

Yugoslavia and the USSR 1945-1980:

The History of a Cold War Relationship

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I. Yugoslavia and Stalin's politics

1. Unquestionable unity - Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and the onset of the Cold War

While one of the most devastating wars on the soil of Europe was nearing the end, the first foundations of the new Yugoslavia were being created. In this process, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) distinguished itself as the main political force, due to its great capital, brought from the National Liberation Struggle. The old Royalist Yugoslav project was deeply compromised, both by its failure to build a stable and prosperous state in the interwar period, and by the political and military failure of the forces that stood behind it during the war. The Yugoslav communists, crowned by the victory over the occupying and collaborationist forces, offered a different vision of Yugoslavia, in which the anti-fascist heritage would be merged with the future socio-economic transformation of socialist modernization. From the very beginning, the main support in such an ambitious project was the Soviet Union. The endless inspiration of all pre-war Yugoslav communists, the Soviet state under Stalin's leadership, offered hope in the feasibility of a special vision of a prosperous communist society, applicable in the poor agrarian societies of Eastern Europe. The glorious war alliance with units of the Red Army had instilled in the consciousness of Yugoslav Partisan fighters the notion that the expected goals of the Yugoslav revolution are inextricably linked to the support and help of the Soviet Union.

The Second World War significantly changed the role of the Soviet Union in Europe. From an isolated and ideologically undesirable state within the Versailles Order in the interwar period, the war achievements and the massive mobilization of the Soviet Union's human and material power against the Axis Forces made the ruling Kremlin the chief arbiter of the

construction of a part of post-war Europe.¹ Starting from the interests of protecting its own security in a new international order, Stalin's policy at the end of the war was focused on defining and preserving Soviet interest spheres, affirmed by allies at conferences in Yalta and Potsdam.² Stalin's "realpolitik", which did not abandon the Bolshevik vision of the world for a single moment, implied the conduct of international politics on the principle of respect for the "balance of powers". The victorious Red Army was paving the way for the confirmation of Moscow's influence zone in Eastern Europe. Although, according to many authors, Stalin did not initially have a clear plan to create an Eastern Bloc immediately after the war, it was evident that the vacuum of power created in Eastern Europe imposed a new transformation of these backward societies, in which the Communists, with the support of the Soviet Union, would represent a decisive political factor.

Yugoslav communists, unlike most Eastern European communists, did not base their triumphal march towards power exclusively upon the merits of the incursion of the Red Army units. Relying on their own strength in a four-year war against occupation forces, they managed to build a respectable military power, and at the same time, by thorough ideological and educational work, tie a significant part of the fighters to the ideal of a future socialist society. Within post-war Yugoslavia, a sufficiently strong and organized political opposition that could jeopardize the monopoly of the CPY power did not exist. Relying on the victorious war performance and the promise of creating a new socio-economic order, the CPY was far ahead in comparison to all communist parties in Eastern Europe. In the period of Stalin's concern over the organizational and political incapacity of the communist parties in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary, the Yugoslav party leadership in the late 1945 already strongly held power in its hands. In this process of building the so-called "people's democracy", the Soviet Union was the main foreign policy and ideological support of the new Yugoslavia.

¹Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity* (Oxford University Press: 1996), 20.

²These were the "Memorandum" of Maxim Litvinov, dated January 11, 1945, and the "Note" by Ivan Maisky, dated January 10, 1944. Litvinov's document dedicated to the Yalta Conference, dealt with the possibilities of defining the Soviet sphere of influence in Europe. According to his plan, there would be zones in the east and north linked with the Soviet Union, including Finland, Sweden, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Turkey. Maisky's Note anticipated that Europe would inevitably transform into socialist societies over a period of 50 years. Norman Naimark, "The Sovietization of Eastern Europe 1944-1953", in *The Cambridge History of Cold War*, vol. I, ed. Melvin P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge University Press: 2010), 175-176.

The first steps of socialist Yugoslavia on the international scene were made with the whole-hearted support of the Soviet Union. The experience of Yugoslav communists in conducting international (but also state) affairs was extremely modest, and could be reduced to the last several war years of diplomatic struggle for the affirmation of the partisan movement and the revolutionary authorities.³ Adjusting the policy towards Yugoslavia to its wider approach in the Balkans region, Soviet foreign policy had taken care to link its interests deeply with those of Yugoslavia, while presenting Western interests as “ideologically” undesirable. The solid foundation for post-war Yugoslav-Soviet cooperation was defined by the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, signed on April 11, 1945, in Moscow, between the Soviet and the Yugoslav delegation, led by Josip Broz Tito. The importance of this act for the interests of the new Yugoslavia were expressed by Tito in his toast, as he assessed that the treaty was “the achievement of the long-standing aspirations of the peoples of Yugoslavia - to live in close friendship with the great Soviet people”, who, under the “genius leader” Stalin, won the victory against the common enemy.⁴ The foreign policy orientation of the new Yugoslavia (FPRY) was built on the belief that the Soviet Union, along with the countries of “people’s democracy”, was the only guarantor of the protection of Yugoslav interests in international relations. Josip Broz Tito, as the prime minister of the FPRY and the minister of defense, pointed out himself in his speech in the National Assembly on February 1, 1946, that the “unbreakable alliance” between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union represented “one of the strongest factors for the safety of our independence and peaceful development of our country”.⁵ Yugoslav diplomacy regularly consulted with Moscow on all foreign policy issues, and with the beginnings of the Cold War, it provided unreserved support to Soviet politics. The first international problems that Yugoslavia faced as an actor after the war, such as the issues of Trieste or Carinthia, were resolved by relying on the support of Soviet diplomacy. Over time, it became expected that Yugoslav and Soviet representatives would act and vote in a unified manner in many international institutions

³In his memoirs, Vladimir Velebit describes his uneasiness about joining the Ministry of Foreign Affairs without previously spending a day of work in diplomacy. Tito's advice at that time was remembered: “None of us, who are now creating a state, knows anything about how this is done. We all have to learn through work. Go, work and you will learn.”, Vladimir Velebit, *Moj život* (Fraktura: Zagreb, 2016), 448.

⁴Yugoslav-Soviet relations 1945-1956, Collection of documents (edited by Lj. Dimić, M. Milošević, Đ. Borozan...), Belgrade 2010, 19.

⁵Napukli monolit: Jugoslavija i svet: 1942-1948, edited by Ljubodrag Dimić, Aleksandar Životić (Belgrade: Arhipelag: Službeni glasnik, 2012), 354.

and forums.⁶ The belief that the power of the Communist Party in Yugoslavia was secured, and that the society was being built in accordance with the Soviet model, convinced Stalin in the possibility that Yugoslavia itself could be the first exponent of Soviet interests in the Balkans. Plans to build a Balkan federation, with the decisive role of Yugoslavia, testified to the intentions of Soviet politics to additionally consolidate the position of the USSR in that part of Europe, by manipulating the pan-Slavic feelings among the Balkan peoples.⁷

The ideological closeness of Yugoslav communists and “the first country of socialism” was one of the strongest post-war ties between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia, from the very beginnings of organized political activity, was based on the success of the idea of the October Revolution of 1917. Lenin's codification of Marxism, by building a coherent and rounded theoretical conception, became the main ideological orientation of Yugoslav communists. The Soviet Union was idealized as an example of the successful construction of the new socio-economic order, and the Bolshevik Party, as an example of the perfect organized political power of the proletariat. With Josip Broz Tito's arrival at the head of the CPY in 1937, the process of Bolshevization of the party was largely completed. The infallibility of the Bolshevik line was expressed through the popularization of the **History of the Soviet Communist Party (b). A short course**, the basic and mandatory ideological “textbook” of all communists. Stalin was celebrated and exalted as a great theorist, whose contribution to Marxist theory was equated with that of Marx, Engels and Lenin. On the occasion of the celebration of the 66th anniversary of Stalin's birth, Edvard Kardelj proudly claimed in an article in *Borba*, on December 21, 1945, that writing about Stalin meant “writing about the most important historical epoch in the development of humanity” and “a great triumph of the human mind”.⁸ Dedicating the ideological panegyric to Stalin, Kardelj actually emphasized the values that the Yugoslav communists would firmly adhere to in the post-war Sovietization of Yugoslavia, and whose ideological founder was the Soviet leader: “Stalin gave the foundations for the international policy of the socialist state and for the line of internal

⁶“We watched what the Soviet representatives are doing and in most cases we voted as they would vote.” V. Velebit, op.cit., 484.

⁷More on the topic of Balkan federation in: Branko Petranović, *Balkanska federacija 1943-1948* (Belgrade: IKP Zaslou, 1991).

⁸Documents 1948, tome I, edited by V. Dedijer (Belgrade: Rad, 1979), 78.

building of socialism. The socialist reconstruction, industrialization, collectivization, five-year plans, the building of the Red Army and the defense forces of the USSR in general - all this is the result of the theoretical and practical leadership activity of Stalin in the struggle for the victory of socialism in the USSR.”⁹

The construction of the “people's democracy” in Yugoslavia was intended to theoretically express the “transitory” period in the development between civil democracy and socialism.¹⁰ The consistency and speed of the transition was determined by the leadership role of the CPY, which consistently pursued the planned Soviet model in this process. In January 1946, the National Assembly voted on and approved the FPRY Constitution, which, with certain corrections, represented a copy of the Soviet constitution of 1946.¹¹ The new constitution established a clearly expressed centralization of the state and the party, with the abolition of even the slightest presence of institutions of “bourgeois” democracy. Remnants of the civil opposition parties within the People's Front were eliminated from political and public life by various methods, from arrest to intimidation. The restoration of the economy of the country, after the severe consequences of war destruction, was carried out exclusively by copying Soviet economic policy (nationalization, central planning, collectivization). The ambitious first five-year development plan was introduced in April 1947, and was the first such plan in Eastern Europe. The viability of the planned development of the Yugoslav economy was closely linked to an orientation towards the eastern market, trade relations with the Soviet Union and the countries of “people’s democracy”. In April 1946, the Yugoslav ambassador to Moscow, Vladimir Popović, in a conversation with Soviet Ambassador Lavrentiev, emphasized the fact that Yugoslavia could not independently develop its economy without close cooperation with the Soviet Union. Yugoslavia did not want, Popović considered, to “fall under the economic influence of England and the United States”.¹² To that end, many bilateral agreements between Yugoslavia and the Soviet

⁹Ibid, 81-82.

¹⁰Marija Obradović, *Narodna demokratija u Jugoslaviji 1945-1952* (Belgrade: INIS, 1995), 17-27.

¹¹The Soviet ambassador in Belgrade, I. Sadchikov, reported to Molotov that, according to Andria Hebrang, the initial version of the constitution “was almost a mere translation of the Soviet constitution into the Serbo-Croatian language.” 53

¹²At the time of the Marshall Plan of 1947 the US Ambassador Cannon sketched the Yugoslav trade policy in a report to the State Department: “1) development and strengthening of economic relations with the Soviet bloc

Union were signed.¹³ Yugoslav communists expected economic, military and personnel assistance from the Soviet Union as a contribution to the construction of a new socialist order. Soviet instructors took part in the building of the Yugoslav Army and State Security Service, while hundreds of military cadets went to school in Moscow.¹⁴ According to Ambassador Popović, “educating personnel with a Marxist-Leninist view of the world, in the Soviet spirit” was a fundamental issue for Yugoslavia.¹⁵ In the middle of 1947, acting on the instructions of the party’s top leadership, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union made an analysis of the results of the development of “people’s democracies” in Eastern Europe. In a separate memorandum, the CPY's performance was presented in superlatives, commendations of the war success and the construction of the communist government with the appropriate socio-economic model. Regarding the conduct of foreign policy, the memorandum confirmed the fact that Yugoslavia stood firm against the West and supported all Soviet foreign policy goals.¹⁶ The image of “loyal” Yugoslavia was aimed at completing the success of the construction of the Soviet sphere of interest, especially with the escalation of the Cold War in Europe during 1946-47, and for preparing the ground for the constitution of a more solid bloc of socialist states under the direct control of Moscow.

Faced with the challenges of post-war reconstruction, the anti-Hitler coalition failed to reaffirm the strength of its wartime alliance. Allied conferences in Yalta and Potsdam briefly offered hope for the possibility of a compromise on the basis of long-term and shared concern for peace in Europe. However, different ideas about the basis on which the new international order should be built, with the strong presence of diametrically opposed ideological points of view and state interests, alienated the positions of Moscow and the majority of the Western states. The expansion of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, related with numerous incidents in other parts

through full economic co-operation; 2) establishing provisional, less important agreements with the West that are mostly not fulfilled.” Napukli monolit: Jugoslavija i svet: 1942-1948... 485

¹³Agreement between the Government of the USSR and the Government of Yugoslavia on the Supply of Petroleum Products (November 30, 1945), Agreement on Economic Cooperation between the USSR and FPRY (June 8, 1946), Agreement on Commodity Circulation and Payments between the USSR and FPRY (July 5, 1947) Agreement between the Government of the USSR and the Government of the FPRY on the Delivery of Plant and Industrial Equipment on Credit to Yugoslavia (July 25, 1947), etc.

¹⁴Ivo Banac, *Staljinom protiv Tita* (Zagreb: Globus, 1990), 36-37.

¹⁵Yugoslav-Soviet relations 1945-1956..., 80.

¹⁶Leonid Ia. Gibianskii, “The Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict and the Soviet Bloc”, in: *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War 1943-53*, edit. Francesca Gori, Silvio Pons (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 227.

of the world (the issue of controlling Turkish straits, the occupation of northern Iran, support to Greek and Chinese communists), was perceived as the forcible creation of the Soviet “socialist empire”. It was interpreted as “a traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity”, which could only be curbed by the “logic of power”.¹⁷ On the other hand, Stalin's policy, proceeding from deeply rooted ideological prejudices about constant antagonism with the capitalist world, interpreted the British and American opposition to Soviet interests as a renewal of a “Hitlerian” war policy, directed against Soviet security.¹⁸ The unresolved issue of Germany and the initiation of a plan for the economic reconstruction of Europe (the Marshall Plan) created an atmosphere of total mistrust, in which one party perceived the other as a fundamental threat to national security.

With the first beginnings of the Cold War in Europe, Yugoslavia was speedily ranked on the West among the states - instruments of Soviet politics. Reports from the British Embassy in Belgrade illustrated such views in one of the telegrams to Foreign Office, in June 1946, which stated that the situation in Yugoslavia was difficult to assess because it was “not a free actor, and its actions are not a reflection of Yugoslav, but rather Soviet politics.”¹⁹ The Trieste crisis, which began in May 1945, with the arrival of the Yugoslav Army, was interpreted more as expansion of the Soviet sphere of influence to the Adriatic, than it was perceived as a struggle for the fulfillment of Yugoslav interests. The same alarm for the West was the escalation of the civil war in Greece in the spring of 1946, in which Yugoslavia consistently provided significant assistance to the armed forces of Greek communists, and for which it was condemned in the UN. In the Western press and diplomatic reports, Yugoslavia received the epithet of the Soviet “satellite no. 1”, while Tito was portrayed as a true advocate of Stalin's policy.²⁰ During numerous conversations with Western diplomats the Yugoslav authorities periodically tried to reassure them that the state policy was aimed at developing good relations with all countries, but ideological differences, however, could not have been overcome. Articles in the press and party newsletters intensified anti-Western rhetoric, creating a black and white image of the existence of a permanent fight between “progressive” and “reactionary” forces. With increasing tensions in

¹⁷Richard Sakwa, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union 1917-1991. Sources in History* (London, NY: Routledge, 1999), 283-284.

¹⁸Ibid, 285-287.

¹⁹Napukli monolit: Jugoslavija i svet: 1942-1948..., 410.

²⁰Ljubodrag Dimić, *Jugoslavija i Hladni Rat* (Belgrade: Arhipelag, 2014), 54.

international relations, the Yugoslav press wrote more and more about “imperialist” plans of the Western states, which were opposed by the Soviet Union, as “the main foothold, the strongest weapon, the most important position of progress, freedom and independence of the people and true democracy”.²¹ For the Yugoslav communists, it was “natural” and expected that Yugoslavia, as part of the “progressive and advanced world”, would support the empowerment of the USSR and its active role in international relations, with the aim of achieving an “advanced path in the development of humanity”.²² Soviet Ambassador A. J. Lavrentiev was pleased to note (in March 1947), summarizing a report for Moscow, that it became clear to the Yugoslav leadership that “the basis of Yugoslavia's foreign policy, the guarantee of strengthening its international position, is reliance on the Soviet Union”.²³ Belgrade was the first capital in Eastern Europe which refused to take part in the consultations of European countries in July 1947, on the issue of the implementation of the so-called Marshall Plan, adopting the Soviet view that the Plan envisages “interference in the internal affairs of European states”, and making the economy of European countries “dependent of US interests”.²⁴ Unlike Jan Masaryk, who, after the Soviet ultimatum to Czechoslovakia in connection with the Marshall Plan, viewed himself as a “Soviet lackey”, Yugoslav diplomacy was proud of fulfilling its “international duty”.

Moscow's decision to reject the Marshall Plan for the economic reconstruction of Europe led to the radicalization of Stalin's policy, the rejection of the “national path” towards socialism, and a firmer binding of the communist parties under the ideological and political suzerainty of the Soviet Union. In the attempts to achieve this goal representatives of the European communist parties held a meeting in Szklarska Poręba (Poland), from September 22 to 28, 1947.²⁵ The main tone of the entire meeting was set by the presentation of the Soviet representative Andrei Zhdanov, one of the key figures in the implementation of repressive ideological dogmatization in the Soviet Union since 1946. To the gathered communists, Zhdanov presented a picture of the

²¹Documents 1948..., 82

²²Ibid.

²³Yugoslav-Soviet relations 1945-1956..., 171.

²⁴Ibid, 194-197.

²⁵The conference was attended by representatives of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the Bulgarian Workers' Party (of Communists), the Communist Party of Romania, the Hungarian Communist Party, the Polish Workers' Party, the All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks), the Communist Party of France, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Communist Party of Italy.

postwar world, in which, in his opinion, two opposing blocs had crystallized - “imperialist”, led by the United States, and “anti-imperialist”, led by the USSR. Presenting the policy of former allies as “imperialist” and “bellicose”, designed for restoration of fascism and the struggle against socialism, Zhdanov craftily ideologically summed up the Soviet view of the new Cold War divisions, towards which communists must have a clear standpoint. The leading role, Zhdanov stressed, in opposing the American plan for “the enslavement of Europe” and the imperialist aspirations of Western capitalism, belonged to the Soviet Union, which was “foreign to any aggressive exploitative motives”, and which was a “devoted supporter of freedom and independence for all peoples”.²⁶ However, the presentation of Zhdanov did not fundamentally change the perception of the postwar world and the character of the capitalist society, which all communists, sincere proponents of Marxism-Leninism, shared. What Moscow was demanding at that time, was a change in the strategy of the European communist parties, the adoption of a more robust and uncompromising approach to the plans of “imperialist expansion”. Communist ranks had to be consolidated and they had to work closely, said Zhdanov, and to that end, the meeting in Poręba was concluded with the establishment of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), a separate coordinating body, in charge of harmonizing the joint approach of European communist parties. Belgrade was designated for the headquarters of the Bureau.

The Yugoslav party delegation had a prominent role at the Poręba consultations, and acted as the main “prompter” of the standpoints of the Soviet delegation. The reports by Edward Kardelj and Milovan Đilas were noticed, and concentrated on the criticism of the Italian and French communists and the unsustainability of their “parliamentary illusions”, as a means of political struggle in their countries. The report on the attitude of the CPY at the consultations was overall positive, and the designation of Belgrade as the seat of the new Information Bureau testified about the special attention Moscow showed to Yugoslavia.²⁷ During the meeting between Stalin and Edward Kardelj, the Soviet leader underlined the difference between the needs of Yugoslavia and the needs of “satellite states”. Soviet propaganda shared positive news about Yugoslav politics, while the memoranda on Yugoslavia within the Soviet Ministry of

²⁶Yugoslav-Soviet relations 1945-1956..., 210.

²⁷The Cominform bimonthly “For Strong Peace and National Democracy” started to be published also in Belgrade, headed by Pavel Yudin, a Soviet emissary on a direct telephone line with Moscow.

Foreign Affairs noted mostly positive things. The Sovietization of Eastern Europe, which emerged with the establishment of the Cominform, did not raise any doubts among Yugoslav communists. Vladislav Gomulka's lonely attempt to promote the “national path” to socialism was rejected in the name of ideological uniformity and firm discipline. In October 1947, Yugoslav communists solemnly celebrated the 30th anniversary of the October Revolution, in a celebration “noisier than in Moscow.”²⁸ In a telegram to Stalin, Tito declared that the peoples of Yugoslavia would cherish “sincere friendship” with the peoples of the Soviet Union, and that they would jointly defend the legacy of the revolution, as the guarantor of the “victory of democracy and peace in the whole world”.²⁹ It seemed that there was little that could disrupt the unquestionable unity of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.

2. The Cominform Resolution and the breaking up with Stalin.

The Cominform resolution, of June 28, 1948, represented the peak of the crisis in the Yugoslav-Soviet relations, which started at the end of 1947. Until then, the differences that existed between the foreign-policy positions of Belgrade and Moscow were minimal. Yugoslavia was firmly standing by the Soviet Union, loyally following the Soviet model of socio-economic relations in its internal development. Identical ideological beliefs had contributed to mutual trust, especially when it came to the understanding of contemporary events and deepening the differences with the Western capitalist world. However, over time, notable differences in mutual relations, which were a logical consequence of the hegemonic aspirations of the Kremlin, as well as occasional misunderstandings in bilateral cooperation, became a sufficient nuance that changed the impression of Yugoslavia as a loyal “satellite” and the Soviet Union as a defender of “independence and sovereignty” of countries. At the end of May 1945, when the Trieste crisis took an alarming turn, Josip Broz Tito delivered a far-sighted speech to the gathered citizens of Ljubljana: “It has been said that this was a just war, and that is what we considered it to be. But

²⁸Milovan Đilas, *Vlast i pobuna* (Belgrade: Književne novine, 1991), 118.

²⁹Yugoslav-Soviet relations 1945-1956..., 225-226

we also ask for a just ending, we ask that everyone be the master of his realm, we will not pay the bills of others, we will not be a bargaining chip, we will not be involved in some politics of interest spheres. Why would the will of our people to be independent in every way be taken amiss, and why would this independence be limited or disputed? We will no longer be dependent on anyone, regardless of what is being written and what is being said - and a lot is being written, it is being written unsightly, it is being written unjustly, it is being written offensively, unworthy of those who live in our allied countries. (...) There is no brokering, no dealing with this Yugoslavia.”³⁰

Tito's speech expressed Yugoslav dissatisfaction over the allied forces' denial of the right of Yugoslavia to dominate Trieste, but it was also a protest against possible pressures on Yugoslav independence, where no difference among the possible states that might try to exert it was made. Although it was obvious that the new socialist Yugoslavia stood steadfastly by the Soviet Union in post-war relations, the negative reaction to Tito's speech came precisely from Moscow. Tito was criticized for equating the interests of Western imperialists and the USSR in his speech, and for the fact that Yugoslavia did not lead a cautious enough policy on Trieste.³¹ “Comradely” criticism from Moscow was accepted in Belgrade, but it did not stop sporadic suspicions in mutual relations, which became increasingly pronounced over time, especially when the actions of the Yugoslav authorities questioned the position of Moscow as the key arbitrator. Yugoslavia could not conceal its dissatisfaction with the unfavorable epilogue to the solution of the issue of Trieste at the Paris Conference in 1946, whereas the Soviet Union took steps to restrain the excessive hastiness of the Yugoslav Balkan policy on several occasions. It became particularly expressed in 1947, when representatives of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria closed negotiations on close cooperation and contours of the future Balkan federation. The plan for the federation of the Balkan peoples has had a long history since the mid-19th century, to be

³⁰Documents 1948..., 75-76.

³¹Tito's speech in Ljubljana would later serve Stalin in a clash with Yugoslavia as evidence of the continuous “anti-Sovietism” in Yugoslavia. Stalin's letter of May 4, 1948 highlighted the Ljubljana speech, and cited the response to it from Moscow, transmitted by Ambassador Sadchikov: “We consider the speech of comrade Tito as a hostile outburst against the Soviet Union, and the explanation of comrade Kardelj as unsatisfactory. This is how our readers understand the speech of comrade Tito, and it is impossible to understand it otherwise. Tell comrade Tito that if he makes another such outburst against the Soviet Union, we will be forced to respond with criticism in the press and disavow him.” Yugoslav-Soviet relations 1945-1956..., 330.

reaffirmed after the Second World War, but this time as a useful means of further rapprochement of precarious Balkan communist parties and states. Consultations of the Bulgarian and Yugoslav delegations, on the form and manner in which the federation would be created, were run sporadically since the end of the war, and were getting their final outlines in the summer of 1947. The Bled Agreement between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia was signed on August 1, 1947, and represented the basis of common interests in the Balkans. However, Stalin expressed his reservations and disagreements from the very beginning. He believed that the signing was premature, especially since Bulgaria's peace agreement had not yet come into force. He sent his objections to Tito and Dimitrov in separate messages. By its negative reaction to the Belgrade-Sofia agreement, Moscow showed its growing suspicion that it was being gradually excluded from consultations on the definition of strategic policy in the Balkans.³²

The signing of the Yugoslav-Bulgarian agreement took place at a time when Moscow changed its strategy towards Eastern Europe, and when clear signs of Stalin's intention to put the communist parties in Europe under tougher control and discipline had already appeared. The favorable reports on the work of the CPY, as well as the reports of Ambassador Lavrentiev on Yugoslav-Soviet relations, besides numerous praises, carried with them a dose of criticism as well. In the spring of 1947, Lavrentiev reported on the tendencies of "local-nationalism" in Yugoslavia, which, in his opinion, could not be neglected. The Soviet ambassador noted that with the "over-emphasis" of the Yugoslav partisan struggle, the role of the Soviet Union was diminished, and that the leading Yugoslav communists were trying to credit only themselves for the liberation of Yugoslavia and the success in economic reconstruction.³³ At the end of 1947, Lavrentiev strengthened his criticism against the regime in Yugoslavia, becoming even more critical towards the CPY leadership, and especially towards Tito, to whom the label of "nationalist narrowness" was attached.³⁴ At the beginning of 1948, the Soviet Embassy had already considerably alarmed Moscow that its position in Belgrade was being ignored, and the Soviet military attaché General Sidorovich recommended that Cominform must investigate

³²R. Craig Nation, "A Balkan Union? Southeastern Europe in Soviet Security Policy, 1944-8" in: *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War 1943-53*, edit. Francesca Gori, Silvio Pons (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 133.

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Yugoslav “mistakes”.³⁵ The unfavorable reports from the Belgrade embassy supported Stalin's doubts about the flaws of Yugoslav politics in the Balkans. The relations between Yugoslavia and Albania also attracted attention at the end of 1947. The situation in the Balkans started to become overcomplicated for the interests of the Soviet Union at a time when mobilization against Soviet policy in Western Europe was taking place. On the one hand, the consequences of the civil war in Greece became more and more unpleasant, and on the other hand, the independent actions of Sofia and Belgrade, without consulting Moscow, directly challenged the emerging larger policy of the Soviet Union. Stalin carried out the first consultations with Milovan Đilas in early 1948 in order to try to clarify the directions of Yugoslav and Soviet policy towards Albania.³⁶ Đilas reported to Tito from Moscow that the Yugoslav and Soviet views on Albania were “identical”, which encouraged Tito to send two Yugoslav divisions to Korçë (Albania), as a preventive measure from the alleged possible intrusion of the Greek “monarchofascists”.³⁷

The decision to send the army to Albania, which was ultimately prevented by the intervention of the Soviet government, was interpreted in Moscow as yet another indication of the unrestrained Yugoslav foreign policy. In a telegram of V. Molotov sent to Josip Broz Tito, on January 31, 1948, it was noted that there were “serious differences in the understanding of mutual relations between our countries.”³⁸ Moscow had also related Bulgaria's intentions to the issue of the existence of various foreign policy concepts, following the controversial statement by G. Dimitrov at the railway station after the signing of a bilateral agreement with Romania. Elated by the successful realization of cooperation with neighboring countries, the Bulgarian party leader said that the plan was to create a large Eastern European federation, which would include, besides Bulgaria and Romania, also Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Greece, despite the ongoing civil war in that country.³⁹ The statement was related by Moscow's Pravda without commentary, and it suited the West to create an even more “anti-Soviet” hysteria, as a clear example of the expansionist intentions of Soviet policy. The meeting with Stalin and the Soviet party's top leadership, on February 11, 1948, was a breaking point in

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³⁶Milovan Đilas, *Razgovori sa Staljinom*, (Belgrade: Književne novine, 1991).

³⁷Yugoslav-Soviet relations 1945-1956..., 243.

³⁸Ibid, 245-246.

³⁹ Documents 1948, tome I..., 166-167.

Yugoslav-Soviet relations. Expecting constructive talks and “comradely” criticism, members of the Yugoslav and Bulgarian delegations, E. Kardelj and G. Dimitrov, faced an avalanche of humiliating accusations by Stalin. Bulgaria and Yugoslavia were accused of leading their foreign policies without the slightest consultation with the Soviet Union (“You and the Yugoslavs do not report anything you do, we have to find out everything in the streets - you just present us with a **fait accompli**”).⁴⁰ At the meeting nothing was left to chance anymore. Stalin demanded that both delegations unconditionally accept his criticism and undertake urgent measures - the uprising in Greece had to end, and the federation of Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria had to be realized as soon as possible. In order to avoid future “misunderstandings”, E. Kardelj was forced to sign the Protocol to the Treaty of Friendship, Mutual Assistance and Post-war Co-operation between the USSR and Yugoslavia from April 1945, in which the Yugoslav party committed itself to “mutual consultations on all important international issues concerning the interests of the two countries”.⁴¹

The political pressure demonstrated in Moscow, which the members of the Yugoslav delegation faced for the first time in this form, was unexpected and shocking for Belgrade. The first reaction of the Yugoslav party’s top leadership leaned towards a belief that there were no major disagreements with the Soviet Union, followed by mild self-criticism that a mistake had been made with the decision to send troops into Albania.⁴² However, the events that followed at the end of February, primarily the growing pressure on Yugoslavia made by the refusal of Moscow to extend the trade agreement, strengthened the belief among the leading Yugoslav communists that Soviet policy towards Yugoslavia was jeopardizing the main accomplishment of the Yugoslav revolution and the national liberation struggle - the independence of the state. The debate at the session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CC CPY) Politburo, on March 1, 1948, raised within the party’s top leadership the issue of a critical assessment of the politics of the Soviet Union and the resulting “ideological disagreements” for the first time. The Politburo noted that the policy towards the Soviet Union would remain unchanged, but with an important reserve “that we are obliged to keep watch over the interests of

⁴⁰Milovan Đilas, *Razgovori sa Staljinom* (Belgrade: Književne novine, 1991), 111-119; Edvard Kardelj, *Borba za priznanje i nezavisnost nove Jugoslavije* (Belgrade, 1980), 111-117.

