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TITO: THE FORMATION OF A DISLOYAL BOLSHEVIK*

SUMMARY: Tito rose to lead the Yugoslav Communist Party by stressing his loyalty to Lenin. As a "Left" critic of "Right Liquidationism" his views coincided with the Left turn in the Comintern which climaxed with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. During the "imperialist" war, Tito, like Lenin, wrote only of the armed uprising and the proletarian revolution; for him this began with the German invasion of April 1941. However, Tito's experiences in Moscow during the height of the purges enabled him to get the measure of Stalin. Twice he emerged unscathed from accusations of Trotskyism, and in his writings began to explore the differences between Leninism and Stalinism.

Introduction

Tito saw himself as a Bolshevik. A convinced Leninist, he believed in the need for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalist society; he believed that such a revolution would involve an armed clash with the forces of the old order; and he believed that such a clash would only end in victory if carried out under the leadership of the communist party.

As a conclusion to a study of Tito's world view this is at first sight rather banal; Tito was after all leader of the Yugoslav Communist Party (CPY), a party closely controlled by the Comintern. However, students of Tito and Titoism have tended to ignore the self-evident, and preferred myths to reality, myths which Tito himself was not averse to fostering. During the Second World War he was keen to play down the extent of the civil war then taking place in Yugoslavia, and portray himself to the Western allies as nationalist first, and communist second. This view, which involves a certain reticence over the Nazi-Soviet pact and is difficult to sustain during the post-war Stalinist years, was greatly reinforced when in 1948 Tito successfully stood up to Stalin's blackmail. A whole school of Yugoslav historiography seeks to show how, almost from birth, Tito put Yugoslavia's national interest above the interests of international communism.[1]

Those historians who have challenged this view have allowed their anti-communism to blind them to the subtleties of life in the Comintern during

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[1] The best known representative of this school writing in English is Vladimir Dedijer.

the Stalin years. Tito is portrayed as red in tooth and claw: he was from the start a tool of Moscow, more Russian than true Croat after his years spent in Siberia as a youth, he had been placed in the CPY leadership by the Comintern to bring dissident elements to heal. During the war he actively supported the Nazi-Soviet Pact, deliberately deceived gullible British emissaries about the nature of the civil war being fought between partisans and Četniks, and then went on to establish a one-party Stalinist dictatorship. Confronted with the events of 1948, such historians have had to underplay the importance of that dispute.[2]

In writing this article I have avoided the potential minefields presented by another account of the partisan-Četnik war and the Stalin-Tito dispute. Instead I have concentrated on showing how Tito's experiences in both the CPY and the Comintern during the formative years of his party leadership, 1936-1941, led him, an orthodox Bolshevik, to become disloyal to Moscow.

1 Learning to work with Moscow

Tito's Leninist orthodoxy helped him immensely when it came to being selected by the Comintern as CPY leader. In the 1920s and 1930s the CPY was a byword for factional intrigue. Party histories of those years are difficult to follow as the reader enters a labyrinth of Left versus Right struggles. Behind those clashes, however, lay genuine ideological issues and in the mid 1930s, when Tito rose to a position of influence within the party, the issue was Liquidationism. Tito took the same line on Liquidationism as Lenin had done.

Liquidationism meant abandoning or "liquidating" the underground committee structure of the party in an attempt to legalize the party and thus make easier an alliance with the liberals by distancing the party from its radical leadership in emigration. It was a term used by Lenin to describe the views of the majority of his Menshevik opponents in Russia during the years 1907-1914. The Menshevik view of Tsarism was that there were essentially only two political groupings in the country, supporters of the Tsar and supporters of the opposition; the Russian social democrats should, therefore, be ready to co-operate with any opposition alliance which might emerge. Liquidator Mensheviks argued that this would be facilitated if the social democrats concentrated their activity on the trade unions, legalized after 1905, and rebuilt the party on a semi-legal footing, abandoning the centralized hierarchy of underground committees.

