

THE SOVIET-YUGOSLAV DISPUTE CULMINATING IN YUGOSLAVIA'S
EXPULSION FROM THE COMINFORM

A Research Paper
Submitted to the Faculty of
Saint Meinrad College of Liberal Arts
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

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May 5, 1985
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the dispute between Stalin and Tito, which culminated in Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform on June 28, 1948. First, I want to examine Yugoslavia's involvement in World War II. In doing this, I hope to illustrate the nature of the state of Yugoslavia, early tensions that existed between Stalin and Tito, and how Russia's involvement in Yugoslavia compared to Russia's involvement in "other satellites." Tito constantly praised the war efforts of the Partisans, while Stalin gave little importance to this. From all this, I think you will see the beginning of Tito's independent nature; something that Stalin was weary of.

After World War II, Tito became the Master of his own country. In doing this, he wanted to prove himself worthy of being a true Communist. When Tito tried to expand and develop Yugoslavia, he became less and less understanding of why Russia did not encourage his actions and why Russia often made it more difficult for him to carry his actions to completion. Tito felt it was wrong for Russia to demand that Communists outside Russia had to promote the interests of Russia over their own country.

From information such as this, I hope to show in my thesis that the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform did not occur over doctrinal issues, as such, but that it was caused by a dispute concerning the future development of socialism. Tito

wanted socialism to develop under different forms by allowing special conditions that existed in different countries to come to the surface. Stalin saw no problem with the expansion and development as long as the benefits went toward the Soviet Union. This was illustrated when Stalin allowed Yugoslavia to be a protectorate over Albania. When Stalin felt Yugoslavia had too much influence over Albania, and that Albania looked toward Yugoslavia first over the Soviet Union, he spoke out against Yugoslavia's actions in Albania. Eduard Kardelj, Tito's Vice-President, said the issue is whether socialism should develop "by equal co-operation" of socialist states, or "by further enlargement of the Soviet Union."

CHAPTER ONE

In 1928, Josip Broz Tito at the age of thirty-six went to jail for five years. During this time he met Mosha Pijode, a top intellectual of Yugoslavia's Communist Party. At this time, Pijode introduced Tito to, and broadened, his understanding of Marxism. When Tito was released in 1933, he went to Moscow in order to attend the Lenin School. After this he was sent as a Party agent for the Comintern into Western Europe, and in 1937 he was placed by Moscow into Yugoslavia as the leader of the Communist underground movement. At this time the size and importance of the Communist Party present in Yugoslavia was negligible, and Tito immediately set out to strengthen it. He realized that the vast majority of the Yugoslavian population were peasants, and for his program to be effective, he had to somehow bring the peasants to understand that they wouldn't be treated like the peasants in Russia if Communism took power. Tito hoped to incorporate them into the actions of the Party. Eventually, the peasants would prove to be the main component of the Partisan Army, which will be described later.¹

Tito, fortunate to survive Stalin's purges of the Yugoslav Communists in 1937, was now in a position to advance in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the CPY. Milon Gorkic, who preceeded Tito as the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was arrested in Moscow in the summer of 1937. Gorkic was rumored to be a British agent. Almost the entire Yugoslavian Central Committee followed him, together with a

large number of the remaining Yugoslav Communists: of these, more than one hundred 'found their deaths in Stalin's prisons and camps.'² They included such men as Vlada Copic, the Party's Organizational Secretary, newly back from command of the International Brigade in Spain. Tito, in Moscow at this time, never knew whether he would get out alive or awake in the night "to hear the fatal knocking at my door."³ He noticed there was a tendency in the Comintern to dissolve the entire Yugoslav Party -- as was being done with the Polish and Korean parties. Following the purges, he was allowed to form a new Central Committee. Since he was still somewhat fearful of what could happen, he transferred the Central Committee to Yugoslavia as soon as he could.⁴

When asked his ethnic nationality, a South Slav will identify himself as a Serb, a Slovene, or a Croat. A non-Slavic inhabitant will call himself a Hungarian, an Albanian, etc. Not many identify themselves as Yugoslavian; Tito, born in Croatia in 1892, would be one of the few to do so. In his later life, Tito participated in the Russian Civil War. He was, for many years, a worker in a movement in which loyalty was to class and communism, rather than to a nation.⁵

When Tito re-entered Yugoslavia in 1937, it was a federal state. Its constituent republics were based on historic units generally following the lines of ethnic individuality as mentioned above. Some republics are separated by language, religion, some a combination of both, and each has its own

unique traditions. It would be accurate to say that a single Yugoslav state exists, primarily because each of its national groups would face a more dubious future outside, rather than from any sense of nationalism. The first united Yugoslav state, formed during the second decade of this century, was nearly torn apart by the fierce struggle of Catholic Croat against Orthodox Serb, and it finally came to grief during World War II amidst foreign invasion, civil strife, and many massacres. Although during World War II the Communist Party committed many violent acts towards individuals and groups while it built up its power, it deserves credit for holding the lid on the explosive tension that existed among the factions, which could have reduced the country to chaos.⁶

There were three factors that made Yugoslavia unique: first of all, in matters such as intense nationalism and willingness to battle overwhelming odds, the South Slavs were almost beyond all other people, in that they possess much perseverance and indulge in taking heroic measures. Secondly, Tito, unlike other party leaders, was a national figure and had the support of people outside the Party. He had dynamic and magnetic qualities as a leader, while other leaders, in Eastern Europe, were strong because Stalin placed them in power; Tito was strong in his own right. Finally, except for Albania, Yugoslavia was the only Communist country separated geographically from Russia. This will prove to be important after the dispute between Tito and Stalin occurs.⁷