⁴¹Yugoslav-Soviet relations 1945-1956..., 251-253

⁴²Ibid, 255.

our country”.⁴³ The Politburo's session was secret, but the Soviet Embassy found out about its content through a member of the Politburo, Sreten Žujović, who, by doing so, decided among the first to bow to Moscow in the dispute. The atmosphere of mistrust created in March 1948 had increasingly cooled the relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. In only two days, March 18 and 19, Moscow withdrew all its military and civilian instructors from Yugoslavia. Without waiting for the deepening of the dispute, the Yugoslav party's top leadership began a series of consultations in republic party bodies in order to timely inform members about the conflict with the Soviet Union. On the other hand, in mid-March, a draft document (“On the anti-Marxist orientation of the leaders of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the issues of foreign and internal politics”) was already prepared in Moscow, which represented an ideological criticism of the CPY and the foundation of the future Stalin's letter of March 27, 1948.⁴⁴ Similar documents on the “anti-Marxist” actions of other communist parties in Europe appeared at the same time, which suggested that, by disciplining Yugoslav communists, Moscow was preparing for a more extensive subordination of European communists to its interests.

The correspondence between the Soviet and the party's top leadership, which took place from March to May 1948, strengthened the irreconcilable positions of the two parties and led to the deterioration of interstate relations. Criticism against the CPY in a series of Stalin's letters (March 27, May 4 and May 17) came basically down to ideological accusations and to proving the deviation of Yugoslav communists from the positions of Marxism-Leninism. Accusing part of the Yugoslav party and state leadership that they were “semi-Marxists” and “English spies,” and that they supported “anti-Sovietism” in their surroundings, the letters accused the CPY of being in a “semi-legal state”, lacking “the spirit of the politics of class struggle”, that Yugoslav communists, following the example of the Mensheviks, vulgarized Marxist theory, and that the French and Italian parties had more credit for the revolution than the Yugoslav party.⁴⁵ Stalin's letters had a crystal clear goal. The self-confidence of Stalin and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), as already confirmed authorities in the international communist movement, was meant to add to their influence in undermining the legitimacy of the CPY, and

⁴³Ibid, 264.

⁴⁴Ibid, 272-278.

⁴⁵ibid, 284-289; 326-342; 351-353.

therefore the independence of Yugoslavia. As the same type of pressure began from other European communist parties, the aim was to create the impression that the dispute was not only between Moscow and Belgrade, but that the Yugoslav communists had violated the main principles of proletarian internationalism, and that they had stepped into the area of inexorable ideological heresy, and as such, had to bear the consequences. Expressed within the political vocabulary of Bolshevik political culture - they had to show self-criticism and take responsibility. The repentant self-criticism of the CPY was being prepared at a conference of the Information Bureau in Bucharest, at the end of June 1948.

The responses of the top leadership of the CPY to Stalin's letters did not intend to sharpen the polemic and deepen the dispute (especially the first letter of the CPY, of April 13), but they, for the most part, dismissed all critical remarks. A somewhat reconcilable tone transpiring from the letters of the Yugoslav party was intended to send a message to Stalin that Yugoslavia would not backtrack from any change in its internal and external course.⁴⁶ In the letters of the CPY, it was emphasized that Yugoslavia was advancing “steadily towards socialism” and that the USSR had “the most loyal friend and ally” in it.⁴⁷ Persistence in answers that would not contribute to a complete break was noticeable even after the second sharp and more elaborate Stalin's letter of May 4, 1948, when the top leadership of the CPY declared that it would persistently continue to build socialism and would remain faithful to the Soviet Union, and the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.⁴⁸ Thus, the Yugoslav side expressed its desire to shift the dispute to an interstate basis, rather than it being an interparty ideological polemic, which Stalin insisted on. The criticism that came from Moscow was interpreted by the Yugoslav leadership as a result of “erroneous” and “malicious” information, while the differences Stalin insisted on in his answers were explained as the results of the “specific conditions” in building socialism in Yugoslavia.⁴⁹ The Yugoslav communists emphasized the greatest difference in relation to the Soviet Union by their attitude towards their own country: “No matter how much one loves the country of

⁴⁶In his memoirs Milovan Đilas mentions that the first draft of Tito's response to the March 27 letter was “sharper” because he insisted on the independence and equal relationship between the socialist states and the Soviet Union. By the advice of the narrowest party circle, this part was omitted in the CPY response of April 13. Milovan Đilas, *Vlast i pobuna* (Belgrade: Književne novine, 1991), 150.

⁴⁷Yugoslav-Soviet relations 1945-1956..., 302.

⁴⁸Ibid, 347.

⁴⁹Ibid, 300.

socialism, USSR, they must not in any case love their country less (...) for which hundreds of thousands of its most progressive people have fallen”.⁵⁰

The Cominform resolution, published on June 28, 1948, was the final act in the polemic between the CPY and CPSU top leaderships. The text of the resolution was drafted after the meeting of the Information Bureau in Bucharest, where the assembled communist parties discussed the “case of the CPY”. Following a decision of the CPY Politburo, leading Yugoslav communists declined the invitation to participate in the meeting in Bucharest, which made Stalin accuse them in advance of “betrayal of the unified front of national democracy and the USSR.”⁵¹ The resolution accused the CPY of anti-Sovietism, deviation from Marxism-Leninism in internal and external politics, poor organization of the party, and failure to accept criticism. The main decision of the Resolution was to expel Yugoslavia from the Information Bureau. A special appeal was made to the “healthy forces” of the CPY to resist its party leadership, force it to acknowledge errors and change its policy, or simply oust it eventually if it came to that. In the conclusion of the Resolution, the Information Bureau expressed its hope that the “Communist Party of Yugoslavia would fulfill this honorable task”.⁵² The CPY's response to the Resolution followed on June 30 in the party organ *Borba*, and on that occasion, all the accusations against the CPY voiced in the Resolution were rejected. The CPY top leadership urged its membership to “close its ranks” and achieve absolute unity in the party, towards the necessary construction of socialism in Yugoslavia, because it was “the only way and manner to prove the unjustified nature of these charges in practice”.⁵³

Stalin's hope that the appeal to the high level of internationalist consciousness of “healthy forces” among Yugoslav communists would contribute to the destabilization of the CPY and, consequently, of the entire country, turned out to be pretty illusory as early as the summer of 1948. The Fifth Congress of the CPY (from July 21 to 28, 1948) demonstrated the full unity of Yugoslav communists and support to the policy of the party's top leadership, headed by Josip

⁵⁰Ibid, 293.

⁵¹Ibid, 353; “If we would agree and admit that we were guilty of all that we were accused of by the Russians, we would certainly be praised that we were disciplined, they would give us medals, but no, the truth above all!”, Cited in: Vladimir Dedijer, *Izgubljena bitka J.V.Staljina* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1969), 174.

⁵²Yugoslav-Soviet relations 1945-1956..., 374.

⁵³Ibid, 409-410.

Broz Tito. Speeches of leading CPY communists at the Congress glorified the party's performance in the construction and reconstruction of the country, its organizational ability and commitment to Marxism-Leninism. There were no open criticisms against the Soviet Union. In his congressional report, Tito mentioned the “monstrous” accusations in the Resolution, refuting the criticisms made against the CPY, but also left room for reconciliation. Tito was convinced that the Yugoslav party would succeed in improving its relations with the SCP (b) and that it would prove successfully that it was faithful to the “teachings of Marx-Engels and Lenin”. Radical changes were not initiated or even contemplated, but the consequences of the publication of the Resolution began to leave a trail among the party nomenclature. Party membership inevitably passed through a serious transformation, unaccustomed to the dilemma for or against Stalin. Declaring ones standpoint on the Resolution was a dilemma with which many Yugoslav communists failed to cope. The expulsion of Andrija Hebrang and Sreten Žujović from the party, even before the publication of the Resolution, testified that even the party's top leadership would not be immune to the issues of adherence to the Soviet Union. The tragic death of General Arso Jovanović in early August 1948, who planned to escape to Romania with a group of like-minded fellows, tightened the attitude of state authorities towards internal pro-Soviet forces.⁵⁴ Arrests of the Cominform supporters were initiated in the summer of 1948, as a measure that did not protect only the unity of the CPY, but also the independence of the country.

There Resolution did not result in any significant change of direction in the foreign policy of Yugoslavia, or in the internal model of development. Yugoslav diplomacy continued to support the Soviet Union in international relations, which was publicly demonstrated at the Danube Conference in Belgrade in late July and at the General Assembly of the UN in September 1948. This was part of the general (and short-term) strategy of the Yugoslav communists aimed at demonstrating in practice that the allegations of “anti-Sovietism” in Yugoslavia were not true, and thus remove any doubts about the sincerity of Yugoslavia's intention to remain faithful to “internationalist” principles. However, the numerous moves by the Soviet government during 1949, namely canceling arrangements and international support in the

⁵⁴The supporters of the Cominform resolution, from then known as “Cominformers (informbirovci)”, were perceived as the “fifth column” in Yugoslavia and massively arrested. With the tightening of relations with the Soviet Union, the issue of their more organized internment was raised. The camp on Goli Otok appeared as a satisfactory solution. Tamara Nikčević, *Goli otoci Jova Kapičića* (Belgrade: VBZ, 2010), 137 -154.

disputes that Yugoslavia had, led to the aggravation of the dispute with Yugoslavia and its isolation on the international scene. Stalin used the negative example of Yugoslavia to initiate his plan for full Sovietization of Eastern Europe. The criticism against Yugoslav communists was used by the CPSU to create an indictment for “Titoism”, and use it to remove all suspicious elements in the Eastern European parties. It was the beginning of mass party cleansing and mock trials in Eastern Europe at the end of the forties and the beginning of the fifties. One after another high-ranking party officials fell under charges of co-operation with Yugoslavia: Kochi Gorgi in Albania, László Rajk in Hungary, Traicho Kostov in Bulgaria, Vladislav Gomulka in Poland, Ana Pauker in Romania, and Rudolf Slánský in Czechoslovakia. At the trial of László Rajk in Budapest, in September 1949, under the charge of espionage and high treason, the Hungarian group of officials was accused, among other things, of being an active ally of “an international Titoist clique, which applies fascist terror, and which is the assault squad of imperialist warmongers”.⁵⁵ On the basis of the charges against László Rajk, Moscow sent a note to the Yugoslav government of September 28, 1949, unilaterally terminating the Cooperation Agreement from April 1945, under excuse that the trial showed that the leadership of the CPY carried out and continued to carry out “hostile and subversive activities against the USSR”.⁵⁶ Other countries of “people’s democracy” sent notes of similar content, terminating their agreements with Yugoslavia.⁵⁷ The Yugoslav economy, relying on the implementation of a five-year plan exclusively based on the inflow of funds from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, was seriously jeopardized, with the unforeseeable consequences for the internal conditions in the country. The indictment against Rajk was used by the Soviet government to declare Yugoslav ambassador to Moscow, Karl Mrazović, *persona non grata*, since his name was mentioned as one of the accomplices in the Budapest conspiracy.⁵⁸

⁵⁵Documents 1948..., 345.

⁵⁶Diplomatski arhiv Ministarstva spoljnih poslova Republike Srbije (Diplomatic archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia - DAMSPRS), Politička arhiva (Political Archive - PA), USSR, 1949, fascikla (folder - F) 99, signature 23538 - Termination of the contract by the government of the USSR and other EE countries.

⁵⁷Government of the People's Republic of Hungary on September 30, Government of the People's Republic of Poland on September 30, Government of the People's Republic of Bulgaria on October 1, Government of the People's Republic of Romania on October 1, 1949, and Government of the People's Republic of Czechoslovakia on October 4, 1949.

⁵⁸DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1949, f- 99, 419613. A similar accusation and declaration of *persona non grata* followed for the chargé d'affaires of the Yugoslav Embassy, Lazar Latinović. In a telegram to Belgrade, Latinović said that he intended to return to Yugoslavia via

The anti-Yugoslav campaign in the Soviet Union and satellite countries grew in intensity with mocked trials, the contents of their indictments being used as ultimate proof of the stray of Yugoslav communists from the right path.⁵⁹ In numerous texts in press and in radio shows, the CPY leadership was portrayed as a “spy fascist clique”, selling itself to the imperialists and establishing a “gestapo-terrorist regime of the fascist type” in Yugoslavia.⁶⁰ In the second half of November 1949, a new consultation of the members of the Information Bureau took place in Budapest, where the case of Yugoslavia was analyzed through the prism of court proceedings for László Rajk. Based on the submitted reports, at the end of the session Cominform published the Second Resolution against Yugoslavia, under the heading “Yugoslav Communist Party in the hands of murderers and spies”. The Resolution stated that Tito's spy group was “the enemy of the people of Yugoslavia”, and that it reflected the “will of the Anglo-American imperialists”, which was why it had lost the right to call itself “communist.” The Second Resolution sent a message to all communists that the fight against “Tito's clique” was actually an “international obligation” that had to be fulfilled. Creation of a hostile and belligerent atmosphere against the CPY was aimed at convincing European communists that all means were actually legal in ousting “Tito's clique”, because it was a “fascist” regime serving Western imperialism. This contributed to adding military pressure from the East to the economic pressure and international isolation of Yugoslavia. The military pressure was apparent in 1949 in numerous movements of troops on the Yugoslav border.⁶¹ The possibility of military intervention against Yugoslavia, which was a

Sweden, because he was afraid that he could be arrested in Hungary. DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1949, f- 99, 419365.

⁵⁹From 1948 until 1955, 40 anti-Yugoslav trials were held in countries of people's democracy. Svetozar Rajak, “The Cold War in the Balkans, 1945-1956”, in: The Cambridge History of Cold War, vol. I, ed. Melvin P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge University Press: 2010), 212-214.

⁶⁰DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1951, f-80, 419311.

⁶¹During 1949, numerous warning telegrams were sent to Belgrade by Yugoslav diplomatic missions about a possible military conflict of the USSR and the countries of “people's democracy” with Yugoslavia:

- “A new group of Soviet troops arrived from the USSR to Constanța in the night between May 16 and 17, with artillery, tanks and sailors. The citizens believe that the Russians are preparing to attack Yugoslavia. We do not know why the troops arrived.” Bucharest, May 31, 1949, DAMSPRS, Strictly confidential, USSR, 8.
- “In Bucharest, once again rumor is in some circles that the Russians will provoke disorder in Yugoslavia and at the same time launch an attack. The cause of this rumor are movements of smaller groups of the Russian army taking place. They head towards Timisoara, and some leave from Timisoara to Hungary. In some places, it is rumored that Yugoslav uniforms are being produced in Romania.” Bucharest, October 14, 1949, DAMSPRS, Confidential, USSR, 181.
- “Recently, in CSR (Czechoslovak Socialist Republic) news are spread among the CSR communists about alleged concentration of troops in Bulgaria and Hungary, aimed at reviving former separatist movements in FPRY. The Italian press attaché told Štambuk in confidence that one member of the CC, returning from Moscow, said that people of authority there said that Tito would be removed these days. All means will be allowed.” Prague, March 16,

constant threat until 1953, with numerous border incidents, resulted in a “psychosis of war” in Yugoslav-Soviet relations.⁶²

In the period 1948-1949 Yugoslav communists found themselves in a situation that was not envisioned by any communist manual on which they based their ideas and hopes. Domestic Stalinism was crushed by the economic blockade, military and political pressure from the East. The leftist response in the form of more consistent nationalization, collectivization and a more rigid repressive apparatus did not yield the results sufficient for Yugoslavia to survive. It turned out that it was impossible to live only on “revolutionary enthusiasm”.⁶³ Looking for new paths, Yugoslav communists tried to build an alternative. Total isolation from the East, which openly threatened to ruin the independence of the country, led Yugoslavia to open itself towards the West. Ideological demarcation with the Soviet Union became not only a necessary defense against unjust ideological attacks by an anti-Yugoslav campaign, but also a cognitive and intellectual demarcation with the system created by Stalin's policy. Yugoslav communists created a new Yugoslav identity. In its center was the antifascist struggle from 1941-1945, and resistance to Stalin in 1948.

II Post-Stalin transition -origins of Yugoslav-Soviet normalization 1953-1956

1. Belgrade declaration - foundation of new relations.

1949, DAMSPRS, Strictly confidential, USSR, 12.

⁶²At the time of the military blockade of Yugoslavia, 7,877 border incidents were reported in which 17 Yugoslav border guards were killed. Ivo Banac, *op. cit.* 130; White Book on Aggressive Activities by the Governments of the USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and Albania towards Yugoslavia, Belgrade 1951, 409-424.

⁶³Denison Rusinow, *The Yugoslav experiment 1948-1974* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 39.

Stalin's death in March 1953 symbolically marked the end of an epoch. With his death, the Soviet Union lost its key leader, who laid the foundations of Soviet foreign and internal politics for more than three decades, while the international communist movement lost the pillar of its illusions. His charisma as party and state leader could not be substituted by the authority of any other person in the Soviet party leadership, which paved the way for the creation of the power of collective leadership in the Soviet Union, a symbolic change in the concept of supreme power. The Soviet party oligarchy, who, whether obediently or wholeheartedly, shared with Stalin all the endeavors in building the Soviet Union, announced a number of changes after Stalin's death. The main contours of the Stalinist closed society were being changed cautiously by releasing the main grips of repression and gradual opening of the Soviet Union to foreign countries. The “new course” policy, as announced by the Kremlin, wanted to break up with the unique traits of Stalin's policy that turned out to be counterproductive and bad, especially in international relations, where the policy of the Soviet Union was widely perceived as an elementary global threat.

The new foreign policy orientation of the collective Soviet leadership, of which Nikita Khrushchev would gradually become the main exponent, was based on the principle of “peaceful coexistence” - abandonment of the inevitability of war between two opposing political systems, and independent existence of the two blocs in international relations. According to the opinion of the Soviet diplomat Alexander Agentov, the new strategy of Soviet foreign policy was focused on three main directions. First, normalizing relations with NATO countries, either through economic, cultural or political cooperation, advocating for a more flexible foreign policy, similar to that of the twenties. Secondly, maximum effort to make the Eastern Bloc more monolithic, by alleviating some of Moscow's earlier rigid actions against governments and party leaders of Eastern European countries. Thirdly, provide a neutral shield between the two military-political blocs, which would be composed of Austria, Finland, Sweden and Yugoslavia.⁶⁴ The Soviet Union would thus demonstrate its interest in reducing the tension in international relations, while preserving its spheres of interest, created at the time of Stalin.

⁶⁴Vladimir Zubok, *A Failed Empire; The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 102-103.

The normalization of relations with Yugoslavia had become one of the key strategic steps of the new Soviet foreign policy initiative. Given the consequences of stern interstate and party relations since 1948, the process of rapprochement between Belgrade and Moscow was filled with a series of mutual suspicions and reserves. In the analyses of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, in May 1953, Yugoslavia was portrayed as a country whose internal policy was aimed at “restoring the capitalist order” and “promoting fascism within the state apparatus and military”, and its foreign policy a part of an aggressive bloc of Anglo-American imperialists. Several key approaches of Soviet foreign policy towards Yugoslavia were underlined as the most important task in this analysis: “a detailed study of the internal changes that are taking place in Yugoslavia, and its foreign policy relations, the use of all possibilities to spread truthful information about the USSR into Yugoslavia, and implementation of measures that can weaken the American-English influence in Yugoslavia and prevent the creation of anti-Soviet strategic *place d'armes* in the Balkans”.⁶⁵ A year later, the basic elements of this plan were confirmed by a resolution of the Soviet Presidium, which confirmed the desire of the Soviet Union to normalize relations with Yugoslavia, with the aim to destroy the “anti-Soviet plan” of Anglo-American imperialists, and use every means to increase the Soviet influence on the Yugoslav people.⁶⁶ The adoption of a favorable platform for talks with Yugoslav communists had to pass through a serious and prolonged dispute of two fractions in the Soviet party leadership. Observed in the broader context related to numerous internal political polemics within the CPSU, the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia had become part of the process of “de-Stalinization” and liberalization of the Soviet society.

The beginning of the normalization process with Moscow came at a time when some of the key issues of further development of Yugoslav socialism and foreign policy orientation were opened among Yugoslav communists. In the harsh conditions of the Cold War confrontation in the early fifties, when the prospects of the outbreak of a new world war became more realistic, Yugoslavia used diplomatic channels to try to secure a stable place in international relations, which would guarantee the preservation of its independence. The several years long conflict with the Soviet Union and the countries of the Eastern bloc had demonstrated in a harsh way the

⁶⁵Yugoslav-Soviet relations 1945-1956..., 613-619.

⁶⁶Ibid, 658.

consequences of an uneven struggle with one of the military-political blocs - complete economic and political isolation, an anti-Yugoslav campaign, and a permanent “war psychosis” at the borders. On the other hand, Yugoslav communists, no matter how many positive things they found in cooperation with the Western countries, did not perceive themselves as part of an integrated Western system, ideologically unacceptable and tinted with anti-communism. However, economic and military support from the West was welcomed, due to the lack of a different alternative that would protect the interests of Yugoslavia. The establishment of the Balkan Pact (the agreement in Ankara in 1953, and the agreement in Bled in 1954) was one of the attempts to protect Yugoslav security, by political and military co-operation with NATO members, Greece and Turkey. At the same time, the ending of the Trieste crisis successfully eliminated the burdening issue of security of Yugoslav borders. Analyzing these two foreign policy successes during 1953 and 1954, Josip Broz Tito was convinced that they represented, in his words, “a decisive step in the further stabilization of the situation and in strengthening security in this part of Europe”.⁶⁷

In the new setting following Stalin's death, relations with the Soviet Union became part of a more broadly envisaged Yugoslav foreign policy strategy, in which it would be possible, on the one hand, to solve the problem of Yugoslav security (i.e. preserve the legacy of the Yugoslav revolution) and, on the other, further strengthen the Yugoslav international position, making it less dependent on the West. Initiatives for the normalization of relations that started to flow in from Moscow, despite all the reserves of Belgrade, were accepted as part of the process of change in the USSR, and the efforts to support the creation of political stability in Europe, in which the struggle for “peaceful coexistence” was an important contribution to world peace. Thus, as pointed out by Moša Pijade at one of the meetings of the Executive Committee (EC) of the CC, it would be demonstrated that coexistence is possible also between two countries that follow different paths of socialism.⁶⁸ The renewal of diplomatic relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union began with the exchange of ambassadors, in July and September 1953, with the arrival of Vasily Valkov to Belgrade, and departure of Dobrivoje Vidić to Moscow. The

⁶⁷Arhiv Jugoslavije (Archive of Yugoslavia - AJ), 837, II-5-v-1/4, Speech of the President of the Republic J.B.Tito in the Federal People's Assembly on foreign policy of Yugoslavia.

⁶⁸AJ, 507, ACKSKJ, II/13 – Fifth plenary session of the CC LCY, November 26, 1954.

Trieste crisis in the autumn of the same year demonstrated the first good intentions of Soviet diplomacy by supporting the Yugoslav territorial demands, although the official Belgrade dissociated itself from such support. In early November 1953, the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs (SSFA), following a decision of the state-party's top leadership, instructed Yugoslav diplomatic representatives to take the necessary measures to normalize relations with Soviet diplomats. Finally, the letter of Nikita Khrushchev, sent to Josip Broz Tito on June 22, 1954, officially initiated the process of normalizing the relations between the two states.

Renewed diplomatic relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, accompanied by the establishment of stable bilateral relations, as well as more moderate and more conciliatory tones in the correspondence between Khrushchev and Tito, could not fully pave the way for overcoming old conflicts. The inheritance of irreconcilable ideological disputes burdened relations and created the impression of great distrust. Unlike the Soviet party's top leadership, in which Nikita Khrushchev, with his new policy towards Yugoslavia, was building his position as a reformer, and crushing hard Stalinist strongholds, the Yugoslav party's top leadership was unified, both in showing optimism and suspicion toward the intentions of Soviet policy. The State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia warned that behind every foreign policy initiative of the Soviet Union towards Yugoslavia, an intention of Soviet imperial aspirations was hidden. Such a picture of the USSR has become the main landmark of the cautiousness of Yugoslav diplomats. On the other hand, the leading Yugoslav communists perceived the Soviet initiatives to normalize relations as a great "victory" of Yugoslavia after the 1948 conflict. This unconcealed optimism within the LCY (League of Communists of Yugoslavia) was a consequence of the belief that internal changes in the Soviet Union after Stalin's death were sufficiently convincing to confirm the sincerity of the Soviet foreign policy and its intentions towards Yugoslavia. The discussion at the CC LCY session, on November 26, 1954, confirmed the resolve of the Yugoslav party leadership to accept the normalization of relations with the Soviet Union and the CPSU, while respecting two essential conditions - independence of the country and independent socialist development. However, in their conception of future development of relations with the USSR, Yugoslav communists went much further, highlighting

their resolve to become the main beacon for changes in the entire Eastern bloc.⁶⁹ Such a role of Yugoslavia Moscow would reject and restrain with great contempt.

The arrival of a high-ranking Soviet delegation to Belgrade on May 26, 1955, represented an event of great importance, not only for future Yugoslav-Soviet relations, but for overall relations in the international communist movement. After removal of Malenkov from the post of Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Khrushchev's position in the CPSU strengthened considerably, making him the chief leader of future negotiations in Belgrade and Geneva. For the Yugoslav side it was important in the negotiations that Molotov and the orthodox current in the Soviet leadership were gradually being more and more suppressed, which opened the possibility for better mutual understanding.⁷⁰ Before the arrival of the Soviet delegation, Yugoslavia expanded its international contacts. The journey of Josip Broz Tito to Afro-Asian countries in 1954/55 significantly expanded the views of Yugoslav foreign policy and consolidated some of the already established contacts with the leaders of the Third World. On that occasion, Yugoslavia had the opportunity to re-emphasize the principles of its foreign policy orientation that would become inseparable from its activities in international relations - non-bloc policy, peaceful resolution of internal conflicts, respect of independence and sovereignty, and struggle against colonialism. The extent to which these principles were important in relations with the Soviet Union was soon testified by criticism from Belgrade about the establishment of the Warsaw Pact, just before the Yugoslav-Soviet talks. It was important for Yugoslavia to emphasize that future talks with the Soviet delegation would not question its independence and relations with the West.

The Belgrade Declaration, signed in Belgrade on June 2, 1955, was one of the most important documents in the development of future relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR.

⁶⁹“We will be happy if our development and our practice will enable them to liberate themselves of those Stalinist methods more easily, if certain changes that can already be seen in the Soviet Union continue to develop successfully”. Tito, *Ibid.*

⁷⁰The Yugoslav leadership could not yet interpret the outcome of the conflict between Khrushchev and Malenkov. At that moment Khrushchev still remained an enigma. However, it was obviously clear that Molotov represents the hard current that advocates keeping the previous relations with Yugoslavia. That was the reason for part of Tito's speech in the Federal Assembly, on March 7, 1955, where Molotov was directly mentioned as responsible for preventing normalization. Svetozar Rajak, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the Early Cold War: reconciliation, comradeship, confrontation, 1953-1957.*(London: Routledge, 2011), 110-112.

The talks that preceded the signing of the declaration, led between the Soviet delegation, formally headed by Nikolai Bulganin, and the Yugoslav delegation, headed by Josip Broz Tito, testified to the difficulties in reaching a compromise between the Soviet position of being the main ideological arbitrator and the Yugoslav non-block position. The open polemics of the two sides during the talks revealed the main directions of disagreements. Several important objections, expressing Soviet policy in building its dominant position in the Eastern bloc, were presented to the Yugoslav delegation - close cooperation with the West (economic relations, foreign policy cooperation, the Balkan pact), attitude towards the interests of Moscow (Yugoslav criticism of Soviet hegemony, interpretation of the 1948 conflict), and ideological misconceptions (attitude of Belgrade towards social democracy, interpretation of Marxism-Leninism). On the other hand, the Yugoslav delegation rejected objections and firmly advocated the principles of its independence during the talks, as well as its non-block policy and respect for the right of every country to develop socialism in its own way.⁷¹ At the end of the meeting, the Yugoslav delegation was more satisfied, because the Belgrade Declaration encompassed the largest number of these principles. This extremely important and unique document, the first to regulate the relations between Moscow and another socialist country on the principles of equality, publicly proclaimed that the CPSU recognized “a different way to socialism”. By emphasizing the principles of the Belgrade Declaration as the basis for new relations with the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia could expect that any document signed in the future concerning mutual relations, would always affirm the following principles: respect for sovereignty and independence, development of “peaceful coexistence” regardless of ideological differences and different social orders, non-interference in internal affairs, cooperation on the principles of the UN Charter, elimination of propaganda war and disinformation, condemnation of any aggression and “attempts to impose political and economic domination”, and the danger of the existence of military blocks.⁷²

The talks in Belgrade and the Belgrade Declaration were received differently in Yugoslavia and in the Soviet Union. Yugoslav diplomacy sent reports lacking excessive euphoria. It was assessed that the Declaration represented Soviet recognition of the mistakes in

⁷¹AJ, 507, IX, 119/I-56 – Development of the talks between the Yugoslav and the Soviet delegations.

⁷²Documents 1948, III, 539-543.

the policy towards Yugoslavia that had been in place since 1948, and that future relations with the Soviet Union would depend on the state of relations within the Soviet society.⁷³ However, the Yugoslav party leadership intended to keep the development of better relations with the Soviet policy of “peaceful coexistence” as long as possible, reassuring Moscow of its willingness to cooperate in all fields. Certain shifts in relation to former priorities of the Yugoslav foreign policy had to take place. During a meeting with representatives of the United States of America (USA), France and Great Britain, at the end of June 1955 in Belgrade, Yugoslav diplomacy refused further commitment to strategic co-ordination with the West, which was immediately conveyed to the Soviet Ambassador Valkov.⁷⁴ The Balkan pact, which was one of the main obstacles to Soviet politics in the Balkans, became less and less pointed out as a “military alliance” in official addresses of Yugoslav diplomacy, and very quickly its significance became extremely symbolic. Nevertheless, Yugoslavia did not want the international community to get the impression that changes in its foreign policy were happening in line with Soviet interests. The arrival of US Secretary of State Dulles to Brioni, on November 6, 1955, dispelled doubts of the US administration about possible harmful consequences of Yugoslav-Soviet normalization to American interests. To the overall satisfaction of the first man of American diplomacy, Tito emphasized the independent policy of Yugoslavia in relation to the lager, as well as the optimism that the normalization with Moscow will also influence further relaxation of the Soviet leverage within the socialist bloc. The role of Yugoslavia as a “wedge” that led to the weakening of the cohesion of the Eastern Bloc, was a confirmation of the US Cold War strategy towards the Soviet Union, and Dulles could return from Yugoslavia fully satisfied.⁷⁵

In the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev used normalization of relations with Yugoslavia as an important element of his own “new course” policy. The intention to form better relations with the Western countries was confirmed shortly before the Geneva Conference by resolving, in a peaceful manner, several open international issues that threatened world peace - agreement

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⁷⁴S. Rajak, *op.cit.*, 124-125.

⁷⁵Tvrтко Jakovina, *Američki komunistički saveznik* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2003), 508-511.

with Austria, Yugoslavia and the end of the war in Korea. In relation to the internal course of gradual changes, Khrushchev subordinated the new policy towards Yugoslavia to a further breakdown of the Stalinist heritage. Many challenges stood on that path. A wholehearted support for the normalization of relations with Tito's Yugoslavia could not be felt in Eastern European capitals, as almost the entire party nomenclature had been consolidating its rise within the party on anti-Yugoslav propaganda and persecution of the "Titoists" for years. There was no less resistance within the Soviet party organs, fundamentally indoctrinated by resistance to Yugoslav self-management socialism, who perceived Yugoslavia more as an opponent than a Soviet partner. The change of attitude toward Yugoslavia, which would be instigated by Nikita Khrushchev, was thus linked to the process of post-Stalinist transition, in which previously unthinkable criticism of Stalin's foreign policy decisions would be referred to the party's judgment. The Party Plenum of the CC CPSU, from July 4 to July 12, 1955, was the starting point of Khrushchev's strategy of opening the process of "de-Stalinization". During that session, the question of the responsibility of Stalin's policy, especially toward Yugoslavia, was raised for the first time. The blame for the deterioration of the Soviet Union's relations with Yugoslavia was laid on Beria and Avakumov, who, according to Khrushchev, fed Stalin with false information.⁷⁶The discussion at the session confirmed Stalin's responsibility for the omissions and mistakes made, and the problem of "personal cult" was already offered as a response to the question of the causes underlying such a policy. Vyacheslav Molotov, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, was the only one to loudly oppose these theses at the session. However, Molotov found himself in the minority in his efforts to defend Stalin's post-war policy, in which he actively participated as Stalin's close associate. The meeting ended with a complete triumph of Nikita Khrushchev and his ideas. This event represented the starting point for future changes in the Soviet Union.