Lenin argued that there were two opposition groupings: the liberals, little more than a new capitalist government in the wings, and the social demo-

[2] For a recent example of this approach, see Nora Beloff, *Tito's Flawed Legacy* (London, 1985).

crats. No co-operation with the liberals was possible and the legal labour movement should be protected from liberal influence by remaining under the control of the underground committee structure based in emigration. In his book, reforming the party organization was simply a cover for reformism: it was the logical next step in a strategy of betrayal which began with the demand for a united opposition.[3]

Liquidationism was the ideology espoused by Milan Gorkić, who preceded Tito as party leader. Under his leadership, in the shadow of developments in France, the party sought a popular front style agreement with the socialist party. Of course, at first sight there were few similarities between the situation in France, where both the communist and socialist parties were legal, and Yugoslavia, where both were illegal. However, the Comintern line required all parties to follow broadly the same policy, and ever since the assassination of King Alexander on 9 October 1934 there had been signs that the dictatorial regime established in 1929 was beginning to weaken. The censorship was relaxed, prominent political prisoners were released, and in February 1935 elections were promised for the following May.

Seeking to capitalize on these developments in the run-up to the May 1935 elections, Gorkić held talks with socialist leaders throughout January and February 1935. However, although an agreement on joint action in the trade unions seemed feasible, negotiations on an electoral agreement broke down over who should head the electoral list. To speed up these negotiations, Gorkić initiated a dramatic change in tactics. Earlier instructions that the party fight as an independent entity, but in co-operation with other groups, were contradicted by the proposal that the party merge into a single opposition list.[4] An electoral pact with the socialists was one thing, a policy of a single opposition list was quite another, and dangerously close to the sort of liberal domination of the opposition against which Lenin had once warned.

The May election was for many a moral victory for the opposition, despite the government's comfortable majority in terms of parliamentary seats. With opposition groups at first boycotting the new parliament, and the appointment of the more liberal figure of M. Stojadinović as prime minister, the political scene in Yugoslavia remained fluid, with the socialist party now legalized *de facto* if not *de jure*. Gorkić, therefore, was to repeat the proposal for a single opposition list throughout his period as party leader, even though the rest of the leadership did not support him. In June

[3] Lenin's controversy with the Liquidators is explored in Geoffrey Swain, *Russian Social Democracy and the Legal Labour Movement* (London, 1983).

[4] Milovan Bosić, "Aktivnost KPJ na stvaranju jedinstvene radničke partije 1935. godine", *Istorija radničkog pokreta*, Zbornik radova III (1966), pp. 134-138.

1935 the Central Committee rejected his "single opposition" stance, but continued to press for an alliance with the socialists.

When prospects for an alliance improved in the autumn, after the socialists had adopted a new radical programme,[5] Gorkić was sent to Yugoslavia in October 1935 to try to finalize these negotiations: again he had no success. Mass arrests during the winter of 1935-1936 showed the clear limits to Stojadinović's liberalism and revived opposition to Gorkić's tactics. He was forced to summon a meeting of the CPY Central Committee in April 1936, without the prior agreement of the Comintern, and agree to the adoption of a series of resolutions critical of all the attempts at negotiating an alliance with the socialists.[6]

The Comintern's decision to quash these resolutions of April 1936, and summon the leadership to Moscow in August of that year, appeared to suggest total endorsement for the Gorkić line. However, questions had clearly been raised in the Comintern by Gorkić's apparent inability to keep his own house in order, for he was criticized for not having sought Comintern intervention earlier.[7] When Gorkić returned from Moscow to Vienna, where the CPY Central Committee was based, he told a Central Committee meeting on 8 December that henceforth he had the right to veto all party decisions: he alone would in future have the right to correspond with the Comintern.[8]

Again negotiations began with the socialists, and again Gorkić stressed the single opposition tactic. Discussions started in Zagreb in autumn 1936 about an agreement for the December 1936 local elections. A joint platform was drafted and sent to the Central Committee for comments and the party's November report to the Comintern was upbeat and optimistic, as was a Gorkić letter to Tito. Once again Gorkić was convinced of the need for agreement at any cost. An agreement of some sort had to be achieved, whether officially or unofficially and no matter what name was given to that list, he told Tito. It was essential that any united Left grouping that might emerge should become an active part of the United Opposition organized by the "bourgeois" parties: the "old socialist" idea – Lenin's idea – of a "third bloc" was rejected.[9]

[5] Nadežda Jovanović, "Milan Gorkić: prilog za biografiju", *Istorija 20 veka*, I (1983), pp. 45-46; and Bosić, "Aktivnost KPJ na stvaranju", pp. 148-151.