After Germany's invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941, two of the main Yugoslav guerilla movements appeared on the scene. The first group, referred to as the Chetniks, were led by Draza Mihailovic, a Serbian. The second group was communist and part of the communist world movement. It was led by Josip Broz Tito, who was appointed by Moscow as Secretary General of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1937. The Communist International played a part in rekindling the interests in the Communist Party in Yugoslavia.⁸

The third organization formed in Yugoslavia was referred to as the Utashi movement. The Utashi were not so much a party, but a military organization. They didn't appear to have a coherent ideology. They adapted Nazism and Fascism out of weakness.⁹ The Utashi, found primarily in the state of Croatia, were led by Ante Pavelic. Pavelic was the head of the puppet Independent State of Croatia. The Utashi massacred hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews, and Gypsies, and fought both the Partisans and Chetniks. Their terrorists methods filled the population of Croatia with fear. Pavelic intended to settle the problem of the Serbs in Croatia with fire and sword.¹⁰

On February 28, 1942, Mihailovic delivered a speech at Lipovo stating that he didn't need the Western Allies since they weren't helping him. He saw the Croats, Moslems, and Partisans as the enemies of the Chetniks -- and only after these scores were settled would he turn against Germany. In Yugoslavia, it was felt that the Chetniks were doomed to

destruction when they received the first gun from Germany to use in fighting against the Partisans. Milovan Djilas, a top Yugoslav Communist, felt that the Chetniks couldn't win, because the Communists were more militant and visionary, and most importantly, more Yugoslavian.¹¹

Winston Churchill called the state of affairs in Yugoslavia as being a terrible tragedy. In truth, it was far more complex than this. The first tragedy was the occupation of Yugoslavia, the torment and bloodiness coming from the occupation forces. The second tragedy was to be found in the Utashi massacres of the Serbian population and their battle against the Chetniks, which were followed by the Chetnik reprisals against the Croats. The third was the mutual destruction between the Utashi and the Communists. Finally, you had the conflict between the Communists and the Chetniks and other anti-communist military units.¹² In the fall of 1942, Tito made a plea to the Comintern, trying to get Russia to understand the situation in Yugoslavia:

Can nothing be done to better inform the Soviet government of the traitorous role of the Yugoslav government and the superhuman sufferings and hardships of our people, who are fighting the invaders, the Chetniks, the Utashi, etc? . . .¹³

Some people compared the Japanese invasion of China to the German invasion of Yugoslavia. As the Chinese Communists under Mao seemed to be more wholeheartedly resisting the Japanese invaders than were the Nationalists under Chiang, so too did the Yugoslav Communists under Tito seem to be more

wholeheartedly resisting the German invaders than the Chetniks under Mihailovich. Moscow, faced with alternative Yugoslav regimes, long remained on friendly terms with Mihailovich, while withholding from Tito official recognition or assistance. The British supported Tito's Communists, and abandoned the Chetniks, long before Moscow could bring itself to do likewise. Since Tito opposed Moscow's domination of the CPY, he didn't have the subservience that Stalin looked for in foreign Communist leaders.¹⁴

Mihailovic's first clash with Hitler came soon after Hitler's invasion of Yugoslavia. Tito, even before the formation of the Partisan Army in 1941, criticized and had major conflicts, with Hitler. At this time he and his Communist followers were ready to defend themselves in case of an invasion. This idea, of defending Yugoslavia in case they were invaded by Germany, ended when Hitler and Stalin signed a pact of friendship on August 23, 1939. When Hitler attacked Yugoslavia in April 1941, the Partisans didn't fight the Nazi Army but contributed to the defeat of the Chetniks. Tito would only attack the Nazi Army if Russia, the country Tito admired, came under an attack from the Germans.¹⁵

Hitler attacked Russia on June 22, 1941, and caused the CPY to re-examine their position. Tito addressed all "who loved independence and liberty and didn't want to be slaves of fascism."¹⁶ The CPY would now carry out their struggle for freedom. They wanted to fight with Russia, not allowing Russia

to do all the work. Tito would fight the invader, but his primary goal would be to seize power in Yugoslavia, while the country was going through a difficult time.¹⁷

In the years 1941 and 1942, Tito asked for arms and supplies from Moscow, but all they received was Moscow's expression of encouragement and praise for their Partisan activities. Russia stated because of "technical difficulties," no help could be sent. The CPY felt that Moscow's refusal was for political reasons; that it would offend England, because at this time England supported the Chetniks -- Tito's enemies in Yugoslavia. Russia also took this action because they resented Tito's independent actions. Stalin feared Yugoslavia would eventually develop as China did, thereby the Communist Party after they received freedom wouldn't be under the complete control of Stalin. When the CPY created a provisional government named the National Committee of Liberation, soon after the Tehran conference in October 1943, and announced that King Peter, who succeeded King Alexander, wouldn't be allowed to re-enter the country, Stalin saw this as "a stab in the back."¹⁸

Many Yugoslav democrats had been dissatisfied with the leadership of King Alexander between 1928 and 1934; they preferred a republic rather than any form of monarchy. They deeply resented the fact that the king had supported the tendencies of Serbian dominance. The largest Croat party favored the republic program formulated by their leader Stephen

Radic, during World War I. In November of 1942, 65 delegates, representing the individual states of Yugoslavia, met at Bihac and elected the first Anti-Fascist Committee of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia, the AVNOJ. A year later, 208 delegates met at Jajce and promulgated the principles of the future republic. They wanted to build a national Yugoslavia on the basis of a federation; one that would guarantee the equality of all states: Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The AVNOJ was constituted as the central organ of the national liberation movement, and was its highest legislative body. It elected a Presidium composed of one chairman, five deputy chairmen, two secretaries, and forty members. Marshall Tito headed the National Committee of Liberation, which was composed of members of each of the states mentioned above.¹⁹