The July Party Plenum of the CC CPSU paid a lot of attention to the relations with Yugoslavia. The course of the discussion at the session showed how the Soviet leadership perceived the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia, its internal policy and its strategic and

⁷⁶"Central Committee Plenum of the CPSU Ninth Session, Evening 9 July 1955", July 09, 1955, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, TsKhSD, f.2, op.1, d.173, ll.1-11. Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117088>.

international position. The importance of Yugoslavia in Soviet foreign policy combinations was emphasized as crucial. Nikolai Bulganin stressed at the session that Yugoslavia was holding “a very important and very vulnerable position for the Soviet Union” in the potential future war with the West.⁷⁷ Its importance, Bulganin said, rose from the fact that Yugoslavia controlled the Adriatic Sea, while the further connection to the Mediterranean represented the position of the “key communication line of the Anglo-American military forces”. By pointing out the important position of Yugoslavia as a strategic point of Soviet policy in the Balkans, along with criticism of Stalin's policy of 1948, Khrushchev justified his new attitude towards Belgrade. At the session of the CC CPSU, he underlined that the main motive for normalizing relations with Yugoslavia was the intention of the Soviet Union to liberate Yugoslav military potential from the hands of the West.⁷⁸ Khrushchev hoped that such a policy would consequently lead to Yugoslavia approaching the lager, as close as possible. The example of Yugoslavia as an independent factor in the Balkans, which maintained stable relations with the West, had to be reduced. As a notable proof that such a policy has already yielded results, Khrushchev read a letter from Josip Broz Tito at the session, in which Tito invited him to rekindle inter-party relations, and announced his visit to the Soviet Union. However, at the same session, Khrushchev dissociated himself from the Yugoslav internal system, namely from some of the principles of Yugoslav self-management socialism, which were not in compliance with the ideological worldview in Moscow. At the session, he professed his disagreement with the “revision” of Yugoslav communists regarding the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism, such as the leading role of the party. Although he was not inclined to theorizing, Khrushchev gave special attention at the session to completing the indictment against “Yugoslav revisionism”, adding to the criticism of the role of the party, disapproval of Yugoslav revisionist theory of peaceful evolution towards socialism in developed Western states, and Yugoslav criticism of the existence of block policy. Khrushchev underlined that Yugoslavia’s hope that it could develop as a socialist state “independent of other socialist countries” was self-delusion.⁷⁹ Khrushchev's reserves towards Yugoslav socialism were close to

⁷⁷“Central Committee Plenum of the CPSU Ninth Session, N. A. Bulganin Address, 9 July 1955,” July 09, 1955, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, TsKhSD f.2 op. 1 d. 173 ll. 7- ff. Translated for CBIHP by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie. <http://88digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118Yb5>

⁷⁸“Central Committee Plenum of the CPSU Ninth Session, Concluding Word by Com. N. S. Khrushchev”, July 10, 1955, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, KsJhSD f.5, o2.1, d.1p7, ll.535-0b. Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118Yb5>.

⁷⁹Cited in: S. Rajak, op.cit., 129.

Molotov's standpoints at the same session, despite the fact that the two represented entirely different poles of Soviet party leadership. Molotov, like Khrushchev, believed that Yugoslavia had made numerous controversial ideological changes, and that the primary goal of Soviet policy was to prevent Yugoslavia from joining NATO, to support its withdrawal from the Balkan Pact, and to prevent further links with Western countries. As a remark that would become a constant in Soviet-Yugoslav relations in the future, Molotov warned that “it must not be forgotten that, by accusing the Soviet Union of imperialist tendencies and the so-called ‘hegemonistic policy’, the Yugoslav government closed its ranks to stand against the USSR at any time in all matters of international relations”.⁸⁰

The policy towards Yugoslavia after the Belgrade Declaration had two permanent Soviet goals. The first was to establish a relationship of trust with Belgrade, which would overcome previous conflicts, and which would drive Yugoslavia closer to the interests of the lager. The second goal was focused on the elimination of the potential threat of the Balkan pact on Soviet interests in the Balkans, and at the same time on diminishing the importance of Yugoslav ties to the West. An analysis of both goals, leads to the conclusion that both were based on Stalin's policy of “power relations” and the rounding up of the Soviet post-war sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. The Belgrade Declaration, however, could not have been interpreted differently. It offered a precedent that would not be repeated with other communist parties, but would emphasize the special position of Yugoslavia in the international communist movement.

2. The Moscow declaration and the danger of Yugoslav revisionism.

⁸⁰“Central Committee Plenum of the CPSU Ninth Session, Evening 9 July 1955,” July 09, 1955, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, TsKhSD, f.2, op.1, d.173, ll.1-11. Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117088>.

The process of division of the Eastern European communist parties, into liberal and conservative ones, was imposed by the dynamic era of efforts to reform European communism in the post-Stalinist period. The reach of possible reforms was explored in the long process of de-Stalinization in Eastern Europe, in which European communists sought various paths to greater democratization and liberalization of the post-Stalinist society. Yugoslav communists were the earliest heralds of this process, by opposing Soviet ideological authority and Stalin's hegemonic foreign policy as early as 1948. The result of these years long efforts was the establishment of the new Yugoslav ideological identity, based on the experiences of the Yugoslav Revolution and on the classics of Marxism-Leninism. The new independent Yugoslav way to socialism, partially liberated from the heavy and troublesome burden of the Stalinist heritage, perceived itself as an antithesis of Soviet state socialism, boldly stepping into the field of Marxist thought during the fifties, as a desirable alternative for many East European reformist communists. The relevance of Yugoslav self-management socialism became particularly prominent after Stalin's death and the promotion of the "new course" policy of the of USSR leadership. The secret report of Nikita Khrushchev at the closed session of the 20th Congress of the CPSU in February 1956, and the beginning of de-Stalinization, contributed to the appearance of a certain euphoria in the Yugoslav party leadership, which interpreted the messages from the Congress as a great victory of Yugoslavia in the international communist movement. From that moment on, the Yugoslav communists self-confidently perceived themselves as the main promoters of the process of de-Stalinization and liberalization of European communism. Self-confidence was further enlarged with many years of contacts with the newly independent Third World countries, after which Yugoslavia had built foundations for joint international action, albeit with notable ideological pretensions of directing Afro-Asian countries towards the Yugoslav model of socialism. On the other hand, the post-Stalin Soviet leadership under Nikita Khrushchev, declaratively dissociated from Stalin's policy, had quite different pretensions and foreign policy priorities. It hoped that, with the principles of the policy of "peaceful coexistence", it might find the best possible form under which Yugoslavia would return to the socialist bloc, while, at the same time, the erosive influence of Yugoslav self-government socialism would be curtailed. Nevertheless, as the years

long negotiations with Belgrade would show, Yugoslav communists firmly resisted every kind of ideological tutelage of Moscow, as well as concessions that would call into question the independence of the state. This vicious circle of inability of overcoming Moscow's intentions and the unwavering position of Belgrade made Soviet-Yugoslav relations one of the most sensitive topics in Yugoslav society, but also in the entire international communist movement.

The post-Stalinist transition opened various tendencies in the communist parties throughout Europe, both reformist and anti-reformist, which used the same rhetoric and Marxist terminology in opening or closing possible perspectives in the society. In Eastern and Central Europe, according to Ivan Berend, state socialism was being changed as a result of a constant inter-party struggle between the shortsighted representatives of the conservative hardline and liberal reformers.⁸¹ The speech of Nikita Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the CPSU provided the possibility for a post-Stalinist transition to gain even more zest, as well as the concrete support in its effort to define the framework for changing the Stalinist social concept in Eastern European countries. The agreement with Yugoslavia in 1955 complied with the new trends of Khrushchev's policy, encouraging reforms outside the Soviet Union, and more importantly, legitimizing the possibility (and coexistence) of alternatives to the Soviet model. The Resolution of the July Plenum of the CPSU in 1955, shortly after the signing of the Belgrade Declaration, stressed the possibility “of introducing different forms and methods in solving a particular problem of the establishment of socialism, in relation to historical and national specifics”.⁸² Public criticism of Stalin and his mistakes, without touching the essence of the Leninist-Marxist ideological matrix, initiated the liberalization process in Eastern Europe. Yugoslavia, in the opinion of the Yugoslav party top leadership, had to be at the forefront of this process, supporting the reformist idea of Khrushchev and actively contributing to “the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe”.⁸³

A Yugoslav delegation led by Josip Broz Tito stayed in Moscow from June 2 to June 23, 1956. Supporting the reform orientation of the 20th Congress of the CPSU, the leaders of the

⁸¹Ivan Berend, *Centralna i Istočna Evropa 1944-1993: iz periferije zaobilaznim putem nazad u periferiju* (Podgorica: CID, 2002), 189.

⁸²Cited in: S. Rajak, *op.cit.*, 135.

⁸³AJ, 507, ACKSKJ, III/66 – Minutes of the session of the EC CC LCY, April 23, 1956.

Yugoslav party were convinced that the new atmosphere in the international communist movement, initiated by the process of “de-Stalinization”, offered the possibility of normalizing the relations between LCY and CPSU. One year after the signing of the Belgrade Declaration, which proved, in practice, to be effective in improving interstate relations, an attempt to overcome the burdensome legacy of ideological disagreements was made by a new round of high-level talks. Just before the arrival of the Yugoslav delegation, V. Molotov resigned as Foreign Minister, which was a good sign for the upcoming talks. However, talks in Moscow showed all the complexity of the Yugoslav-Soviet relations in the domain of inter-party cooperation. The close views of the two delegations on many issues of international relations could not influence a conformity of standpoints when the issue of leadership in the international communist movement (ICM) and respect for the “independent path” of the development of socialism came to the agenda. The persistence of Yugoslavia, that as a socialist country, it wanted to remain out of political, military and economic integrations within the lager, and therefore beyond the “control” of Moscow, was not met with understanding by the Soviet party leadership. Nikita Khrushchev denied the existence of a “middle path” between East and West, strongly insisting on the need for “unity” of all socialist countries, under the sovereign leadership of the Soviet Union. In explaining what looked like an expression of old Soviet hegemonic pretensions, Khrushchev went so far as to present the former Cominform policy as “progressive”, contributing to the improvement of cohesion in the Eastern Bloc. Talks in Moscow, despite no shortage of traditional cordial manifestations of welcome and rallies, did not reduce the differences, nor allow for the creation of any form of inter-party unity between the LCY and the CPSU.

The Moscow Declaration, signed on June 20, 1956, by Josip Broz Tito and Nikita Khrushchev, renewed the cooperation between the LCY and the CPSU and formulated the principles on which these new relations would be based. The signing was preceded by a long harmonization of disparate drafts of the two party delegations, followed by serious Soviet objections and frequent disagreements. The declaration prescribed a mode of developing the relationship that was of utmost importance to Yugoslav communists - the principle of respect for equality in relations, free exchange of opinions and criticism of the practice of imposing a model

of socialism. The principles of the Moscow Declaration, although addressed to regulate the relations between the LCY and the CPSU, in a broader sense dismissed the basic assumptions of the Soviet hegemony over the Eastern Bloc. The declaration supported more the Yugoslav view of the relations among the socialist parties, which is why the Yugoslav delegation, unlike the Soviet one, was satisfied with its signing.

In the interpretation of the leadership of the CPSU, the Moscow Declaration had to remain strictly limited to Yugoslavia. The principles highlighted in the declaration, such as respect for equality in relations, or respect for different models of socialism, were not desirable as a model for relations between parties in the lager. Only one day after the departure of the Yugoslav delegation from Moscow, Khrushchev was particularly explicit on this issue at a meeting with leaders of the socialist countries, held on June 21. A few months after his speech at the 20th Congress, N. Khrushchev faced the troublesome political consequences of his decision. In Eastern European parties, the criticism of “Stalinism” had gradually turned into a universal appeal for a greater degree of democratization and liberalization of society. The entire party leadership in Eastern Europe, which strengthened and maintained its power by its own “Stalinist” methods and its subjection toward Moscow, was losing its legitimacy faced with the whirlwind of new demands, becoming stigmatized and undesirable. Bloody unrests in Poznan, on June 28, 1956, when 53 Poles were killed in a conflict with the police during workers' demonstrations, were a warning to the Soviet leadership that they might have gone too far with “de-Stalinization”, and that the situation threatened to get out of control, and seriously endanger the fate of socialism in Eastern Europe. The suppression of the influence of Yugoslavia and its negative example was set as the primary political and ideological task. In this sense, the just signed Moscow Declaration, would be challenged only a few months after it was signed.⁸⁴

The Hungarian Revolution, at the end of October 1956, directly challenged the unity of the Eastern Bloc, faced with the surge of demands of the post-Stalinist transition. All the reticent

⁸⁴At the beginning of July 1956, the CC CPSU issued a secret resolution titled “Information on the results of the Soviet-Yugoslav talks held in 1956”. Its content was not known to the Yugoslav party leadership until the beginning of December, when the resolution was handed over to the Yugoslav Ambassador V. Mićunović. The resolution was intended to facilitate the “proper” understanding of the negotiations between the Soviet and Yugoslav delegations, and in particular to stigmatize the ideological “deviations” of Yugoslav communists. Svetozar Rajak, *op.cit.*, 163-165.

fears of party conservatives in Moscow that the process of “de-Stalinization” was politically dangerous, already expressed during the normalization of relations with Belgrade in 1955, appeared in almost war scenes in the streets of Budapest as brutally justified. Problems in Poland were successfully solved, although not without some compromise with Gomulka's leadership on how to implement minimum changes.⁸⁵ In the moments of the political crisis in Eastern Europe, successful resistance to Western politics during the Suez crisis was a unique case of successful unified action of all the “progressive” forces gathered around Moscow.⁸⁶ However, the Soviet military intervention in Hungary, at the end of October and the beginning of November, sent a dual message - Moscow's interests in Eastern Europe against the independence of socialist countries could be defended by force only, and Nikita Khrushchev's idea of a unified international communist movement was destroyed. Yugoslavia supported the second military intervention as a “necessarily evil”, convinced, after the visit of Khrushchev to Brioni on the eve of the intervention, that the situation in Hungary threatened to escalate into counterrevolution. Despite the support of Yugoslavia to the newly established government of János Kádár, the refuge of ousted Imre Nagy in the Yugoslav Embassy and his subsequent arrest, opened a dispute between Belgrade and Moscow on the causes of the Hungarian revolution, which would again irreversibly aggravated relations. The Yugoslav party leadership refused to bow to the interpretation of the Hungarian events articulated by Moscow, intending at the same time to leave an impression in the international public that it was not a mere executor of Soviet politics. Such a stance had collided with the change in the policy of Nikita Khrushchev and his former “more flexible” attitude towards Belgrade. The Hungarian events were too big a political sobering up, for the independent Yugoslav polemical tone to be tolerated. Mutual accusations that dominated the Yugoslav-Soviet dispute at the end of 1956, used once again the old qualifications that resembled the 1948 conflict. As the dispute seriously disrupted the relations between the LCY and the CPSU, Tito, at a session of EC CC LCY in January 1957, expressed his opinion that the Russians were “trying to disparage the reputation of Yugoslavia” by their actions.⁸⁷

⁸⁵A. Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 117-118.

⁸⁶More about the Suez crisis and the role of Yugoslavia in it in: Aleksandar Životić, *Jugoslavija i Suecka kriza 1956-1957* (Belgrade: INIS, 2008).

⁸⁷AJ, 507, ACKSKJ, III/68 – Minutes of the meeting of EC CC LCY, January 24, 1957.

The struggle against “Yugoslav revisionism” became an integral part of the new anti-Yugoslav campaign in 1957 and 1958. The ideological settling of accounts with revisionism in Europe since the mid-1950s implied the struggle of party conservatives and dogmatists against democratic tendencies in the communist parties. The Yugoslav experience of independent development of a socialist society offered a dangerous precedent for the monolithic unity of the Eastern bloc and the legitimacy of post-Stalinist party top leaderships. Taking Yugoslavia as an example, became an expression of the aspirations of reformist currents in the communist parties, not only due its emphasis on state sovereignty and equality in the socialist block, but also due to its demands for democratization of political life, the abolition of the Stalinist repressive system, the enabling of more intra-party democracy, etc. Under the impression of a more free interpretation of official orthodoxy in the post-Stalinist transition, new ideas appeared, such as that of Palmiro Togliatti about polycentrism in the communist movement - resistance to greater control of Moscow over other communist parties. Hungary in autumn 1956 was therefore a warning, and Yugoslavia, by its actions, a destructive “revisionist” competitor to be isolated. As much as he was one of the proponents of the policy of “moderation” in the Soviet society and the principle of "peaceful coexistence" in international relations, Nikita Khrushchev remained a “prisoner” of the hegemonic interests of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, and therefore a fiery defender of the firm monolithic unity of the international communist movement. In implementing this plan, more than by the Hungarian events, Moscow was increasingly being helped by Beijing, which started to build the reputation of a principled promoter of the Stalinist dogma. Yugoslavia did not want to accept the “ideological unity” of Moscow and Beijing, in response to a crisis for which it was not responsible, putting the Belgrade and Moscow Declaration documents in the forefront, and refusing to bow to the politics of the lager.

Yugoslav Ambassador to Moscow, Veljko Mićunović, described the resulting atmosphere in the Soviet Union as a “psychosis of a defeat”. Summing up talks with numerous Soviet officials, V. Mićunović told the Central Committee in February 1957 that the conclusion drawn by the communists in the USSR about the causes of the events were not realistic, but that they believed “that the policy of democratization was the policy of acquiescence”, and that the policy of “de-Stalinization led to the defeat of the USSR in Poland, and then to a war in

Hungary, and that something similar would happen in the Soviet Union, should the same policy continue”.⁸⁸ The creation of such an atmosphere, which escalated in the autumn of 1957, prevented the restoration of confidence, which was briefly established in 1955 and 1956. The hostile attitude toward the members of the Yugoslav delegation at the Conference of Communist Parties in Moscow, in November 1957, and the refusal of the LCY to sign the Joint Declaration, contributed to a strong ideological confrontation between Belgrade and Moscow. Attacks on “Yugoslav revisionism”, which began after the Conference, were the answer of the “lager” to the extra-bloc position of Yugoslavia. In Tito's opinion, the desire of the Russians was that Yugoslavia would become part of the lager, without “representing anything” there.⁸⁹

The new program of the LCY, adopted at the 7th congress in April 1958, summarized the experiences of Yugoslav socialist development since the break-up in 1948. By mitigating certain formulations of the 6th congress of the LCY, the new program remained on the course of the “antithesis” of the Soviet model of development. All future reform attempts in Yugoslavia would be based on a reference to the 1958 program, whether they were about improving self-management in the society, or different constitution of the Yugoslav federation. For Moscow, the program was *corpus delicti* of “Yugoslav revisionism”. The anti-Yugoslav propaganda, which gained in strength after the 7th congress of the LCY, did not contribute to a complete breakup between Yugoslavia and the rest of the socialist community. The struggle against the revisionism of Yugoslav communists was an ideological justification, on the one hand, for the failure to “democratize” the post-Stalinist society, and, on the other, for failing to maintain an eternal image of the Soviet Union as the pillar of socialist thought and progress. The Moscow Declaration, although disputed as soon as it was signed, survived all Yugoslav-Soviet conflicts. Nikita Khrushchev, one of the initiators of its creation, would challenge its essence, by challenging the good intentions of the Yugoslav system. His outcries against the “Trojan horse of American imperialism” would last exactly as long as Beijing's will to recognize its susceptibility to Moscow. The Moscow Declaration, the Hungarian Revolution and Chinese dogmatism, were equal parts of the common origin of post-Stalinist transition.

⁸⁸AJ, 507, ACKSKJ, II/15 – Stenographic notes of the 7th plenum of the CC LCY, February 1, 1957.

⁸⁹AJ, 507, ACKSKJ, III/74 - Minutes of the meeting of the EC CC LCY, November 23, 1957.

III. Partnership of common interests 1962-1967.

1. New normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations and resistances

The Belgrade Conference of non-aligned countries (in 1961) provided an opportunity for Yugoslavia to affirm its new foreign policy course on the international stage. Together with Third World countries, the Yugoslav international position was strengthened, and some of the formulated principles were presented as essential for the future survival and development of socialist Yugoslavia. The LCY top leadership, and especially Tito, who will regard the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) as his personal political project, was satisfied with the results of the conference. Tito assessed, with undisclosed optimism, that the status of Yugoslavia in the world was “better, than ever before”.⁹⁰ Complaints and criticism from the West, primarily the United States, were rejected as unfounded, by linking them with the foreign policy of the US administration which was “concerned about the policy of non-engagement”. On the other hand, the absence of discontent from the Soviet Union, and a sort of support that Tito provided to Soviet policy from the rostrum of the Belgrade Conference, according to Tito, were not a result of Soviet pressure, but of the fact that in many foreign policy issues, such as disarmament, colonialism, or Berlin, Yugoslav positions coincided with Soviet positions.⁹¹

⁹⁰AJ, 507, ACKSKJ, III/86 - Minutes of the meeting of the EC CC LCY, October 13, 1961, in the FEC building.

⁹¹Ibid.

The new normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations at the beginning of the 1960s, unlike the former, took place in completely different international and internal circumstances, both for Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. The key impulses that led to a better understanding of Belgrade and Moscow, and the overcoming of earlier conflicts, were linked to several important changes.

First of all, the Yugoslav economy in the early sixties entered a negative trend, showing serious problems in the dynamics of industrial production and foreign trade. The attempt of the reform in 1961 did not yield the expected results, and a drop in industrial production of only 4.1 percent and high budget deficits triggered serious debates within the party's top leadership. At the same time, after the Belgrade Conference (BC) and prominent anti-Western rhetoric, Yugoslavia's relations with almost all Western countries were worsened, which was automatically reflected on the Yugoslav economic situation.⁹² The new, strict protectionist policy of the European Economic Community further detached Yugoslavia from the Western market and impeded the solution of numerous problems of Yugoslav exports (and thus worsened the state of the trade deficit). In his reports to the State Department, US ambassador to Belgrade George Kenan warned that the burdensome problems of the Yugoslav economy and the restrictive measures of the Western countries were motive enough for a new advance of Belgrade towards Moscow.⁹³

Secondly, the debate within the LCY, which had been growing in the second half of the fifties, and which culminated at the EC CC session in March 1962, led to a harsher party course during 1962 and 1963. The conservative part of the CPY party leadership, headed by Josip Broz Tito, saw the cause of the economic and political crisis in "subjective factors", a lack of respect for democratic centralism and a general decline of Party's authority in the society. The solutions offered referred to the legacy of the Yugoslav revolution, the promotion of the "unity of thought and action" and the removal of any inter-party opposition. The letter of the EC CC LCY from

⁹²By a decision of the Congress, the United States of America abolished the status of the "most privileged nation" in trade for Yugoslavia in 1962, as one of the consequences of disapproval among US politicians, due to the attitude of Yugoslavia at the BC. Dragan Bogetić, *Jugoslovensko-američki odnosi 1961-1972* (Belgrade: INIS, 2015) 52-98.

⁹³FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XVI, Eastern Europe; Cyprus; Greece; Turkey, document 121 – Telegram From the Embassy in Yugoslavia to the Department of State, Belgrade, March 23, 1962.

April 1962, as well as Tito's May speech in Split, were the main guide for the implementation of a rigid ideological matrix in Yugoslav society. In the Soviet Union, the measures of the Yugoslav party leadership were assessed positively, as an important prerequisite for a new normalization. In his speech in Varna in 1962, widely transmitted in all media in Yugoslavia, Nikita Khrushchev acknowledged Yugoslavia as a socialist country, and thus abolished one of the basic premises of the anti-Yugoslav campaign in the Eastern Bloc. The arrival of Foreign Secretary Andrei Gromyko in March 1962, and Leonid Brezhnev in September 1962, suggested a clear path towards the normalization of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, which would finally be confirmed at the end of the same year.

Thirdly, new changes in the Soviet Union, as well as divisions in the international communist movement, drew the attention of the leading Yugoslav communists. The break-up between Moscow and Beijing in the early 1960s contributed to a new differentiation in the ICM (International Communist Movement) - to "dogmatic" and "progressive" forces, and this time the reason was not Yugoslavia. The militant revolutionary approach of Mao Zedong had become too radical for Moscow, with its pretension to establish Beijing as the new ideological authority of world communism. In this new conflict, the years long anathematized Yugoslav socialism became more acceptable to the CPSU, as a possible balance against Chinese "dogmatism", while the influence of Yugoslavia in the Third World was needed as another barrier to the advancement of Beijing's influence. At the same time, in response to the Chinese version of "Stalinism", Khrushchev launched a new wave of de-Stalinization, promoted at the 22nd Congress of the CPSU, in October 1961. Yugoslav Communists assessed the new changes in the Soviet Union as one of the decisive reasons for accepting the outstretched hand of Moscow in 1962.

Finally, the new foreign policy strategy of Yugoslavia as an unaligned country, demanded a rigorous balance between the two Cold War blocs. The modified policy of the Soviet Union towards the Third World, which was especially popularized during the time of Khrushchev, was assessed by the Yugoslav communists as a welcome "evolution" of standpoints within the CPSU, and a significant contribution to the strengthening of the principles of NAM

that were of crucial importance, and which the Soviet Union, as a great power, could support - the struggle against colonialism and imperialism; economic independence from the West, promotion of the path of socialist modernization, etc. The policy of the Soviet Union, however, was not always displayed in a favorable light in Belgrade, especially when it took into account only its “narrow” bloc interests.

A work visit by a Yugoslav delegation to the Soviet Union in December 1962, headed by Josip Broz Tito, was a symbolic introduction to the beginning of the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Moscow. Numerous examples of mutual understanding, which were manifested during the visit, testified to the existence of sincere motives to overcome disagreements and animosity. The two sides agreed that there was complete unity in relation to all important international issues and that this unity was based on the fight for the principles of “peaceful coexistence”. Differences on ideological issues were declared, but followed at the same time by the wish not to “dramatize” them in the future, and not to emphasize them as part of mutual propaganda confrontation. By declaring that there existed a common ideological goal - the achievement of a socialist society - both Tito and Khrushchev emphasized in their speeches the merits of the two parties for the development of socialism. Although a new document important for the improvement of Yugoslav-Soviet relations was not signed in Moscow (because the visit was also unofficial), Tito was extremely pleased in front of Yugoslav journalists after returning from the Soviet Union, because, in his opinion, there was “a better understanding of a lot of what was happening in our country” in Moscow, and that due to such newly established understanding, anything that interfered with relations with other socialist countries, especially with the Soviet Union, should be avoided.⁹⁴

From the moment of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Belgrade and Moscow, Yugoslav diplomacy, with its SSFA, represented one of the important links within the Yugoslav state policy in formulating an acceptable form of new relations with the USSR. However, at the same time, it persisted the longest in expressing serious reservations about all salient features of Soviet politics and its approach to Yugoslavia. The very essence of such an attitude resulted from the fact that Yugoslav diplomacy actively worked on the elimination of the

⁹⁴“Odlazimo iz SSSR veoma zadovoljni”, *Politika*, December 22, 1962.

negative effects of the anti-Yugoslav campaign and all forms of political, economic and military pressure on Yugoslavia, both by the Soviet Union and the larger countries, for more than a decade. On the other hand, the new Yugoslav foreign policy strategy required in particular that the principle of maintaining an equal distance from both military-political blocs in the world be taken into account, perceiving its affirmation among the newly independent Third World countries in the criticism of the “bloc” policy of great powers. The leadership of SSFA cherished such a way of representing Yugoslav interests and understanding of international relations, especially with the arrival of Konstantin Koča Popović at its head. In his reflections on the priorities of the Yugoslav foreign policy, K. Popović proceeded from the experience of the break-up of Yugoslavia with the Eastern Bloc, considering 1948 as the central event that formed the “solid basis of non-alignment”, and represented a consistent defense of the country's independence.⁹⁵ The attitude towards the Soviet Union was central in these reflections. With his arrival at the head SSFA, at the very beginning of the process of normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations, Koča Popović accepted the main thesis of the party's top leadership that it was in the interests of Yugoslavia, as a socialist state, to establish good relations with the Soviet Union, and to support the process of “de-Stalinization” in Eastern Europe. However, although a pre-war communist, K. Popović did not have too much illusions about the possibility of major reformist changes in the Soviet Union.⁹⁶ Under his direct influence, SSFA, at the very beginning of the establishment of new Yugoslav-Soviet relations in 1953/1954, acted as a corrector of excessive expectations of the Yugoslav party leadership, warning of the existence of insincere Soviet motives, which arose from the fact that “the Soviet Union was a great power, which remained the enemy of our political system and independence”.⁹⁷

⁹⁵Aleksandar Nenadović, *Razgovori s Kočom*, (Zagreb: Globus, 1989), 21.

⁹⁶Koča Popović noted his initial doubts in his personal notes, already at the end of 1953, stating that he disagreed with the enthusiasm that arose in the Yugoslav, but also in global public opinion, about the removal of one of Stalin's closest associate, Lavrenty Beria. Unlike the prevailing majority opinion, that this act was one of the important proofs of the readiness of the new Soviet leadership to implement the announced reforms, Koča was convinced that the event was of very small value, since the new top Kremlin leadership was actually, in his opinion, “a group from Stalin's school” and that they “were not of a different character or structure, although certainly with different abilities and with less authority”, in a society in which honesty had long since lost its meaning, “Zapisi iz pokojne prošlosti”, *Vreme*, December 9, 1991.

⁹⁷Svetozar Rajak, *op.cit.*, 58.

At the earliest stage of the deliberation of the possibility of overcoming Yugoslav-Soviet disparities, Yugoslav diplomacy assessed the prospect of better relations as extremely small, citing as the reason that in “political issues and ideology nothing can be normalized between us, because we are states with incompatible political systems”.⁹⁸ Huge doubts that prevailed in SSFA regarding Soviet politics were not diminished even at the moments when certain political changes in Moscow contributed to a positive attitude of the LCY leadership towards the “reformist” commitment of N. Khrushchev in the CPSU. Nikita Khrushchev experienced this personally, as he complained to the Yugoslav delegation in Moscow in October 1957 about a sarcastic comment Koča Popović addressed to him, that in seeking the discipline in the “rota” (“the company”, i.e., the lager as Khrushchev thought), he did not know who was the “rota” and who was the “soldier”.⁹⁹ Even when the Soviet side showed a certain cooperation in relations with Belgrade, especially in foreign policy issues, the head of Yugoslav diplomacy demanded from the Yugoslav ambassadors to be able to recognize the ultimate meaning of such Soviet policy, and “not be deceived” by the Soviet tactics, which “changed according to their interests and existing circumstances”.¹⁰⁰ His critical attitude towards Soviet politics created in Moscow a halo of “pro-Western man” around Koča Popović¹⁰¹, while Western diplomats had similar assessments of many representatives of SSFA.¹⁰²

The attitude of distrust towards the policy of the Soviet Union that dominated in SSFA, was not only encouraged by Koča Popović, but was also acquired through numerous experiences of Yugoslav diplomats who were heads of Yugoslav diplomatic missions in Moscow and other Eastern European capitals. Under constant pressure of the anti-Yugoslav campaign, Yugoslav ambassadors in lager countries were often perceived as the main saboteurs of the internal system and promoters of “Yugo-revisionism”, and local security services established special treatments for their surveillance accordingly. The gloomy picture of a closed society in Eastern European

⁹⁸Ibidem.