[6] Bosić, "Aktivnost KPJ na stvaranju", pp. 161-167.

[7] Archive of the Yugoslav League of Communists Central Committee, Belgrade [hereafter, ACK], KI 1936/434.

[8] Jovanović, "Milan Gorkić", p. 51.

[9] ACK, KI 1936/279, 1936/364, and 1936/379 (1936/304 shows that the purge trials starting in Moscow also hampered an agreement); and Ivan Jelić, "O nekim problemima stvaranja narodne fronte u Hrvatske, 1936", *Historijski zbornik* (1976-1977), pp. 538-541.

Tito had been confirmed in the post of Organizational Secretary, responsible for links with Yugoslavia, at the August 1936 meeting in Moscow. He knew as early as November 1936 that the Comintern had serious doubts about Gorkić's abilities, and differences between them became apparent at once. While not critical of the negotiations with the socialists *per se*, Tito was clearly worried by the logic of agreement at any price. The socialists insisted that the illegality of the CPY was a major stumbling block to an agreement, and Tito told Gorkić in November 1936 that much of the current talk about relations with the socialist party could only be described as Liquidationist.[10]

That Gorkić was a Liquidationist there can be no doubt. Not only did he call for a united opposition, but he wanted to facilitate this by legalizing the communist party and thus overcoming the socialists' fear of association with an illegal organization. To this end, he drew up lengthy proposals aimed at completely transforming the party's organizational structure. At his first meeting with the Central Committee on returning from Moscow he called on all those in emigration who were in contact with Yugoslavia to study the question of the relationship between legal and illegal work. All Gorkić's correspondence with the Comintern in the spring of 1937 made clear that radical changes were at the front of his mind. The issue of reform appeared regularly on the agenda of Central Committee meetings as the "organizational question".[11]

The starting point for Gorkić's analysis of the failings of the party were the constant arrests. He therefore proposed legalizing as many party leaders as possible by involving them in the legal and semi-legal trade union work so essential for working class unity. This would inevitably mean the demise of "deep underground commanding committees", which showed

[10] Josip Broz Tito, *Sabrana djela* [hereafter, *Works*] (Belgrade, 1977), vol. I, pp. 40-41, and ACK, KI 1937/121.

[11] ACK, KI 1937/121, 1937/161; and Jovanović, "Milan Gorkić", p. 51. See also Milovan Djilas, *Memoires of a Revolutionary* (New York, 1973), p. 159. It is perhaps worth quoting from ACK, KI 1937/121, to reinforce the charge of Liquidationism against Gorkić. This document comprises a series of translated excerpts from Gorkić's correspondence with the Comintern. He says: "The illegal [party] leadership must legalize as much of its work as possible, enlarging its size and quality by bringing in activists from legal work and legal organizations – its directives must, where-ever possible, be sent legally; its links with cells, groups and the party membership maintained legally [. . .]. In general, there is no longer any point in talking about an illegal technical apparatus." Someone, presumably the Comintern official preparing the German translation of these excerpts for the commission looking into Gorkić's fate, has put exclamation marks against these passages. To abolish the technical apparatus which linked the party to the emigré leadership, and to encourage activists of the legal labour movement to take the lead in party affairs, was precisely what Lenin opposed as Liquidationism between 1908-1912, see note 3. However reasonable Gorkić's proposals might seem, they were un-Leninist.

little activity and were increasingly irrelevant. "We must be brave enough to recognize this", he wrote in January 1937, "and draw the logical conclusions, which are not", he insisted, "Liquidationist". The old technical apparatus should be abolished, the party rebuilt from below, and the party leadership legalized in Yugoslavia.[12]

Unfortunately for Gorkić, the Comintern did not agree that these proposals were not Liquidationist. He was warned by the CPY representative in Moscow that he should take care not to commit any sort of "silliness" by appearing to favour Liquidationism. The impression "here", he was told, was that the proposed reorganization would indeed be "silly". Gorkić stuck to his guns and took a detailed statement on party reorganization when summoned to Moscow in July 1937. This repeated the call for the legalization of the party and the abolition of the technical apparatus; it described the underground cells as irrelevant.[13] The Comintern was equally unhappy about his repeated calls for the party to follow the tactic of a single opposition and criticized his letter of July 1937 calling for all anti-fascist elements to be part of the same list in local elections.[14]

Gorkić never returned from that visit to Moscow, one of the many victims of Stalin's purges, and at a meeting on 17 August 1937 Tito took over as interim party secretary. His Leninist opposition to Liquidationism did not mean his position as interim party leader was automatically endorsed by Moscow. Gorkić had been arrested by the NKVD, not for the ideological sin of Liquidationism, but as a British spy. As a result, the Comintern began a lengthy investigation into the CPY to establish whether Gorkićites existed among the remaining leadership.

