has been based primarily on an assessment of their own interests, rather than an attempt to curry favour with the USSR.

- (b) The recognition of the East German authorities is certain to give much satisfaction to the USSR, more probably than any other single change of Yugoslav policy. It creates a situation from which the USSR cannot fail to benefit, as Germany's decision to break relations with Yugoslavia drives Yugoslavia a little closer to the USSR. Nevertheless, the Yugoslav decision would appear to be understandable in terms of Yugoslav national interests. The break in relations is unlikely to jeopardise Yugoslavia's large trade with Germany, while recognition of the DDR opens up the possibility of considerable trade with the Eastern zone of Germany. Last year a trade agreement which had been fully negotiated with the East Germans was scrapped when the Yugoslav delegation refused to sign in the name of the Yugoslav state. However, trade does not alone explain the Yugoslav decision, as this could be achieved by 'de facto' recognition.

The major explanation for this Yugoslav initiative is the freedom of manoeuvre which Yugoslavia has gained from her reconciliation with the USSR. It has been apparent that Yugoslavia has never sympathised with German policy concerning East Germany. So long as Yugoslavia could not play a role in East European politics, there was nothing to be gained by risking a breakdown in relations with Germany. Although the proposal was put to Tito by Khrushchev in Rumania and subsequently by Grotewohl in a letter of 21st August, Tito did not reply to Grotewohl's letter until 3rd October, which suggests that his conversations with Gomulka had an important influence on his decision. This decision that the time had come to take an initiative appears from the Yugoslav (and Polish) point of view to be the most fruitful

way to reach a settlement of the German problem and secure the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe. Undoubtedly Tito was aware that he was risking a rupture in relations with Germany, but he possibly underestimated Germany's determination to carry out the threat. The statement by the Yugoslav Foreign Minister urging the German Government to reconsider its decision seems to confirm this view.

- (c) The second trial of Djilas has been generally interpreted as a move to please the USSR. Although it is certain that the Soviet leaders approve of Tito's way of handling Djilas - and the related decision not to give Dedijer a passport to take up a year's appointment at Manchester University - the action should also be interpreted in terms of the Yugoslav domestic situation. Tito has become increasingly concerned over the decline in the unity and confidence of the communist elite. He believes the trend can only be halted by re-asserting central authority and insisting upon the unity of party and of dogma. The challenge of Djilas' "New Class" is so direct that only a strong condemnation of the man and his ideas could provide the party propagandists with the firm line necessary to answer intra-party questioning. Not only was Djilas' latest challenge more fundamental than his previous criticisms, but his former colleagues, Dedijer excepted, have lost patience and now regard him as a traitor. Moreover, Yugoslavia's reconciliation with the USSR has permitted Tito to pay less attention to the reactions in the West of domestic policies. Previously the charges against Djilas may have been limited by a concern not to lose Western confidence. All of this is not to suggest that Tito will not have had very much in mind that his trial of Djilas will facilitate his rapprochement with the USSR, but the domestic implications of the trial are certainly an important reason for the decision.
- (d) There has been much disappointment in the West over Yugoslavia's change of policy on the Hungarian question. The reasons why Yugoslavia's approach has changed have already been set out in paragraph 4 above. The decision to vote against the Western resolution certainly represents a significant move towards the Soviet position, although it is important to note that Yugoslavia has continued to allow Hungarians who have taken asylum there to remain until places are found for them in Western countries. One can imagine that Khrushchev will have urged Tito in Rumania to encourage Hungarian refugees to return to Hungary. It must also be conceded that the Yugoslav argument on the Hungarian situation - i.e. that the United Nations debate on Hungary has strengthened the hands of the conservatives in the Hungarian Communist Party who argue that strong measures must be used no matter how strong the reaction in the West - is a defensible position.

The Indian Ambassador thinks it is valid, and recent articles by Harrison Salisbury of the New York Times have made a similar case. From the point of view of the Yugoslav Government, the argument is doubly valid because it accords with their foreign policy.