⁹⁹J, 507, ACK SKJ, III/74, Minutes from the meeting of the EC CC LCY held on November 23, 1957 in Belgrade.

¹⁰⁰Dragan Bogetić, *Nova strategija spoljne politike Jugoslavije 1956-1961* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2006), 208.

¹⁰¹Gojko Berić, *Zbogom XX stoljeće: sjećanja Ive Vejvode* (Zagreb: Profil, 2013), 143.

¹⁰²In the report by John Nichols for the year 1959, British diplomats singled out, as closer to the West and of an anti-Soviet disposition in the SSFA, amongst others, Maksimilijan Baće, Srđa Prica, Milan Bartoš, Aleš Bebler, Peko Dapčević, Veljko Mićunović, Nenad Popović, Vladimir Popović, Vladimir Velebit and others, *Yugoslavia Political Diaries 1918-1965, IV 1949-1965* (Slough: Archive Editions, 1997), 711-757.

capitals, where the crucial content was to mimic Soviet policy in all social spheres, was a valuable experience for many Yugoslav diplomats as a specific continuation of their own “ideological sobering”. Veljko Mićunović, the Yugoslav ambassador to Moscow (1956-1958), left an important source of such an experience in his diary notes. Since the time of the Cominform Resolution in 1948, V. Mićunović was one of the most determined Montenegrin communists who firmly advocated the censure of Stalin's assaults in the CC CP of Montenegro, and his appointment as ambassador to Moscow represented a high degree of trust of the party's top leadership. Before being sent to the diplomatic post in Moscow, V. Mićunović belonged to the part of the Central Committee membership, who perceived the intentions of the Soviet “peaceful offensive” towards Yugoslavia with distrust. During the discussions on the issues of Yugoslav-Soviet relations at the sessions of the Central Committee, he advanced opinions that warned that the “remainders of the Stalinist conception” were very strong in the Kremlin, and that they contributed to the perception of normalization with Yugoslavia as a “bloc matter”. According to Mićunović, such normalization of relations would be “at the detriment of Yugoslavia” and “the policy of coexistence”.¹⁰³ Leaving Moscow as the Yugoslav ambassador, in the moments of a new tightening of relations with the Soviet Union in 1958, V. Mićunović did not significantly change his vision of Soviet politics much. Although he emphasized the importance of some important steps forward in the policy of the “new course” of Nikita Khrushchev, such as his speech at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, and the initial promotion of the policy of “peaceful coexistence”, Mićunović believed that the Soviet leadership did not fully free itself from the Stalinist heritage. According to the Yugoslav diplomat, relation towards Yugoslav socialism and the anti-Yugoslav campaign, which persisted throughout Mićunović's stay in Moscow, were a result of a continuation of Stalin's policy of “consolidating the socialist lager and Soviet hegemony within the lager”, which was fully embraced by Khrushchev.¹⁰⁴ Mićunović also linked these principles of Soviet foreign policy to internal policy, where the policy of decentralization was reduced to an “administrative character”, without significant changes in social relations, while party doctrine and state control were maintained continuously in all spheres of life. Yugoslav-Soviet relations should have therefore been interpreted through

¹⁰³AJ, 507, ACKSKJ, II/13 – Fifth plenary session of the CC LCY, November 26, 1954.

¹⁰⁴Veljko Mićunović, *Moskovske godine 1956-1958* (Zagreb: Liber, 1977), 512.

the great contradiction of Khrushchev's policy, in which, according to Mićunović's final assessment, the old and the new struggled.¹⁰⁵

The difficult period of the isolation of Yugoslavia after the Cominform resolution, which openly threatened to crush the independence of the country and jeopardize the independent socialist path, not only provoked a more thorough work of the Federal Secretariat for Foreign Affairs, but also decisively influenced the important political maturation of the new generation of Yugoslav diplomats. Unlike the older generation of Yugoslav communists, who reached their ideological maturation idealizing the achievements of the Soviet Union, the younger post-war generation grew, and was ideologically shaped, in the atmosphere of strong anti-Sovietism in Yugoslav society.¹⁰⁶ While senior Yugoslav party officials wrote dozens of texts on the “deformations” of the Stalinist bureaucracy and the repressive state apparatus, the foreign policy of the Soviet Union and its attitude towards Yugoslavia were also interpreted as an expression of the “undemocratic character of the Bolshevik Party”.¹⁰⁷ On the eve of his departure to assume the position of Yugoslav diplomatic representative in Cairo, Marko Nikezić said from the rostrum of the City Committee of LC in Belgrade that there should be a persistent struggle for “the liberation from the smallest remainders of illusions about the role of the USSR”. He was convinced that the main goal of the party organization in Belgrade was to “fully explain to each member of the party and to every citizen the true character and causes of its (USSR, P.Ž.) enslaving policy towards other nations”.¹⁰⁸ The conflict with the Soviet Union contributed to gradual development of numerous “self-management” centers of thought within the society, out of proclaimed ideas of democratization and liberalization of Yugoslav socialism, where each Yugoslav communist had the opportunity of discovering “their powers, their denials and their misconceptions” in themselves.¹⁰⁹ The boundaries of such a reconsideration certainly changed over time, depending on the reform potentials of the new Yugoslav ideological model, but also on the compromises related to the foreign political interests of Yugoslavia.

¹⁰⁵Ibid, 513-514.

¹⁰⁶Svetozar Rajak, op.cit., 48.

¹⁰⁷Milovan Đilas, *Vlast i pobuna...*, 152.

¹⁰⁸Historical Archive of Belgrade, fund 865, LCS Organization of LC Belgrade, City Committee, dossier 145, Fourth post-war city party conference of Belgrade, February 3-4, 1951.

¹⁰⁹Milovan Đilas, *Vlast i pobuna...*, 211.

The complex history of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union exceeded in importance the issue of inter-state relations, and often produced direct consequences, both to the internal development of Yugoslavia, and to the dissension within the Yugoslav party leadership. At the beginning of normalization of relations with the “first country of socialism”, Yugoslav Communists faced dilemmas similar to those of most East European communists, who temporarily put charges of “Titoism” away in party files, during imposed observance of better relations with Yugoslavia. In the Yugoslav case, the numerous party membership, up to that moment thoroughly purified from Cominform adherents, and the local public, accustomed to the demystification of Soviet policy, had to be reassured that all agreements reached with the Kremlin did not mean a return to the relationship of 1948, and that they did not subordinate Yugoslavia to the interests of the Soviet Union. However, doubts were not unfounded. The price of manifestations of good relations between Belgrade and Moscow was paid by suppression of more critical manifestations towards Soviet politics in the Yugoslav public, with the pretext that, under the new circumstances, such practice was to be considered politically ill-timed and harmful to the Yugoslav foreign policy interests. In addition, the basis for initiating any reform in Yugoslavia, whether in the political or economic sphere, proceeded from theoretical postulates of the ideas of Yugoslav self-management socialism of the late 1940s and early 1950s, i.e. from the results of the ideological divergence from Soviet state socialism. This created, in time, a setting for each new conflict with the Soviet Union to strengthen positions and open opportunities in the party to individuals who wanted further reforms in the Yugoslav party and state, while the creation of a more favorable atmosphere in Yugoslav-Soviet relations served the conservative party forces to obtain the necessary backing to restrain, what were in their opinion, the undesirable and politically damaging reformist ideas in Yugoslavia.¹¹⁰ Shortly after the secret report of Nikita Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the CPSU, Tito demanded unity from the top party leadership in accepting the new policy towards the Soviet Union, because in his words “it would be very inconvenient if members of our League had different viewpoints, if they failed to create a clear picture of what is happening in the Soviet Union now.”¹¹¹ However, in a private

¹¹⁰Dennison Rusinow, *The Yugoslav experiment 1948-1974* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 94.

¹¹¹Archive of Yugoslavia (AJ), fund 507, Archive of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (ACKSKJ), II/14, Stenographic notes of the 6th Plenum of CC LCY, March 13-14, 1956.

conversation with Nikita Khrushchev at Brioni in September 1956, J. B. Tito insisted that future talks should be conducted eye to eye, in order to avoid the difficulties from the reactions of numerous Yugoslav communists, for whom Khrushchev himself knew “what kind of education they received”.¹¹² Unlike the conservatives in the Eastern European communist parties, who could rely on direct action support from like-minded persons in Kremlin,¹¹³ in time a strong orthodox barrier was also built in the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, which used already tested mechanisms to suppress the inner party opposition, discovering ideological closeness to Soviet “hardliners” on many issues. This closeness was expressed above all in the common fear from the results of uncontrolled liberalization of the post-Stalinist society, which, with its initial ideas, would have intended, among other things, to deprive the communist party of its power, and diminish its sovereign position of the main ideological beacon of social actions. The confrontation with the ideas of Milovan Đilas in 1954 testified about the earliest relation between the restrictions of reform policy in Yugoslavia and the normalization of relations with the Soviet Union. Đilas’s critical thought, directed against the surviving forms of state socialism in Yugoslav society, had become too radical for the Yugoslav party leadership, both for criticizing the fundamental principles of the Leninist party, and for the new foreign political context. Although the party indictment against M. Đilas did not encompass his critical attitude towards the Soviet Union, the condemned ideas were clearly related to Đilas’s public criticism of Soviet state socialism and hegemonic foreign policy. His “heretical” texts did not avoid criticism of the new Soviet post-Stalinist leadership, with which the Yugoslav party's top leadership initiated a normalization of relations, while Đilas assessed its policy as “the epoch” of the socialist collective oligarchy and bureaucratic “democracy”.¹¹⁴ For the Soviet leaders, the removal of Milovan Đilas was a “positive” change in the Yugoslav leadership, which removed from the party's top leadership a man known for “mimicking the West” and cultivating “negative feelings”

¹¹²“Note from N. Khrushchev to the CPSU CC Presidium regarding conversations with Yugoslav leaders in the Crimea”, October 8, 1956, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, APRF, fund 52, description 1, act 349, sheet 64-113. Published in “Istochnik” no earlier than September 24, 1956. Translated by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112230>.

¹¹³“It is also necessary to understand that these groups of conservatives in the eastern countries were interconnected by invisible threads, but also with groups within Moscow leadership, not only with the first secretary or the Presidium, but also with some groups within party apparatus, the KGB, and the Soviet secret police. Thus, in case of need, they could mobilize an entire ‘internationale’ of conservatives and exert pressure”, Jiri Pelikan, *Praško proljeće* (Zagreb: Globus, 1982), 182-183.

¹¹⁴Milovan Đilas, „Kraj dvorjanina L. P. Berije“, *Nova misao*, Year 2, No. 1, January 1954, 108-112.

toward the Soviet Union.¹¹⁵ Although the Yugoslav party leadership rejected the intention of the Kremlin to personalize the blame for earlier deterioration of the relationship (by censuring equally Đilas and Beria), the attitude towards Milovan Đilas and his criticism successfully united, at least in the approach to one issue, the positions of the two communist parties that were irreconcilable until then. With the commencement of Đilas's more radical criticism of communism and policy of the Soviet Union, the Yugoslav party leadership saw in his further ostracization and punishment not only the internal policy goal of suppressing the idea of "Đilasism", but also a foreign policy one, proving in this way a certain "orthodoxy" in the international communist movement, at the moment of harsh anti-Yugoslav campaign in the Eastern bloc.¹¹⁶

The decision of the Yugoslav party leadership to initiate the process of normalizing relations with the Soviet Union during 1962 had different reverberations. The Western press and some diplomats reported about Yugoslavia getting closer to the lager, linking the tightening of the party's course with becoming closer to Moscow. The arrest of Milovan Đilas, in April 1962, on the eve of Andrei Gromyko's visit, because of his book "Conversations with the Stalin", and numerous rigid ideological propaganda attacks on Western modern art at the end of the year, identical to those in the Soviet Union, left no doubt about the general character of new relations between Belgrade and Moscow. On the other hand, the party's top leadership, faced with rising problems in the country, was becoming increasingly aware of the volume of dissonance among party groups, which threatened to question the basic elements of party's Leninist monolithism. The struggle for a unique party line in 1962 led to SSFA coming under suspicion of diverting from the "revolutionary" course, and disregarding the basic guidelines outlined in the Letter of the Executive Committee. The confirmation of the implementation of the party line in an

¹¹⁵The Soviet leadership exploited the case of Milovan Đilas a lot in its relations with Yugoslavia, using it as one of the events that created an important precondition for improving the relations between the two states and parties. In a letter to Josip Broz in 1954, N. Khrushchev specifically pointed out that "the expulsion of Đilas from the CC LCY and the condemnation of his hostile views of Marxism-Leninism, facilitate the improvement of mutual relations between the CC CPSU and the CC LCY". Yugoslav-Soviet relations 1945-1956..., 662.

¹¹⁶Svetozar Rajak, op.cit., 60.

important institution of Yugoslav diplomacy would be demanded precisely during the new normalization process with the Soviet Union.¹¹⁷

Marko Nikezić, a Yugoslav diplomat since the beginning of the 1950s, and State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia since 1965, believed that it was an undisputable fact that “over 90% of SSFA employees perceived the Soviet Union as the most significant foreign political threat to the independence of the country”.¹¹⁸ The decision of the party's top leadership in the early 1960s to renew co-operation with Moscow in all areas, was accepted within the SSFA as an important foreign policy initiative, but accompanied by well-known reservations. The wariness within the SSFA was related to proper understanding of the character of the Soviet strategy towards Yugoslavia, which was often treated, according to Yugoslav diplomats, as an “object” of the USSR policy.¹¹⁹ In periodic analyses of SSFA, the approach of Soviet foreign policy to Yugoslavia was still characterized as excessively “bloc oriented”, ideologically paternalistic, and insincere. In the opinion of Yugoslav diplomats, the Cuban crisis in November 1962 demonstrated that Yugoslavia was “invisible” as an independent international subject for the Soviet Union, which placed Yugoslavia in an unequal position in its relations with Moscow. Koča Popović, as the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, persistently sent out instructions warning Yugoslav diplomatic missions of the necessary “reciprocity” in relations with the Soviet side, and of the need for continuous care that Yugoslavia defended its own interests at all times.¹²⁰ However, Tito believed that the Yugoslav motives to initiate a new normalization of relations with the Soviet Union were sufficiently clear and undisputable. Different stances within the party's top leadership were not allowed to exist. In a conversation with Yugoslav Ambassador Cvijetin Mijatović, in February 1963, the official in charge for Yugoslavia in the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, V. A. Bakunov, referred to the testimony of the Komsomol delegation present at the Yugoslav National Youth Congress, when Tito told members of the Yugoslav youth organization that “heads would roll” should there be anti-Soviet incidents during

¹¹⁷Petar Žarković, „Sipovska koncepcija jugoslovenske spoljne politike: DSIP u centru unutarpartijskih sporenja.“ Tokovi istorije, br1. (2017), 97-121.

¹¹⁸Slavoljub Đukić, op.cit., 311.

¹¹⁹DAMSPRS, PA, 1962, USSR, f-127, sign 43547 - Note on some aspects of our relations with the USSR after Gromyko's visit.

¹²⁰DAMSPRS, PA, 1962, USSR, f-127, sign. 437536, Circular telegram to all diplomatic missions.

the congress.¹²¹ Officials of the Soviet party and diplomacy were convinced, and this conviction never left them, that the LCY leader was one of the strong guarantors and advocates of better relations with the Soviet Union. They believed that in the period of the crisis, Tito's personal authority would be a sufficient guarantee that Yugoslavia would not break all ties with the Soviet Union, and that any resistance would be suppressed to that end.

The existence of a “SSFA concept” in Yugoslav foreign policy was mentioned for the first time at the session of the EC CC LCY, on April 23, 1963. The reason for convening the meeting was the conviction of the party's top leadership that there was no unity in the party in accepting the new policy towards the Soviet Union, and that one of the centers of such resistance is the SSFA. At the EC meeting, criticism of the main institution of Yugoslav diplomacy headed by Konstantin Koča Popović since 1953, was led by Tito. He censured some members of the Party for failing to understand the depth of changes in the USSR and the impact of the dogmatic policy of the Chinese communists. In his opinion, Yugoslavia, as a socialist country, had to fulfill its “international revolutionary duties”, and maintain good relations with all socialist countries. In relation to the principles thus formulated, Tito considered that two concepts in the Yugoslav foreign policy came into being - one of the SSFA and the other of the Central Committee. Recalling his authority as head of state, he warned that such a situation was “unhealthy”, and could no longer be observed peacefully.¹²² As a welcome proof of the existence of a “SSFA” concept, the activity of several Yugoslav diplomats was criticized at the session. The case of the Yugoslav ambassador to Bulgaria, Predrag Ajtić, was the most problematic. The party commission summoned for his case, assessed that Ajtić showed “major reservations and disagreements over the LCY foreign and domestic policy”.¹²³ On the basis of the evidence collected, the LCY Disciplinary Committee banned Predrag Ajtić from the party, and his

¹²¹AJ, 507, ACKSKJ, Committee for international relations, USSR, IX, 119/I-134-136, Note on the conversation with V. A. Bakunov, official in charge for Yugoslavia in SMFA, Moscow, February 11, 1963.

¹²²AJ, 507, ACKSKJ, III/97, Minutes of the session of the EC CC LCY, held on April 23, 1963.

¹²³The issue were Ajtić's negative comments on the visit of the Yugoslav delegation to Moscow in December 1962. Information reached Belgrade that Ajtić made very serious objections to the normalization of relations with the USSR in the embassy in Sofia in front of witnesses. Some of Ajtić's offensive comments recorded were: “(...) if Tito had sold us for 25% to the Russians before, he sold us for all 75% now”; “(...) I am leaving Ranković's party. He does not know what he is talking about; he goes to factories and recognizes USSR leadership, against which we fought and which we did not recognize”; “(...) that now we were experiencing all sorts of things, that all sorts of things were happening in the country, that the Communists would find it very difficult to accept this shift towards the Russians, and that Tito would need time and effort to transfer the party to this line”, Ibid.

diplomatic engagement in Bulgaria was terminated. At the end of the session, Josip Broz Tito mentioned the improper attitudes of Veljko Mićunović, the Yugoslav ambassador to Washington, and Marko Nikezić, the State Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs. Specifying Nikezić's views in particular, Tito assessed that they had “stunned” him, and that they were “totally in contradiction with our policy”. He expressed his opinion that “such people could not be leaders and determine the line and guidelines of our foreign policy”.¹²⁴

Although almost all EC members accepted and elaborated Tito's critique of the “SSFA concept”, Koča Popović refused to agree with almost all elements of the charge. He reckoned that a critique of SSFA could not be built around the “Ajtić case”, as well as that a special “SSFA concept” did not exist, although SSFA was a “special institution”. Facing the party leadership, he said that he disagreed with critical assessments, but would accept them “as a disciplined communist”.¹²⁵ Tito condemned this approach by Popović at the session, insisting that all those who were not ready to pursue a given policy had to be removed from the SSFA. Only “good communists” were supposed to be brought to SSFA.¹²⁶ The session of the Executive Committee was only one of the steps of the party leadership in ensuring maximum support to the new normalization of relations with the USSR. However, the existence of resistance to close relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union would not be constrained by the decision of a single party session. It had become a permanent component of Yugoslav-Soviet relations, arising from the 1948 conflict, and upgraded by the different paths of Soviet and Yugoslav socialism. The turbulent currents of the sixties would contribute strongest to the escalation of these differences.

¹²⁴Criticism of Nikezić and Mićunović came as a consequence of the insight to the content of the debate at the SSFA Collegium on March 29, 1963. At the meeting, both of them spoke in favor of improving relations with the United States and Western countries, for the sake of Yugoslav interests that had to be met, primarily on the economic level. AJ, 837, KPR, I-5-b/104-11, Minutes of the meeting of the SSFA Collegium, held on March 29, 1963.

¹²⁵AJ, 507, ACKSKJ, III/97, Minutes of the session of the EC CC LCY, held on April 23, 1963.

¹²⁶Ibid.

2. Principled Cohabitation - Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union against Maoism and imperialism in the Third World

2.1. Restraining China

The conflict between Moscow and Beijing, which escalated in the early 1960s, with its far-reaching consequences, could be compared to the break-up of Yugoslavia with the Soviet Union in 1948. Both important events in the history of world communism had a major impact on the dwindling of ideological unity in the ICM (International Communist Movement), and contributed decisively to the intensification of Cold War conflicts in the Third World until the early eighties. The criticism of “Yugoslav revisionism” after the Hungarian Revolution, which substantially homogenized the communist parties under the auspices of the "leading role" of the Soviet Union, became radicalized by the ideological concept of Chinese communists. Advocating principles of militant anti-imperialism, Mao Zedong challenged the idea of “peaceful coexistence” of Nikita Khrushchev, the strategy pursued by the post-Stalinist Soviet leadership in international relations. The position of Chinese communists - that the war against imperialism (the West) was inevitable, and that insisting on coexistence actually meant moving away from the revolutionary essence of international communism, became an object of harsh criticism by the leading figures of the Soviet party's top leadership. Opposing the surges of Chinese dogmatism, which openly rehabilitated the “Stalinist” vision of the society, Khrushchev, in his address at the World Communist Party Conference, in November 1960, tried to maintain the position of the CPSU, as the leading ideological authority. The Chinese standpoint at the conference did not contribute to reducing the support of the majority of communist parties to Moscow, but it prepared the ground for a very long and harsh ideological dispute. The results of the 22nd Congress of the CPSU affirmed the new period of “de-Stalinization” in the Soviet Union, as a specific response to the Chinese Communists, but also brought the first serious indications of the collapse of the unity of the Eastern Bloc, when Albania sided with Beijing. In

mid-1962, Mao began a critique of “Soviet revisionism”, using revolutionary rhetoric, while Zhou Enlai believed that Beijing had, at that time, become the center of the world revolution.¹²⁷

By coincidence, Yugoslav communists remained outside the Chinese-Soviet polemic, until the beginning of the sixties. Since Yugoslav socialism had been a common subject of criticism of Moscow and Beijing for many years, referring to it within the ICM was intended solely for demonstrating negative ideological straying. However, as the polemic became public, standpoints of Yugoslav communists became more pronounced and needed. In February 1962, the Yugoslav ambassador to Moscow, Cvijetin Mijatović, reported to Belgrade that the polemic with the Chinese contributed significantly to the affirmation of the policy of “peaceful coexistence”, and that, as part of these shifts, a positive change towards Yugoslavia could be readily observed. In the ambassador's conclusions, which were meant to assist further understanding of new elements in Soviet politics, Mijatović concluded that the speed of normalization of Moscow-Belgrade relations would be decisively influenced by further development of the conflict between the Soviet Union and China.¹²⁸ Mijatović's forecasts soon proved to be correct. The harsh secret correspondence between the CPSU and the CPC (Communist Party of China), in the first half of 1962, opened a significant perspective for the “rehabilitation” of Yugoslav socialism in Moscow. In a surge of criticism against “Soviet revisionism”, in mid-1962, Mao Zedong identified Tito and Khrushchev as two main enemies of China, along with Kennedy and Nehru.¹²⁹ The renewed co-operation between Belgrade and Moscow, despite many unresolved ideological issues, would contain the attitude towards Chinese “dogmatic” politics as a key feature. The mutual interest was forged with the intention to curb, by adopting the strategy of promoting “peaceful coexistence”, the adverse impact of the militant radicalism of Chinese communists in the ICM, in particular the spreading of “Maoism” in the Third World, where they proceeded from different positions, the Yugoslav non-aligned policy and Soviet hegemonic aspirations.

¹²⁷Silvio Pons, *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism 1917-1991* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 236; Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split. Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton University Press 2008), 220-223.

¹²⁸DAMSPRS, 1962, PA, USSR, f-127, 43661.

¹²⁹Silvio Pons, *op.cit.*, 230.

Meetings of top leaderships of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, during 1963 and 1964, consolidated the foundations of the “anti-Chinese” coalition, and briefly overshadowed earlier disputes. Moving against anti-Sovietism in the LCY, by restraining the “SSFA concept”, Josip Broz Tito, for the second time, supported the “reformist” policy of Nikita Khrushchev. With his report at the CC LCY Plenum in May 1963, Tito went one step further. Defending the vision of relations of equality within the ICM before the party's top leadership, on which LCY persisted practically from the break with Stalin, and which the new (old) concept of the Communist Party of China opposed, Tito told the Yugoslav communists that they had to take, once again, the prominent role of the main promoters of new relations among communist parties. Referring to the need for promotion of “internationalist duties”, which involved active struggle of communists for all “progressive” ideas in the ICM, Tito stressed the importance of advocating for the realization of the principle of “peaceful coexistence”, which, in his opinion, “was one of the strongest political means of the struggle of the international workers' movement for social progress and the strengthening of socialist forces and factors in the world”.¹³⁰ From the plenum roster, Tito declared that the leaders of the Chinese CP stood on “dogmatic positions”, that they simultaneously supported “Stalinist” relations and methods in the communist movement and the “Trotskyist” standpoints of war, and that, by their overall action, they directly threatened world peace. The new line of division, in Tito's opinion, was clear. In the ICM, there were dangerous Chinese warlike and “dogmatic” positions on one side, and peaceful and “anti-dogmatic” ones, supported by the largest number of parties, on the other. Tito stressed that the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was obliged to actively participate in the fight against all negative phenomena, against all those who were splitting the ICM, and against the policy that hindered the further development of socialism. At the end of the session, the 5th Plenum of the CC LCY adopted Tito's report (“LCY's standpoint on current international issues, and tasks of the international workers' movement in the struggle for peace and socialism”), as the party line and future guidelines for further action of Yugoslav communists.¹³¹

Just a few months after the CC LCY Plenum, the results of the visit of a high-ranking Soviet delegation to Belgrade, from August 20 to September 3, 1963, confirmed the justifiability

¹³⁰AJ, 507, ACKSKJ, II/23, Stenographic notes of the 5th CC LCY Plenum, held on May 18, 1963, in Belgrade.

¹³¹Ibid.

of the new path of the LCY in the fight for “progressive” forces in the ICM. Just before the arrival of the delegation to Belgrade, the Soviet Union normalized its relations with the United States of America, which were impaired by the Cuban crisis in November 1962, and started a total break-up with the Chinese Communist Party. As opposed to the previous visit of Nikita Khrushchev to Yugoslavia, in June 1955, this time, the complete unity of standpoints of the two delegations was expressed, with a special emphasis on “Chinese dogmatism”. Noting that the differences in the inter-party relations between the CPSU and the LCY were minimized, during their talks, the two delegations used every opportunity to reflect the consequences of Chinese politics in a negative light. Khrushchev was explicit that the Chinese performance was damaging to the ICM, and that it was trying to influence a change of the concepts in many communist parties, while Tito promised that the Yugoslav communists would work actively on the “dismantling” of Chinese theories in the future.¹³² The united joint front against China once again pushed to the foreground the principles of the Belgrade and Moscow declarations, documents that, due to the anti-Yugoslav campaign, since 1958, have been circumvented several times. In their joint action against “Maoism”, both parties seemed to intend to put an end to some fundamental controversies, and to concentrate all their attention on overcoming the challenges that came from the Far East. In February 1964, the exchange of letters between the LCY and the CPSU confirmed the unity of the standpoints on the harmful effects of the CP of China. At an encounter with Tito, on June 8, 1964, in Leningrad, Khrushchev expressed his wish that the Yugoslav side contribute to overcoming the crisis that began in the relations between the Romanian and Soviet leaderships.¹³³ This appeal was fully in line with Tito's proclaimed policy of performing an “internationalist duty” and fighting for a “progressive” course in the ICM, and thus his meeting with the leader of the Romanian party, Gheorghiu-Dej, in June 1964, was an attempt on the Yugoslav side to mend the dispute between Bucharest and Moscow.¹³⁴ Up to 1968, following the Yugoslav contribution to “peaceful coexistence”, Tito met with almost all communist party leaders in Eastern Europe. Apart from the expressed mutual desire for further improvement of interstate bilateral and party relations, in each of these encounters, a relationship of understanding for the need to oppose China was present. However, there were no major

¹³²AJ, 837, KPR, I-3-a/101-51.

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¹³⁴Đoko Tripković, *Jugoslavija – SSSR 1956-1971* (Belgrade: ISI, 2015), 156-159.

changes in the final analyzes of Yugoslav diplomacy about the perception of Yugoslavia in the lager. Resistance to China had pacified the resistance to Yugoslav self-government socialism and its solutions, at least for a short period of time.

The joint resistance to Chinese influence in the Third World, and the commitment to the principles of “peaceful coexistence”, moved Yugoslav-Soviet relations into a period of stable relations. Bilateral cooperation was successful, and the Soviet Union became one of the important foreign trade partners of Yugoslavia.¹³⁵ However, the Yugoslav foreign policy, bearing in mind the preservation of its non-aligned policy, was becoming more and more sensitive to the possible consequences of close coordination with Moscow. Primarily, this was related to Moscow's intention to, traditionally, tie Yugoslavia, as much as possible, to the political and economic interests of the lager, but also to use the Yugoslav influence in NAM in order to expand the sphere of its influence in the Third World countries. At the beginning of 1964, the Soviet press wrote positively about the preparations for the start of the Second non-alignment conference in Cairo, supporting the convening of the second summit of non-aligned countries, and especially emphasizing that their voice often “sounded in harmony with the voice of the USSR and other socialist countries”.¹³⁶ Yugoslavia did not want its policy to be perceived as a “satellite policy” and “extension of Kremlin's hand”, and SSFA reacted decisively to such Soviet efforts, continually sending instructions to Yugoslav diplomatic missions on the conduct of diplomats on such occasions. On the other hand, the LCY party's top leadership also dismissed, as early as 1964, all the initiatives that came from Moscow on the need to organize consultations of communist parties in which “fraternal” parties would assemble and discuss a strategy of joint action against Chinese politics. In direct talks with Khrushchev, in June 1964, in Leningrad, Tito reiterated LCY's position that the conditions for such consultations had not yet “matured”, while in a conversation with Andropov, two months later, he added to his dismissive attitude on the consultations, the need to respect the principle of non-alignment, on the eve of the Second conference in Cairo.¹³⁷ The defense of the original principles of NAM, which would become a specific obligation of Yugoslav politics, was in serious collision with the consequences of the

¹³⁵Ibid, 152.

¹³⁶DAMSPRS, PA, Yugoslavia, 1964, f- 87, sign. 47457- Analysis of the foreign press writing on the new non-alignment conference.

¹³⁷Đ. Tripković, op.cit., 159.