Understandably, this enquiry gave new heart to those who had opposed Gorkić in 1935 and 1936 and who interpreted his removal as a vindication of their position,[15] but it left Tito uncertain as to whether he should openly criticize Gorkić's links with the socialists, at a time when the popular front policy was apparently so successful in France and Spain. It would be eight months before Tito could even begin to combat Liquidationism and "Bolshevize" the party, and over two years before his position as party leader

[12] ACK, KI 1937/1.
[13] ACK, KI 1937/61, and 1937/121.
[14] ACK, KI 1937/55, and 1937/82.
[15] ACK, KI 1938/3. Gorkić did visit Britain in the course of his Comintern work, see Jovanović, "Milan Gorkić", p. 36. The spy story probably gained some credence, in the atmosphere of the purge trials, form Gorkić's disastrous attempt to organize the mass transport of Yugoslav volunteers to Republican Spain on board a French ship which the police successfully intercepted. The archives show the whole question of handling volunteers to Spain was removed from his control and he himself was prevented from visiting Spain, see ACK, KI 1937/32 and 19037/61. Gorkić was warned prior to his fateful trip to Moscow that "he had fallen far short" of what was expected of him, see ACK, KI 1937/83.

was truly secure. During that time he experienced at first hand the role of the NKVD within the Comintern at the height of Stalin's purges. This experience forced him to clarify his thoughts on the relationship between Leninism and the Stalinist state.

From the start of Tito's period as *de facto* party leader he began to explore the nature of his dependency on Moscow: a sort of sparring began, through which he sought to establish the limitations on independent action. He was determined to act, rather than simply await instructions. To justify such initiatives he was concerned to keep the Comintern informed in detail of what was happening; however, much of what he told the Comintern verged on disinformation and was highly selective, often glossing over controversial issues.

In his first letter as interim leader to Wilhelm Pieck, the Comintern Secretary responsible for the Balkans, Tito proposed holding a party conference and pressing ahead with plans to relocate the leadership in Yugoslavia. Receiving no instructions from Pieck, Tito then undertook a series of initiatives: on 24 September he sent Politburo member Rodoljub Čolaković to Spain, and shortly afterwards, having asked Moscow whom to appoint to run the party's affairs in Paris and received no reply, he appointed Lovro Kuhar. This appointment was characteristic: it was a bold move to make without the agreement of Moscow, yet the appointment was cautious in that Kuhar was respected by all party factions and was one of the two possible candidates named in his letter to Pieck.[16]

Any idea that the party crisis would be of short duration ended in mid October 1937 when Tito was first summoned to Moscow and then told to cancel his travel arrangements. With no clear instructions Tito carried on running the party's routine affairs and sent Čolaković on a trip to Yugoslavia immediately on his return from Spain at the beginning of November 1937. This, however, proved controversial. After months without a reply from Moscow, Tito was told by Pieck, in a letter dated 17 December 1937 but not received until 7 January 1938, that Čolaković and another Politburo member, Sreten Žujović, should be suspended. Tito recalled Čolaković at once, admitting it had been wrong to send him without Comintern approval.[17]

The suspension of Žujović and Čolaković was instigated by reports from Paris by Politburo member Ivan Marić and Labud Kusovac, the party's representative on the committee for aid to republican Spain, that the whole leadership, and not just Gorkić, were traitors. These Paris-based critics had contacted Petko Miletić as a potential new party leader as soon as Gorkić was summoned to Moscow: Miletić, another former Politburo member had

[16] Tito, *Works*, III, pp. 91, 124, p. 239 n. 340.
[17] Tito, *Works*, III, p. 242 n. 364, p. 246 n. 406, and IV, p. 77.

