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TITOISM -- TWENTY YEARS AFTER (PART TWO): HOW STALIN COMPELLED TITO TO TAKE A SEPARATE ROAD TO SOCIALISM

Summary: It is a historical fact that neither Tito nor any of his colleagues wanted a break with Moscow or any "separate road to socialism." They were simply compelled by Stalin and his East European satellites to take a road which for twenty years has been considered a symbol of resistance against Russian overlordship. In this part of the report dealing with the 20th anniversary of Tito's expulsion from the Communist family on 20 June 1948, some details are given concerning the way in which Stalin treated Tito and the way in which the Yugoslav leader and his followers have successfully resisted all attempts at subjugation by Moscow.

On 28 June 1948 Stalin made of Yugoslavia a symbol of resistance against Russian overlordship. Of course, in the Cominform Resolution condemning Yugoslavia one of the chief accusations against Tito and his colleagues was that they were revising the Marxist-Leninist teachings about the Party. As if reflecting some Soviet or Bulgarian articles published in 1968, the Cominform Resolution 20 years ago insisted that "according to the theory of Marxism-Leninism, the Party is the main guiding and leading force in the country, one which has its own, specific program and will not dissolve itself among the non-Party masses. The Party is the highest form of organization and the most important weapon of the working class."¹ The Yugoslav leaders were therefore accused of having "belittled the role of the Communist Party and of having actually dissolved the Party in the non-Party People's Front."

1 Borba, Belgrade, 30 June 1948.

If such accusations are being made today (without Yugoslavia's name being openly mentioned), one must say that much truth is contained in them: the Yugoslav leaders have really been discussing for years about how to replace the one-Party dictatorship with a non-Party system.² But in 1948 the accusations against Tito of having allegedly tried to "belittle" or even "dissolve" the Party, was sheer nonsense. It is a historical fact that the Yugoslav leaders did not want to pursue any "separate road to socialism" but were directly compelled by Stalin and his East European satellites to do so. Tito and his colleagues were accused of having done things which they had never done at that time, but which they did much later.

Only a few days after the publication of the Cominform Resolution (the Yugoslav press reproduced it from a text published in Rude Pravo on 29 June 1948), Gustav Beresh, Czechoslovakia's Communist Party delegate at the Cominform session, published in Rude Pravo an article entitled "Responsibility of the Yugoslav Communists." The Yugoslavs were enraged by Beresh's article and Veljko Vlahovic answered Beresh in Borba. He charged Beresh with "smearing Yugoslavia" and then said:

Accepting the conclusions of the Cominform Resolution concerning "the general attitude of the leaders of the Yugoslav Communist Party toward the Soviet Union," you [Beresh] have made the following assertion: "It has been claimed... that the leading role in the international revolutionary movement should be taken by Yugoslavia." And also: "In Yugoslavia new, more perfect forms of state organization and public life have allegedly been discovered, better [forms] than those employed in the USSR -- as it was recently written by a leading personality of the Yugoslav Communist Party." I am now asking you before the eyes of the members of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and before the whole Yugoslav public: "By whom, where and when was it ever asserted in our Party and in our whole country that "the leading role in the international revolutionary movement should be taken by Yugoslavia?" I am asking you: "What is the name of this 'leading personality in the Yugoslav Communist Party' who wrote that in Yugoslavia 'have been discovered new, more perfect forms of state organization and public life, better than those employed in the USSR?'" Where was this "recently" published? I know that you will not answer these questions; you cannot answer them because you know that such things have never been written in Yugoslavia by anybody.³

2 See RFE Research report "The Crisis of the One-Party System in Yugoslavia," 5 June 1967, by s.s.

3 Borba, 4 July 1948.

The Yugoslav Communists did their best to prove that their love for Stalin and the Soviet Union was much greater than the love of other East European Communists. Three weeks after Tito's expulsion from the Cominform, Vladimir Dedijer gave the following breakdown of how much more Borba wrote about the Soviet Union than other Communist newspapers in East and West Europe:

By 13.8 per cent more than in Rabotnichesko Delo; by 137 per cent more than Scinteia; by 155 per cent more than Rude Pravo; by 236 per cent more than [the Italian Communist Party organ] Unita; and by 850 per cent more than [the French Communist Party organ] Humanité.⁴

At the 5th Party Congress held in Belgrade from July 21 to 29, 1948, it was Milovan Djilas who sharply attacked "every underestimation of the development and achievements of the contemporary theoretical ideas in the Soviet Union which might have appeared because of the attacks levelled against our Party by the Soviet Central Committee."⁵ Tito himself defended the Yugoslav Communists against the accusations that they were against Stalin and the Soviet Union. His speech at the 5th Congress Tito ended with the words: "Long live the Soviet Union, long live Stalin!"⁶

Stalin Calls Tito Fascist

But with Stalin remaining stubborn and not willing to yield an inch, the Yugoslav Communists could not but try to find their own way. The year 1948 was not only a turning point in the relations between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia as countries, or in the relations between two "brotherly" Communist Parties -- but, what is more important, it was a turning point in the inner feeling of each Yugoslav Communist who "crossed the Rubicon" and began feeling hatred toward Stalin and the Soviet Union. From that time on each generation of young Communists in Yugoslavia has been taught not to live "above all" for the "first country of socialism" and its leaders, but to love their own country first and to feel independent in all respects. It was not insignificant that thousands of young Yugoslav Communists, in their Party cells and all sorts of public meetings, have been able to attack the Soviet Union and its leaders without any inner fear that by doing

4 Borba, 17 July 1948.

5 Borba, 23 July 1948.

6 Vladimir Dedijer, Tito Speaks, London, 1953, p. 381.

so they were committing themselves to the "greatest heresy" ever known. Thus the Soviet mythology started to be gradually and surely destroyed.

As far back as October 1948 Milovan Djilas started the destruction of the Soviet mythology by stating the following in an article:

Nobody denies the authority of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party; no one not out of his wits can negate its past and present role. But authority is not everything: the truth is above authority -- thus far this has been the principle within the workers' movement. For instance, in no other country outside the Soviet Union did the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party have such authority as in Yugoslavia; in no other country outside the Soviet Union has it been loved more than in Yugoslavia. Still, people do not want to be prevented from seeing the truth because of the [Soviet Communist Party's] authority.⁷

Djilas accused the Soviet Central Committee and all East European Central Committees of having failed to respect the truth and thereby having destroyed "the basis for a real discussion at the meeting of the Cominform." But Stalin wanted Tito's head rather than any "equality" among the parties. The more Tito and the Yugoslav Communists resisted, the more furious Stalin became. The political and economic pressure against Yugoslavia in 1949 assumed unbelievable proportions. Stalin had mobilized every possible means to crush Tito's resistance.⁸ If in September

7 From the booklet About False and Unjust Accusations Against the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (O neistinitim i nepravednim optuzbama protiv KPJ), Belgrade, 1948, p. 223.

8 In the so-called "secret speech" of Khrushchev at the 20th Party Congress on 25 February 1956, Khrushchev told the following story: "I recall the first day when the conflict between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia began to be blown up artificially. Once when I came from Kiev to Moscow, I was invited to visit Stalin who, pointing to the copy of a letter lately sent to Tito, asked me: 'Have you read this?' Not waiting for my reply, he answered: 'I will shake my little finger -- and there will be no more Tito. He will fall.' But this did not happen to Tito. No matter how much or how little Stalin shook, not only his little finger but everything else that he could shake, Tito did not fall. Why? The reason was that in this case of disagreement with the Yugoslav comrades, Tito had behind him a State and a people who had gone through a severe school of fighting for liberty and independence, a people which gave support to its leaders." (From the booklet The Dethronement of Stalin, published by Manchester Guardian in June 1956, p. 25).