Also at the meeting at Jajce, the Congress declared, not only was the government in exile to be deprived of the right of a legitimate government, but it was forbidden to represent Yugoslavia abroad as well. King Peter II was forbidden to return home until the country was completely liberated, then it would be possible by a "free" expression of the will of the nation to decide the question of the monarchy.²⁰ Up until 1943, the Yugoslav liberation attempt was proving to be a failure; Hitler had been attaining great military success in Yugoslavia. This changed for the better when Italy surrendered in July of 1943, and the British began supporting Yugoslavia. This caused

the Italian troops in occupied Yugoslavia to lay down their arms, and the added British support gave Tito obvious increased strength.²¹

When the British cooled their friendship with Mihailovich's units, there were efforts in London to persuade King Peter to disclaim Mihailovich and come to terms with Tito. On June 1, 1944, King Peter gave into British pressure by appointing Ivan Subasic Prime Minister to the government in exile. Subasic, a Croat like Tito, felt he could bring a reconciliation between King Peter and Tito.²² Subasic sought the collaboration between the two factions, the national liberation movement in the country and the Yugoslav government in exile. Tito allowed Subasic's government to represent the country abroad, while the latter expressed its respect for Tito's committee to administer the liberated territory. Later, they signed another agreement that would facilitate the transfer of power from the wartime institutions to a regular government. A Regents Council subject to the approval of Tito and Subasic would now officially represent Yugoslavia. Tito had skillfully handled himself to prepare his way to attain exclusive power in Yugoslavia.²³

Churchill didn't want to see Russian influence spread throughout the Balkan Nations with the help of Russian bayonets. He wanted to head off a Communist takeover after the liberation of these countries, and to come to an understanding with Russia, defining the spheres of influence that the two

powers would have in the Balkans. On May 18, 1944, a tentative agreement was accepted by Russia from the British, that placed Rumania and Bulgaria under Russia's influence, while Greece and Yugoslavia were to come under Britain's. By August of 1944, Tito's Partisans, with British assistance, had cleared most of the Yugoslav borders of Germans and, in addition, harassed German lines of communications. Since some of Hitler's defense in the Southeast Balkans was weakened, the Russian Red Army was able to plunge into the Balkans.²⁴

When the Russians began their military assistance to Yugoslavia during October 1944, the first thing they tried to do was to bring Tito's army under the direct command of the Red Army. Russia illustrated how they brought Bulgaria's army under their command to influence Tito's decision. Tito argued that, whereas Bulgaria was at war with the Allies and couldn't have an independent army fighting alongside the Allies, the Yugoslav army was an Allied army and shouldn't be under any command but its own. Thus, Tito held firm against Russian attempts to control the Yugoslav army.²⁵

When Russia began its march through the Balkans in September 1944, Tito's relationship began to cool with the British. Some people attributed Tito's attitude change toward the British, to the Anglo-Soviet dispute in Poland. But actually it was Russia's advance into the Balkans, which promised to make Tito less dependent on the British for military assistance, that was probably of greater importance.

While this was going on, a Tass communique stated that on September 29, 1944, the civil administration of the National Committee of the Liberation of Yugoslavia would continue to function in those districts of Yugoslavia where Red Army units were operating. It also stated that Soviet forces, upon the completion of their operational tasks, would be withdrawn from Yugoslavia.²⁶

After Russia's new involvement in the Balkans in October of 1944, a new agreement was reached between Stalin and Churchill on the amount of influence each would have in Yugoslavia. Now it was to be 50-50. This agreement reflected the new military balance in the Balkans. Additionally, these percentages might serve as a guide to the numerical division between pro-British and pro-Soviet cabinet members in the governments to be formed in the Balkan states.²⁷

Despite the agreement made between Churchill and Stalin in October, 1944, to share equally in influencing Yugoslavian affairs, and despite the fact that after the Yalta Conference Subasic and two other "Western" candidates had been admitted into Tito's government, it had become clear that Tito was firmly in control and had a will and policy of his own. On April 11, 1945, Tito signed a treaty of alliance with Russia, directed against Germany. As befitted a good communist, he expressed his admiration for Russia, and his distrust for capitalist imperialism.²⁸

In May, 1945, Soviet troops were in total occupation of

what, before 1938, had been eight sovereign states in Europe: Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria. Also at this time, some Soviet troops were stationed in both Yugoslavia and Albania, where power was firmly held by the native communist leaders Tito and Enver Hoxha.²⁹

Although the Red Army was involved in the liberation that took place in Yugoslavia, most of the work was done by the Partisan Army. The vast majority of the 800,000 to 900,000 Yugoslavs in the Partisan Army remained loyal to Tito after the war. Once Yugoslavia was liberated from Germany, most of the Soviet soldiers left to help at the Hungarian front. The Soviets that remained in Yugoslavia were to work as advisors, and they had to operate within the Yugoslav system; they couldn't appeal to the Soviet Union if they had a confrontation with the Yugoslavs.³⁰

One of the interesting things about Yugoslavia and World War II, is that the democratic countries had much influence in imposing communism on Yugoslavia and the other countries mentioned above. The Allies were more favorable to those that fought for communism than to those that fought for national and democratic rights. It would seem that Nazi Germany caused the Western leaders to be receptive to any group that fought against Hitler. After Germany's attack on the Soviet Union, the communists were able to illustrate to the West one main belief: that since fascism was opposed to communism and Western

democracy, these two were natural allies. Communism was imposed on Yugoslavia, not because of their fight against the invader, but because of their opposition to the Nazi ideology.³¹

CHAPTER TWO

The events in Yugoslavia followed a revolutionary pattern, and during the first postwar years, Yugoslav Communists outdistanced the other parties in their march toward socialism. In the November, 1945 "elections," the Yugoslav voters were presented with a single slate, this was to be a confirmation of the fact that power was clearly in the hands of the Tito-led Partisans. Their 1946 constitution was patterned on the constitution used by Russia. Between 1944-1946, the state began ownership of industry, banks, and other enterprises.³²