had a battalion of Spanish volunteers named after him for his supposed heroism under torture.[18] On 8 December 1937 Marić informed Tito that after four months in the job it was clear he had continued with the old practices and taken no measures against Gorkić's closest associates. Henceforth, he said, he would boycott Central Committee meetings attended by Čolaković and Žujović.[19]

Kusovac, a former member of the Profintern apparatus and the man responsible for handling Yugoslav volunteers bound for the Spanish civil war, where opposition to Gorkić was widespread, had good contacts with the Comintern and the NKVD. He was visited in Paris by the Comintern emissary Golubović early in 1938 although no contact was made with Tito who was in the French capital at the same time. Apparently as a result of this visit the French Communist Party supported Marić in his job as organizer of the Yugoslav emigration in France even after Tito had removed him from that post. The Marić and Tito groups were fighting bitterly for control of the party with Marić insisting no personnel initiatives should be made until the Comintern enquiry was over.[20]

In this dispute, Tito portrayed himself to the Comintern as an aggrieved innocent, appealing always for the Comintern to conclude its enquiry rapidly and prevent the party disintegrating.[21] However, far from waiting patiently for a decision, Tito took a series of initiatives to reinforce his position and by-pass the restrictions coming from Moscow. The Comintern enquiry meant that all financial support from Moscow ended and the party journal *Proleter* had to cease publication. Tito looked to other means of support and first sought to divert money being used to send volunteers to Spain for the more mundane task of keeping the party press operating.[22] Frustrated in this by the opposition of Kusovac, whom he tried to sack as Spanish agent in March 1938, Tito had to appeal for funds to Yugoslavs living abroad.[23]

Even more controversially, perhaps, despite the clear instructions from Moscow that Čolaković and Žujović should be removed from the leadership, Tito equivocated. Their suspension was "noted" by a Politburo

[18] Tito, *Works*, IV, p. 244 n. 45, p. 251 n. 99.
[19] ACK, KI 1937/112.
[20] Tito, *Works*, IV, p. 59; Miloš Marić, *Deca komunizma* (Belgrade, 1987), p. 76; Rodoljub Čolaković, *Pregled istorije Saveza Komunista Jugoslavije* (Belgrade, 1963), p. 246; and Vjenceslav Cenčić, *Enigma Kopinič*, 2 vols (Belgrade, 1983), I, pp. 77-85. Although the Cenčić book caused much controversy when published, and the author is prone to exaggerating the importance of Kopinič, most of the controversy surrounded volume two and the events of July 1941; the outline of events prior to 1941 has not been seriously questioned.
[21] Tito, *Works*, IV, p. 26.
[22] ACK, KI 1938/3.
[23] ACK, KI 1938/13.

meeting on 21 January 1938, but the two men continued to attend meetings throughout February, including the one on 15 February at which, amongst other things, Marić was removed from his post as organizer of Yugoslav emigrants in France.[24]

Marić responded to his dismissal by writing a long letter to the Comintern detailing his criticisms of the current leadership. In his letter to Tito of December 1937 Marić had made clear he saw Tito as a positive figure. In this letter of February 1938, while he was still prepared to recognize Tito would have to be included in a new leadership, he made a series of serious accusations against him: these included his refusal to listen to advice and his dictatorial behaviour in manipulating the proceedings of the trade union commission. For Marić, Tito had, quite simply, failed to live up to expectations by falling completely under the spell of the Gorkićites.[25]

This new turn of events prompted Tito to act. On 23 March he wrote to Dimitrov, Chairman of the Comintern, explaining that he was winding up the Central Committee in Paris and moving his base to Yugoslavia: this temporary leadership was formally inaugurated on 20 May. This move was again both revolutionary and cautious. To set up a new leadership without the agreement of the Comintern was certainly revolutionary, but the Comintern was kept informed at every stage and those co-opted to the new leadership were existing Politburo members not associated with the Gorkić and Marić factions and the leaders of the CPY's constituent parties and sections, whose appointment had been accepted by the Comintern.

