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Office of the Political Advisor  
Background Information USSR

*Yugoslavia*

June 28, 1958

KHRUSHCHEV AND THE 1948 COMINFORM RESOLUTION (II)

The tenth anniversary of the first Cominform Resolution<sup>1</sup> occurs at a moment when the ideological and political importance of this document is undergoing a process of upward reevaluation throughout the entire Soviet orbit as the result of the polemics with Yugoslavia and the execution of Imre Nagy. In a previous analysis<sup>2</sup> of Khrushchev's attitude towards this Stalinist declaration of ideological war against Tito a decade ago, the basic documentation cited was the detailed version of Khrushchev's unpublished speech at the July, 1955, plenary session of the Central Committee provided by a functionary of the Polish Central Committee.<sup>3</sup> Additional investigation of this issue, so crucial for the separation of the unchanging doctrinal substance of the protracted controversy from the carefully applied camouflage of alternating political reconciliations and estrangements, has revealed that the first substantiation of Bialer's report was published in East Berlin as early as November, 1955, less than four months after the July plenum. At that time W. Ulbricht replied to a question on Yugoslav-DDR relations as follows:

"I repeat that we are very interested in the establishment of good relations with the People's Republic of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia is a land in which the industry is in the hands of the people.

"The Yugoslav people have not only performed heroic deeds in the struggle against the Italian and fascist occupiers, but have also accomplished great things in the construction of a people's democratic system. Relations with Yugoslavia were broken off through the 1948 resolution of the Informationburo of the Communist Parties which contains some correct critical remarks but false conclusions.

"In the meantime, it has been proven that Beria's band had exploited certain weaknesses which existed in Yugoslavia in order to arouse differences and to worsen the relationships. Beria's band undertook everything to weaken the revolutionary forces through the destruction of cadres. This happened above all in Hungary but also in Czechoslovakia. These events contributed considerably to the breach with the People's Republic of Yugoslavia. The 1949 decision of the Informationburo of the Communist and Workers' Parties was incorrect and has been revoked. One must say that Yugoslavia in no way has agreed to unworthy conditions with respect to the U.S. or Great Britain, and has maintained its sovereignty. It may therefore be assumed that in the foreseeable future, normal relations between the DDR and the People's Republic of Yugoslavia will also be established." 4

<sup>1</sup> Pravda, 29 June 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Background Information, 18 June 1958.

<sup>3</sup> Background Information on S. Bialer, Office of the Political Advisor, RFE Munich, June 1956.

<sup>4</sup> Neues Deutschland, 1 November 1955; see also Background Information, 13 December 1955.

Ulbricht's reserved formulation understandably enough, in view of the diplomatic expectations expressed in the statement, places more emphasis on the "false conclusions", i.e. the implementation, than on the undefined content of "some correct critical remarks". Nevertheless, the fact that only the November, 1949, Cominform resolution was officially stated "to have been revoked" is incontrovertible evidence that the first resolution had not then been withdrawn. From this it inevitably follows that Tito since the Belgrade Agreement has been fully conscious of the implication of Khrushchev's unyielding differentiation between the two Cominform resolutions and had also accepted the potential consequences of a subsequent reversal. In the two months since the first Chinese appearance 5 as defenders of the 1948 resolution no Yugoslav spokesman has challenged the interpretation that the original resolution had maintained its validity as a bloc-wide guidance; in the month since Khrushchev for the first time openly identified himself with that "fundamentally correct" document Tito has not accused Khrushchev of deceit on this specific issue.

(5 Peoples' Daily, 5 May 1958)

(6 Pravda, 4 June 1958)

The most unqualified defense of the resolution in the week preceding its tenth anniversary appeared in a Tirana editorial entitled "Modern Revisionism Must Be Mercilessly Fought To Its Complete Theoretical and Political Destruction". In this extension of the most violent Chinese attacks the phraseology and purpose of 1948 are moderated only by the hypocritical wish to continue state relations:

"The criticism which the Communist and Workers' Parties made against the leaders of the YCL in 1948 was completely correct and (well) founded because that leadership had for a long time deviated from Marxism-Leninism and had fallen into positions of bourgeois nationalism and social chauvinism. This has been proven by history. All the revisions and theses of the Yugoslavs which we are now combatting began at that time and continue today. But then mistakes were also made, such as the rupture of diplomatic relations and all other dealings with Yugoslavia. Our Party, like the other fraternal parties, has carried out self-criticism for that and has found absolutely correct the initiative of the CC, CPSU, led by Comrade Khrushchev, to normalize relations ...." 7

(7 Zeri i Popullit, 22 June 1958)

This obviously opportunistic concession on the state level, however, is followed immediately by the most significant revelation that the Yugoslavs had unsuccessfully sought the annulment of the 1948 Cominform decree:

"The Tito group has done everything to induce our Parties to label as incorrect the 1948 resolution. They are thus seeking to hide their hostile activity and their anti-Marxist views, to give the impression that they had been right, to divert the vigilance of Communists and thereby to create the possibility of devoting themselves more easily to their task. The Yugoslav revisionists must also condemn the 1948 resolution for another reason as well--they are determined to follow their anti-Marxist road and they believe that when our Parties have again been obliged to unmask their path again, they would be able to exploit the condemnation of the resolution of 1948 by turning against our Parties and saying 'You are retracting your self-criticism'."

"But the Tito group has calculated poorly. Our Parties can never admit that the historical and entirely correct 1948 resolution has been thrown into the waste basket."

With words such as these the infamous ideological resolution is to be preserved for posterity; but no less than in the past can the doctrine be imposed without acts of violence and terror, such as the execution of Imre Nagy. For Khrushchev who never abandoned the premises of 1948 the return to the 1949 methods is an inevitable progression on the path to total power. As long as the 1948 resolution remains - for Khrushchev as for Stalin - the criterion for political conformity, the repetition of Party purges cannot be avoided.

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