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KHRUSHCHEV AND THE 1948 COMINFORM RESOLUTION (III)

For the second time in less than two months N.S. Khrushchev has used the platform of a satellite Party Congress to pronounce judgement on the policies of the Yugoslav Party and on the actions of its leader, Marshal Tito in particular. Expanding in length and adding details to his Sofia (June 4) defense of the 1948 Cominform resolution, the First Secretary of the CC, C.P.S.U. speaking to the SED Party Congress, accused Tito of "lacking the courage" to tell the Yugoslav Party members the real reasons for the outbreak of the current controversy. The basic premise of Khrushchev's charges is an explicit interpretation of the 1948 resolution as an ideological document of unimpaired validity. In his clearest and most unambiguous statement on this issue to date, the proponent of the pro-Tito policy of 1955/56 portrayed the Soviets as paragons of doctrinal consistency whose justifiable Party criticisms had assumed an erroneous form at the state level:

"In 1948 our parties criticized the opportunistic and nationalistic errors of the Yugoslav leadership. Incorrect was not our criticism from which we have never deviated, but (wrong was) the demand for a change in leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia such as was included in the resolution of the Information Buro. That is all as far as 1948 is concerned. On both sides, I stress, on both sides errors were committed in the guise that the conflicts and bad relations between the Parties were carried over to State relations,

Contrasting the frank self-criticism to which the Soviet Party and others in the bloc had subjected themselves with the unwarranted and stubborn self-righteousness of the Yugoslavs, Khrushchev challenged Tito to prove that the Soviets had made any ideological compromise as the price of the 1955 reconciliation;

"The Yugoslavs have not yet undergone self-criticism. Moreover they are even concealing from the members of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia that we (the Soviet delegation) stated from the very beginning, in 1955 at the talks in Belgrade, that we consider our criticism of their (Yugoslav) mistakes in 1948 and the resolution of the Information Buro in 1948 as essentially correct."

On this basis -- the admission that the call for the overthrow of the Yugoslav Party/State leader was wrong and the insistence that the ideological criticism was correct -- Khrushchev claims that the subsequent improvement in State and Party relations was effected. Since the mistakes

of the past are not to be repeated, State relations will not be permitted to suffer to the same extent as after 1949; because the doctrinal errors have not been recognized and repaired, the ideological offensive against Yugoslav revisionism and anti-Marxist-Leninist views cannot be relaxed.

For the Soviet Party/State leader, the Belgrade and Moscow meetings in May, 1955, and June, 1956, permanently closed the regrettable chapter of 1948-54; in his view the Yugoslav reactions to critical developments in the Soviet bloc during the past three years have always involved the return to arguments applicable only to that era. Nevertheless, as Khrushchev now presents his case, neither the Yugoslav attacks against the "unity of the Socialist camp" after the Hungarian events in October-November, 1956, nor the Yugoslav decision to abstain from participation in the November, 1957, meeting of the "Ruling Parties" were used as the pretext for a break in relations. In the first case the "splitting tactics" were resolutely rebuffed; in the second instance the Yugoslav rejection of bloc-wide unity was met with "restraint."

There is, in this section of Khrushchev's uncompromising speech, an obvious undertone of regret. This, no doubt, reflects his considered judgement that his personal policy of reconciliation with Tito is being publicly buried. To deliver the funeral oration for the defunct program, however, the First Secretary has chosen a most appropriate forum, the leaders of the Party/State for whom this policy, before its collapse, obtained its most notable diplomatic victory -- the recognition of the DDR. In passing judgement on his own actions, although coupled with the achievements of his own Party, there are, perhaps, some elements of self-criticism, but these are completely overshadowed by the confident and self-assured note of the address. To date, at least, there has been no intimation of criticism of Khrushchev's Yugoslav policy except that attributed to the "dogmatic" opposition of the members of the "anti-Party" group who were expelled from the Central Committee just a year ago. From the tiny Albanian Party to the mighty Chinese, from the ultra-orthodox Bulgars to the "revisionist" Poles, Khrushchev's initiatives have been universally praised on every appropriate occasion.

The argumentation in the latest speech raises no new ideological issues, but the stress on doctrinal differences as the core of the controversy

is practically complete. Particularly clear is the catalytic role attributed to the publication of the draft of the Yugoslav Party Program. The unanimous "comradely criticism" of the bloc Parties -- "basic and principled" -- was, in Khrushchev's opinion, answered with "crude and unprincipled attacks" by the Yugoslav leaders and theoreticians who can no longer find their way out of the maze of their own doctrines. With crude sarcasm, Khrushchev raises a rather labored objection to the language and tone of the Yugoslav rebuttals, noting with surprise that the word "Comrade" is used less and less in the Yugoslav press when reference is made to the leaders of the bloc Parties. For the content of the offensive articles and the form of the resulting caricatures -- indeed for the entire anti-Soviet campaign -- now filling the pages of the Yugoslav press, Khrushchev, however, holds "Comrade Tito" personally responsible.

The transition from theory to practice is made by drawing a comparison between Yugoslavia's building of socialism with the aid of "expensive American wheat" and Bulgaria's accomplishment through its own efforts and with the unstinting and unselfish assistance of the "Socialist Camp." Neither in rate of industrialization nor, more importantly, in the rate of collectivization do the Yugoslav protestations of constructing a society along Marxist-Leninist lines match the Bulgarian achievements. In passing, the Czechoslovak and Albanian parties are given due credit for having collectivized 70 % of the countryside; only the Hungarians and the Polish party are passed over in meaningful silence.