When writing to explain his actions to Dimitrov, Tito referred only obliquely to the power struggle under way. He justified his decision, rather disingenuously, by referring to the German occupation of Austria and the consequent war threat to Yugoslavia. He stressed the cautious side of what he had done, though by appointing Žujović as Kusovac's replacement in handling the Spanish volunteers and making Čolaković one of Kuhar's advisers he was clearly questioning the decision to suspend them. His comment that Čolaković and Žujović had done no more than fall under Gorkić's influence was almost a direct criticism of the Comintern decision.[26]

Having established his new leadership, Tito reaffirmed his orthodoxy by starting the task of "Bolshevizing" the party's organization, putting to rights the organizational errors of Gorkić. Tito was not only opposed to Liquidationism but had a positive alternative. In December 1937 the Politburo had agreed to confront the Liquidator danger, while retaining legal work at the centre of attention, by establishing party cells in mass organizations.[27] Tito would not have contradicted Gorkić's view that the under-

[24] ACK, KI 1938/4; and Pero Damjanović, *Tito na čelu partije* (Belgrade, 1968), p. 78.
[25] ACK, KI 1937/23.
[26] Tito, *Works*, IV, pp. 36, 48.
[27] ACK, KI 1938/3.

ground was discredited, but rather than abandoning it he concentrated on reforming the underground, making it more secure and more in tune with workers' needs. He concentrated on trying to break down the old "super-conspiratorial" three-man cell structure – in which student revolutionaries had debated the pros and cons of the dictatorship of the proletariat – and establish party cells in the legal workers' movement.

Cells in the trade unions would become the responsibility of the trade union commission whose work had been so criticized by Marić. It would be under the control of the Central Committee. The impact of this on the Liquidators was obvious. Those who, in their legal life, held responsible and legal posts in the trade union hierarchy could in their illegal life be a mere rank and file party member, subject to Central Committee directives and ultimately to Moscow. Whereas they had once sought to ignore the illegal underground in order to improve relations with the socialists, they now had to obey the centralized underground hierarchy.[28]

As a result of effective work in the legal labour movement, seven of the fifteen members of the executive of one of Yugoslavia's major trade union federations, the URSS, were communists after the congress held on 17-18 April 1938. That same year communists took control of the URSS construction workers' union, textile workers' union and woodworkers' union, while the powerful Zagreb regional board of the URSS metal workers' union was in their hands. The Yugoslav trade union movement remained divided along political and national lines, but the situation had been transformed since the early 1930s. Then, the party's only concern in the unions was to divide them still further. Now, Tito's organizational structure would ensure that all the healthy developments of the previous two years were brought firmly back under the control of the Central Committee.[29]

Having established his provisional leadership and begun the task of "Bolshevizing" the party, Tito returned to Paris in June 1938 to seek a visa for Moscow to explain his actions in person. It took the intervention of Tito's own Comintern supporter, Josip Kopinič, for that visa to be obtained and when Tito arrived in Moscow on 24th August 1938 he found the Comintern still debating the future of the party. It had three options before it: dissolving the party completely, appointing Petko Miletić as secretary, or appointing Tito as secretary.

The evidence against Tito had been supplied by Ivan Srebrenjak, a Yugoslav member of the NKVD active in Paris. It concentrated on rumour and inuendo current among the Paris emigration; his lifelong penchant for

[28] Čolaković, *Pregled*, pp. 248-250; and Ivan Jelić, *Komunistička Partija Hrvatske*, 2 vols (Zagreb, 1981), I, p. 229.
[29] Čolaković, *Pregled*, pp. 220-228; and Jelić, *KPH*, p. 153.

beautiful women and the good life were portrayed as liaisons with Gestapo agents and favouritism towards the party's bourgeois rather than proletarian members. It was also pointed out that since the party press had continued to appear during his acting leadership, despite the cut off in Moscow funding, he must have sought the support of the police. Tito responded by stressing his record of success in Yugoslavia outlined above: the party was at last beginning to make headway among the working class.[30]

Ultimately, Tito's strength probably lay in the fact that Marić had made it plain in both his letter to Tito and his letter to the Comintern that he would be prepared to work with Tito if the Gorkićites were removed.[31] Nevertheless the enquiry took many months. Tito saw Dimitrov on 17 October and 2 November and clearly believed a favourable outcome was possible,[32] but it was not until 26 December 1938 that the relevant commission accepted a pro-Tito report drawn up by Kopinič.[33] Formal agreement by the Executive came on 5 January 1939.[34] For that formal session Tito drew up a revised version of his plans for the future. This stressed working towards uniting the fragmented trade union movement by developing the party's legal work. In such work, however, any agreements reached with the socialists would not mark an end to criticism of the policies pursued by socialist trade union functionaries.[35]

