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● YUGOSLAVIA: Foreign
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BELGRADE PROTESTS AGAINST SOVIET SUPPORT FOR
ANTI-YUGOSLAV ÉMIGRÉS

Summary: On June 9 the Belgrade daily Politika reported that the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry had protested to the Soviet Union over anti-Yugoslav activity in Moscow. The paper's correspondent in Moscow said that in at least two instances in May 1971 Yugoslav Cominformist émigrés gave lectures to Soviet citizens, in which they openly slandered the policy of the Yugoslav Communist Party. This paper analyzes the past and present activities of the pro-Soviet Yugoslavs in the country and abroad in view of the internal Yugoslav polemics over the revival of nationalism in Croatia and unitarism in Serbia.

The Moscow correspondent of the Belgrade daily Politika, Miodrag Marovic, has drawn attention to a significant -- not to say sensational -- factor in the current deterioration of Yugoslav-Soviet relations: the "anti-Yugoslav lectures organized by Cominformist [i.e., anti-Titoist] émigrés in Moscow," with the implicit approval of the Soviet authorities. In an editorial note the paper supplements Marovic's report by revealing that the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry has registered "a resolute protest with the Soviet ambassador in Belgrade" against the activity of "the Cominformist exiles in the Soviet Union."

Before analyzing Marovic's report, one should emphasize three points in connection with the Yugoslav protest. First, it was made on the very day (9 June) that the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, Mirko Tepavac, arrived in Peking on an official visit that represented not only an historic rapprochement between the Chinese and Yugoslav regimes but also an obvious Yugoslav challenge to the interparty strategy of the Kremlin. Secondly, for some weeks before the protest was made, the Yugoslav press carried many articles attacking the activities of Cominformist -- i.e., pro-Soviet -- elements in Yugoslavia. Finally, the move undertaken by the Yugoslav government against the Cominformist exiles in the USSR must be viewed in the light of a sudden shift by ultra-nationalistic Croat émigrés in the West to a pro-Soviet tactic as part of their struggle against the Yugoslav regime.

Marovic reports that he has been informed by some Soviet citizens "of all professions" that of late lectures concerning the situation in Yugoslavia have been organized in the Soviet Union. This way of providing information, Marovic added, is used in the Soviet Union when people have to be told about certain topics which cannot be read in the newspapers. "Judging from the questions posed to the Yugoslav citizens [in the Soviet Union] by Soviet citizens, one can reach a conclusion as to the contents of the lectures" about Yugoslavia, Marovic notes. The Soviet lecturers describe the Yugoslav Party Program as "revisionist" and claim that Yugoslav policies "have suffered a fiasco." Yugoslavia's economic situation is called "chaotic" and the lecturers assert that the only way out of such a critical situation lies in the abandonment of the self-management system and a return "to the strong-arm regime." In addition, Marovic adds, Yugoslavia's nonaligned policy is brought under fire.

Anti-Titoist Exiles

Moreover, in addition to the Soviet anti-Yugoslav speakers, there have lately appeared some Yugoslav "Cominformist émigrés" who speak to Soviet citizens about the allegedly chaotic situation in Yugoslavia. Marovic goes on:

They slander the policy line of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia quite openly, with no disguise whatsoever; they paint the situation in our country in the blackest colors and make crude attacks on President Tito. All this is accompanied by eulogies of the Cominform and its policies toward Yugoslavia in 1948. Of course, one is justified in supposing that it would not be possible to hold such lectures without the permission of, or against the will of, the competent Soviet authorities.

As examples of this anti-Titoist propaganda, Marovic cites two lectures given by Yugoslav émigrés in Moscow. The first was given by a certain Blazo Raspopovic, who on 25 May 1971 (Tito's birthday) spoke to the students of the State Musical Pedagogic Institute in Moscow. A big poster presented Raspopovic to his Soviet listeners as "the well-known Yugoslav partisan and Lieutenant-Colonel of the Soviet Army." Two days later, on May 27, another Yugoslav émigré, "the philosopher Jovo Elez," spoke in the hall of Moscow's Polytechnical Museum, where, as Marovic puts it, "in the past friendly meetings on the occasion of Yugoslavia's state holidays were held." The title of Elez's lecture was "the Relationship Among Nationalities and the Conflicting Situation in Yugoslavia."