Where is Yugoslavia Going?

9. The swift series of developments which has brought about a virtual reconciliation between Yugoslavia and the USSR will require careful consideration by the Western powers, and possibly some adjustment in Western relationships with Yugoslavia.

10. A realistic appraisal of Yugoslavia's relations with the Soviet world since the break in 1948 suggests that the bitterness resulted from an artificial barrier raised and maintained by the USSR. While this barrier remained in place, Yugoslavia was obliged in order to survive to seek closer relations with the Western powers, which in turn involved an acceptance of Western positions on certain international issues. The removal of the barrier by the Soviet Union permits Yugoslavia to resume relations and to follow policies more closely in accord with her ideology and geographic position.

11. It seems probable that Yugoslav policy in future will on many international issues be close to that of the Soviet Union. This is the natural result of sharing an ideology and being located in such a position that, like Finland or Austria, she must take account of Soviet interests in deciding on policies. The danger which many observers foresee is that Yugoslavia will come too close to the Soviet bear and be strangled. While this is a possibility, we need only be concerned if Yugoslavia begins to support Soviet policies which are not in Yugoslavia's national interest as seen from a Marxist standpoint. This is unlikely to occur, at least so long as Tito is in control. He seems to have learned during the years of association with the Western nations that this contact is beneficial. Accordingly, it appears reasonable to assume that Yugoslavia will seek to maintain contact with the Western nations, and in particular to retain close political, if not military, relations with the members of the Balkan Pact, especially Greece. This concern is to be seen in swift arrangements for the visit of Kardelj to Athens. Tito is too astute not to recognize that the main domestic support of his regime has been his independence and on this fundamental issue he is even less willing to compromise than he was in 1948.

12. The recent changes in Yugoslav policies, in particular the recognition of the East German authorities, will arouse in Western countries suspicion of Yugoslav motives. It has been suggested above that Yugoslav changes in policy may be interpreted as natural developments now that Khrushchev has made great efforts to lower the barrier which Stalin had raised against Yugoslavia. It is possible to interpret the recognition of the East German authorities in a similar manner, while acknowledging that the Yugoslav action has been too speedy and so forced the German Government to take a step which might, if the ground had been properly prepared, not have been taken.

13. Combined with Western suspicion is the belief that the Western position in Eastern Europe has been weakened. In the formal sense this is true - notably the breach in the front against East Germany. But it does not follow that Yugoslavia's changed

relationships with Eastern Europe are wholly disadvantageous to the West. It is significant that the major disturbances in the satellites have come when the USSR tried to adjust its relations with Yugoslavia, rather than when Yugoslavia was ostracised. Yugoslavia has not been encouraged to make another attempt to establish a closer association with the USSR, because Khrushchev is apparently convinced of the need for a more independent relationship between the USSR and the satellites. Although it is unlikely that the present reconciliation will have the same dramatic effects as occurred last year, it is to be assumed from the trend of official reception given Gomulka that it will encourage the other satellite leaders to strive for similarly independent positions. Insofar as it is contributory to a weakening of Soviet control, it is desirable. It is even possible that the degree of flexibility in Soviet relations with the satellites which will be necessary to accommodate Yugoslavia, will be the precedent for the leaders of the satellites, if they are to maintain control of their peoples. In this connection it will be of particular importance to study the reactions of the Czechoslovak leaders to Khrushchev's policy of reconciliation with Yugoslavia, since they were the other satellite leaders face the problem of maintaining control of their people in a period of detente without the stabilising presence of Soviet troops.

14. If these thoughts have validity, it would follow that the West must react cautiously to these new developments in Yugoslav-Soviet bloc relations. If any drastic moves are made which would mean the breaking of established contacts, we should be rejecting those continuing advantages which we have gained from Yugoslavia's forced association with us during the past nine years. We should be careful not to take steps which might have the effect of forcing Yugoslavia to turn to the Soviet Union even more than she otherwise would.

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