

1957

F-112

News Background

RUSS -

TWO SIDELIGHTS ON YUGOSLAV-SOVIET RELATIONS

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Munich, June 24 -- (STANKOVIC) -- A short news item published in a minor provincial newspaper reveals that, although the official Yugoslav attitude toward the Soviet bloc is at present conciliatory, discussion of the Soviet anti-Yugoslav campaign is going on in Yugoslavia with the official connivance.

"Vesti", a paper dealing with the political and social problems of the district of TITOVO UZICE (read: Uzhitse) in Serbia, said in its June 13 issue that a minor Communist official, Dragutin MAKSIMOVIC, had given a lecture at which he had explained "in a very interesting manner the present stage in the development of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union." The newspaper added that the speaker had dealt chiefly with "the recent anti-Yugoslav campaign by certain leading officials of the Soviet Union and certain other East European countries".

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In view of the fact that the authority to make statements on Yugoslav-Soviet relations has been hitherto strictly reserved to the highest Yugoslav leaders in their efforts to appease MOSCOW and bury their own private dispute with the Kremlin, a lecture by a minor Communist official on relations with Russia could have been given only on orders from above. Other sources have confirmed that a verbal "enlightenment campaign" on this subject is fairly well under way in Yugoslavia now.

The official statement made on June 21 by the Yugoslav Government spokesman, Branko DRASKOVIC, in answer to the question put by a Yugoslav journalist, showed that the Yugoslav leaders are bristling at the Soviets' Janus tactics toward their country. DRASKOVIC said that a number of articles critical of Yugoslavia which have appeared recently in Communist countries (contrary to a statement by Marshal TITO only last month that the Soviet Union had called off its six-months campaign against Yugoslavia) "were inconsistent with the favorable development of relations" between Soviet bloc countries and Yugoslavia.

On the other hand it appears the Yugoslav people themselves are manifesting their anti-Soviet attitude without waiting for orders. Thus, for instance, "Politika" of June 14 criticized the BELGRADE film-distribution enterprise for ordering the Soviet film "The Forty-First" (which was awarded a prize at the CANNES Festival) to be played in BELGRADE's "dirtiest cinema", while certain Western films, including the American westerners, are being presented in the biggest and smartest cinemas.

"Politika" concedes that the reason for this treatment of a Soviet film was no doubt "speculative" -- tantamount to admitting that managers were rightly pessimistic of the chances of drawing large audiences to see it. (The Soviet film was for several days played in the smartest cinema in BELGRADE but later transferred to the "dirtiest cinema".) But the paper goes on to criticize the distributors for not having made efforts to "use propaganda methods in popularizing the (Soviet) film, as is done with so many other films". "Why should one of the best films we have seen recently to be so discriminated against?" -- "Politika" asked in conclusion.

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