Chinese-Soviet conflict. This was especially evident during the Cairo Conference, October 5-10, 1964, when polarization to radical and moderate forces among the delegates of non-aligned countries became manifest. In his speech at the Conference, Indonesia's leader Sukarno accepted some Chinese ideological conceptions, about the need for an active revolutionary struggle against Western imperialism, opposing the Yugoslav-Soviet strategy of “peaceful coexistence”. Yugoslav diplomacy assessed Sukarno’s speech as pro-Chinese and strongly opposed it.¹³⁸

The removal of N. Khrushchev, in October, 1964, questioned, for a moment, the firmness of the “coalition” between Belgrade and Moscow. After more than a decade at the helm of the CPSU, Nikita Khrushchev had been removed from all leading positions in the party and state, in an upheaval that had been planned for a long time, and has brought to the surface the enormous dissatisfaction of the majority of the party leadership with the results of Khrushchev's “new course”. One part of the dissatisfaction was directed at the attitude of Khrushchev towards China, since not such a small number of conservative party leaders regarded the long-term tightening of Soviet policy towards China as detrimental, sympathizing with China's pro-Stalinist and anti-Western views. It seemed that the new Soviet leadership had not yet developed an elaborate foreign policy strategy, as an erroneous internal policy was emphasized on the occasion of removal of Khrushchev at the summit in October, and a significant number of new Soviet leaders had a negligible, or almost no international experience. The Soviet ambassador in Belgrade, A. Puzanov, was calming down the Yugoslav leadership, by saying that Khrushchev's removal would not contribute to changes in Soviet foreign policy, especially towards China. During a conversation with Josip Broz Tito, on November 11, 1964, explaining the essence of the removal of N. Khrushchev, Puzanov conveyed Moscow's firm conviction that, in spite of the renewed contacts with Beijing, a compromise on “issues of principle” would not be made. However, the new collective leadership in the Kremlin, led initially by the trio Brezhnev, Kosygin and Podgorny, had set an attempt to reconcile with Communist China as its first priority in foreign policy.¹³⁹ The Yugoslav Embassy in Moscow warned about this fact, in early November 1964, notifying that tendencies in keeping the Soviet policy “on two tracks” were observed -

¹³⁸Tvrtko Jakovina, *Treća strana Hladnog rata* (Zagreb: Fraktura, 2011), 50.

¹³⁹V.Zubok, *op.cit.*, 197-198

approaching China, and moving away from Yugoslavia.¹⁴⁰ Part of Tito's speech at the 8th Congress (November 1964), in which Yugoslav criticism of the Chinese “dogmatic” policy was even more clearly underlined, followed by a support to Khrushchev's former line toward Beijing, was completely omitted in the Soviet press.

Kosygin's mission at the Far East, in February, 1965, dispelled all the hopes of the new Soviet leadership that reconciliation with China was possible. During his meeting with Mao Zedong, Kosygin became convinced of the unchanged ideological views of the Chinese communists, and the persistence of criticism against “Soviet revisionism”. The attempt to restore unity was unsuccessful, and China continued to radicalize its foreign policy, opposing the idea of “peaceful coexistence” and the alliance with nationalist regimes in the Third World. The Chinese Cultural Revolution of 1966 led to the climax of the ideological concept of the Chinese Communist Party, making China completely isolated from the outside world, especially from the revolutionary and liberation movements in the African countries. In Chinese public approach, the Soviet Union was assessed as an imperialist state and a major threat to the world revolution.¹⁴¹ Despite numerous initiatives, mainly from Moscow, the Vietnam War, which escalated in 1965, failed to result in full unity of all communist forces to jointly provide help to Vietnamese communists, but it did manage to put the struggle against American imperialism in the forefront. It is on this platform that the Soviet Union built its presence among the Third World countries, but also the tactics for attracting Yugoslavia to its sphere of interest.

2.2 The antiimperialist paradigm of Yugoslav-Soviet cooperation.

For communists, the attitude towards “imperialism” represented the affirmation of the basis of Marxism-Leninism teaching, and for the communist parties, the affirmation of the “revolutionary” and “class” essence of their own political platform. Relying on Lenin, who devised its theoretical foundations on the eve of the October Revolution, the communists defined imperialism as “the highest stage of capitalism”. The struggle against imperialism meant the realization of Lenin's tactics of confronting the capitalist order in every place, by supporting

¹⁴⁰DAMSPRS, PA, Yugoslavia, 1964, f-96, sign 444273.

¹⁴¹Silvio Pons, op.cit., 249.

movements that demolished such a global system, from the liberation movements in colonial countries, to peasant and national movements directed against (mainly) Western imperialists.¹⁴² The popularity of the “antiimperialist” struggle gained in significance with the process of post-war decolonization, which made the Soviet Union gain more popularity in postcolonial countries. The Cold War division, which was most prominent in promoting two different ideological concepts (capitalist and socialist), allowed the Soviet Union to increase its influence on various continents, especially in the countries that were liberated from the Western colonial system, under the umbrella of promoting socialist modernization. Unlike Stalin's inert policy, which looked down on the prospects of the liberation and decolonization movements in the Third World, considering them too “reactionary”, the CPSU, under the leadership of Khrushchev, began to devise a new Soviet strategy towards the Afro-Asian countries. It involved military and economic support to all liberation movements, the pursuit of the policy of “peace offensive” against the Western states, and as its final result, an increase of the Soviet influence in comparison to the West.

Since the mid-1950s, Yugoslav non-alignment policy had gained its main outlines through numerous international contacts with countries and leaders of the Third World. From the very beginning, the new Yugoslav diplomacy was one of the main expressions of the new attitude of the independent path of Yugoslav socialism. In the period of the first open conflict with the Soviet Union, when Yugoslavia formulated the initial basic principles of its new internal policy, Yugoslav foreign policy also discovered new roads, atypical for Europe, divided by Cold War. Affirming the principles of independence, non-bloc position, disarmament, anti-colonialism and peaceful resolution of conflicts, Yugoslav diplomacy opened up a much wider range of engagements, from UN sessions to numerous international conferences. The non-alignment movement, in its emergence, became an expression of the Yugoslav world policy and fully reflected the Yugoslav attitude towards the bipolar world.¹⁴³ The non-bloc character of the movement, the lack of communist states in it, and the persistence on its independent existence in international relations, caused misunderstanding and resistance in the Soviet Union for a long period of time. The significant role of Yugoslavia in the establishment of the movement became

¹⁴²Lešek Kolakovski, *Glavni tokovi marksizma, II* (Belgrade: BIGZ, 1983), 562.

¹⁴³T. Jakovina, *Treća strana Hladnog rata...*, 46.

too “unpleasant” for Soviet diplomacy, especially in the moments when relations with Belgrade were colder, and the potential of Yugoslav resistance to Soviet policy had the possibility of becoming especially destructive to Soviet global interests.¹⁴⁴ However, similar standpoints on many international issues, the Soviet promotion of “peaceful coexistence” and support for the goals of the African countries, with the support of the Marxist-Leninist vision of the world, eliminated, in time, the disagreements, and strengthened the common interests.

Before the arrival of Nikita Khrushchev to Belgrade in August 1963, the Yugoslav side positively analyzed the policy of the Soviet Union towards non-aligned and underdeveloped countries. Starting from the decisions of the 22nd Congress of the CPSU, which portrayed the non-aligned countries as the main allies of the socialist countries in the struggle for peace, Yugoslav communists noted that Soviet politics was undergoing a process of “evolution” in relation to the newly liberated countries. Their opinion in Belgrade was that there were many signs of such an “evolution” of Soviet attitudes, which suggested that the progressive part of non-aligned countries could “contribute to the spreading of the global socialist system”.¹⁴⁵ The conflict with China was perceived in the context of these changes, and it was emphasized with satisfaction that the Soviet-Chinese conflict would “strengthen real opportunities for cooperation between the USSR and non-aligned countries”.¹⁴⁶ Analyzing the role of the Soviet Union in many parts of the world, Yugoslav communists believed that it could play its most important role in South East Asia, as its politics insisted on some important strategic goals that were complementary with those of non-aligned countries - appeasing the situation and removing the focal points of conflicts, while preserving the independence of countries. On the whole, the new orientation of the Soviet Union towards non-aligned and underdeveloped countries was assessed in Belgrade as extremely important “for further expansion and success of non-alignment policy as an important factor in the struggle for peace and progress”.¹⁴⁷ During a conversation with Khrushchev in Belgrade, Tito emphasized his resolve to steer NAM towards the left. He conveyed to his interlocutor the firm convictions that Yugoslavia was doing everything in its power to suppress the influence of the West in Afro-Asian countries, thus contributing to their

¹⁴⁴Od Arne Vestad, *Globalni Hladni rat* (Belgrade: Arhipelag, 2008), 140.

¹⁴⁵AJ, 837, KPR, I-3-a/101-51 – The policy of the USSR towards the non-aligned and newly liberated countries.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

“progressive orientation”. Tito used an example to support the statement that the influence of Yugoslavia in this regard was not small, stating that on the occasion of his visit to Egypt, on the eve of a rally, he persuaded Nasser to reject the criticism of the Soviet Union, and that, in his opinion, in the future implementation of his planned policy Nasser “would move more and more towards the left”.¹⁴⁸ The Soviet Union strengthened its alliance with Egypt with the visit of Nikita Khrushchev to Cairo in 1964, which enabled a significant presence of Soviet policy in the Middle East in the late sixties.

After the removal of Khrushchev, the new Soviet leadership intensified its ideological campaign of the struggle against imperialism, especially after the buildup of the Vietnam War in 1965, and the significant US military engagement in the area of Southeast Asia. The idea that common support to Vietnamese communists would alleviate the antagonisms between Beijing and Moscow proved to be unrealistic, but the Soviet leadership did not abandon the basic guidelines of its foreign policy strategy, aimed at creating a tight unity of all Communist parties. The Yugoslav Communists were no exception. In the first talks of the Yugoslav delegation with the new Soviet party leadership, from June 18 until July 1, 1965, in Moscow, a common desire was demonstrated to condemn American policy in Vietnam, and the need was stressed for “unity of action” and cooperation among socialist countries in defending world peace against imperialism. Tito informed Brezhnev in Moscow of his impressions after his trip to the UAR and Algeria, about the calamity of Chinese influence, and the activities of American imperialism (“Americans want to make the whole of Africa a new Katanga”).¹⁴⁹ He conveyed the concern of Arab leaders that the Soviet Union did not use its authority sufficiently in the events that took place in Africa, and that it avoided political engagement and more straightforward criticism of imperialists. On the other hand, according to Tito, the Yugoslav delegation came to Moscow convinced of the appropriateness of Soviet foreign policy. At the end of the conversation Tito did not hesitate to stress that, during his visit to the African countries, he used the opportunity to

¹⁴⁸Tito said that he had advised Nasser to control the press better. According to Tito, he was “progressive”. Kardelj also sought support for Nasser, to “prevent him from falling into the hands of the Americans”, AJ, 837, KPR, I-3-a/101-51.

¹⁴⁹Tito said that Morocco and Tunisia were under the influence of the United States, and that non-aligned countries were thus weakened. He also said that the situation in Africa was very bad. On the other hand, while conveying his talks with Ben Bella and Nasser, Tito highlighted their concern that Israel was “an proponent of imperialism in the Middle East”. AJ, 837, KPR, I-2/26-3.

“raise the confidence of these countries in the Soviet Union”. The new leader of the CPSU, Leonid Brezhnev, followed a similar tone in his analysis of the Yugoslav-Soviet relations and the situation in the world. Both leaders had identical attitudes towards the Vietnam War and the strategy that should be applied. Tito believed that all socialist countries should help the movement in South Vietnam and publicly oppose American policy, while Brezhnev pointed out that the most important plan of Soviet foreign policy was the struggle against American imperialism, portraying it as the “most aggressive force” in the world. Criticism of China persisted in the talks as an important and permanent stance on the suppression of Chinese adventurous and dangerous warmongering policy.¹⁵⁰

The joint strategy of combating Chinese dogmatism and Western imperialism did not yield great results, and testified to the limited possibilities of the Yugoslav-Soviet actions in the Third World. The Soviet Union provided extensive material and military assistance to North Vietnam, but failed to impose itself as a key political player in Hanoi. The Vietnamese communists, on the other hand, did not welcome the diplomatic approach of Yugoslavia, believing it was too passive and indecisive. The radicalization of the war in Vietnam contributed to a growing popularity of militant anti-imperialist groups, both in many guerilla movements in Southeast Asia, and in many communist parties. The principles of “peaceful coexistence” were the main target of criticism. The Tricontinental Solidarity Conference in Havana, in January 1966, offered the “ultra-antiimperialist” rhetoric of these radical groups. The Yugoslav policy towards Vietnam was sharply criticized by representatives of Cuba, Vietnam and Korea. The ideological qualifications directed against Belgrade, as one of the main promoters of coexistence, reminded of the Cominform campaign against Yugoslavia after 1948. Cuba, as the leader of the “new forces”, would eventually become the main opposition to Yugoslavia in NAM, advocating the change of the principles of the movement, and an enhancement of the “revolutionary” essence.¹⁵¹

Yugoslav politics resisted equally the radicalism of certain Third World countries, and the “camp” aspirations of the Soviet Union. Trying at the same time to find the necessary

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Tvrtko Jakovina, *Treća strana Hladnog rata...*, 54.

balance with the Western countries, Yugoslav diplomacy wore itself out in the elaboration of a foreign policy strategy that would best preserve the interests of the country. Non-bloc policy continued to imply disagreement on tight policy coordination with Moscow. New CPSU initiatives for convening Consultations of Communist Parties and a Conference of the Communist Parties of Europe (in 1966 and 1967) were rejected by the LCY. A similar attitude was also expressed when it came to the possibility of the overflight of Soviet aircraft through the airspace of Yugoslavia (in 1965), as well as to the joint approach to the non-aligned countries. However, one part of the LCY party's top leadership was still convinced that the political and military power of the Soviet Union in resolving international crises, was the only guarantor of successful opposition to US imperialism. Such assessments became even more pronounced after dramatic events in the Third World countries since the mid-1960s. Influential leaders of non-aligned countries (Sukarno, Ben Bela, Nkrumah) were ousted in violent **coup d'états**, while the Indonesian left suffered a major defeat in 1965 and 1966, after Sukarno was ousted, as it was completely exterminated from Indonesia, by bloody military reprisals of the new military regime in Jakarta. American interventionism in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic was experienced by Yugoslav communists as resilient persistence of American imperialist politics. The Middle East in 1967 was a new dramatic warning.

The six-day war in the Middle East, in June 1967, between the military forces of Israel and the Arab states, completely changed the balance of power in the Middle East. Since the beginning of the 1950s, Yugoslavia had increasingly better relations with Egypt and the majority of Arab countries, while relations with Israel, especially after the Suez crisis, were declining. Tito considered Nasser as “a progressive”, an important leader of the Arab world and NAM, who, although not a leftist, led his country more and more according to socialist and non-alignment principles. Since the mid-1960s, the Soviet Union had invested heavily in the Nasser regime, which was the focus of Soviet influence in the Middle East, along with Syria and Yemen. The sudden harsh defeat of Egypt and other Arab states by the Israeli army, in just a few days at the beginning of June 1967, and the loss of a significant part of the territory, practically challenged many years of political and material investments, both of Belgrade and Moscow. Nasser faced a total military and political collapse, and the other leaders of the Arab world were

in a similar situation. Israel refused to withdraw from occupied territories, and a tense international crisis threatened to intensify the conflict.

For Josip Broz Tito, there were no dilemmas as to the understanding of the causes and character of the war in the Middle East. Yugoslavia stood firmly on the side of the Arabs since the first days of the war, until the end of the crisis at the UN at the end of the year, leading virtually all initiatives to assist Arab states. Having aligned himself fully with the interests of the Arab world (“the struggle of the Arab peoples is our struggle”), Tito believed that the war showed the true face of global imperialism, and that in such a conflict, one had to reason solely as a communist.¹⁵² Linking the coup in Greece and the Middle East war, Tito instructed all his interlocutors, from Ulbricht to Bumedian, that the Six Day War was in fact part of a “general imperialist plan”, which was directed primarily against the “free world”, and even against Yugoslavia (“we also feel a lot of military ‘meddling’ around us”).¹⁵³ Israel was declared a “pawn of American imperialism”, which used the same methods as the Nazis in the war, and was labeled by Yugoslavia in the UN as the sole culprit for the war (along with the United States).

¹⁵²DAMSPRS, Strictly confidential, 1967, f-III, 48/1 - Note on the talks between the President of the SFRY and the Romanian foreign minister Cornelia Manescu, personal representative of the party-state leadership of SR Romania, in Dobanovci, on June 16, 1967.

¹⁵³DAMSPRS, Strictly confidential, 1967, f-III, 48/2 - Note on the talks between the President of the Republic with the President of the Council of the Revolution of the Democratic and People's Republic of Algeria Huari Bumedian, at the Belgrade Airport, on June 12, 1967.

Tito believed that, in order to prevent imperialist plans, a “sharper dialogue” had to be conducted, and that a situation had to be created for speaking from a “position of power”.¹⁵⁴

Tito's “position of power” involved the gathering of as many countries as possible (preferably "progressive") in aiding the Arab states. The rescue of Nasser's regime in Cairo had become the number one foreign policy task of Yugoslavia. To this end, Yugoslavia began the closest foreign-political cooperation with the Soviet Union since the period before the 1948 conflict. In the name of the defense of Egypt from the conspiracy of the imperialists, Yugoslavia marched along the bloc line of Moscow. In 1967, the Yugoslav president participated in two Conferences of socialist countries (on June 9 in Moscow, and on July 11 and 12 in Budapest), and called for maximum support to Egypt, and establishment of a common platform of socialist countries. In September 1967, defining economic aid to Arab countries was discussed in Zagreb, at the level of deputy prime ministers, while at the end of the year, a meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs of the socialist countries began, to discuss the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution on the Middle East crisis, and the mitigation of the crisis. Yugoslavia was the only socialist country that offered free aid to Arab countries.¹⁵⁵ The crisis in the Middle East was terminated, although in the short term, by the resolution of the Security Council no. 242, of November 11, 1967. The resolution envisaged the withdrawal of military forces from the occupied territory, the abolition of the state of war, and recognition of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all countries in that area. The entire Yugoslav approach in the UN was assessed by the Western states as “one-sided” and “extreme”, in the service of the interests of the USSR. Since 1967, the Middle East had become the main strongpoint of the Yugoslav-Soviet partnership.

IV. Detente and Yugoslav-Soviet relations 1968-1980.

¹⁵⁴DAMSPRS, Strictly confidential, 1967, f-III, 48/2- Note on the talks between the President of the Republic with the President of the Council of the Revolution of the Democratic and People's Republic of Algeria Huari Bumedian, in Belgrade, on June 13, 1967, 44/2.

¹⁵⁵About the Six Day War and the role of Yugoslavia more in: Dragan Bogetić, Aleksandar Životić, Jugoslavija i arapsko-izraelski rat 1967 (Belgrade: INIS, 2010).

1. Beginning of the detente. The “Prague Spring” and the repeated contradictions of Yugoslav-Soviet relations.

The military intervention of the Warsaw Pact forces in Czechoslovakia, on August 21, 1968, aimed against the reform policy of the Czechoslovak party leadership, is interpreted today as one of the groundbreaking events in the history of European communism and Cold War relations. On the one hand, the violent suppression of “Prague Spring” testified to the impossibility of accepting any reform ideas of European communist parties, which would challenge both the basic ideological foundations of Marxism-Leninism, and Soviet ideological and political hegemony in Eastern Europe. On the other hand, military intervention had confirmed the right of the Soviet Union to use all available means in the name of “proletarian internationalism” to ensure unhindered control over its “sphere of interest”, while at the same time, given the lack of any significant intervention from the West, this fact became generally accepted, tracing the path to the detente. The role of Yugoslavia in the events related to the rise and fall of the “Prague Spring”, which led to worsening relations with the Soviet Union, was sufficiently intense to pinpoint the many problems that Yugoslavia faced in the late 1960s.

Until 1968, Yugoslav-Czechoslovak relations did not differ much from Belgrade's relations with the majority of Eastern European countries. The normalization of Belgrade's relationship with Moscow at the beginning of the 1960s traced the path to the improvement of bilateral relations between the SFRY and the CSR, and coincided with the changes in Czechoslovak society, fueled by the second wave of “de-Stalinization” in the Soviet Union. In Prague, an atmosphere of increasingly bolder criticism of the “Stalinist” Gottwald cadre prevailed, which had been missed in the 1950s, and in the early 1960s announced the arrival of a new generation of educated and more far-sighted party leaders. The head of the party, A. Novotný, confidently declared in 1960 that socialism in Czechoslovakia had been realized. Only a few years later, the country's economy experienced complete collapse. Under the impression of the sharp fall in industrial production and, consequently, of the national income, the critique of the Stalinist policy of industrialization and centralized bureaucratic planning inspired the first demands for radical

reforms in the CSR. In September 1964, the Central Committee of the CP CSR adopted the principles of a market-oriented economic reform, as a result of the work of a special Committee of experts under the leadership of the economist Ota Šik. The economic reform in Czechoslovakia, which was on the track of many similar attempts in Eastern Europe, was met with sympathy in Belgrade. Yugoslav communists assessed that the improvement of relations between Belgrade and Prague was closely linked to the “anti-dogmatic processes” in Czechoslovakia.

The change of attitude towards Yugoslavia was interpreted in Belgrade as “an evidence of the readiness of the leadership” to free itself from the ideological heritage of Stalinism and begin the processes of democratization of internal relations. It was noted with manifest satisfaction that the interest in the “Yugoslav experience of internal development” was increasing among Czechoslovak communists, and that popularization and promotion of cooperation with Yugoslavia were realized by many “progressive circles”.¹⁵⁶ On the other hand, a concern was also noticeable, regarding possible prevalence of a more conservative group, which would reduce the good relations with Yugoslavia by restricting the reform.¹⁵⁷

In January 1968, at the plenary session of the CC CP CSR, a new Czechoslovak party leadership was established, headed by Alexander Dubček.¹⁵⁸ The resignation of the long-time party leader A. Novotny occurred as a result of a large inter-party debate of October 1967, and the prevalence of the reformist group. Novotny failed to suppress further reform attempts in the economic

¹⁵⁶DAMSPRS, PA, Yugoslavia, 1964, f- 87, sign. 4518666, Bilateral cooperation of Yugoslavia with Eastern European countries.

¹⁵⁷The delegation of the Federal Assembly of Yugoslavia, led by the president of the Federal Assembly, Edvard Kardelj, in May 1964, was also under the impression of the change in Czechoslovakia. The Yugoslav delegation held talks with the Speaker of the CSR Assembly Zdeněk Fierlinger, Prime Minister Lenart, and the State President Novotny. In a report on the visit, the delegations conveyed a part of the impression on the situation in the party “where discussions of the system and further paths of development had been expanded lately, along with a sharper criticism of the past, which provoked fear in the leadership, as well as anxiety to suppress some more extreme views, whereas in the case of conservative circles, also a desire to suppress or at least slow down any further process of democratization”. DAMSPRS, PA, Yugoslavia, 1964, f- 106, sign. 429275, Report on the visit of the delegation of the Federal Assembly to Czechoslovakia and GDR, May 6-10, 1964.

¹⁵⁸It is interesting that Yugoslav communists in the mid-1960s did not have a high opinion of Dubček, who led the Czechoslovak delegation at the 8th Congress of the LCY in 1964. He was presented as a “disciplined executor of all standpoints and decisions of the leadership”, who did not stand out with “independent initiatives and attitudes”, and did not make requests for positive changes. (“They consider him a man of mediocre abilities in Slovakia”). DAMSPRS, PA, Yugoslavia, 1964, f-96, sign. 447167.

system initiated in the mid-1960s, and could not secure the necessary political support in Moscow. His final political downfall occurred at the end of March 1968, when he withdrew from the remaining two functions. By removing his political followers from the party, a process of defining a new political reform took place, which was considered to be the necessary predecessor to the successful realization of economic changes. The strong new reform team of the Czechoslovak party leadership won growing massive support in the CSR. The reform plan was outlined in the so-called Action program, in April 1968. The reform plan represented, as Ivan Berend pointed out, the most comprehensive and most radical “version of an attempt at a serious ‘reform from the inside’ in Central and Eastern Europe”.¹⁵⁹ In Prague, a massive democratic movement was born, initiated by the party establishment, and independent of Moscow.

The understanding of the essence of the “Prague Spring” became from the very start the seed of discord between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Stable relations from the beginning of the 1960s were founded on the respect of mutual trust, created against the challenges of radical currents in the international communist movement. The joint restraint of Chinese dogmatism did not entail an infinite identification of Yugoslav interests with those of the Soviet Union. This meant that the Yugoslav party leadership was ready to contribute to creating a positive atmosphere in relations between socialist countries, by promoting “peaceful coexistence”, but it did not see itself as an “extended arm” of the Kremlin in the Balkans. And while Belgrade succeeded, on Moscow's request, to calm the troublesome independent policy of the Romanian communist party, such expectations were fundamentally changed when the situation around Czechoslovakia was concerned. The Yugoslav party's top leadership remained consistent, in the first place, in respecting the rights of every socialist country to launch its own path to socialism, especially if it supported the democratic tendencies expressed in the Yugoslav system. The events in Czechoslovakia from January 1968, widely popularized in the press, were assessed positively in Yugoslavia, as a conflict between the “old” and the “new”, incomparable with the events in Hungary in 1956, and completely “progressive” for the development of socialism in Europe.

¹⁵⁹Ivan Berend, *op.cit.*, 172-174; K. Williams. *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath- Czechoslovak Politics, 1968-1970* (Cambridge University Press, 1997.), 2-21.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union, with the support of the majority of larger countries, initiated a major campaign in the spring of 1968 to suppress the controversial and undesirable content of the Prague reformists' program. Starting with the meeting of representatives of European parties in Dresden in March 1968 (with the exception of Romania), until the July meeting of five WP member states in Warsaw, an uninterrupted sharp criticism of Dubček's leadership took place. The reformist aspirations of the party in the CSR were equated with "silent counterrevolution" under the auspices of imperialist conspiracy. Ideological censure had become binding and sufficiently mobilizing for the European communists in the perception of the danger to the ICM, as in the case of Hungary in 1956. Harsh measures against Czechoslovakia were demanded, their abandoning of the Action program, and a change in the essence of the proposed reforms. Brezhnev was afraid that, as the new leader of the CPSU, he would witness a process of disintegration of the lager, and the loss of hard-won Soviet spheres in Europe. The joint policy of pressuring Prague had already been opposed by the Romanian, Yugoslav, French and Italian parties, which supported the thesis that Moscow was losing its traditional role as a sponsor of ideological "unity". In mid-May 1968, Yugoslav diplomacy analyzed with concern that the Soviet Union had estimated "that it was more worth to use all available resources and keep the situation under control, than to allow the process of democratization in the CSR".¹⁶⁰

Yugoslavia tried to play the role of intermediary in the peaceful resolution of the crisis. At the end of April 1968, Josip Broz Tito paid a brief visit to the Soviet Union (April 28-30, 1968). During the talks with the Soviet party's top leadership, Tito tried to defend the position of Dubček's leadership, assessing that Czechoslovak socialism would not be endangered, and that there was no reason for great concern. However, the opinion of the Soviet party's top leadership, which was completely exclusive and ideologically rigid, was not only sharply expressed during the talks, but it also reiterated the old "Cominform" tendencies, not shying in its criticism from "hitting" the reforms in Yugoslavia. According to the Soviet top leadership, the events in Czechoslovakia were leading to the creation of a "war headquarters of counter-revolution".

¹⁶⁰DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1968, f-162, sign. 419180, Some elements for assessing the current foreign policy activity of the USSR and its perspectives.

Brezhnev denied the ability of A. Dubček to establish control over events in which Czechoslovakia was undermined by “fans of Beneš and Masaryk”. He believed that the struggle between capitalism and socialism was taking place in the CSR. The criticism of the Czechoslovak communists was concluded by a criticism of the Yugoslav press, which promoted positive articles on Czechoslovakia, and of some fallacious reform attempts in Yugoslavia (“your economic reform does not lead where it should”).¹⁶¹ The attitude of Soviet party leadership in talks with Tito was fully in line with the Yugoslav analysis of the basic theses of the April party plenum of the CPSU (from April 9 to 11, 1968). In the conclusions of the analysis, it was pointed out that the measures taken by the Soviet leadership after the plenum testified to the unwillingness to “look deeper into the existing internal contradictions in socialist countries”. The plenum was assessed as a step further in “the direction of tightening on the wider front of ideological activity in the USSR”, which should ultimately serve as “an example to other socialist countries”. The Yugoslav communists assessed that the intention of the CPSU was to dispose of all the forces in the Soviet Union, which, through the support of “de-Stalinization”, called for “democratization and deeper changes in the Soviet society”.¹⁶²

The definitive existence of different views on the events in Czechoslovakia gradually cooled the relations between Belgrade and Moscow. Communication between the two leaderships after the talks in Moscow fell silent, and Yugoslav initiatives for peaceful resolution of the crisis went in a totally opposite direction from the actions taken by the USSR and the larger countries. The Yugoslav press was criticized for publishing materials that were “unfriendly to the USSR”, which misinterpreted the decisions of the April plenum, and which “arbitrarily interpreted the struggle of the CPSU and the USSR government for unity and for closing of ranks within the international communist movement.”¹⁶³ In the opinion of Soviet diplomats, Yugoslavia was “less cautious than even America” in that respect.¹⁶⁴ The attempt by the CC CPSU to influence the views of the LCY, by a letter of July 11, ended without major shifts in the attitude of Yugoslavia towards the CSR. Moscow warned Tito that the forces of political opposition “which disclaim Marxism-Leninism” had appeared in Czechoslovakia, that anti-

¹⁶¹ AJ, 507, ACKSKJ, IX-119/1-338 – Stenographic note on the talks of Tito with Soviet leaders, April 29, 1968.

¹⁶² AJ, 837, I-5-b/99-21, Information on the April plenum of CC CPSU.

¹⁶³ DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1968, f-162, sign. 420645.

¹⁶⁴ DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1968, f-162, sign. 424170.

socialist forces were “splitting the Czechoslovak society”, and influencing a “reorientation of the foreign policy of the CSR”. Belgrade was invited by Moscow to resist the obvious spreading of “revisionism” and “counterrevolution in Czechoslovakia”.¹⁶⁵ The Yugoslav attitude toward the development of the events in Czechoslovakia was criticized by Brezhnev and the majority of Soviet party leaders at a meeting of the CPSU Politburo in mid-July.¹⁶⁶ At the Warsaw Pact meeting in early August, Brezhnev already defined the ideological justification of the future military intervention, by his view that “the weakening of any connection with the world system of socialism directly affected all socialist countries, and they could not watch it indifferently”.¹⁶⁷ Yugoslavia, which entered a period of serious internal crises with student demonstrations in June 1968, did not diverge from the attitude towards the development of socialism in Czechoslovakia. This was confirmed by the impressions following the visit of the Yugoslav delegation led by J. B. Tito to Czechoslovakia, from August 8 to 10, 1968. In agreement with Tito, Mijalko Todorović informed the Soviet Ambassador Ivan Benediktov about the results of the visit, and conveyed the mainly positive impressions of the Yugoslav delegation. In the opinion of the Yugoslav communist, Dubček's leadership in Czechoslovakia was building democratic socialism that was meeting the specific conditions of that country, and for which it had the full support of the entire population (“it is a true national leadership”). The extreme bourgeois forces, on the appearance of which Eastern European parties expressed their concern, were, according to M. Todorović, “of second degree significance”. The Yugoslav leadership opposed the “dramatization” of the situation, and expressed full confidence in the “working class and the current leadership of the CSR”.¹⁶⁸ However, at that moment, the decision on military intervention was already made in Moscow, which could also be noticed by the attitude of the Soviet ambassador in Belgrade. The views of Yugoslavia, as well as Romania, were successfully isolated and discarded.