This readiness to confront the socialists was also apparent in Tito's attitude to elections. Tito insisted, following Lenin, there were three political blocs in Yugoslavia, not two; the government, the hesitant bourgeois opposition and the principled workers' opposition. The December 1938 elections brought this out clearly. As in 1935, although on paper the government won the December 1938 elections handsomely, in terms of the popular vote the opposition almost defeated the government list. What is more, in 1938 the opposition increased its vote considerably over 1935. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that, sensing the popular mood, the socialist leadership was prepared to support co-operation with the bourgeois opposition.

Many communists took a similar line, and over the summer, the socialists and communists had come to an understanding about some joint activities. Tito, however, believed that the communists were not committed by this understanding to following the tails of the socialists in the elections. He

[30] Cenčić, *Kopinič*, I, p. 86.
[31] ACK, KI 1937/112 and 1938/8.
[32] Tito, *Works*, IV, pp. 124, 129.
[33] Cenčić, *Kopinič*, I, pp. 88-100; and K.K. Shirinya, *Strategiya i taktika Kominterna v bor'be protiv fashizm i voiny, 1934-39* (Moscow, 1979), p. 352.
[34] Stephen Clissold (ed.), *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, 1939-73: A Documentary Survey* (London, 1979), p. 115.
[35] Tito, *Works*, IV, p. 144.

believed the party should put up a separate list and issued an instruction from Moscow to this effect. In Croatia, however, the party refused to accept the ruling and did not put up a separate candidate.[36] Tito condemned them angrily as "capitulators and Liquidators".[37]

It is not surprising therefore, that Tito returned to Yugoslavia in the spring of 1939 determined to finish off Liquidationism. At three meetings of the Central Committee between March and May 1939 all leading Liquidators were expelled from the party for preventing the correct functioning of the trade union commission. At a national meeting of the CPY in June 1939 the Croat party was severely criticized. In future, it was resolved, underground party cells would be established in all enterprises. Equally, far from the talk of a single opposition, the resolution stressed that it was the role of party cells to explain to workers "that the struggle for a better life, the struggle for socialism was not a utopia" but at the appointed time the working class would come to power.[38]

This firm action against the Right of the party in the spring of 1939, and the leadership's increasingly revolutionary rhetoric, sparked off a new bout of anti-Tito manoeuvres within the Comintern hierarchy during which questions of reformism and nationalism became hopelessly entwined. When opposing the idea of independent candidates in the December 1938 elections, the communists in Croatia had argued that Croatia was a special case. Indeed, the question of Croat nationalism, never far below the surface, was to move centre stage in Yugoslav domestic politics during 1939.

Ever since the assassination of his father, King Alexander, Prince Paul had had contacts with Dr. Maćek, leader of the Croat Peasants' Party. After the December 1938 elections, Croat pressure led to the replacement of Stojadinović as prime minister by M. Cvetković, and, after six months of secret negotiation, the announcement of an agreement on Croat autonomy on 26 August 1939. In such a climate, Croat communists could argue it was absurd to split the opposition forces in Croatia, even if it might make sense in other parts of the country. Their motivation was clear: if the communists in Croatia were to make progress – communists organized by Tito himself into a national party within the CPY umbrella – Croat national feelings should not be offended.[39]

Thus, Tito's Leftist policy of opposing a united opposition list in the December 1938 elections, became sucked into the nationality question as it

[36] Tito, *Works*, IV, p. 55; and Milovan Bosić, "Komunistička Partija Jugoslavije u parlemantarnim izborima 11 Decembra 1938", *Istorija radničkog pokreta*, Zbornik radova II (1965), pp. 322-354.
[37] Tito, *Works*, IV, p. 141.
[38] Tito, *Works*, V, p. 5; and Djilas, *Memoires*, p. 302.
[39] Bosić, "KPJ u izborima", p. 333.

effected Croatia, at a time when the Comintern hierarchy also had an interest in making concessions to Croatian national feeling. When, in March 1939, Hitler annexed Bohemia and Moravia and created a new "independent" Slovak state, the possibility of the dismemberment of Yugoslavia became real. While at certain times in its history the Soviet Union would have welcomed the break-up of the Yugoslav state, that was not the case during the spring of 1939.