Much more space was devoted by Marovic to Raspopovic's lecture on May 25:

The leaders of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia -- Lieutenant-Colonel Raspopovic told the students -- had left the road of the construction of socialism as far back as 1948 and thus isolated the country and the party from the fraternal family of the socialist states and from the international workers' movement. All attempts made by the Soviet Communist Party and other fraternal parties to persuade the League of Communists of Yugoslavia that such a road was harmful have up to the present remained futile.

Raspopovic also said that in Yugoslavia "honest Communists" have been persecuted and arrested. Since his lecture was held on Tito's birthday, Raspopovic used the opportunity to attack President Tito "in a specially crude way," in addition to attacking other leaders of the Yugoslav revolution. Raspopovic also said that Tito came to power by means of "various machinations" while Edvard Kardelj, second in the Yugoslav leadership after Tito, was called by Raspopovic "an ordinary Social-Democrat." The Yugoslav leadership as a whole "is now in the mud of revisionism," Raspopovic added. He claimed that "the working class and people of Yugoslavia live today worse than under the pre-war [capitalist] regimes" while the "ideological confusion" has brought about "the contradictions and hatred" among the nationalities.

Who Are the "Cominformists"?

The Cominform (better known in Eastern Europe under the name of Informbureau) was created by Stalin in 1947 and included the following East European and West European parties: Soviet, Polish, Czechoslovak, Hungarian, Rumanian, Bulgarian, Yugoslav, Italian and French. On 28 June 1948 the Cominform, meeting in Bucharest, passed a resolution expelling Yugoslavia from the Communist family for nationalistic deviation from the Soviet line. In the latter part of November 1949, the Cominform met in Budapest, adopting another resolution under the title "The Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the Power of Assassins and Spies." The Cominform was dissolved on 17 April 1956, as a concession to Tito by the post-Stalinist Soviet leadership. Nevertheless, it has continued to provide a criterion of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. Thus, in November 1969 the Yugoslavs complained that the new Soviet Party history had described the Cominform as an organization which performed "useful work," while the injustices done to Yugoslavia were not mentioned at all.

After Tito's break with Stalin in June 1948 the Yugoslav authorities arrested a great number of "Cominformists," which meant pro-Soviet elements in Yugoslavia. While attempting to escape to Rumania, the Yugoslav Chief-of-Staff, General Arso Jovanovic, was killed and Colonel Vlado Dapcevic captured and put in jail for twenty years. General Pero Popivoda managed to escape to the Soviet Union where he was later joined by another top Yugoslav diplomat, Radonja Golubovic, at that time Yugoslavia's ambassador in Bucharest. Popivoda and Golubovic are considered to be the leaders of the anti-Yugoslav émigrés in Moscow.

After the Soviet-Yugoslav reconciliation in 1955, Colonel Vlado Dapcevic was released from prison and detained in his native Montenegro. In 1958 he succeeded in escaping to Albania. His older brother, General Peko Dapcevic, was Chief-of-Staff of the Yugoslav army, but was replaced after the Milovan Djilas affair in 1954. He is today a deputy in the Yugoslav Federal Assembly. In February 1970 a Zagreb weekly published an article by Drago Tovic who revealed that the Cominformists were making efforts to organize themselves. Said Tovic:

The Cominformists [in Yugoslavia] are making contacts with their friends abroad and are looking for new allies in various [anti-communist] exile circles. Something has happened of late: Cominformist centers are being created in Western countries with the aim of acting against Yugoslavia. Recently a leaflet was received by individuals

and institutions from Copenhagen, signed by an illegal "Socialist Party." In this leaflet it is claimed that a fratricidal war threatens our country, that relations among the nationalities in Yugoslavia are very bad, and that everything possible must be done to prevent Yugoslavia going over to the Americans. The evidence suggests that this propaganda is being spread by the well-known Cominformist Vlado Dapcevic. In the course of the past few months he has visited several Western countries and is now going to Paris where he will form his propaganda headquarters, which will be called the government in exile. (2)

Thus far Vlado Dapcevic has not formed any "government in exile" but it is a fact that he lives in Paris and conducts propaganda among the anti-Communist exiles for a struggle against Tito on Moscow's side.