¹⁶⁵AJ, 837, I-2, CSR, Information of the CC CPSU on the situation in CSR conveyed to the CC LCY on July 11, 1968.

¹⁶⁶Jan Pelikan, “Jugoslavija i praško proleće posle pojačanja sovjetskog pritiska na Čehoslovačku (jul 1968)” in: 1968 – četrdeset godina posle. Collection of papers. Edited by Radmila Radić. (Belgrade: INIS, 2008), 125.

¹⁶⁷Cited in Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 443.

¹⁶⁸AJ, 837, I-5-b/99-21, Note on the talks of the secretary of the EC CC LCY M. Todorović with USSR ambassador to SFRY Ivan Benediktov in the CC, on August 14, 1968.

The military intervention of the Warsaw Pact forces in Czechoslovakia and the forcible removal of Dubček's leadership, in the night between August 20 and 21, 1968, led to a serious deterioration of the relations between Belgrade and Moscow. The use of army as a means of interfering with the internal affairs of another country was fundamentally contrary to everything that Yugoslavia, as part of the wider front of non-aligned countries, stood for in international relations. As the initiative for intervention was led by the Soviet Union, and later ideologically justified by the “doctrine of limited sovereignty”, a critical overview of the Soviet imperialist ambitions was renewed in the Yugoslav public. At two special sessions immediately after the intervention (9th joint session of the Presidency and the Executive Committee on August 21, and 10th session of the Central Committee, on August 23, 1968), the party leadership was united in condemning the aggression against the CSR. For the first time since the break with Stalin, the Yugoslav communists found themselves in a position to elaborate harsh criticism of the policy of the Soviet Union at the highest party forums. Military intervention was assessed as the resurrection of a “greater state policy” that, in the act of “occupation”, affirmed the elements of a “dark ideology”. It was a moment, according to State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Marko Nikezić, when “illusions about the USSR collapsed”.¹⁶⁹ Edvard Kardelj believed that, by censuring the intervention, Yugoslavia gained a new historical opportunity to be at the head of forces that would censure bureaucratism, hegemonism and deformations of socialism.¹⁷⁰ The Yugoslav communists returned to the theses of 1948 that the foreign policy of the Soviet Union could not be explained without recognizing the rules regulating the development of the Soviet society. At the above-mentioned sessions, Tito also supported such a view, pointing out that the reasons for military intervention should be sought in the embracing of “old methods”, which the Soviet Union and other larger members knew well how to use. Both party sessions demanded great mobilization in achieving unity among party membership, necessary military preparations, alertness towards all enemy elements, both from the right and from the left, changes in foreign policy, as well as proper understanding of what happened in Czechoslovakia. By defending the socialist character of the reforms of the ousted CSR leadership, Yugoslavia defended both its independent position and its socialist development. All the reasons justifying military

¹⁶⁹AJ, 507, CKSKJ, III/134 – Authorized stenographic notes from 11th joint session of the Presidency and the Executive Committee held on August 21, 1968.

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

intervention, presented to Josip Broz Tito by Soviet Ambassador Benediktov on August 30, were totally rejected.

The negative and harsh reaction of Yugoslavia to the military stifling of the “Prague Spring” caused the usual propaganda “restraint” of Yugoslav politics in the lager. In this, the activities of the Soviet Union were most prominent. From the first day of military intervention, the Yugoslav Embassy in Moscow reported on the beginning of strong political pressure, in the form of a harsh anti-Yugoslav campaign. The ambassador, Dobrivoje Vidić, sent urgent reports to Belgrade, in which he noted numerous measures of Soviet official bodies directed against Embassy members and Yugoslav citizens in the Soviet Union.¹⁷¹ According to the Yugoslav Embassy, the content of the anti-Yugoslav campaign testified to the “renewal of the course from the 1948 era”.¹⁷² In numerous articles in the Soviet press, the censure of the critical attitude of Yugoslavia had a dual role. On the one hand, it justified military intervention in Czechoslovakia by opposing Yugoslav arguments, and popularizing the thesis of the Soviet party leadership according to which “the sovereignty of socialist countries depended on the unity of the socialist lager”.¹⁷³ In talks with Yugoslav diplomats, many Soviet party leaders justified the use of the WP troops in Czechoslovakia, pointing out that military intervention “had to happen”, that it was directed against “counterrevolution”, and that history would show that it was justified.¹⁷⁴ At the same time, it could be observed that the views of Soviet officials were conveyed calmly, that an understanding of the Yugoslav views was occasionally expressed, and that space for future normalization of relations was left. On the other hand, the criticism of the Soviet (and the lager) press was also aimed at the Yugoslav system, and many articles insisted that the Yugoslav position was actually the result of a “long-standing political conception of the LCY”, and that the non-bloc policy of Yugoslavia was openly directed against the social-political countries.¹⁷⁵ The

¹⁷¹D. Vidić reported that the treatment of members of the Yugoslav Embassy (monitoring, police control) was tougher, and that the work of Yugoslav correspondents, and their contact with the editorial offices in Belgrade, was being disrupted. DAMSIP, USSR 1968, DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1968, f-162, sign. 429369.

¹⁷²The Yugoslav Embassy assessed the anti-Yugoslav campaign as similar to the one from the Stalinist period. DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1968, f-162, sign. 432210.

¹⁷³DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1968, f-162, sign. 433493, Proposal for assessment of the current situation in relations between the SFRY and the USSR.

¹⁷⁴DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1968, f-162, 432615.

¹⁷⁵DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1968, f-162, sign. 433493, Proposal for assessment of the current situation in relations between the SFRY and the USSR.

aim of such a campaign was to “unmask the Yugoslav model”, which served as a model for “Czech counterrevolutionaries”.¹⁷⁶

After the censure of the intervention in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslav foreign policy gained the possibility of distancing itself further from close cooperation with the Soviet Union, which was based on the partnership established in the early 60's, by recovering a balance in maintaining good and stable relations with Western countries.¹⁷⁷ Intensive contacts with the US administration ensured the support of Washington for Yugoslav independence by the end of the year.¹⁷⁸ The activation of non-aligned countries, which started at the beginning of the year with the intention of convening a new conference, was also carried out in the desire to obtain support in relation to Czechoslovakia.¹⁷⁹ From the perspective of Yugoslav diplomacy, relations with Moscow had to be based on an understanding of the events in Czechoslovakia, proper analysis of the intentions of Soviet foreign policy, and the role and place of Yugoslavia in it. At the beginning of September 1968, at a new session of the Presidency and the Executive Committee, Marko Nikezić, representing SSFA, outlined a thesis about the obvious expansion of Soviet politics, which was, in his opinion, directed towards the Mediterranean and the Middle East, with Yugoslavia as an obstacle on that road. According to Nikezić's opinion, such a policy was a “permanent tendency” of Soviet foreign policy, and it did not depend on the actual group of Soviet leaders in the Kremlin.¹⁸⁰ Similar analyses were made by SSFA in the first weeks of the

¹⁷⁶In one of the articles in “Pravda”, at the end of September, the question of the role of the party was raised by censuring the Yugoslav program and the decisions of the Brioni Plenum. Contrary to the Yugoslav view of the role of the party, “Pravda” pointed out that this was an essential issue of Leninist theory and practice, which was under the assault of imperialists, who had launched an attack “on the leading role of the party, under the pretext of ‘democratization’ and ‘liberalism’.” The article by Alexei Kosygin entitled “The main weapon of revolutionary transformation”, published at the beginning of October 1968, was an attempt to attack the Yugoslav system from a high level in Moscow. According to the analysis of the Embassy, Kosygin pointed out that there were “essential and long-term differences in the concepts and practice of building socialism” between Yugoslavia and the USSR. Kosygin resolutely rejected the Yugoslav model as contrary to Marxism-Leninism. DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1968, f-162, sign. 436087.

¹⁷⁷Đoko Tripković. “Vraćanje balansa u politici Jugoslavije prema supersilama krajem 60-tih godina 20 veka”. Tokovi istorije, br.2 (2010), 80-85; Đoko Tripković. “Međunarodni položaj i vojna intervencija u Čehoslovačkoj 1968”. Istorija 20. veka, br.1 (2008), 126-130.

¹⁷⁸In the second half of 1968, there were several high-level contacts that improved relations between Yugoslavia and the United States. Support to Yugoslavia came not only from Ambassador Elbrick in Belgrade, but also from the Under Secretary of State Katzenbach, and especially from the Secretary of State Dean Rusk and President Lyndon Johnson. Dragan Bogetić, Jugoslovensko-američki odnosi 1961-1971 (Belgrade: INIS 2012), 263-283.

¹⁷⁹Tvrtko Jakovina, Treća strana hladnog rata..., 65-66.

¹⁸⁰DAMSPRS, PA, Strictly confidential, 1968, f-4, str.pov.br. 161/68, - State Secretary Marko Nikezić's speech at the 12th Joint session of the Presidency and the Executive Committee of the CC LCY, September 2, 1968.

escalation of the crisis. The Soviet action in CSR was assessed as “an expression of a much broader Soviet strategic foreign policy concept”, the essence of which could be found in the intention of USSR “to accomplish some of its long-standing aspirations by various means and even military force”.¹⁸¹ Soviet policy in the Balkans was interpreted as part of a larger strategy for strengthening the Soviet influence, and suppressing the independence of Yugoslavia (and Albania), with the aim of realizing full military control over the greater part of the Balkan Peninsula. In early October, Belgrade sent warning instructions to Yugoslav diplomatic missions in West European countries, asking them to observe the intentions of Soviet pressure on certain Western countries regarding their relationship with Yugoslavia, especially with regard to the support of these countries in regulating Yugoslavia's relations with ECM.¹⁸² What worried Yugoslavia most after Czechoslovakia, was the promotion of the Soviet doctrine of “limited sovereignty”.¹⁸³ The articles in the Soviet press, as well as the speech of Gromyko in the UN, had raised dilemmas and fears that Yugoslav independence was constantly under scrutiny of Soviet interventionist intentions, justified by the ideological reasons of the alleged “international duty”.

The decline of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, in the autumn of 1968, as a result of the existence of totally different views of the military intervention in Czechoslovakia, did not lead to full deterioration, nor did it imply consequences similar to post-Hungarian events in 1956. From the first weeks of the crisis, Soviet party officials sent dual messages - public censure of Yugoslavia, but with room left for improvement of relations. Many interlocutors to Yugoslav ambassador Vidić in Moscow, in his view, had tried to leave the impression that Yugoslavia was not threatened with military intervention, and that with acknowledgment of different standpoints, they intended to continue cooperation in bilateral relations of the two countries.¹⁸⁴ The correspondence between Brezhnev and Tito, which was the usual practice for exchanging Yugoslav and Soviet views on important issues, began only two months after the August crisis, and in some way summarized the dissatisfaction of the two

¹⁸¹DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1968, f-162, sign. 443442, - Information on the relations between the USSR and the Balkan countries, and the Soviet policy towards the Mediterranean.

¹⁸²DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1968, f-80, 419311. 435514.

¹⁸³More about L. Brezhnev's foreign policy and the implementation of the doctrine of “limited sovereignty” in: Matthew Quimet. *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy* (North Carolina, 2003).

¹⁸⁴DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1968, f-162, sign 432615.

parties by the actual crisis in relations.¹⁸⁵ In the first letter of Brezhnev, dated October 17, Soviet dissatisfaction was focused on criticizing the presence of an “anti-Soviet sentiment” in Yugoslavia, which was initiated by an “incorrect assessment” of the Warsaw Pact military intervention. Brezhnev blamed this new atmosphere for the deterioration of Soviet-Yugoslav relations, especially with the insistence of officials in Belgrade that an identical military intervention threatened Yugoslavia. As opposed to the crisis in relations a decade ago, Brezhnev emphasized, this time the issue was not in “different approaches to the theory and practice of socialism”, but rather in the disturbing course that Yugoslavia began to implement with the help of the “anti-Soviet campaign”.¹⁸⁶ Tito's answer on November 5, 1968, started from pointing out the principles on which Yugoslavia based its foreign policy for decades.¹⁸⁷ Refusing to accept the reasons for the deterioration of relations that L. Brezhnev stated in his letter, Tito replied that the crisis was not a consequence of the “anti-Soviet propaganda”, but rather of a change in Soviet foreign policy, which used military force against the CSR and disregarded the independent position of Yugoslavia regarding that event. Tito criticized all elements of the anti-Yugoslav propaganda that was being carried out in the Soviet Union and other socialist states, especially attacks on Yugoslavia's foreign policy orientation and its internal system, which resembled a “similar campaign against our country in the past, which caused enormous damage, not only in the mutual relations of our countries, and much beyond that.”¹⁸⁸ Yugoslavia was particularly worried, Tito pointed out, by the justification of military intervention by the doctrine of “so-called limited sovereignty”, which “legalized intervention and interference in the internal affairs of other sovereign states.” The suggestion of Soviet policy that an improvement in relations between the two countries might follow if Yugoslavia changed its policy, was rejected by Tito as unacceptable conditioning, stressing that the existence of different positions was a “normal

¹⁸⁵Milivoj Bešlin, „Odnosi Jugoslavije i Sovjetskog saveza 1968 - između nužnosti saradnje i principa slobode“, Istraživanja, br.22, Novi Sad 2011, 491-514

¹⁸⁶AJ, 837, I-1/1007, Message from the Secretary General of the CC CPSU Leonid Brezhnev to the President of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia Josip Broz Tito, October 17, 1968.

¹⁸⁷The necessary instructions were sent from Belgrade to Ambassador Vidić on the delivery of Tito's letter. During the delivery of the reply, the ambassador was to stress that Yugoslavia had a “permanent interest” to cooperate with the USSR on the principles of the Moscow and Belgrade declarations. It was unacceptable for Yugoslavia to change its policy, as was conditioned by the letter of Brezhnev, and it opposed the theory of “limited sovereignty” advocated in Moscow. It was specifically ordered that Vidić should not enter into a debate about Czechoslovakia, nor initiate ideological issues, and represent Yugoslavia's interest in opposition to the “lager” expectations - DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1968, f- 159, sign. 439433.

¹⁸⁸AJ, KPR I-1/1007, To the Secretary General of the CC CPSU comrade L. I. Brezhnev, November 5, 1968.

situation” in the relations of sovereign states. The principles of the Belgrade and Moscow declarations were the only true foundation of Yugoslav-Soviet cooperation on equal terms, and Tito had to conclude at the end of the letter that they were missing, and asked “if they still represented the basis on which the USSR government is ready to cooperate with socialist Yugoslavia?”¹⁸⁹

The irreconcilability of differences manifested in the correspondence between the two party leaders was a confirmation of the divergent directions of interests of the two socialist countries. The crisis that arose due to the military intervention in CSR was unexpected for the Yugoslav communists, but it was not a new event in understanding the essence of Soviet policy in Eastern Europe. The process of finding the right **modus vivendi** in the Yugoslav-Soviet relations had gone through various stages, testing the possibility of Soviet foreign policy to be sufficiently “flexible”, and Yugoslav to be sufficiently unaligned. Drawing from the experience of 1948 and 1956, Soviet policy was based on the fact that any tightening of relations with Yugoslavia was politically harmful, not only because of the possible spreading of “anti-Sovietism” in Yugoslavia, but also due to the fact that a complete break with Belgrade would lead to a greater military and economic dependence of Yugoslavia on the West. On the other hand, Yugoslav policy firmly stood on the non-bloc position, believing that too close relations with one of the parties in the Cold War were harmful to Yugoslav interests. In the late 1960s, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union had enough experience and developed diplomatic mechanisms for sufficiently overcoming the crisis. The problem related to the events in the CSR did not jeopardize the Soviet-Yugoslav bilateral relations at any moment, and the Soviet Union was already becoming one of the important foreign trade partners of Yugoslavia. Moscow had focused its hopes on Josip Broz Tito's statesman's experience, whom it perceived as a strong guarantor of stable relations, unlike many in the Yugoslav party leadership who were characterized by the Soviets as “anti-Soviet” and “pro-Western”. At the celebration of the Republic Day, on November 29, 1968, in Jajce, Tito spoke about the desire of Yugoslavia to develop good relations with all socialist countries. Positive messages heard at Tito's press conference in Jajce, in the opinion of the members of the CC CPSU, were immediately

¹⁸⁹AJ, KPR I-1/1007, To the Secretary General of the CC CPSU comrade L. I. Brezhnev, November 5, 1968.

welcomed at the highest level in Moscow (“they gave wings to the Soviet leadership”).¹⁹⁰ The Soviet ambassador to Yugoslavia, Ivan Benediktov, in a conversation with the acting State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Miša Pavićević, on December 25, also expressed satisfaction with Tito's stance, pointing out that responsible people in the USSR concluded that “after some deterioration, a basis for improving the atmosphere in our relations had been created.”¹⁹¹

Mitigation of the political damage caused by the Soviet intervention in the CSR to Yugoslav-Soviet relations did not last too long. It could be said that, in comparison to previous crises in mutual relations, such as the break with Stalin in 1948, or the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the crisis of 1968 was the shortest. By relying on Tito's support, Soviet policy managed to open a dialogue with Yugoslavia in 1969, and to improve communication with Belgrade in less than a year. For the Soviet interests, it was the achievement of one part of the strategy after the stabilization of the situation in the CSR, by the establishment of unity in the ICM and the reduction of resistance that appeared in many European communist parties. Already in the spring of 1969, talks between Josip Broz Tito and Soviet Ambassador I. Benediktov significantly raised the issue of normalization of relations. After consultations in Moscow, at a meeting with Tito and the new State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mirko Tepavac, on May 18, the Soviet ambassador conveyed a message from the CC CPSU stating that the principled line of Soviet party and state leadership towards Yugoslavia remained unchanged, and that it entailed “consistent fulfillment by the USSR of treaties and agreements signed with Yugoslavia, strict adherence to the principle of equality and respect for the sovereignty of the SFRY, the absence of any restrictions in the development of economic, military, scientific-technical and cultural cooperation with Yugoslavia.”¹⁹² The Soviet Union, in its message to the Yugoslav leadership, insisted on the existence of a number of common interests, which enabled the strengthening of mutual cooperation, and on the rejection of those bad practices, such as writings in the press. In contrast to fierce anti-Yugoslav course present in the Soviet public since August 1968, as well as Brezhnev's criticism in his letter to Josip Broz, a new orientation towards Yugoslavia in mid-

¹⁹⁰DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1968, f-162, sign. 445639.

¹⁹¹J, 837, I-5-b/99-21, Note on talks of the acting State Secretary M. Pavićević with the ambassador of the USSR I. A. Benediktov, December 25, 1968.

¹⁹²AJ, 837, I-3-a/101-112, Note on the talks of the President of the Republic J. B. Tito, with the ambassador of the USSR I. A. Benediktov, May 18, 1969, in Karadordevo.

1969 calmed the rising tensions. Stable bilateral cooperation, enhanced by many favorable economic and military arrangements, had been highlighted as an indicator of the good will to improve overall interstate relations. This was especially emphasized by the statement from the Soviet side that there was not a single country that would, with bad intentions towards a country, “offer economic and military assistance, help it to prepare military personnel and install the latest military technique.”¹⁹³ The CPSU message was received by Tito without major objections, with expressed desire to talk about all the problems. The conciliatory tone in the conversation bypassed the usual dispute on the writings of the press and the problem of Czechoslovakia. Tito reiterated that the intervention in the CSR was wrong, but believed that its future development was “a matter of the people and the party”, bearing in mind also the changes brought with the new party leadership. Asked by Benediktov, whether he could convey to the government of the USSR and the CC CPSU that Tito’s attitude was “that by taking appropriate measures it is possible to overcome existing difficulties and to improve and further develop our mutual relations and cooperation”, Tito answered affirmatively.¹⁹⁴

The Yugoslav response to the May message was delivered to Brezhnev by Ambassador D. Vidić on June 23, and it contained Yugoslavia's readiness to improve all forms of cooperation with the Soviet Union, which were in line with the well-known principles of “the self-management system and the principles of our foreign policy.”¹⁹⁵ However, the desire of the party's top leadership to start a dialogue with Moscow did not go along with the criticism of Soviet politics in the Yugoslav press and opinion journalism. In mid-June 1969, the Yugoslav ambassador to Sweden, Lazar Latinović, sent negative remarks on the forwarded circular letter about Yugoslav-Soviet relations, opposing the somewhat changed views on Soviet politics. Based on the experience of his diplomatic activity in Stockholm, Latinović warned that the USSR “was intensely working to compromise the SFRY and its leadership, by using all available means”. Describing his negative experiences after his trip to the Soviet Union in 1969, where he met with “crafty” and “knavish” Soviet leadership, Latinović said that any “indulgence toward a large country would negatively affect the small country”.¹⁹⁶ On the other hand, in early July

¹⁹³Ibid.

¹⁹⁴Ibid.

¹⁹⁵DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1969, f-177, 42230.

¹⁹⁶DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1969, f-177, 422545.

1969, the Yugoslav ambassador to the United Kingdom, I. Sarajčić, sent confidential reports to Belgrade, where he conveyed valuable information from certain British and American services regarding the foreign policy positions of the Soviet Union. According to the assessments from London, the USSR was not prepared to undertake new pressure measures against Romania and Yugoslavia in the nearest future, and a group within Soviet leadership was strengthening that opposed the policy of crude pressure, and advocated a “more flexible resolution of misunderstandings within the socialist lager, as well as with Yugoslavia.”¹⁹⁷ Sarajčić’s information from London contributed to confirming the correctness of the party’s top leadership decision to initiate the process of normalizing relations with the Soviet Union, so that the doctrine of limited sovereignty would be less mentioned in relation to Yugoslavia. The Czechoslovak case was now isolated, and the Yugoslav side ceased to exploit it publicly. Critical texts about the Soviet Union, repressive skirmishes in Czechoslovakia, and the Cino-Soviet relations, occasionally appeared in the titles of the Yugoslav press, but since the summer of 1969, they were reduced, either forcibly, or by insisting that the press had to follow the objectives of Yugoslav foreign policy.¹⁹⁸

The visit of Andrei Gromyko, the head of Soviet diplomacy, at the beginning of September 1969, was used by the Yugoslav leadership to formalize, in a direct dialogue with the Soviet Union, the principles on which the new Yugoslav-Soviet relations would be based. Prior to the start of the talks, A. Gromyko read the response of the Soviet government and the CC CPSU to the Yugoslav message of July 16, delivered to Brezhnev. Invoking the respect of the “Leninist principles of foreign policy”, Soviet officials reiterated their readiness “to follow the principles of equality and sovereignty of the socialist states, and to respect their full right to solve their internal affairs”, in their relations with Yugoslavia.¹⁹⁹ Disagreements had been noticed, but the message emphasized that the basic issue was “to remove disagreements and to improve the comprehensive cooperation”.²⁰⁰ During a substantial discussion on many issues, Tito reiterated

¹⁹⁷DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1969, f-177, 425118.

¹⁹⁸Zdravko Vuković, *Od deformacija SDB do maspoka i liberalizma –moji stenografski zapisi 1966-1972* (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga 1989), 297.

¹⁹⁹AJ, 837, KPR, I-3-a/101-113 – Note on the talks of the President of the Republic J. B. Tito with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR A. A. Gromyko held on September 4, at Brioni.

²⁰⁰*Ibid.*

that there was an interest in Yugoslavia to maintain good relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, advocating the policy of active co-existence in foreign affairs. Persuading the Soviet delegation that the leading political power in Yugoslavia was solely the League of Communists, and that the course of removing all “anomalies” secured “proper socialist development”, Tito responded to the many erroneous conclusions of the anti-Yugoslav campaign since August 1968 about the Yugoslav system, with the primary desire to make the “specific path of Yugoslav socialism” publicly recognized once again. The attitude towards military intervention in Czechoslovakia was, in principle, unchanged. Tito reiterated that this move had been a mistake “both for socialism in Czechoslovakia and for socialism in general”.²⁰¹ However, at the same time, the Yugoslav shift regarding the issue of the CSR was expressed, with Tito's attitude that he did not wish to get involved in the interpretation of the substance of the changes with the new Czechoslovak leadership, and his clear instructions to Yugoslav communists that writing about the Czechoslovak case had to end. According to Tito, the overall situation about the CSR was no longer to be “dramatized”, because “we could not be bigger Czechs than Czechs”. Tito clearly emphasized that Yugoslavia's position was that Yugoslavia's relations with the Soviet Union were not allowed to deteriorate due to the issue of Czechoslovakia, which was accepted by A. Gromyko with great pleasure.

In the text of the joint statement on the visit of Minister Gromyko, it was pointed out that the two parties declared their will to further develop the friendship between the USSR and the SFRY. The fact that the Yugoslav side wanted to be highlighted in the statement, and which was also emphasized in the message of the CPSU read by Gromyko, was that the principles of the Belgrade and Moscow declaration were “the permanent basis for cooperation between the two countries”.²⁰² By a statement in which the key common standpoints were outlined, both parties expressed their belief that the exchange of views would have a positive impact on further development and consolidation of the relations between the SFRY and the USSR. For the Yugoslav party's top leadership, the debate on the forcible crash of Dubček's reform leadership was ended. Yugoslav interests to support the international detente through better relations with the Soviet Union overpowered the debates that emerged in European communism about the

²⁰¹Ibid.

²⁰²Ibid.

essence of military aggression, and the possibilities of democratic reform. In October 1969, Brezhnev was able to note with pleasure that no one was speaking “against our intervention” any more. In his words, his decision to send troops was motivated by the decisive awareness that “Czechoslovakia was not Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia could do it one way or the other, but it had undergone a revolution and remained socialist.”²⁰³ It was a far-sighted conviction of the Soviet leader.

2. The rise of detente and Yugoslav-Soviet agreements 1971-1973.

In a later reference to the events in Czechoslovakia of August 1968, Leonid Brezhnev assessed that the military intervention of the Warsaw Pact forces significantly contributed to setting the ground for the implementation of the detente. The successful completion of military and political measures in the CSR, the suspension of all program interventions of Dubček’s leadership, the stabilization of the situation in Czechoslovak society through the imposition of a more restrictive party course, and, most of all, the absence of any significant consequences for the international position of the Soviet Union, convinced the Soviet leadership that a big political victory had been won on the international scene. In his September 1968 report to the Politburo, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, A. Gromyko, assured the party's top leadership that the invasion had sobered many in the West as to the possibility of developing their potential in that part of Europe, and convinced them of the determination of the USSR to defend its interests.²⁰⁴ The prospect that the intervention in Czechoslovakia would jeopardize the already fragile unity of the ICM and undermine Moscow's authority among European communists had also failed to materialize. Some opposition that appeared with the military intervention among certain European Communist parties, especially French, Italian and Yugoslav, had been gradually successfully muted. The World Conference of Communist Parties, held after many years of preparations in June 1969 in Moscow, showed the CPSU's skill to assert

²⁰³DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1969, f-177, 437083.

²⁰⁴V. Zubok, op.cit. 208-209.

unity in the ICM and its sovereign position at the conference, by offering the topic of confronting imperialism and Maoism, and reiterating the importance of “peaceful coexistence”. Brezhnev perceived the conference as an expression of great support for successful policy implementation in Czechoslovakia and censure of Chinese politics.²⁰⁵

The possibility of achieving a detente in cold-war international relations was a fundamental issue that, in various ways, affected the post-war period of development of the bipolar world. Drawing from the firmly set and irreconcilable interests of the established blocks, impulses towards supporting adherence to the principle of “peaceful coexistence” among states with different socio-political systems, constituted a periodic, rather than permanent feature of the policies of key actors in international relations. Analyzing all the international crises since 1945, in particular with reference to the Cuban rocket crisis of 1962, it seemed that the detente was an unattainable project in a complex ideologically distributed discourse of world politics. However, at the end of the 1960s, along with the end of the crisis in Czechoslovakia, new political platforms in Washington and Bonn appeared, which enabled the resolution of a number of open and unresolved problems in post-war relations with the Soviet Union. The increased confidence of the Soviet leadership after the break-up of the “Prague Spring” made the Soviet foreign policy more pervasive, while the new danger from China, after the border incident on March 1969 on Ussuri, made it more adaptable to the initiatives from the West. For Leonid Brezhnev, undoubtedly the strongest political figure in Politburo since 1968, the detente was perceived as a personal project. The statehood of the Soviet leader in securing world peace, and the assertion of Soviet post-war spheres of interest, had become an effective substitute for the anti-reform course in internal policy and the stagnating effect of “real socialism”. Embracing the “Eastern policy” of the new West European government of Willy Brandt, after its election triumph in 1969, led to the first important agreements between Moscow and Bonn, which opened the door to the detente.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵S. Pons, *op.cit.*, 266-267.

²⁰⁶The Moscow agreement, of August 1970, regulated the relations between West Germany and the Soviet Union, and established new cooperation on the principles of the renunciation of war and stable bilateral co-operation. For Moscow, this meant solving the problem of German militarism and revanchism, as the main post-war danger to Soviet security. Finally, the agreement between Poland and the FRG, in December 1970, as well as the acceptance of Western powers that West Berlin did not belong to the FRG, in September 1971, paved the way to the recognition of post-war borders, unhindered existence of East Germany, and ultimately recognition of Soviet spheres of interest in Europe. It was a decisive moment towards reaching the Helsinki agreement in 1975.

Regulating the most controversial problems with West Germany, which was until then, the main ideological and geostrategic rival in Europe, enabled Brezhnev's stable negotiating position with Washington. Relations with the United States, and the new administration of Richard Nixon, were enduring grave temptations of the unfinished war in Vietnam, great resistance in both the Soviet and the American leadership, and the simultaneous need to maintain cohesion in both military-political blocs. Summit meetings between Nixon and Brezhnev in 1972 and 1973, and numerous signed bilateral agreements, represented the peak of the detente in international relations.

Yugoslav foreign policy had closely monitored the changes in the relations between the great powers, trying to find in them enough elements to match its interests. At the beginning of 1970, the new Yugoslav ambassador to Moscow, Veljko Mićunović, sent the first preliminary reports on the state of relations with the USSR. Besides a critical overview of the many negative features of Soviet policy and strategy towards Yugoslavia, Mićunović noted that there were many favorable factors in international relations that could influence further development of Yugoslav-Soviet relations - the interest of the USSR to preserve the status quo in Europe, cooperation of the USSR with all countries of Western Europe, and the long-term cooperation between USSR and the United States, in both directions. Mićunović pointed out, and this became an obvious fact from the beginning of the 1960s, that the danger from the People's Republic of China strengthened the "pro-Western policy of the USSR".²⁰⁷ Some of the new moments observed in Soviet politics were on the agenda during Yugoslav-Soviet contacts in 1969. During the visit of A. Gromyko, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union agreed, in a joint statement, that one of the priorities in mutual cooperation between the two countries had to be the issue of security and cooperation in Europe: "The two parties believe that holding a general European conference could present a useful path towards solving European problems, contributing to the rapprochement of viewpoints and to the efforts of all interested states to consolidate peace in Europe, and to develop common European cooperation in various fields."²⁰⁸ Each in its own way, Belgrade and Moscow had committed themselves to cooperating and exchanging views on the

²⁰⁷AJ, 837, KPR I-5-b/99-23 -Overview of the relations between SFRY and USSR at the beginning of 1970.