Of the Eastern European Communist parties after the war, the Yugoslav party was regarded by the Russians as being not only the most promising but also, at the same time, the one most likely to prove troublesome. Tito's communists were especially prone to exhibit unreasoning fanaticism and enthusiasm. Grievances towards Russia on the part of Yugoslavs had been accumulating since the end of the war. The disorderly behavior of the Russian troops in Yugoslavia, after the war, prompted Djilas to state that they were worse than the British. The inadequate Russian support in the Trieste problem, described below, led to Tito's speech in Ljubljana on May 28, 1945.³³ Tito, frustrated with Moscow's lack of support, began to lash out at Stalin. Tito didn't want to get involved in

other spheres of influence, and he didn't want to be dependent on anybody. Russia viewed this attitude as a direct attack against them.³⁴

In 1945, after the war, Tito, who wanted to reveal himself as a true Communist, was bent on an expansion of his own. When Tito's troops advanced into Trieste and showed interests in parts of Austria and Hungary, Moscow was irritated by this whole situation. Stalin, in the midst of maneuvers in Poland, didn't want to face a confrontation with the West over Tito's expansions. The Yugoslavs couldn't understand why the all-powerful Soviet Union wouldn't risk a war on the behalf of Yugoslavia. This was a sign to Stalin how Tito, once he became master of his own country, could be transformed into a troublesome ally.³⁵

For three years following the war, Yugoslavia was trying to be the greatest follower of Moscow. They had come closest to duplicating Russia's form of government than any other communist nation. First of all, Yugoslav industry was brought under the control of the state. Secondly, a five-year plan, similar to the one installed in Russia years earlier, was ready to go into effect. Thirdly, an agrarian policy to abolish all large landowners and set up peasant co-operatives, was put into effect. Finally, a single party controlled the armed forces, the secret police, an apparatus for propaganda, the press, and education. This, in effect, brought a close alliance between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. However, Yugoslavia thought it

should be placed above the other "satellites" in terms of rank in importance to the Soviet Union.³⁶

The idea of Yugoslavia being more important than the other satellites originated toward the end of World War II. To illustrate this, I would like to briefly look at Stalin's involvement in Rumania and Bulgaria. Rumania was a country at war with Russia during World War II. When Russia advanced into Rumania in August 1944, a takeover occurred and Rumania now began to assist Russia in battle. Even though the Red Army didn't bring any revolution, it did bring new leaders -- people that had been in exile in Moscow. Russia declared war on Bulgaria on September 5, 1944, for being associated with Germany. Stalin felt he would have an easier time controlling countries such as these. He placed new leaders in control of these countries; he did not ultimately place Tito in control after the war was over. From this, Tito felt he was more important because he illustrated more power by being able to liberate his own country himself.³⁷

This alliance, after the war, could be seen in the domination Russia tried to have over the Yugoslav economy. Russia wanted to begin sponsoring mixed companies, where they would be working with Yugoslavia in developing these companies. In theory, each nation would supply capital of equal amounts, and they would possess an equal voice in their operations. In practice, however, the Russians didn't want to invest any capital, while insisting on having a predominant voice in the

operation. Moreover, Russia only wanted mixed companies in those fields, or economic pursuits, which would benefit Russia the most. For example, Soviet negotiators were forced to admit to Yugoslavia that agricultural produce would be used primarily to meet the needs of the Soviet Union, not Yugoslavia.³⁸

Although it consented to two mixed companies, Yugoslavia resented the idea. These operations were seen by Yugoslavia to be an avenue to increase its influence in the Communist operations in Eastern Europe. Soviet leaders often "blackmailed" the Yugoslavs into concluding commercial agreements, which took from Yugoslavia precious products, at world market prices, prices that were much lower than Yugoslavia's price of production. In return, Yugoslavia was forced to purchase products from Russia that they didn't need, and these at outrageous prices. Additionally, Russia wanted to determine the entire course of Yugoslavia's economic development. As shown above, the Yugoslavs had to export their raw materials and agricultural products, accept the products sent to them, and have all prices dictated to them by Russia.³⁹

Russia wanted to prevent Yugoslavia from having unlimited power in determining its own development in industry. By limiting Yugoslavia's economic self-development, Russia could make the Yugoslavs look towards itself for assistance in development. Their first joint company was called Justa, an airport center. Each country put up 100 million dinars. Yugoslavia provided the airport, communication equipment and

extra cash, while the Soviets provided aircraft, technical installations and equal cash. The profits were to be divided on the basis of the capital investment that each country had made. Yugoslav assets in the venture were figured at 1938 prices, while the Soviet assets were figured at 1946 prices. This caused the proportion of the profits to be increased more towards Russia than their actual investment allowed, while Yugoslavia received less profits in proportion to its own investment. When all was said and done, the Yugoslavs figured their assets were worth 20 times the amount allowed by the Soviets. This kind of business with Russia did not allow the economic power of Yugoslavia to increase, which is what Russia wanted.⁴⁰

For Moscow, political domination went hand-in-hand with economic exploitation. They wanted the Yugoslavs to follow the Kremlin's advice in all domestic and foreign matters. Moscow wanted to shape both the internal and external policies of the Balkan states under their control, an influence that Tito refused. Additionally, the Yugoslav's ego was hurt when Stalin didn't place them above the other "satellites" in importance. Stalin placed importance on a country's "attitude toward the Soviet Union," and so Yugoslavia didn't rank high because of some of Tito's independent actions. Soviet agents were gathering information to discredit Tito. They wanted to build an anti-Tito wing in the Yugoslav Communist Party to gain control and eliminate the "Tito clique."⁴¹