The next section of the speech also includes an indirect reminder to the Polish leadership -- the repetition of Khrushchev's unchanging attitude towards the recipients of U.S. aid, this time labelled "alms". Although not many words are wasted on this issue, there can be little doubt that, as in the case of agriculture, the straightforward allusions to the price that must be paid for this assistance are meant primarily for a Polish audience. Since the Poles are unable for geopolitical reasons, made only more conspicuous by the Berlin site of Khrushchev's speech, to adopt a position even remotely approaching Yugoslav "neutrality", these warnings may not yet have acquired an immediate relevance. With respect to the Yugoslav Party Khrushchev once again reduces the relationship between the "Ruling Communist Parties" to its least common denominator: membership in

the socialist camp. The stance of neutrality assumed by a "Ruling Party" -- under present conditions -- means a "weakening of the revolutionary forces and help for the foes of the working class." Stripped of the guise of acting as a Marxist-Leninist Party, the Yugoslavs will be gladly accepted as allies in the fight for peace along with all other peoples, be they "socialists or liberals, nationalists or communists." As a "Trojan horse" within the "workers' movement" there is no place for those "objectively" implementing the imperialist designs to disintegrate the Socialist camp.

The role of leader of this camp has, in Khrushchev's modest presentation, been practically forced upon the reluctant CPSU and Soviet Union. As evidence -- and perhaps in a formal sense correctly -- the First Secretary reminds the Yugoslavs that the preliminary Soviet draft of the Ruling Parties' Communique did not include the formula of the "leading role of the Soviet Union". It was introduced only at the Moscow Conference by "representatives of other fraternal Parties". Khrushchev, for some reason, does not name Mao Tse-tung as the author of this amendment. (He does, however, give a paraphrased version of Mao's argumentation for recognizing Soviet leadership as reported by F. Ebert last November to an SED plenary session.)

The interpretation of the "leading role", as seen by Khrushchev, deserves to be mentioned. Objectively both the chronological element -- the first Party to seize power -- and the tremendous achievements -- the transformation of agricultural society into the second mightiest industrial country in the world within 40 years -- are the decisive factors in this unanimous choice which eliminates, by definition, any possibility of "commandism", "subordination of Parties or countries", and removes the necessity of any "commanding organ". In return for the responsibilities of leadership, the Soviet Party and State, in proportion to its potentialities, assumes the obligations of assistance to the other members of the camp, none of which can build socialism except through the combined efforts of the entire camp.

This axiom of Soviet doctrine is a premise of the 1948 resolution which Gomulka accepted in the Gdansk speech last week and necessarily sets rigid limitations to either a "Yugoslav" or "Polish" road to socialism. It is, however, somewhat moderated by Khrushchev's rhetorical promise that Soviet resistance to "revisionism and opportunism" will not be answered by "intervention in the internal affairs of the other Parties, but only through the comradely criticism, through the comradely influence of the world

revolutionary movement." The worth of such paper promises, less than a month after the Nagy execution, as a determinant of future Soviet actions can be almost entirely discounted; extended over into State relations the pledge of non-intervention is even more categorical, and may remain, perhaps, of as little practical import. Nevertheless, the formal promise that the "leadership of each Party, the leadership of each state, is alone and fully competent" to judge and correct its errors is a frail reed towards which Gomulka is more likely to grasp than Tito.

While the tactics to be applied towards Gomulka remain shrouded in silence, the policy towards Tito is clearly delineated in the final summation by Khrushchev. In contrast to the intense propaganda threats and economic sanctions of the past, Khrushchev intends to reduce the Yugoslavs to impotence by granting them only the attention which that small nation, in his opinion, deserves. Speaking for the "leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", the First Secretary claims that "the intentions of those Yugoslav leaders who want us to inflate the present conflict will not be fulfilled. We will not contribute to a release of passions, to a sharpening of relations."

With this sanctimonious expression of moderation Khrushchev suggests the possibility of finding "some form of contact for certain questions." Even more disarming is the outraged rejection of any implication that pressure -- as in 1949 -- will be exerted against the Yugoslav leadership. Concluding on a note that comes close to ridiculing the Yugoslav "illusions of grandeur" Khrushchev assures his audience that the Yugoslav revisionism as "unpleasant as it may be ... is not an earthquake and will not cause our socialist construction to tremble."

Despite Khrushchev's efforts to de-emphasize the repercussions of the Yugoslav controversy within the bloc, the space allotted to this subject in his speech places the issue in its proper perspective. It has been, for the past three years, the major issue that could have been used against Khrushchev by his opponents in the Party leadership. From his own accusations against Molotov there is evidence that the failure of this policy had been exploited in the intra-Party struggle which reached its climax just a year ago. For Molotov who was right this may provide some consolation in distant Ulan-Bator;

it does not seem, as yet, to have affected Khrushchev's power position. No matter how much his authority appears to have been shaken by failure, he alone has presented his defense and pronounced the verdict. There is neither reproach expressed in words nor punishment threatened in deed.