²⁰⁸AJ, 837, KPR, I-3-a/101-113 – Note on the talks of the President of the Republic J. B. Tito with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR A. A. Gromyko held on September 4, at Brioni.

issue of European security in the future. During the talks with Gromyko at Brioni, Tito suggested to the Soviet side that their policy should be much more “flexible” in providing support to the forces in West Germany that promote peace and security. Insisting on the support to the Social Democrats of Willy Brandt, with whom he already had successful co-operation, Tito expressed concern that their political option might not win in the upcoming elections (“Our interest is to strengthen Social Democrats in West Germany. Brandt is, nevertheless, in favor of a different foreign policy than Kissinger.”)²⁰⁹ In a letter to Brezhnev, of December 7, 1969, Tito was encouraged that there were numerous initiatives among European countries to organize a European conference, which, in Tito's view, could be regarded as “a favorable sign that a climate and readiness for creating better and more stable conditions in Europe exist.”²¹⁰

Yugoslav politics tried to be visible enough in moments when the detente was developing. The crisis in the CSR in August 1968 was sobering for Yugoslavia, and it emphasized more the need to return the balance in relation to the great powers. In addition, the international prestige of Yugoslavia was on the increase with the resistance of Belgrade to the military intervention in Czechoslovakia, which was used by Yugoslav diplomacy for a greater engagement in international relations. The initiative for convening of the third NAM conference had been one of the most important priorities of the Yugoslav foreign policy. Although preparatory meetings in Belgrade (1969) and Dar es Salaam (1970) showed different views among non-aligned countries, caused by the action of radical currents in the Third World, they did not prevent the successful holding of the Lusaka conference. Tito's visit to the African countries in January and February 1970 (Tanzania, Zambia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Uganda, UAR and Libya) was part of the Yugoslav campaign to support the new conference, and Tito's travel to Benelux, France and West Germany, at the end of the year, was the first official visit of the Yugoslav president to Western Europe since the mid-1950s. The meeting with Willy Brandt was important not only for strengthening the bilateral relations between Yugoslavia and West Germany, but also for Yugoslav support to the first agreements between Moscow and Bonn. As Tito conveyed to the members of the Soviet delegation of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR during their visit to Belgrade in October 1970, Brandt was willing to continue the policy of

²⁰⁹Ibid.

²¹⁰DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1969, f-175, 443239 – Tito's letter to Brezhnev, December 7, 1969.

improving relations with socialist countries, despite the opposition's antagonism, with the message that the atmosphere in Europe for the planned European conferences should continue to be improved. With great optimism, Tito viewed the visits to West European countries as very important, especially in sending the message to European hosts, that the issue of security in Europe was incompatible with the bloc division.²¹¹ Finally, the visit of Richard Nixon to Yugoslavia from September 30 to October 2, 1970, was a confirmation of the rise of Belgrade's cooperation with Washington since 1968, which would be reinforced by Tito's return visit to the United States at the end of October 1971. The new political platform between the SFRY and the US, harmonized with the Washington declaration of 1971, laid the foundations of new Yugoslav-American relations on principles that reflected the intentions of detente - overcoming international tensions, respect for equality among states with different systems, and maintaining relations in line with "the spirit and principles of the UN Charter".²¹²

The path to the Yugoslav-Soviet agreements of 1971-1973, which represented a turning point in establishing stable relations of the 1970s, faced various challenges, both in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. The invitation to Leonid Brezhnev to visit Yugoslavia, sent by Josip Broz Tito in late 1969, was not accepted in Moscow until mid-1971. There was an impression that in the process of improving the relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, the former was much more active. Yugoslav ambassador to Moscow, Veljko Mićunović, in his first reports on the perspectives of Yugoslav-Soviet relations, at the beginning of 1970, pointed out numerous negative features of Soviet policy towards Yugoslavia. Mićunović believed that the political reservations of the USSR towards Yugoslavia did not significantly change even after A. Gromyko's visit, and that this was a direct consequence of the political activity against Yugoslavia since 1968. Assessing the Soviet approach towards Yugoslavia as less and less improvised, as it results from the work of "special teams composed of experts from various institutes", Mićunović pointed out that, apart from the official attitude towards Yugoslavia, there existed an internal one, which was anti-Yugoslav, as well as another, which used all means to establish relations within the Yugoslav society "in order to strengthen the Soviet presence and

²¹¹AJ, 837, KPR, I-3-a/101-121, Note on the talks between J. Broz Tito and the delegation of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, held in Belgrade on October 16, 1970.

²¹²D. Bogetić, *Jugoslovensko-američki odnosi...*, 321-335.

influence in Yugoslavia". The report warned that the activities of the Cominform emigration in the Soviet Union were running without interference, that Soviet politics was a longstanding patron of "Greater Bulgaria" threats to Yugoslavia, and that, with its independent position, Yugoslavia represented an obstacle to the Soviet expansion towards the Mediterranean. As to the Yugoslav non-aligned policy, in the opinion of Mićunović, there were clear tendencies of challenging the influence of the role of Yugoslavia and efforts to adapt the activities of the NAM to the Soviet interests.²¹³ Regarding the prospects for future development of relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR, Mićunović emphasized positive factors in the change of Soviet policy towards Western Europe and America, but he generally believed that the hegemonic policy of the Soviet Union towards socialist countries and Europe was a significant impediment. His decades long significant experience in diplomacy, enriched by ambassadorial positions both in Moscow (twice) and in Washington, had allowed V. Mićunović to continuously follow the ups and downs of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. Unlike earlier periods of "reconciliation", Mićunović claimed at the beginning of the 1970's that the Soviet leadership based its policy towards Yugoslavia on "more reliable factors".²¹⁴ They were based on the conviction of the Russians that their presence and influence in Yugoslavia, Mićunović concluded, was directly "linked to the rise of our internal problems, and to our possible problems in foreign relations".²¹⁵

The internal crisis in Yugoslavia, which started in the early 1970s, significantly influenced the course of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. The deterioration in relations with the Soviet Union, due to military intervention against the reform leadership in Prague, gave wings to the reform group within the LCY to take some of the key positions in the republican and federal institutions at the end of 1968. It was a conviction, in the words of Mirko Tepavac, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs since 1969, that it became possible to defend in Yugoslavia what had been defeated in Czechoslovakia.²¹⁶ The election of Marko Nikezić, former State Secretary

²¹³"Our current experience shows that our relations with some non-aligned countries (the Arabs) were declining in proportion to the successful development of USSR relations with these countries. The strengthening of Soviet influence in the 'Third World' could rather be a factor that would make our independent foreign policy more difficult in both directions: in relation to some non-aligned countries that were becoming dependent on the USSR, and in relation to the USSR - than vice versa." AJ, 837, KPR I-5-b/99-23 -Overview of the relations between SFRY and USSR at the beginning of 1970.

²¹⁴Ibid.

²¹⁵Ibid.

²¹⁶A. Nenadović, Mirko Tepavac..., 76.

for Foreign Affairs, as president of the CC LC of Serbia, was a clear consequence of such a conviction, since Nikezić was not only one of the proponents of the reform in the 1960s, but also a harsh critic of Soviet policy, which was why he was considered in Moscow as belonging to the “pro-Western” group in LCY. From its reform position, Nikezić's leadership continuously criticized the Soviet system (“we must be critical of this system because of our evolution also”), opposing the conservative party leaders gathered around Tito.²¹⁷ The reform tendencies among Yugoslav communists were traditionally critically received in Moscow, and after the events in Czechoslovakia, they were opposed to the strategy of the CPSU to curb “liberal” tendencies in the communist parties of Eastern Europe. The campaign against Yugoslavia since August 1968 insisted on the criticism of the Yugoslav self-government system, its ideological shortcomings and problems.²¹⁸ At the same time, numerous Soviet party officials critically emphasized, in conversations with Yugoslav diplomats, that there were many pro-Western and anti-Soviet forces in Yugoslavia, which opposed cooperation with the Soviet Union. During the talks with Tito, in September 1969, A. Gromyko pointed out that some events in Yugoslavia, related to its internal organization and political life, were met with reservations in the Soviet Union. Stating that the system was “without a doubt your internal question”, Gromyko stressed that, nevertheless, the USSR, as a “fraternal socialist country”, could not “ignore internal relations in socialist countries. That was in line with socialist internationalism and proletarian internationalism”.²¹⁹

Attempts to reaffirm the principles of social and economic reform from the mid-1960s were not extensively supported by the party, and the problems that arose in that period set the sharp tone of inter-republican and, consequently, inter-ethnic conflicts in Yugoslavia. The Tenth session of the CC CP of Croatia, in January 1970, opened many questions of possible changes in Yugoslavia, viewed from the perspective of Zagreb, which intensified the inter-party polemic

²¹⁷Z. Vuković, *op.cit.*, 370.

²¹⁸In mid-1969, the Yugoslav Embassy in Moscow listed more than 100 articles, information and news directed against Yugoslavia and its external and internal direction, which appeared in Soviet media since August 1968. The Embassy noted in its report that the Soviet press, “initially attempted to discredit Yugoslavia, belittled the significance of its censure of military intervention by equating the reaction of Yugoslavia with the reactions of imperialists, labeled Yugoslavs as ‘advocates’ of Czechoslovak revisionists, claimed that the reaction of Yugoslavia differed from the reaction of other communist parties and African countries, and that Yugoslavia has taken a path of rapprochement with the West and with China, which leads to anti-Sovietism.”, DAMSPRS, PA, USSR, 1969, f-175, sign. 429529.

²¹⁹AJ, 837, KPR, I-3-a/101-113 – Note on the talks of the President of the Republic J. B. Tito with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR A. A. Gromyko held on September 4, at Brioni.

and polarization. In such an atmosphere, which was presented in foreign press as a process of disintegration of the country, apprehension of a more extensive Soviet interference in internal problems was growing in Yugoslavia. Edward Kardelj explained the possibilities of achieving “more liberal changes” in Yugoslav society and their relation to the attitude of the Soviet Union at a meeting of the CC CP Slovenia, where he pointed out that the greatest success in Yugoslavia after 1948 was in resisting “the political tendencies represented by Đilas and other pseudo-liberal or social ultra-radicals”, as Yugoslavia would otherwise most likely experience the fate of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. There was not need to live in the illusion, Kardelj warned, that “this danger for us had completely disappeared”.²²⁰ The warnings of the ambassador to Moscow V. Mićunović, in the reports of 1970 and 1971, went in that direction. Prior to the planned official visit by the President of the FEC (Federal Executive Council), M. Ribičić, to the Soviet Union, V. Mićunović wrote that in a series of statements by Soviet representatives, “acts of direct interference in our internal affairs, divisive perceptions of our leadership, and suggestions for measures that should be undertaken in our internal and foreign policy” could be found.²²¹ The unpleasant talks that Ribičić held with Kosygin, as well as the fact that Brezhnev refused to meet with him, convinced Mićunović that the USSR “did not perceive Yugoslavia as an equal partner”.²²² At the end of 1970, the Yugoslav Embassy also made an analysis of Soviet texts criticizing Yugoslavia, which led to the conclusion that the policy of Yugoslavia and LCY were “systematically treated as a basic ideological opponent” in the USSR.²²³ The crisis in Yugoslavia did not subside, but grew increasingly complicated by a total paralysis of the federal institutions, the inter-republican conflicts and distrust, which was widely commented in the Soviet press and party newspapers as evidence of the crisis of the Yugoslav system.

Meetings between Tito and Brezhnev in 1971, 1972 and 1973 took place at a time when the policy of detente was at its peak. Both leaders were willing to leave their disagreements behind, and frame the principles of cooperation between the SFRY and the USSR in direct

²²⁰Z. Vuković, op.cit., 314.

²²¹AJ, 837, KPR I-5-b/99-23 - Yugoslav-Soviet relations/on the occasion of the official visit of the President of the FEC to Soviet Union, in June 1970.

²²²AJ, 837, KPR I-5-b/99-23 - Official visit of the President of the FEC to USSR (Mićunović’s report).

²²³AJ, 837, KPR I-5-b/99-23 - Note on latest Soviet texts criticizing the policy of Yugoslavia (note received from the embassy in Moscow), November 5, 1970.

negotiations. There was a understanding that the policy of detente should be supported, regardless of whether initiatives came from Moscow or from Belgrade, for the sake of the common goal of achieving peace on the Old Continent. In April 1971, at the 24th Congress of the CPSU, later dubbed the “Congress of Peace”, Brezhnev's concept of “peaceful coexistence” completely triumphed. Although there was still significant resistance, Brezhnev successfully traced a path to accepting his conception of international relations by the CPSU. The Congress offered great support to convening the European Conference on Security and Cooperation, and, consequently, further improvement of relations with Yugoslavia had to be part of a general Soviet European policy.²²⁴ The arrival of L. Brezhnev to Belgrade, in September 1971, took place after a successful meeting of the Soviet leader with W. Brandt in Yalta, and the first agreements with the US President R. Nixon on holding a joint Soviet-American meeting in 1972. In a short conversation with S. Dolanc, Brezhnev summed up his expectations prior to the talks with Tito, stating that the talks should concentrate on the situation in the world globally, setting aside mutual disagreements.²²⁵ The meeting with Tito was rich in important messages of mutual understanding, and showed common attitudes on most international issues. Brezhnev assessed that a socialist society was being built in Yugoslavia, and that, if there were “different approaches”, they could not be the subject of a dispute. The importance of the documents from 1955 and 1956 was confirmed by the Soviet side, and found its place in the joint statement after the visit. Several times during the meeting, the impression was that Brezhnev wanted close Yugoslav-Soviet relations akin to his cordial relations with Tito.²²⁶ A mutual desire for good interstate and inter-party relations was expressed. Brezhnev emphasized the issue of foreign policy as extremely important. He briefed Tito on his talks with W. Brandt, which in his view offered hope that the organization of the European Security Conference had great support from West Germany, as well as on contacts with the United States, with which the first important strategic consultations on strategic weapons and West Berlin were underway. For the first time,

²²⁴At the Congress itself, Brezhnev gave a brief overview of the relations with Yugoslavia and perspectives for cooperation: “Soviet people want socialism in Yugoslavia to strengthen, that Yugoslavia’s ties to the socialist community become stronger. We support Soviet-Yugoslav cooperation, the development of contacts between our parties.” AJ, 837, KPR, I-3-a/101-131 – Visit of the Secretary General of the CC CPSU Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev to the SFRY.

²²⁵Ibid.

²²⁶AJ, 837, KPR, I-3-a/101-131 – Stenographic notes of the talks of J.B. Tito, President of the SFRY and President of the LCY, with L.I. Brezhnev, Secretary General of the CC CPSU, held on September 23, 1971.

the view of the Soviet Union that one of the preconditions for European security was to end the existence of both military blocs, Warsaw Pact and NATO, could be heard from the Soviet side. Brezhnev was hoping that a part of the conciliatory tone of Soviet policy would be transmitted through Tito to the United States, during a planned visit at the end of October. The only reservations Brezhnev expressed were related to Moscow's relations with Beijing, but Belgrade could no longer support the isolation of China. On the other hand, Tito was more focused on internal issues of Yugoslavia, rejecting malicious news about the country's disintegration and the overall crisis, but also emphasized his wish for establishing relations with the Soviet Union on a “sound basis”.²²⁷ The joint Soviet-Yugoslav statement after the talks, which resulted from long and not in the least pleasant negotiations between the members of both delegations, was the most important document of the visit.

The statement outlined the basic principles of cooperation on which the relations of the two countries and parties would be based in the future. Starting from the notion that cooperation was determined by “the closeness of historical fates, identical bases of social order, the closeness of approach to many international problems, adherence to the principles of socialist internationalism”, the joint statement emphasized that the development of Yugoslav-Soviet relations was based primarily on the principles of the Belgrade and Moscow declarations. The acceptance of these principles, both parties agreed, meant ensuring mutual cooperation based on “mutual respect for the specifics in the development of socialism” in both countries, based on the struggle for peaceful coexistence and peace in the world, and which was of particular importance, “on the basis of equality and respect for sovereignty and independence, and the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of another country for any motive whatsoever”.²²⁸ In the statement, both parties noted a number of troublesome issues in the world, where joint action was expected to resolve them, starting from an unfair monetary and trade system, an expansionist imperialism, the conflicts in Vietnam and the Middle East, and finally the removal of all remainders of colonialism. However, particular attention was paid to the process of detente, i.e. relaxation of tensions in Europe. The statement recognized the conclusion

²²⁷AJ, 837, KPR,I-3-a/101-131 – Stenographic notes of the talks of J.B. Tito, President of the SFRY and President of the LCY, with L.I. Brezhnev, Secretary General of the CC CPSU, held on September 23, 1971.

²²⁸AJ, 837, KPR,I-3-a/101-131 – Yugoslav-Soviet statement.

of the treaty between the USSR and Poland, and the Federal Republic of Germany, the Four Power Agreement on West Berlin issues, and the efforts of all parties to support the “healing” situation in Europe by a general European conference on security and cooperation issues. As a special place in the Statement, it was underlined that Yugoslavia, as a non-aligned country, received with understanding the readiness of the USSR and other socialist countries “for simultaneous dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization”.²²⁹

The impression in Belgrade concerning Leonid Brezhnev's visit was extremely favorable. Yugoslavia received strong assurances from the Soviet Union that its internal development, with its independent foreign policy, would be guaranteed by respecting certain principles. With great optimism, Tito told members of the National Assembly that Brezhnev's visit clarified many issues, contributed to a better mutual understanding, and recognition of Yugoslav independence in internal development and activities on the international scene. In Tito's opinion, the role and significance of the USSR in global proportions was indisputable. Analyzing the talks with the Soviet and American leaders, as well as the positive moments in renewing cooperation with China, Tito emphasized with pleasure that the situation in the world was changing, and that it was being realized more and more “that peace is indivisible, that ultimately everyone shares the common destiny, and that neglecting these needs jeopardizes the positive trends and stabilization of mutual relations”.²³⁰

Before Tito's return visit to the Soviet Union, from June 5 to June 10, 1972, a platform was defined by SSFA, to be used when talks with the Soviet party leadership of September 1971 were resumed. By its visit to Moscow, the Yugoslav delegation was to express interest in further stabilization and expansion of the relations, confirm the non-alignment policy at the moment of detente, and receive from the Soviets yet another confirmation of independent internal development. As to international issues, Tito's visit was to insist on providing support to all steps “resulting from a summit meeting within the triangle that strengthened peace and security”, in particular issues of European security, emphasizing that the approach to the CSCE had to confirm “the sovereign right of every country to independent and unhindered internal

²²⁹Ibid.

²³⁰AJ, 837, KPR, II-5-v-1/25 – Final text of the speech.

development”.²³¹ The talks in Moscow between the two delegations confirmed the basic premises of the Yugoslav platform prior to the visit. In front of the Yugoslav delegation, Brezhnev commended the results of the 24th Congress of the CPSU, proudly pointing out that not a single other party “managed to make such a progress towards peace”.²³² Brezhnev also commended the relations with Yugoslavia, although he related them once again to his personal relations with Tito (“maybe it is because of my personal sympathies that I have for you, comrade Tito, and let it be so for the rest of our lives, as we have agreed”).²³³ Brezhnev considered that there should be no military secrets between the two countries, because the Soviet Union expected this from Yugoslavia, if it asked. (“Comrade Tito knows all our secrets”). The Yugoslav delegation paid more attention to its own internal development. Tito was pleased to notify the members of the CPSU top leadership that, following the replacement of the republic's leadership in Croatia, the party was again “standing on its feet”. Secretary of the EC CC LCY Stane Dolanc, added to Tito’s speech by informing the Soviet leadership that a new line of the 2nd Conference of the LCY was being implemented in Yugoslavia, which implied “strengthening the ideological and political leadership of the LCY, clearer attitudes towards democratic centralism and the fight against all ideological, opposition deviations in the party”.²³⁴ The removal of the Croatian leadership, emphasized Dolanc, was a “proof of LCY's strength”. Communications of changes in the LCY were received positively by the Soviet leadership, as the bulk of earlier Soviet objections against the Yugoslav system was expressed by Moscow's concern that Yugoslavia was heading in an unknown direction. Tito told the Soviet leadership that the job had not yet been completed in Yugoslavia, that more matters needed to be cleared, which was a clear allusion to the uncertain position of Nikezić's leadership in Belgrade. The talks were concluded with the composition of a communique, which did not depart significantly from the Joint statement of 1971. The significance of the Belgrade and Moscow declarations was reiterated. Support for European cooperation and security had been supported as a priority of Soviet and Yugoslav foreign policy. On the occasion of the visit, a special honor was paid to Tito, who was awarded the Order of Lenin.

²³¹AJ, 837, KPR, I-2/53 - Information on the forthcoming visit of the President of the Republic to the Soviet Union.

²³²AJ, 837, KPR, I-2/53 Stenographic notes of the talks between the President of SFRY J.B. Tito and the Secretary General of the CC CPSU L.I. Brezhnev, held on June 6, 1972, in Kremlin.

²³³Ibid.

²³⁴Ibid.

At the ceremony of awarding the Order of Lenin in Moscow, Tito made an apposite speech in order to express his thanks for the honor, and used that occasion to point out that Lenin was for him “a great teacher” and “a revolutionary strategist” who set “theoretical and practical foundations for the revolutionary transformation of society”.²³⁵ Lenin's ideas were certainly significant in the continuation of the inner-party confrontations in Yugoslavia in late 1972. The replaced members of the Croatian leadership were expelled from LCY in 1972 alongside hundreds of others. The Sixth party congress of 1952, which was the main decisive point in relations with the Soviet system, was gradually being challenged. Within the party's top leadership, especially Tito and Dolanc, a new (old) party line was established, advocating a new reunified, recentralized, redistributed and thoroughly purified party, which would assert firm control over the country's internal affairs.²³⁶ These ideas were close to the Soviet party establishment, and served in the final defeat of another reform leadership in Yugoslavia, at the end of October 1972, with the resignations of the leaders of the CC LC Serbia. In Moscow, party cleansing in Yugoslavia was welcomed. In a conversation with S. Dolanc and R. Dugonjić, at the end of December 1972, a member of the Soviet Politburo, A. Kirilenko, conveyed that the Soviet party's top leadership was glad that LCY “leads an active struggle against nationalism, liberalism and other counterrevolutionary forces, for the introduction of order in the party, and for the strengthening of its leadership role”.²³⁷ The report on the participation of the state-party delegation of the SFRY on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the USSR, from December 20 to 25, 1972, emphasized the satisfaction of leading figures in the Soviet Union with the new “Marxist-Leninist” course, initiated by Tito, which “makes Yugoslavia closer, and leads it to the positions of the CPSU and the USSR policy in all areas”.²³⁸

The possibility that the internal crisis in Yugoslavia could serve as the main means of Soviet pressure was removed by the end of 1972, and all of Belgrade's attention was focused on

²³⁵AJ, 837, KPR, I-2/53 – Tito's speech on the occasion of receiving the Order of Lenin.

²³⁶D. Rusinow, *op.cit.*, 318-326.

²³⁷KPR I-5-b/99-25- Note on the talks of comrades Rato Dugonjić, Vice-president of the SFRY Presidency and Stane Dolanc, Secretary of the EB LCY, with A. Kirilenko, member of the CC CPSU Politburo, F. Kulakov, member of the CC CPSU Politburo, and I. Kapitonov, Secretary of the CC CPSU, held on December 23 and 24, 1972, in the Pereslavl-Zalessky hunting resort.

²³⁸KPR I-5-b/99-25- Report on the participation of the SFRY state-party delegation at the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the USSR.

strengthening bilateral cooperation and the feasibility of a European detente plan in relations with the Soviet Union. Periodical disagreements, as a relic of decades long distrust, did not disappear, and ranged from the use of Cominform emigrants, to Soviet criticism of Yugoslav press, and the publication of controversial books. The favorable political climate had once again strengthened economic relations. A \$ 540 million long-term commodity loan was signed with the Soviet Union to finance the construction and reconstruction of 38 commercial facilities in Yugoslavia.²³⁹ Yugoslav diplomacy continued to be engaged in advocating its own independent foreign policy orientation, relying on the support of the Soviet Union in crisis-related international situations. Tito's new visit to the Soviet Union, on November 12 to 15, 1973, in Kiev, took place at the moment when the detente experienced its first serious challenges due to the new war in the Middle East (Yom Kippur war) between Israel and the Arab states. During 1973, Yugoslav diplomacy favorably assessed the agreements between Nixon and Brezhnev, which, according to Belgrade, "formally ended the Cold War" and stabilized the cooperation between the West and the East.²⁴⁰ In the middle of the year, the Yugoslav Embassy in the Soviet Union correctly perceived the newly established "partnership" between Moscow and Washington as a guarantee that both forces would endeavor to keep the development of the situation under control, and would do everything to prevent local conflicts from escalating to the extent that could jeopardize their mutual relations. The war in the Middle East (ME) partially confirmed this. With the beginning of the war, Yugoslav diplomacy assumed the same position as Moscow, backing the rights of the Arab peoples against Israel, and assessing the crisis as an event that "unmasked the imperialist intentions of the United States".²⁴¹ The meeting between Tito and Brezhnev in Kiev, in which both leaders offered identical explanations of the ME crisis, passed along these lines. Brezhnev considered that every struggle was a class struggle, and that, accordingly, the strategic action had to contain "revolutionary-Marxist principles", which also entailed the struggle against imperialism "that fights fiercely to surround socialism from all sides".²⁴² Tito agreed with Brezhnev about the situation on the ME, informing the Soviet leader

²³⁹In principle, the USSR had agreed to finance the construction and reconstruction of 11 economic facilities in Yugoslavia in the total amount of 450 million dollars, which were to be used from 1976, D.Bogetić, "Sovjetska politika prema Jugoslaviji tokom prve faze bipolarnog detanta", *Istorija 20. veka*, br.2, (2014), 202.

²⁴⁰AJ, 837, KPR, I-5-b/99-25 - Preliminary overview of Brezhnev's visit to the US (SSIP).

²⁴¹AJ, 837, KPR, I-2/55 – Some elements of the international situation related to the crisis in the Middle East.

²⁴²AJ, 837, KPR, I-2/55 Stenographic notes of the talks between the President of LCY and President of SFRY J.B. Tito and the Secretary General of the CC CPSU L.I. Brezhnev, held on November 12, 1973, in Kiev.

about the measures taken by the Yugoslav government - “raising combat readiness to level one, denying western airplanes the right to fly over the airspace of Yugoslavia, restricting the freedom of movement of the US military attaché in Yugoslavia”.²⁴³ The presence of the USSR on ME was important, Tito pointed out. Joint forces were needed in the struggle against imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. The disappointment with Sadat's policy was mutual, although it was most pronounced with Brezhnev, as the Soviet influence in Egypt had practically ended. However, the forceful “anti-imperialism” of the two leaders could not obscure the significance of the detente and the European Conference on Security and Cooperation. The criticism of American imperialism during the talks did not entail criticism of the Nixon administration. Brezhnev was convinced that he had to preserve what had been accomplished with the United States, because “he would get another one, worse than Nixon”, which Tito agreed with. (“So far there was not a single president in the United States who would treat the Soviet Union the way Nixon did, and who would sign the obligations Nixon signed.”)²⁴⁴ The support to the CSCE was of primary importance, and Brezhnev requested Tito's support for its realization. In explaining the request for support, the Soviet leader stressed that the common interest of socialist countries had to be demonstrated in order to force the bourgeoisie to put its signature “on the principle of peaceful coexistence”.²⁴⁵

Unlike previous meetings, talks in Kiev were the least dramatic. They had already shown the continuity of understanding of the two parties about models of mutual relations and joint activities. For the LCY top leadership, the visit to the USSR was significant because it confirmed the justification of the 1971 and 1972 agreements, and for the Soviet Union, because it could focus its attention more on open problems, as early signs of a crisis of detente had already appeared. It turned out that Yugoslav-Soviet relations were inseparable from European circumstances, and that the ascent of detente had created a favorable environment for their further development.

²⁴³Ibid.

²⁴⁴AJ, 837, KPR, I-2/55 Stenographic notes of the talks between the President of LCY and President of SFRY J.B. Tito and the Secretary General of the CC CPSU L.I. Brezhnev, held on November 12, 1973, in Kiev.

²⁴⁵Ibid

3. The crisis of detente and Yugoslav-Soviet disputes.

In the mid-1970s, relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union exceeded the expectations of the 1971-1973 agreements. In March 1975, the Yugoslav Embassy in Moscow was convinced that there were no “essential changes” in Soviet politics that would disrupt continued good relations and call into question previous agreements. The Soviet leadership was still interested in maintaining stable relations with Yugoslavia, which was interpreted by their positive attitude to internal changes in Yugoslavia. The 10th Congress of the LCY was assessed in Moscow as an important step towards the “process of consolidation of the LCY”, as well as an important stage in the “rapprochement between the LCY and the CPSU”. Books of Tito’s speeches and excerpts from addresses at the 10th Congress of the LCY were published in Moscow, all of which was interpreted by Yugoslav diplomats as a “positive evolution” in the approach of the Soviet leadership to “our revolution, its authenticity and continuity, and even its specific features”.²⁴⁶ There was optimism in that direction, and the Kremlin expected less misunderstanding and difference in the internal and foreign policies of Yugoslavia and the USSR. In April 1975, the president of the FEC, Džemal Bjedić, had a warm reception in the Kremlin, where Brezhnev’s messages about the great Yugoslav-Soviet friendship were supported by the preparation of the largest volume of trade between the SFRY and the USSR in the period 1976-1980.²⁴⁷ In the talks held between Yugoslav Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs M. Minić and A. Gromyko in December 1975, the proximity of standpoints of the two countries on all international issues was confirmed, with the wish that regular mutual consultations be continued. After the visit, Minić assessed that detente was still the long-term course of Soviet foreign policy.²⁴⁸ Belgrade was pleased that a different picture of Yugoslavia had been created in the Soviet public by more diverse and plentiful information in the press and opinion journalism,

²⁴⁶AJ, 837, I-5-b/99-27, On some issues of Soviet perception on current LCY policy, and their attitude towards this policy.

²⁴⁷The agreement envisaged a trade exchange amounting to approximately \$ 14 billion. Export to the USSR worth 7 billion (machinery and ships, consumer goods, miscellaneous supplies and construction services), and import worth a little more than 7 billion (raw materials, equipment according to loans and commodity lists), AJ, 507, I-5-b/99-27, Information on the agreed volume of exchange between the SFRY and the USSR for the period 1976-1980.

²⁴⁸AJ, 507, I-5-b/99-27, Talks of Minić in Moscow, December 1975.

which, according to the reports of the Yugoslav Embassy, refrained from open criticism and public display of reserves towards the Yugoslav system. The Embassy in Moscow concluded with optimism that there was no indication that a different foreign and internal policy could be adopted by the Soviet leadership.²⁴⁹

For the Soviet Union, stable relations with Yugoslavia were only part of a successful foreign policy strategy, as in 1975, USSR turned with self-satisfaction towards self-confident global interventionism. From Moscow's perspective, the defeat of the United States in Vietnam, the collapse of Portuguese colonialism in Africa, and the first signs of the chronic crisis of Western capitalism due to the oil crisis, testified to the changes that contributed to the desired "revolutionary" transformations in the world, and shifted the balance of power with the West in favor of the Soviet Union. The policy of the USSR in Europe reached its peak with the Helsinki Act in August 1975. The Kremlin was in a triumphal mood, perceiving Helsinki as a formal confirmation of the Soviet sphere of influence in post-war Europe, and aiming at turning the focus of Soviet foreign policy towards the Third World countries. The successful Soviet intervention in the Horn of Africa had convinced the party's top leadership in Moscow that the Soviet Union had grown into a global force, which could willingly influence the development in many parts of the world, as a global alternative to the United States.²⁵⁰ Due to that, the detente was undergoing a serious crisis, with growing anti-Soviet sentiments in American politics, and a considerable rise of neo-conservatives, who became increasingly louder in opposing the policy of compromise with Kremlin. Ford's administration continued negotiations with Moscow, but with an obvious lack of legitimacy, after the political collapse of the Nixon administration.