Yugoslavia's foreign policy objectives were: expand itself as a protectorate over Albania; support communist rebels in Greece; bring the Balkans into a united socialist camp; and work on a policy of federation to lead this united camp.⁴² The countries that were interested in the federation were Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania, and Rumania. Albania was the closest to Yugoslavia, and they had developed joint companies with Yugoslavia; supposedly Russia had approved this situation.⁴³ Although Stalin did agree to this, he saw, however, some inconvenience in this arrangement. He wanted Yugoslavia to be a protectorate over Albania to solidify the Communist structure in Albania. Stalin became uneasy with this situation when he saw the Albanians showing more respect and loyalty to Yugoslavia than to the Soviet Union. Stalin felt this somehow diminished the Soviet Union's own influence in this region.⁴⁴

The thought of a Balkan Federation, which was originally encouraged by Moscow and to be planned by Georgi Dimitrov, a Communist party leader in Bulgaria, and Tito, can be viewed as a desirable arrangement. Since both were tried and trusted Stalinists, it was in keeping with the ultimate pattern of relations among socialist states. With the Federation, Stalin saw a solidly unified, self-supporting but local state, which could withstand Western pressure. Also, in the times of best relations, Stalin could be seen showing admiration toward Tito and a hint of giving him the leadership of international

Communism.⁴⁵

Despite the importance of the Bulgarian Communists, there was little doubt who would be the boss of this new Federation. This, in part, was what disturbed the Russians; they were uneasy with the extent to which Tito controlled his party and state. As the leader of the Yugoslav Communist Party, and with the prestige of his wartime achievements, Tito was idolized by his closest associates. This was a unique feature for leaders who were actually creatures of Moscow. The attempts mentioned earlier of Stalin trying to get Russia inside the Yugoslav Party to lower the standing of Tito, were most unsuccessful. Even though Tito was loyal to him, Stalin began to see that Tito was a cunning man, with a strong instinct for self-preservation.⁴⁶

After the Comintern was dissolved in 1943, there was no institution available to control the international co-ordination of the World Communist Parties. Most still looked towards Moscow for all their guidance. Tito made a proposal to Stalin to reinstate such a device, but that it would be on a more democratic and limited basis. Also, he wanted it to be useful for consultation and an exchange of experience. Tito believed the Yugoslav Party now had much to contribute to the Communist movement.⁴⁷

On Stalin's side, the decision to launch the Cominform meant that a new phase in Communist relations was beginning. And that, given the Yugoslav's devotion to himself and to the

Soviet Union, the achievement of Yugoslav sub-ordination would not be a difficult task. Stalin was, therefore, obviously willing to bring the under the surface conflict out into the open on the assumption that the Yugoslavs would submit. Possibly because of Tito's orthodox Communist structure, Stalin could have overlooked Tito's independent power. This miscalculation, which was revealed in the aftermath of Tito's expulsion from Cominform on June 28, 1948, sharpened the trends toward conformity in Eastern Europe.⁴⁸

When the Cominform initially began, Yugoslavia was confident that its influence with the rest of the Balkan nations would be increased. In light of their attempt to build up socialism in their own country, they saw that this would give them recognized authority in the whole scheme of the socialist movements. However, in the eyes of Russia, this only brought suspicion upon Yugoslavia. Moscow didn't like to see strong communist states going their own way independently; they wanted their strength to come from Moscow alone. Therefore, from the start of the Cominform, Moscow was using it as a device to observe and try to influence Yugoslavia's actions. Yugoslavia soon discovered there wasn't consultation or exchange of ideas taking place in the Cominform.⁴⁹

On March 1, 1948, when the Yugoslav Communist Party arrested Andrija Hebrang and Streten Zujovic, two Communist officials in Yugoslavia, the West generally viewed this as proof that the Yugoslav Communists, Stalin's disciples, were

copying the master's methods down to the smallest detail. Nobody guessed those arrests were, in fact, acts of open rebellion against Stalin and a prelude to the rupture with Moscow. The whole of the Yugoslav Party workers had been informed about the conflict with Moscow. Firmness was shown by the Party structure since non-Party and Western diplomats didn't know about it. This also illustrated the separation between party and nation.⁵⁰

Kardelj, Tito's Prime Minister, saw the issue between the two countries as whether socialism should develop "by equal co-operation" of socialist states, or "by further enlargement of the Soviet Union."⁵¹ When the Yugoslav Central Committee expelled Hebrang from the Party, Russia soon retaliated toward Yugoslavia for this show of defiance. All Soviet military advisors and instructors were withdrawn from Yugoslavia on March 18, "because they were surrounded by unfriendliness and treated with hostility."⁵² Civilian advisors and specialists soon followed.⁵³

On March 20, 1948, Tito decided to respond to Moscow directly, so he sent the first of what has been called a famous exchange of letters between the Russians and the Yugoslavs. Tito denied that the Soviet advisors were receiving harsh treatment, and he stated he didn't think that this was the real reason for their withdrawal. Tito was hurt by the accusations made above, and he wanted Russia to inform Belgrade openly of what the trouble was so they could continue to maintain

friendly relations.⁵⁴

When Tito read Stalin's reply, he felt as if a thunderbolt had struck him. Stalin gave him three "other" causes for the advisors' withdrawal: first, that leading Communists in Yugoslavia were circulating anti-Soviet rumors. Second, that the Yugoslav Communist Party was not really a "Marxist-Leninist Bolshevik" organization, because it hid behind the People's Front and lacked internal democracy. Also, the CPY wasn't actively involved in the class struggle. Russia saw too many capitalist elements in Yugoslavia, and Stalin said that Tito's dealings with the People's Front resembled the Mensheviks, who Lenin called "malicious opportunists and liquidators of the Party." Third, Stalin claimed that the Yugoslav Deputy Foreign Minister was an English spy and that Yugoslavia though aware of this fact, did nothing about it. Moreover, Stalin would not correspond with the Yugoslavs "under the censorship of an English spy."⁵⁵