1948 the Yugoslav Party and state leaders were called "the faction enjoying the confidence of only a minority in the Party and who used the state apparatus to suffocate the will of the internationalist majority," a little later they were proclaimed "a clique disarming Yugoslavia before its foreign enemies" and "leading a counter-revolutionary internal policy." In April 1949 the Cominform organ For Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy wrote that Tito and his colleagues have crossed over into the camp of imperialism; in June 1949 Yugoslavia's leaders were called "the storm troops of imperialism." The culminating point was reached in November 1949 when the Cominform, after a session in Budapest, passed the second anti-Titoist resolution entitled The Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the Hands of Spies and Murderers. In the resolution it was claimed that "Yugoslavia's transition from bourgeois nationalism to fascism had been completed" and that Yugoslavia had become "a weapon of aggression" with an anti-Communist police regime headed by "fascist leaders."⁹

Finding their policies of instigating internal revolt in Yugoslavia unsuccessful, the Russians turned to external measures. These took the form of a combination of "border incidents,"¹⁰ formation of a Communist Party of Yugoslavia in exile, of anti-Yugoslav press and radio attacks from the East European countries, and finally a tight economic blockade. Prior to the conflict with Moscow approximately one-half of Yugoslavia's foreign trade was conducted with the Soviet bloc. One year after the Cominform Resolution of 28 June 1948, there was no trade at all between the Soviet bloc and Yugoslavia. The country quickly reached a state of near-bankruptcy.¹¹ It was primarily for that reason, i.e., economic, that Tito turned to the West and by 1950 had received the first of many loans from the United States, Great Britain, and France. For the exigencies of their life and death struggle with their East European comrades left the Yugoslav leaders no choice but to be Titoists, heretics, i.e., to start out along their own road in spite of the fact that the majority of them would have preferred "the good old days" before the split, when the masses knew their place.

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- 9) Pregled istorije Saveza Komunisti Jugoslavia (The Survey of the History of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia), Belgrade, 1963, p. 470.
- 10) According to Borba of 4 November 1952 some 1,530 border provocations occurred between 1949 and 1952.
- 11) Robert Bass and Elizabeth Marbury, The Soviet-Yugoslav Controversy, 1948-1959; A Documentary Record, New York, Prospect Books, 1959, p. 48.

While destroying Soviet mythology, the Yugoslav leaders taught younger Party members that they were not to recognize any "leading role" for the Soviet Union. By "leading role" they meant a "commanding role" for the Soviet leaders. A "normal" leading role of the Soviet Union, as the strongest country, was not rejected. Consequently, the Soviet leaders were accorded no right to dictate to small Communist countries, but only to protect them and help them achieve socialism by following their own roads.

This spirit of independence engendered by Tito and his chief aides has permeated the younger Communist generations in Yugoslavia who -- as time passed -- were even further estranged from the Soviet Union. Trained to be good Yugoslav Communists without being loyal to Moscow, these young people have opposed any attempt to have Yugoslavia subjugated to Soviet bloc discipline. At the same time, however, they have resented any subjugation, even by their own dogmatic leaders, so that quite a new situation has been created. An end has been put to the atmosphere of fear, thus creating one of the preconditions for a modern industrial society to achieve progress. In this respect, Stalin's anti-Titoism proves to have been extremely useful because it has led to the Yugoslav reforms and to greater liberties.

Since 28 June 1948, when Stalin called upon the Yugoslav Party members to overthrow Tito and his "treacherous clique," changes have taken in Yugoslavia the impact of which on the Communist world as a whole has clearly been pervasive and extensive. But what is perhaps even more important is the impact on Yugoslavia herself, on her present and especially her future. The recent student unrest in Yugoslavia has demonstrated that young people, born at the time of Tito's expulsion from the Cominform, are no longer willing to tolerate the arbitrary one-Party dictatorship. They believe that Tito himself has accorded them the right to think and act in this independent way.

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