Yugoslav politics did not show great resistance to Soviet global politics, as the interests of Belgrade and Moscow were largely identical, as was their understanding of the balance of power in international politics. During his meeting with L. Brezhnev, Tito stressed on several occasions the important role of the Soviet Union in solving international crises, always starting from identical ideological views on the causes of world conflicts. At the time of the outbreak of

²⁴⁹AJ, 837, I-5-b/99-27, On some issues of Soviet perception on current LCY policy, and their attitude towards this policy.

²⁵⁰Od Arne Vestad, *op.cit.*, 370.

the Cyprus crisis in 1974, Tito sent a message to the Soviet leader in which he emphasized the importance of the support of the Soviet Union to the independence and non-alignment of the Republic of Cyprus, and of a constructive approach of Soviet policy in order to overcome the crisis.²⁵¹ Soviet interventions in Africa were perceived in Belgrade as a positive contribution to the development of “progressive” regimes in African countries and their resistance to US imperialist politics. Similar impressions were also reflected in the perception of the crisis in the Middle East, in which Soviet influence began to fade after the Yom Kippur war, while the common censure of Belgrade and Moscow of Sadat’s policy in Egypt persisted, as well as their support for the regimes in Syria, Iraq and Libya. However, Yugoslav support was not unconditional, nor did Yugoslavia strive towards the expectations of Soviet politics that it would become a part of synchronized larger policy. The bipolar detente, which was perceived in the Kremlin as a great victory of the Soviet state, had both positive and critical interpretations in Belgrade. On the one hand, it was considered as welcome that the great powers had tried to resolve many cold-war conflicts in a calm tone, which had a direct impact on the rejection of belligerent and militant political strategies. On the other hand, there was evident dissatisfaction with the fact that detente agreements neglected the interests of smaller countries, and that the confirmed status quo was in fact a confirmation of the bloc policy. Although the CSCE was the common goal of Soviet and Yugoslav politics, as a legacy of the 1971-1973 agreements, the participation of Yugoslav representatives at the conferences from 1973 to 1975 was aimed at representing the interests of non-aligned and neutral states, which opposed the bloc interests of Moscow and Washington.²⁵² Despite stable inter-state relations, Yugoslavia's relations with the Soviet Union failed to solve three important problems - Moscow's intention to maintain a leadership position among socialist states, the efforts of Soviet policy to shift the character of the Non-aligned movement to a firmer anti-Western position, and the negative consequences of Soviet global politics.²⁵³ The interconnection among these problems began to reveal itself to Yugoslav foreign policy in full light in the second half of the 1970s.

²⁵¹AJ, 837, I-1/1025, The letter of J.B. Tito to L.I. Brezhnev on the occasion of events in Cyprus.

²⁵²Dragan Bogetić, “Jugoslovenski nastup na Konferenciji o evropskoj bezbednosti i saradnji u Helsinkiju 1973-1975”, *Istorija 20. veka*, br. 2, (2016), 149-161.

²⁵³Ragna Boden, “Soviet world policy in the 1970s – a three-level game” in: *The Crisis of Socialist Modernity: The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the 1970s*, edit. Marie-Janine Calic, Deitmar Neutzat and Julia Obertreis (Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2011), 192.

At the end of 1975, the LCY top leadership was upset by the appearance and functioning of the Cominform emigration in Yugoslavia. The operation of an illegal organization, the so-called New communist party of Yugoslavia, which was supposed to be constituted at the “Bar Congress” in April 1974, was associated with neo-Cominform action inspired by the Soviet Union.²⁵⁴ At the 14th session of the CC LCY Presidency, on October 15, 1975, in Karadorđevo, the party's top leadership discussed the activities of the “internal enemy”, with a special reference to the consequences of the “Bar case”. At the session, Tito warned the party's top leadership that a “liberal” view should not be taken about the existence of the enemies of the Yugoslav self-government society, believing that the Cominformers “sneaked through” while the party was fighting the “anti-socialist elements” of 1972. Not mentioning in any way the possible implication of Soviet policy in promoting the hostile emigration, whose seat was at one time in Kiev, Tito primarily referred to the identification of enemies from all sides (“we are in the whirlwind, various agencies are colliding here”).²⁵⁵ Dominance of the working class in the party, and an overall mobilization of membership and party organizations in the fight against “liberalism” and “Stalinism” were, in Tito's view, the basic preconditions for a successful defense of Yugoslavia and its achievements.²⁵⁶ After a discussion at the session, the CC LCY Presidency concluded that the mentioned hostile activity of Cominformers was “targeted against independence, integrity and free self-management of the socialist development of the SFRY”. In the session conclusions, necessary measures were proposed to activate LCY membership in the struggle against neo-Cominform activities, by political action against antisocialist groups. The conclusion also addressed the Council for the protection of constitutional order in particular, proposing that it should consider the problems of the activation of the enemy, and “instruct state authorities to take all necessary measures in order to strengthen the security and self-protection

²⁵⁴The Coordination committee for the establishment of the new LCY was formed in 1971, followed by organizing several groups (in Novi Sad, Peć, Belgrade, etc.). Members of the NLCY were Mileta Perović, Momčilo Jokić, Komnen Jovović, Slobodan Lazić, Branko Bošković and others. The Congress was supposed to be held in Bar, on April 6-7 April, 1974. A central committee, a politburo, editorial board of the “Iskra” newspaper, a secretary general, a program, and a statute were all planned. The League of Communists of Yugoslavia had been accused of ideological revisionism and the restoration of capitalist relations. On April 6, 1974, the Montenegro State Security arrested 36 of NLCY members, and after that hundreds of supporters throughout Yugoslavia were arrested.

²⁵⁵AJ, 507, ACK SKJ, III/198, Minutes of the 14 session of the PCCLCY, October 15, 1975, in Karadorđevo.

²⁵⁶“They believe that Yugoslavia is dangerous, because nowadays, as almost no other country, it is an example of struggle for, and creation of, better living conditions and better social relations, which is accepted with sympathy throughout the world, especially by young people.” Ibid.

of our society”.²⁵⁷ The appearance of the neo-Cominformers in Yugoslavia, much as they were equated with other “enemies of socialism”, could not but remind the Yugoslav communists of the established mechanisms of Soviet pressure on the internal development of Yugoslavia.

The detente did not live up to the expectations of the Soviet Union that the stabilization of relations with western capitalist states would lead to the consolidation of the unity of the international communist movement under Moscow's leadership. One of the challenges to such plans was largely China, especially as it became an acceptable partner for western countries in the early 1970s, and consequently caused a decline of the importance of the Soviet Union as the only respectable communist power. On the other hand, a challenge to the ideological hegemony of the CPSU in Europe came from the western communist parties, who shyly took over the banner of the reforms from the failed “Prague Spring” in 1968. In the party membership of the communist parties of Italy, France and Spain, the idealistic image of the Soviet Union as the leader of the socialist world and the inspiration for “orthodox” socialist development began to fade. The leader of the CP of Italy (CPI), Enrico Berlinguer, diverged from former Togliatti's strategy, and in the early 1970s proposed a “historic compromise” with the Catholics, accepted European integration, and began to create a new profile of western communism, which freed itself from the firm ties with the socialist bloc.²⁵⁸ The only party with which the CPI could be identified by its strategy was the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, which made Berlinguer visit Belgrade on several occasions to consult with Tito.

Preparations for the Berlin conference of communist parties in June 1976, through a consultative meeting in Warsaw and a preparatory meeting in Budapest, with the participation of ten communist parties, revealed major disagreements over the content of the draft of the final document of the conference. LCY representatives took part in the work of consultative working groups, representing the first major engagement of Yugoslav communists in the preparation of a joint conference of communist parties after 20 years. At the meetings, they presented standpoints advocating free exchange of views, opposed the reduction of the political objectives of the Conference to one binding document for all parties, and supported a final document that would

²⁵⁷Ibid.

²⁵⁸Silvio Pons, *op.cit.*, 285-286.

contain only content-rich information about the Conference, while the basic ideas and possible solutions would be highlighted through the addresses of participating party chiefs. In this way, Yugoslav representatives believed, the acceptance of a single political line would be avoided, and communist parties in Europe would be given more breadth in participating in the political life of their countries.²⁵⁹ However, representatives of the CPSU, and other parties subordinated to Moscow, opposed these proposals, which were advocated not only by the Yugoslav, but also by a significant part of the representatives of the Western European communist parties, offering a different course of the conference and content of the final document. The draft documents submitted on their behalf, produced by the Unified Socialist Party of Germany, deepened the differences between Moscow on one side, and part of the Western European communist parties and Yugoslavia, on the other. In the opinion of Alexander Grličkov, the secretary of the EC CC LCY, the draft document of the East German communists offered a “sectarian crowding of communist parties around one center, one policy”, preventing the opening and strengthening of the communist parties in the West and deepening the confrontation between the communist parties in Europe. Grličkov went further with his critical remarks, assessing that such a draft document was against the policy of detente. He wondered with concern whether the CPSU could objectively keep the detente on two basic political lines - one for communicating with the United States and the other Western countries, and the other for communicating with the communist parties, by “collective and disciplined pressures in the service of Soviet foreign policy”.²⁶⁰

The Soviet Union quickly realized, as Silvio Pons noticed, that the new strategy of the West European communists would not only impair the **status quo** of bipolar relations guaranteed by the detente, but rather the Soviet leadership of European communism itself.²⁶¹ The Conference of communist parties in Berlin, from June 28 to 30, 1976, attended by the LCY delegation led by Tito, demonstrated the deceptive “unity” and readiness of the communist parties to define a common political platform of European communism in the era of the detente. Ultimately, the joint Conference document was acceptable to all parties, but nevertheless, the addresses of individual heads of delegations left more the impression of plurality rather than monolithicity.

²⁵⁹AJ, KPR, I-2/68, Conference of communist and workers parties of socialist countries.

²⁶⁰AJ, 837, I-2/68, Conference of communist and workers parties of socialist countries.

²⁶¹Silvio Pons, op.cit., 287.

For the first time, Berlinguer used the term “Eurocommunism” from the Conference rostrum, in front of the heads of all the communist parties, thus emphasizing the detachment from the center of ideological vigilance in Moscow. Tito's speech at the Conference offered more conciliatory tones, but he did not miss the opportunity to point out Yugoslav commitment to respecting the principle of non-alignment and different paths of socialism. After Berlin, Yugoslav Communists were convinced that “the Soviet concept of the gathering of communist parties, the monolithic ideological and action unity of the movement” could no longer be achieved.²⁶² An attempt to resolve the misunderstandings that had arisen between Belgrade and Moscow in this respect, and which were further complicated by the activities of the Cominformers and polemics before the Berlin conference, was made by another summit, the visit of Leonid Brezhnev to Yugoslavia, from November 14 to 17, 1976. The content of the talks pointed to different intentions of the two party leaderships regarding mutual relations. On the one hand, the intentions that Brezhnev presented were that Yugoslavia would work even more closely with the Soviet Union and the larger states, coordinate its foreign policy with the Soviet one where it was possible, modify the character of the non-aligned movement, and start mutual cooperation in the field of ideology. All of these proposals were addressed to the Yugoslav delegation, followed by a large list of complaints, from negative writing of the Yugoslav authors about the Soviet Union, to the allegations of relations between Moscow and Cominformers.²⁶³ On the other hand, in his address to the Soviet delegation, Tito rejected all proposals for closer cooperation between Yugoslavia and the larger policy, as well as the critical remarks concerning the image of the Soviet Union and its system in the Yugoslav media. First of all, Tito proceeded from the principles outlined at the Berlin conference of communist parties, the consistent implementation of which, in Tito's opinion, could only enhance cooperation between communist parties. Regarding this matter, Tito pointed out, Yugoslav communists were worried by “the attempts by some, even within your ranks, to move parties back to pre-Berlin positions”.²⁶⁴ In the reports following the visit of the Soviet delegation headed by Leonid Brezhnev, the Yugoslav side noted that Soviet positions confirmed that the policy of the Soviet Union towards Yugoslavia, both in international relations

²⁶²AJ, 507, ACKSKJ, III/208, Tape recorder notes of the 24th session PCCLCY, November 3, 1976.

²⁶³AJ, 837, I-3-a/101-153, Note on the talks of the president of SFRY and president of LCY J.B. Tito and Secretary General of CC CPSU L.I. Brezhnev, held on November 15, 1976, in Beli dvor, Belgrade.

²⁶⁴AJ, 837, I-3-a/101-153, Note on the talks of the president of SFRY and president of LCY J.B. Tito and Secretary General of CC CPSU L.I. Brezhnev, held on November 16, 1976, in Belgrade.

and in the relations within the communist movement, “were denoted by foundations and content of the bloc approach”.²⁶⁵ However, the assessment of the Yugoslav party's top leadership started from the belief that Yugoslavia successfully resisted Soviet pressure, and thus strengthened its international position. This was the main topic of the 25th session of the CC LCY Presidency on December 9, 1976, which had the assessment of Leonid Brezhnev's visit on its agenda. The entire session passed in the intention to confirm some invariabilities in the relations with the Soviet Union. Although the platform of the Soviet Union was assessed as an attempt to interfere with the internal affairs of Yugoslavia, and as the old concept of bloc approach to Yugoslavia, the party leadership remained willing to continue developing good relations with Moscow, respecting the well-known principles from the Belgrade and Moscow declarations. In the first place, the party's top leadership emphasized Tito's address at the meeting with Brezhnev as a successful defense of Yugoslav interests, as well as the communication which harmonized the two platforms. The foreign policy of the Soviet Union was not globally criticized or discussed at the session. In the opinion of the party's top leadership, there was no need to “dramatize” the obvious pressure exerted by Leonid Brezhnev, which was why not everything that Brezhnev said during the talks was made public. On the other hand, the session showed that the success of Yugoslav foreign policy was an indispensable element for strengthening the internal unity. Ranging from the pressures from the outside to the absolute unity of the inside. The great international prestige of Yugoslavia, Tito's statesmanship, and the struggle of the LCY to keep its dominance under the assault from all factions (liberal and neo-Stalinist) were overemphasized, which again represented an obvious need to tackle numerous problems that arose in Yugoslav society in the 1970's. In a special “Information for LCY membership on the visit of the Secretary General of the CC CPSU L. I. Brezhnev to Yugoslavia”, the visit was assessed as successful and useful for the international position and reputation of Yugoslavia on the whole. The message to the membership was clear - good relations with the Soviet Union were needed in the interests of socialism and peace in the world.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵AJ, 837, I-3-a/101-153, Report of the CC LCY on the friendly visit of Secretary General of CC CPSU L.I. Brezhnev to Yugoslavia, from November 15 to 17, 1976.

²⁶⁶AJ, 507, ACSIJ, III/209, Tape recorder notes of the 25th session PCCLCY, December 9, 1976.

The return visit of Josip Broz Tito to the Soviet Union, from August 16 to 26, 1977, was burdened by the problems in relations between the two countries from the previous year. Yugoslav diplomacy sketched a portrait of Soviet foreign policy in 1977 as “bloc oriented”, and did not want (and could not) change this portrait. It criticized Soviet Union for leading a hegemonic policy, interpreting the Helsinki final document restrictively, spurring division among non-aligned countries, interfering in the internal affairs of many countries with its interventionist policy in Africa, failing to help developing countries, and belittling and challenging the Berlin conference. Meetings at the top mostly avoided too much debate on these issues, insisting on their conclusion with the idea of mutual respect and partnership on the international scene, wherever possible. Therefore, Yugoslav platform prior to Tito's visit concluded that there were no open problems with the Soviet Union.²⁶⁷ The main goal was set by insisting on the preservation of stable relations with the Soviet Union, and affirmation of non-alignment and self-government socialism. However, during the meeting in Moscow, more attention was paid to the events in Africa - the conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia, and between Libya and Egypt. During the two-day talks, both leaders made identical assessments of the newly emerged conflicts. Brezhnev believed that the situation in Africa was under the assault by a coordinated action of imperialist forces, which were opposing the aspirations of African countries to become socialist, in order to preserve their own domination “the idea of Washington was to overthrow progressive regimes and install puppet governments in Addis Ababa and Mogadishu”.²⁶⁸ Tito fully agreed with Brezhnev's assessments. The United States, Tito considered, wanted to “surround Africa” and suppress the Ethiopian revolution and its “progressive” path. Yugoslavia, Tito boasted, provided military aid to Ethiopia with the delivery of 70 tanks. The conflict between Egypt and Libya was also not perceived as an isolated event, but as Brezhnev estimated, it rather represented “one link in the general chain of imperialist activities in Africa and the Middle East”.²⁶⁹ Tito criticized Sadat's policy as too “pro-American”, and as eradicating everything that was “Naser-like” in Egypt. On the whole, Tito's return visit was positively evaluated in Belgrade. It was obvious that, as opposed to the previous visit of Brezhnev, in

²⁶⁷AJ, 837, I-2/70, Platform for the official friendly visit of the President to the Soviet Union, from August 16 to 26.

²⁶⁸AJ, 837, I-2/70, Stenographic notes of the official talks between the President of the SFRY and President of LCY J.B.T. and Secretary General of the CC CPSU and President of the Presidency of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Leonid. I Brezhnev, in Moscow-Kremlin, August 17 and 18, 1977.

²⁶⁹Ibid.

November 1976, former criticisms and open Soviet pressure were absent. Yugoslav diplomacy explained this Soviet attitude by many reasons, from a change in the balance of power in the Soviet leadership (the removal of Katushev and Podgorny), to the firm stance of Yugoslavia expressed at the November meeting, which made Soviets learn some “lessons”.²⁷⁰ However, changes in international relations were important for the conduct of Soviet foreign policy, and Yugoslav diplomacy was well aware of them - serious difficulties in the policy of detente and in the relations with the United States, new worsening of relations with China, a weakening of positions in Africa and the Middle East, an increasingly unfavorable position of the CPSU in the ICM, and the emergence of Eurocommunism. Yugoslavia's attitude towards these issues, arising from its independent and non-aligned foreign policy, would not always be met with understanding in Moscow.

The Yugoslav-Chinese relations of the 1970s were a major subject of interest for Soviet politics. China was a great competitor and challenger to the global policy of the Soviet Union, especially in Southeast Asia. Beijing mobilized significant forces against Soviet interventionism in Africa, while support for the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia represented a counterbalance to the Soviet influence in Vietnam. The death of Mao Zedong in 1976 did not lead to a change in the anti-Soviet strategy in international relations, but it did contribute to internal reforms, which, among other things, altered some of the established rigid ideological perceptions of the outside world. The fall of the so-called “Gang of Four” in China in late 1976 enabled further changes in the country, as well as the improvement of cooperation with Yugoslavia. The signs of expanding bilateral relations between Belgrade and Beijing, which began with the visit of Džemal Bjedić in 1975, were met with suspicion in Moscow. This could have been felt in particular during the talks between Tito and Brezhnev in Moscow in 1977, which preceded Tito's first official visit to China. Brezhnev tried to persuade Tito that there was no change in Chinese politics after Mao's death, that Chinese politics was based on anti-Sovietism and militarization of the country, and that China was establishing relations with “the most reactionary forces of imperialism”.²⁷¹

²⁷⁰AJ, 837, Report on the visit of the President of the SFRY and President of LCY J.B.Tito to USSR, August 16 to 24, 1977.

²⁷¹AJ, 837, I-2/70, Stenographic notes of the official talks between the President of the SFRY and President of LCY J.B.T. and Secretary General of the CC CPSU and President of the Presidency of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Leonid. I Brezhnev, in Moscow-Kremlin, August 17 and 18, 1977.

Chinese politics was a threat to the entire global socialism, Brezhnev warned. Tito did not want to debate too much on the character of Chinese politics, but he “defended” his decision to visit China by the desire to obtain first-hand information about Beijing's policy, and to draw attention of the Chinese leadership during the talks to the fact that the conflict with Moscow could only work to the benefit of the imperialists. He promised Brezhnev that it would be a “purely state visit”, without party talks, and with certain criticism of their policy.²⁷² The visit of Josip Broz Tito to PR of China, on August 30, 1977, ended with important results in the rapprochement of the views between Beijing and Belgrade. The talks with the Chinese party leadership had convinced the Yugoslav president that there was no justifiable danger from the Chinese policy, as Brezhnev had claimed during the talks in Moscow. In fact, the Yugoslav delegation realized that there were many issues on which they shared identical views with the Chinese communists, whether it was the issue of international relations or the respect for the right of each communist party to develop its own path of socialism. There was no criticism of the Soviet Union by the Chinese hosts, mostly out of respect for the position of Yugoslavia. Tito extended an invitation to the Chinese President Hua Guofeng to visit Yugoslavia, which he accepted.²⁷³

The arrival of Chinese President Hua Guofeng to Yugoslavia for an official visit, from August 21 to 28, 1978, was part of the new Chinese strategy of “opening up to the world”. The visit took place at a time when the policy of the detente was undergoing a serious crisis in US-Soviet relations. The Carter administration, under the impression of Soviet interventionism on the Horn of Africa, began to reevaluate the basic premises of detente in the US foreign policy strategy. Closer contacts between Beijing and Washington, aimed at curbing the Soviet influence, had put Yugoslav politics into the inconvenient position of meandering within the “triangle” of powers. In a letter to “fraternal parties” sent by the CPSU to the LCY, on July 5, 1978, concerns were expressed about the attempts to “unite NATO and Beijing's efforts in the struggle against the detente, and simultaneously, against socialist countries and liberation movements”.²⁷⁴ Competition between China and the Soviet Union, reflected through the conflict

²⁷²Ibid

²⁷³AJ, 507, IX 60/I-61, Information on the talks held during the visit of comrade Tito to the PR of China and on the restoration of relations between the LCY and the CPC, September 30, 1977

²⁷⁴AJ, 837, I-5-v/99-30, Translation of the message sent by the CC CPSU to the LCY leadership, member of the Presidency of the CC LCY Aleksandar Grličkov, delivered by Rodionov, with a similar message sent to “fraternal

between Vietnam and Kampuchea, further tightened the political climate in Moscow and its attitude towards Yugoslavia. After a long time, critical articles against Yugoslav foreign policy appeared in the Soviet press, which provoked an official reaction and a demarche by Yugoslav diplomacy in early August 1978. A particularly controversial piece of news that was transmitted by the Soviet media, quoting a letter of the Albanian leadership to Beijing, was that China allegedly proposed a military alliance to Yugoslavia, Albania and Romania. Soviet Ambassador N. Rodionov, in a conversation with Budimir Lončar, immediately after Hua Guofeng's visit to Belgrade, openly stated that the USSR could not calmly watch the arrival of the Chinese president to a “friendly country”, which Yugoslavia was for them.²⁷⁵ Rodionov forwarded a similar opinion to Miloš Minić, assessing the Chinese activity in Africa, Asia and Europe as directly targeted against the Soviet Union.²⁷⁶ Pressure on Belgrade became increasingly stronger and caused trouble for Yugoslav diplomacy. The official position of Yugoslavia was that the opening of China towards other countries was a positive process to the benefit of the detente. Yugoslav officials believed that the attitude of the Soviet Union toward China was based on its own “narrow interests”, preventing China from entering the international scene, as well as from its modernization.²⁷⁷ However, the beginning of the military conflict between Vietnam and Kampuchea in late 1978, which ended with the ousting of the Pol Pot regime, followed by China's military intervention in the north of Vietnam, in February 1979, additionally confronted the views of Soviet and Yugoslav foreign policy. Although Yugoslavia condemned both military interventions, Moscow considered that the Yugoslav attitude towards China's aggression in Vietnam was significantly milder, and that the two interventions could not be equated.

The military intervention in Kampuchea began to bear consequences, mostly on the non-alignment movement. The issue of the representation of Kampuchea in the UN and the NAM had reaffirmed the existence of different currents among the non-aligned countries. At the end of the

parties of greatest trust”, July 5, 1978.

²⁷⁵AJ, 837, I-5-v/99-30, From notes on the talks of Undersecretary B. Lončar with USSR ambassador to SFRY N. Rodionov.

²⁷⁶AJ, 837, I-5-v/99-30, Stenographic notes of the talks of Miloš Minić with USSR ambassador to Yugoslavia, Rodionov, September 21, 197

²⁷⁷AJ, 507, III/242, Information from the 22nd session of the Federal council on international relations, held on February 21, 1979, where the topics “Long-term courses of development of relations between SFRY and USSR and SFRY and PR of China” were discussed.

1970s, efforts were being made to polarize the movement - to more radical members, which supported a common “antiimperialist” front with the Soviet Union and the larger, and the more moderate ones, which adhered to the basic principles of the movement from 1961 on a leading strict non-bloc policy. The NAM conferences, which were numerous in the 1970s (Lusaka in 1970, Algeria in 1973, Colombo in 1976), more effectively institutionalized the activities of the Movement, established a continuity of regular meetings and consultations among senior officials of non-aligned countries, and were fully in line with the current policy of the detente. However, the conferences could not hide the tendencies towards different opinions on some issues, especially when they were in favor of the interests of the bloc powers. Cuba, as one of the active members of the movement, whose prestige in the Third World had rapidly grown after its participation in the interventions in Angola and Ethiopia, had become the promoter of a different role of the NAM, on a platform of more decisive anti-imperialism and cooperation with the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the Cuban strategy in the NAM started to be strongly opposed by Yugoslavia, as one of the founders of the Movement, which strongly adhered to the opinion that the founding principles were the main strength of the activities of the non-aligned countries within the bipolar world order. Yugoslavia considered that a “larger ambition” stood behind the Cuban policy, which sought to change the character of the Movement, and bring it closer to Soviet interests. The activities of Soviet politics supported these assumptions. By increased engagement in the Third World in the 1970s, the Soviet Union attempted to influence the NAM directly, in providing support for its own expansionist policy. All meetings between Soviet and Yugoslav officials ended with an emphasis on the fact that the NAM was of great importance in international relations only if it kept a sharp “antiimperialist” stance, that is, if it confronted the policy of the West. During his visit to Belgrade in November 1976, Leonid Brezhnev told Tito that the struggle for the vital interests of the non-aligned movement would be more effective “if their relations and cooperation with the socialist world were more close and organic”.²⁷⁸ The Soviet leader criticized the views of some non-aligned countries (among which was certainly Yugoslavia) for devoting too much attention to the criticism of the blocs and the rivalry of the

²⁷⁸AJ, 837, I-3-a/101-153, Note on the talks of the president of SFRY and president of LCY J.B. Tito and Secretary General of CC CPSU L.I. Brezhnev, held on November 15, 1976, in Beli dvor, Belgrade.

superpowers, stating that it weakened the “unity of the antiimperialist front”, and the non-aligned movement proper.

The decision at the Colombia conference to hold the 6th Summit of the NAM in Havana in 1979, caused a great deal of concern in Yugoslavia. Preparatory meetings preceding the Havana conference persuaded Yugoslav diplomacy that Cuba intended to modify the principles of the Movement, and that it had the support of the Soviet Union for that. Belgrade associated the Cuban strategy among the non-aligned countries to poor Yugoslav-Soviet relations. At a session of the Federal Council for International Relations, on February 21, 1979, senior Yugoslav officials warned that the greatest danger to NAM were “actions from the lager positions”, which sought to turn the movement “into a proxy of global policy of the USSR and the lager”.²⁷⁹ The last visit of Josip Broz Tito to the Soviet Union, from May 16 to 21, 1979, was aimed at reducing the pressure of Moscow on the eve of the Havana conference, and at preventing further support for the Cuban standpoints. However, the talks only confirmed the differences. In addition to diametrically opposite views expressed on China, Brezhnev voiced concerns about the development of events in the NAM, where attempts were made to “denigrate Cuba”, and to expel Vietnam from the movement. Tito was asked to prevent such intrigues. Brezhnev believed that differences in the NAM were not invented by the Soviet Union, but “had been imposed by life itself”.²⁸⁰ The visit did not solve the disputes between Belgrade and Moscow, although it assured Tito that the relations would “be more peaceful for some time”.²⁸¹ The main Yugoslav assessment of the visit was that the Soviet Union had witnessed Yugoslavia's determination to defend the principles of its foreign policy orientation. Positive reactions in the world after the visit, along these lines, were considered as further strengthening of the international position of Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, the views of the Soviet leadership were assessed as a result of the interests of a great power, which was why Soviet and Yugoslav politics would always be in conflict.

²⁷⁹AJ, 507, III/242, Information from the 22nd session of the Federal council on international relations, held on February 21, 1979, where the topics “Long-term courses of development of relations between SFRY and USSR and SFRY and PR of China” were discussed.

²⁸⁰AJ, 837, I-2/75, Stenographic notes on the talks between the president of SFRY and president of LCY J.B. Tito and Secretary General of CC CPSU and President of the Presidency of the Supreme Soviet, L.I. Brezhnev, held on May 17 and 18, 1979.

²⁸¹Jugoslavija – SSSR. Susreti i razgovori na najvišem nivou rukovodilaca Jugoslavije i SSSR 1965-1980...872

The NAM conference in Havana, from September 3 to 9, 1979, did not result in changes that the Cuban and Soviet politics hoped for. The summit documents reiterated the basic principles of the movement, and did not change the substance of the principles on which the Movement had been based since the early 1960's. The initial “revolutionary” approach of the more radical countries gathered around Cuba ended by the prevalence of more moderate currents gathered around Yugoslavia.²⁸² Tito was satisfied with the results of the Conference, and under the impression that “the formulated principles and basic orientation of the policy of the non-aligned movement had never been so decisively defended”, since the Belgrade conference.²⁸³ Moscow was disappointed. In the weeks before the conference, the Soviet press wrote about the “turning point” in the fundamental orientation of the movement that would take place at the summit, which would confirm its anti-imperialist orientation, and stronger reliance on the socialist community. Yugoslavia was accused of anti-Sovietism and passive neutralism.²⁸⁴ Similar assessments of Yugoslav politics were expressed by the Soviet party leadership, insisting that Yugoslavia ultimately had to decide whether it wanted to lead a common policy with the Soviet Union and socialist countries or wanted to stand out against it. Putting such a dilemma before Yugoslavia three decades after the breach with the Soviet concept of “bloc” policy in Eastern Europe, testified not only to the persistence of Soviet interests, but also to the lack of realism among the “creators” of the Soviet ideology and politics.

In the early 1980s, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union could not reconcile some of the extremes which they persistently used to build their foreign policy conceptions. The decade of the detente in international relations created a more favorable environment in which the “era of stagnation” of communist societies could be overcome without immediate consequences. During the 1970's, Yugoslav-Soviet relations were perhaps the most solid ever since the first post-war years. A conservative ideological direction, for which the notion of reform had definitely become a first-rate “taboo”, was added to the common foreign policy priorities. Yugoslavia “defended” its difficulties and problems by an active global policy, which garnered “successes”, and the Soviet Union, by a global policy that went beyond Soviet borders and needs. Belgrade perceived

²⁸²Tvrтко Jakovina, *Treća strana Hladnog rata*...241.

²⁸³AJ, 837, I-4-a/35, Tito's statement after his return from the Conference.

²⁸⁴AJ, 837, I-4-a/35, Writings of the press in the USSR.

the Soviet Union as a “bloc power” and as an irreplaceable actor of support for “progressive regimes” at the same time. Moscow recognized Yugoslavia as “an equal partner” and criticized it as a “pro-Chinese” spokesperson. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979 would raise, once again, the issue of the merit of major global policy, but rather too late. The death of Josip Broz Tito in Yugoslavia, in May 1980, would raise the issue of future Yugoslav international position, but given the numerous internal problems, that was rather unnecessary.

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