Tito's reply was both humble yet firm. It denied all Soviet charges, blaming them on "inaccurate and slanderous information."⁵⁶ This information came from Hebrang and Zujovic. Yugoslavia hoped Russia would send a group to Belgrade to investigate the charges. The essence of the reply was: "No matter how much each of us loves the Lord of Socialism, the USSR, he can, in no case, love his country less."⁵⁷ Tito stated that love for the USSR did exist among the Yugoslav masses. He also said that, although the Soviet Union was the prime

example, socialism in Yugoslavia was developing "in somewhat different forms . . . under the special conditions that exist in our country."⁵⁸

Stalin's reply on May 4, was: "Comrades Tito and Kardelj, it seems, do not understand that this childish method of groundless denial of facts and documents can never be convincing, but merely laughable."⁵⁹ Their anti-Soviet attitude "means the negation of all friendly relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia."⁶⁰ Stalin said he saw this attitude as early as 1945 when Tito made the speech that mentioned the situation in Trieste. He said Tito was unable to recognize the difference in Soviet and Anglo-American foreign policy, and that this pro Anglo-American attitude meant "renouncing all friendly relations with the Soviet Union, and betraying the United Socialist Front of the Soviet Union . . ."⁶¹

Tito didn't try to exploit the peasants as did Russia, but stated that they were the strongest pillar in Yugoslavia, and this contradicted Marxist-Leninism. For the Soviet Union, the working class, not the peasantry, should be the pillar of a socialist state. "To underestimate the experience of the CPSU in matters relating to the development of socialism in Yugoslavia is a great danger and cannot be allowed for Marxism."⁶²

Before the Cominform meeting, Stalin protested against Hebrang's and Zujovic's arrests, and requested that delegates from Belgrade be sent to the meeting.⁶³ Part of the Cominform

resolution read:

. . . by their anti-Party and anti-Soviet opinions incompatible with Marxist-Leninism, by their whole conduct, and by their refusal to take part in the conference of the Bureau of Information, Yugoslavia has assumed an attitude in opposition to the Communist Parties affiliated to the Bureau of Information; they have taken the course of separating themselves from the United Socialist Front against Imperialism . . .64

Titoism was born in the Spring of 1948. At this time, many in the West pondered what ideological deviations that the Yugoslav Communists were guilty of. The Russians, it was argued, were displeased with their colleagues because they weren't collectivizing fast enough, or to the contrary, because they were bent on industrializing too rapidly. The interpretations, seen by the two parties involved were likewise interesting. The Soviet assumption must have been that Tito's Communists would seek Moscow's pardon. If they were to do this, their position would be compromised, and the next step would be a leisurely liquidation of the current leadership and a replacement by persons more likely to follow Soviet directions. It was difficult to see how Yugoslavia could resist the Russian proposal to lay the whole issue before the Cominform and abide by their judgement. Without Russia, Yugoslavia was isolated from having relations with other countries. Most people thought it was doubtful that a Western power would protect one Communist dictatorship against another.⁶⁵

The economic consequences alone were enough to force Yugoslavia to compromise. The harsh tone of this message was

meant to dispel any hopes that the Tito regime could maintain its independent posture, and still count on Russia to keep it from disaster. However, an admission of Yugoslav errors, which was all the Russians demanded in the first instance, would have been only the first downward step toward the eventual destruction of the Yugoslav Party.⁶⁶

By and large most of the charges had some merit coming from a Soviet point of view: first, the Yugoslav Party had opposed the Soviet Union, and this made them "anti-Soviet." Second, its policy towards the peasants wasn't in accord with Moscow. Third, the Party and its programs didn't stand out from the People's Front. Fourth, there was no democracy in the Party. Fifth, they didn't respond properly to criticism. In one sense this was "nationalism." The Kremlin made these charges because Yugoslavia wouldn't bend to Soviet domination. All of these charges, which will be examined later, could possibly be a facade to force Yugoslavia into submission.⁶⁷

We need now to examine some of these charges that Stalin gave for Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform, and comment on the validity of them. First of all, they said Tito refused to conform to the policies of the Cominform. This is partly true; Tito listened to the Kremlin except in those areas that contradicted his own country's plans. Secondly, they said Yugoslavia had behaved toward Russia as toward an expanding "bourgeois" empire. This is partly true; if you delete "bourgeois," then it is true. Thirdly, they said Yugoslavia had

subordinated the interests of the CPY to the interests of the National Liberation Front. This is partly true; the NLF was responsible for bringing Yugoslavia to the status of a People's Democracy, the CPY involvement was kept behind the scenes. The Communists' interests couldn't be revealed until the consolidation of power had taken place. Russia couldn't control the NLF as easily as the Party. Fourthly, they said Tito had subordinated the interests of the peasantry. This is false; in Yugoslavia, unlike in Russia, the proletariat had no identity. Tito sought out the peasants and farmers to be the foundation of his state, not the proletariat. Tito having nationalized agriculture, only he failed to collectivize because Stalin did not provide the necessary machinery. In Marxist terminology, the only difference in collectivization and nationalization is that collectivization implies mechanization. Fifthly, they said the Yugoslav government controlled the CPY, rather than the other way around. This is false; in Yugoslavia the Communist Party is the government. Sixthly, they said Tito failed to have the "dictatorship of the proletariat." This is false; their dictatorship was proletarian, that of unlimited subservience to the Pooh-Bahs of the Kremlin.⁶⁸

The Bureau of Information said the error of the CPY is that in the last five or six years nationalist ideas have taken a predominant position in the leadership. Part of the resolution reads:

Showing scant understanding of the international situation and a state of intimidation in the face of

blackmailing threats of the Imperialists, the Yugoslav leaders believe they can win the good will of the Imperialists by making concessions to them . .
. .69

Stalin couldn't expel Yugoslavia because of "left deviation," or by saying they were behaving too militantly for him. This would liquidate Stalin's idea of two camps opposing each other and bring back "peaceful co-existence" with the West. Stalin had nothing against a policy of aggression as such; only against the fruits of aggression going to Yugoslavia, not to the Soviet Union.⁷⁰

Tito and his associates, although devout in their attitude toward the official doctrine for which Moscow spoke, were nationalists, first. They wanted to liberate themselves from tyranny, whether it be domestic or foreign. They had reason to loose their naive faith in the supreme wisdom and the moral evolution of Stalin. When, confronting Stalin face to face, the Yugoslavs found that, far from being of heroic mold, he was petty, brutal, and uncomprehending. Since real circumstances made Tito independent of Moscow, he could hardly fail to defend his society.⁷¹

It is hard for a non-Communist Westerner to appreciate the impact that the Cominform resolution had for the Yugoslavs. For a Yugoslav, communism isn't merely a political theory or program; it is a way of life to which the Yugoslavs had dedicated themselves completely. To be criticized by the object of which they structured themselves made them unhappy. To be

denounced made them miserable. But to be excommunicated, when they considered themselves not only faithful, but the most faithful of the faithful, was simply something that could not happen. As Tito remarked later, in spite of the many doubts, they "at heart had faith in the Soviet Union, and in Stalin."⁷² The Yugoslavs denied heresy; they had no real desire to challenge the authority of the Kremlin.⁷³

The Belgrade Party leaders had to be cautious immediately following their expulsion from the Cominform, they didn't want to do anything that would cause the Party members to interpret their actions as a confirmation of the Cominform resolution. For this reason, the Fifth Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which began on July 21, 1948, failed to produce the great challenge to Russia, by the rebel Tito, that had been forecasted by Party members. There was no proclamation of new Communist principles. Tito explained at length the foundations of the Communist Party. He also praised the Partisan war efforts at great lengths, an effort that Stalin gave very little importance.⁷⁴

The only sure method of punishing the heretical Yugoslavia would have been for Russia to use military force. This may have been considered; one can only speculate as to why it was not employed. One reason certainly was non-continuity. If Yugoslavia had been an immediate neighbor, the Russians would have undoubtedly been much less inclined to permit their separation. The difficult terrain and Yugoslavia's reputation

as guerilla fighters must have given pause. Invasion would have been risky and damaging to the Soviet position. Moreover, it probably seemed unnecessary. The Stalinists couldn't imagine that Tito could stand against them. The Stalinists felt loyal Communists in Yugoslavia would rise at the call of their supreme leader and cast down Tito.⁷⁵ However, there was a limited Russian military response aimed towards Yugoslavia. This varied from placing troop concentrations near the Yugoslav border to military demonstrations. Also, during this time, Russia seemed to be making preparations for direct military intervention in Yugoslavia. Moscow knew the extent of the military strength in Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia's faith in Stalin before 1948 had caused them to order their military supplies from the East only. It was learned after Stalin's death, that Moscow had made a decision in principle to invade Yugoslavia. Some fretted Yugoslavia could put up a strong opposition and that the war could drag on. This faction of people advised Stalin "not to strike a hornet's nest."⁷⁶

In 1949, a fierce struggle was brought to the Yugoslavs. They were being strangled by a gradual economic blockade. She was to be made hungry and miserable, and thus forced to relent and capitulate to Russian pressure. In December of 1948, Tito informed Parliament about the economic breakdown between Yugoslavia and all the other countries of the Eastern bloc. He told the latter he was forced to switch the export of raw materials from the East to the West. He made it clear that by

this action the Eastern bloc would suffer from the break as much as his own country would.⁷⁷

The economic blockade was disastrous for Yugoslavia. They had been dependent on the Eastern bloc for roughly fifty percent of its imports. Even Albania, their close associate, denounced trade agreements with Belgrade. Overall, Yugoslav industrial production slowed down. The Yugoslav's overzealousness contributed to their agricultural difficulties. In 1949, they launched a drive to force collectivization, and by 1951, the peasants' resistance to this amounted to "a nationwide slowdown strike."⁷⁸

In the first year following the break between Stalin and Tito, the United States didn't come to the support of Yugoslavia. America's reaction was caused by Stalin's rejection of the Marshall Plan in June of 1947. In 1947, Stalin was skeptical of why capitalists would give away money to help restore the economy of Communist countries. The Marshall Plan recognized the obligation of advanced countries to help the economies of less fortunate ones. This was a revolutionary idea for something that has become an accepted practice today. The U.S. saw shreds of democratic freedom in some satellites of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia being one example, that they continued attempts to offer aid. When Stalin rejected the Marshall Plan, the U.S. didn't attempt to offer aid to Yugoslavia, because they saw Yugoslavia still resembling the Soviet Union as a rigid communist country.⁷⁹

Western diplomats didn't fully come to the support of Tito's regime until November of 1950. This came after a formal request for aid was made by Tito in October of 1950.⁸⁰ The reason given earlier for the United States not giving Yugoslavia aid is now the reason they offered aid to them. The United States thought that it was safe to say that Yugoslavia was in no way in alliance with the Soviet Union. As with Czechoslovakia, the U.S. felt Yugoslavia could possibly possess some democratic freedom within their country.⁸¹

Further U.S. relief was then provided to Yugoslavia after the President had advised the Congress of the following:

The continued independence of Yugoslavia is of great importance to the security of the United States and its partners in NATO and to all nations associated with them in their common defense against the threat against Soviet aggression. We can help preserve the independence of a nation which is defying the savage threats of Soviet Imperialists, and keeping Soviet power out of one of Europe's most strategic areas. This is clearly in our interests.⁸²