Internal Confrontation

In Yugoslavia today, the claim that Cominformist ideas are being revived (3) is the euphemism for a belief that pro-Soviet elements in the party and state apparatus -- both on the federal and republican levels -- have intensified their efforts to halt the process of liberalization which is intended to make Yugoslavia a country in which "self-managing socialism" will prevail. After April 7 of this year, when the Croat Communist leaders accused some unnamed foreign forces in addition to some, again unnamed, federal authorities of having been engaged in a "plot" against Zagreb, the polemics over which is the more dangerous, nationalism or "unitarism" (a synonym for Cominformism) have become more intense. To deal with this situation two important sessions of the Party Presidium were held, the first on Tito's resort island of Brioni (28-30 April 1971), the second in Belgrade on 2 June 1971. The Brioni session was especially important because, according to Tito, the Serbs and Croats exchanged very sharp words. It is a well known fact that the Serbs accuse the Croat leaders of maintaining links with the anti-Communist fascist exiled Croats called the Ustashi (who call for the secession of Croatia from Yugoslavia), while the Croats accuse the Serbian leaders of cherishing pro-Moscow sentiments.

In the meantime, the extremist Croat exiles in the West, under Dr. Branko Jelcic, have begun to propagate a pro-Moscow line, claiming that only the Soviet Union is today willing to give the Croats their independent state. In his paper Hrvatska drzava (The Croatian State), Dr. Jelcic -- now a West German

citizen living in West Berlin -- regularly publishes reports from his "Moscow correspondent," Slavko Novak, who wrote that the Warsaw Pact would also "defend" Croatia. (4) In the March/April 1971 issue of Hrvatska država Novak said in his report from Moscow that "because the imperialist West has been against any kind of Croat state," then "the [Croat] nationalistic forces should draw from this only one consequence," namely to look for their allies in the East. The only allies for the Croats were to be found in Eastern Europe, Novak said, because of which "for us there can be no dilemma [about the fact] that we, in the case of a crisis, would cede to our [Eastern] allies some important points such as Mostar, Pula and Boka." In Mostar there exists an important airport of the Yugoslav air forces, while Pula and Boka are the two most important harbors in Yugoslavia.

Novak further said that in such a situation Croatia would become a socialist state "sovereign and neutral as Finland," i.e., a "committed neutrality." Novak wrote: "Finland serves as an example that the Soviet Union positively appraises a peaceful policy, something of which the nationalistic forces in Croatia should be aware." Novak expressed his joy that "our Hungarian comrades have understood the imperative significance of our demands, which in the past has not been the case." Novak advocated a government for Croatia composed "of the nationalists and communists who would then invite our allies to protect Croatia." He added that the plans for such an operation "are being completed," and that "the Operative Staff [of the Warsaw Pact] in Bratislava has co-opted two Croat military experts." In conclusion Novak said that promises made by the Croat nationalistic forces and its leader "the Croatian National Committee" headed by Dr. Jellic, are taken seriously. Only in this way could "a socialist, sovereign and neutral Croatia be created," a fact "which these days was resolutely confirmed not only in Moscow, but also in Sofia and Bratislava, and, it appears, also in Budapest. In this way the circle is closed."

It goes without saying that Novak's claims published in Hrvatska država must be taken cum grano salis. Nevertheless, thus far Moscow has not denied any statement made in Hrvatska država, even though in April a Yugoslav spokesman expressed his government's consternation about such statements in Hrvatska država. (5) Therefore, the recent protest of the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry in Moscow against the activity of the anti-Yugoslav émigrés in the Soviet Union cannot be completely separated from the positions of Dr. Jellic's Hrvatska država and from the activity of Colonel Vlado Dapcevic in Paris.

Slobodan Stankovic

- (1) Politika, Belgrade, 9 June 1971.
- (2) Vjesnik u srijedu, Zagreb, 11 February 1970.
- (3) Nedeljne informativne novine (NIN), 6 June 1971.
- (4) See Slobodan Stankovic, "Moscow Supports Croat Separatists?", CAA Research Report No. 0977, 19 April 1971, Radio Free Europe Research.
- (5) Dan Morgan in Washington Post of 17 April 1971.