Yugoslavia's acceptance of American aid came about as a consequence of the regime's critical needs at a time when it was under siege from the East. They were de facto allies in the respective Cold Wars in which each one was engaged in against the Soviet Union. It was worth the consequence that followed to receive from the Americans: weapons, food, raw materials, and a commitment to defend their independence.⁸³

Tito could resist Russian pressure because the Yugoslavs had developed firm esprit de corps in their inspiring struggle. The fact that Tito was the only important Yugoslav Communist to

escape the prewar purges, had made it possible for him to form a guiding nucleus of the Party wholly loyal to him. Badly as the trade embargo hurt, it was bearable. Most important, the Yugoslavs, like the Chinese, had won by their own efforts and saw no reason to surrender power to anyone, especially the master in Moscow.⁸⁴

Due to the Cominform resolution, Tito and his associates recognized that a Cold War was forced upon Yugoslavia. Tito, by holding his own against these heavy attacks, at last brought worldwide humiliation on the Russian Goliath, who could not overcome them. Their defiance had more significance than just entailing a recession of the Iron Curtain. The implications of the national communism that had been adopted by the Bolsheviks, in place of the original anti-national Communism, when they seized power in Russia, failed to indoctrinate Communist revolutions elsewhere. Tito gave his alliance to the original Bolsheviks, but he didn't feel it was right to demand that Communists outside Russia had to promote the interests of the Russian nation over their own. The adoption of nationalism by the Communist movement, inevitably implied the adoption of a different nationalism in each country. Tito's defiance represented the national separation that would eventually fragment Stalin's postwar empire.⁸⁵

ENDNOTES

¹Hamilton Fish Armstrong, Tito and Goliath (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1964), p. 38.

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³Ibid., p. 432.

⁴Ibid., p. 432.

⁵John C. Campbell, Tito's Separate Road: America and Yugoslavia in World Politics (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967), p. 4.

⁶Ibid., pp. 5-6.

⁷George W. Hoffman and Fred W. Neal, Yugoslavia and the New Communism (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1962), p. 109.

⁸Slaboden Draskovich, Tito, Moscow's Trojan Horse (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), pp. 71-72.

⁹Milovan Djilas, Wartime (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977), p. 198.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 454.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 251-252.

¹²Ilija Jukic, The Fall of Yugoslavia (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974), p. 7.

¹³Djilas, Wartime, p. 199.

¹⁴Louis J. Halle, The Cold War as History (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967), p. 47.

¹⁵Draskovich, Tito, Moscow's Trojan Horse, p. 73.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁸Alex N. Dragnich, Tito's Promised Land, Yugoslavia (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1954), pp. 287-288.

¹⁹Josef Korbel, Tito's Communism (Denver: University of Denver Press, 1951), pp. 38-40.

²⁰Ibid., p. 40.

²¹Draskovich, Tito, Moscow's Trojan Horse, pp. 77-78.

²²William Hardy McNeill, America, Britain, and Russia: Their Co-operation and Conflict 1941-1946 (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), p. 389.

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²⁴McNeill, America, Britain, and Russia, pp. 422 and 454.

²⁵Dragnich, Tito's Promised Land, p. 289.

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²⁷Ibid., p. 495.

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³⁰Hoffman and Neal, Yugoslavia and the New Communism, pp. 107-108.

³¹Draskovich, Tito, Moscow's Trojan Horse, pp. 88-90.

³²Zbigreiw K. Brzezinski, The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 19-20.

³³Adam B. Ulam, Ideologies and Illusions: Revolutionary

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³⁴Hoffman and Neal, Yugoslavia and the New Communism, p. 114.

³⁵Adam B. Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1973 (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), p. 284.

³⁶Stephen Clissold, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union 1939-1973 (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 42.

³⁷McNeill, America, Britain, and Russia, pp. 467-471.

³⁸Dragnich, Tito's Promised Land, Yugoslavia, p. 290.

³⁹Ibid., p. 291.

⁴⁰Hoffman and Neal, Yugoslavia and the New Communism, p. 117.

⁴¹Dragnich, Tito's Promised Land, Yugoslavia, p. 292.

⁴²Clissold, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union 1939-1977, p. 44.

⁴³Hoffman and Neal, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union 1939-1977, pp. 173-174.

⁴⁴Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence, p. 462.

⁴⁵Brzezinski, The Soviet Bloc, p. 55.

⁴⁶Ulam, Expansion and Coexistence, p. 463.

⁴⁷Clissold, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union 1939-1977, p. 49.

⁴⁸Brzezinski, The Soviet Bloc, p. 64.

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⁵¹Hoffman and Neal, Yugoslavia and the New Communism, p. 126.

⁵²Ibid., p. 126.

⁵³Ibid., p. 126.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 129-130.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 130-131.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 130-131.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 130-131.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 131-132.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 131-132.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 131-132.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 132-134.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 132-134.

⁶³Halperin, The Triumphant Heretic, p. 73.

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⁶⁵Ulam, Ideologies and Illusions, p. 171.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 172.

⁶⁷Hoffman and Neal, Yugoslavia and the New Communism, pp. 135-136.

⁶⁸Leigh White, Balkan Caesar: Tito versus Stalin (New York: Charles Scribneis Sons, 1951), pp. 113-115.

⁶⁹Halperin, The Triumphant Heretic, pp. 74-75.

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⁷²Hoffman and Neal, Yugoslavia and the New Communism, p. 139.

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⁷⁹Adam B. Ulam, Stalin: The Man and His Era (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), pp. 657-659.

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⁸¹Ulam, Stalin, pp. 657-759.

⁸²Neal, Tito in Action, pp. 6-7.

⁸³Campbell, Tito's Separate Road, pp. 36-37.

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