In March 1939 the CPY Central Committee turned to the question of international relations, and in particular the defence of the Yugoslav state as then constituted. Tito's statement, endorsed by the Central Committee, was uncompromising in its defence of Yugoslav territorial integrity, which no doubt pleased Moscow. However, far from seeking alliances with other opposition groups to help preserve and defend that integrity, the statement verged on the ultra radical: only a people's government, it argued, a truly democratic government, would be capable of defending the country.[40] Franco's victory in the Spanish civil war, the Central Committee stressed in an open letter published at this time, proved that the officer corps was inherently disloyal and reactionary, and that the time had come to put the Yugoslav armed forces at the service of the people.[41]

This view, which seemed to imply that political change not far short of revolution was the only way Yugoslavia could play a role in the defence of peace, clearly caused great concern in Moscow. This was a time of intense international discussion between Great Britain, France and the USSR on the issue of collective security. Those talks had already been complicated by the three powers' differing attitudes to the Republican Government in Spain. A new revolutionary republic established in an area suddenly of great strategic importance could only cause further complications and was not likely to be welcomed by Stalin.

Not all party leaders endorsed Tito's radicalism. A report from his opponents in Paris drew a rather different conclusion to that of Tito on the consequences of the "tragic fate of Czechoslovakia". It argued that the Croats should be given no grounds for turning to a foreign power for support and intervention, as some Slovaks had done. In particular the communist party should not allow itself to become isolated from the Croat Peasant Party, the social democrats or the united Serbian opposition. In other words the whole strategy of "one opposition bloc" would have to be revived in view of the new international situation.[42]

In spring 1939, the Paris emigration was clearly once again split between pro- and anti-Tito groups, seeking to involve the Comintern in the dispute.

[40] Tito, *Works*, IV, p. 165.
[41] *Proleter*, no. 1, May, 1939.
[42] ACK, KI 1939/23.

The Comintern was involved at the highest level. Lovro Kuhar, Tito's agent in Paris was contacted by Dimitrov on 1 May 1939 and told there was an issue which only Tito could discuss, and which had to be discussed.[43] However, Kuhar was himself subject to a Comintern inquiry at this time. No doubt suspecting the true issues involved, but resorting to the tried tactic of disingenuity and procrastination, Tito wrote to Dimitrov on 20 June 1939 asking for comments on the party's March statement on defence. Tito was, clearly, genuinely anxious. He had given some sort of commitment that the task of reorganizing the party would take three months, after which he would return to Moscow. Now he asked for an extension of his period abroad.[44]

By August 1939 Tito could delay his visit to Moscow no longer: there he was to face the charge of Trotskyism.[45] However, by the time he arrived, the international situation had changed completely. The Nazi-Soviet Pact had been signed and the Second World War begun. In March 1939 Tito's talk of a people's government had contradicted the Soviet Union's idea of collective security. By September the Comintern had adopted a new revolutionary rhetoric. Popular fronts from above, through alliances with socialists, were anathema; only popular fronts "from below" could be considered. Tito's views on the elections of December 1938 were close to just such a view, and his talk of a people's government fitted the new mood. There was no accusation of Trotskyism when on 26 September 1939 he reported to the Comintern that the Second "imperialist" World War presented Yugoslav workers and peasants with the opportunity to free themselves from capitalism.[46]

On 23 November 1939 the Comintern Secretariat met and endorsed Tito's work since the decision of 5 January.[47] Tito's position as party leader was finally secure. The more than two years of intrigue and manoeuvre since his provisional appointment had taught him much about which initiatives he could, and could not take. In 1938 he had successfully defied the Comintern on domestic matters and reorganized the party leadership on his own initiative: in 1939 statements on international affairs had resulted in charges of Trotskyism, a charge for which there was only one possible punishment. No wonder, then, that adapting to the Nazi-Soviet Pact presented Tito with so few problems. The Left turn of the Comintern not only saved his life, it meant that the Left, which had once seen Tito as a disciple of Gorkić, now had no problems in rallying to his side.

[43] Tito, *Works*, IV, pp. 231-232, and V, p. 28; and ACK, SP I-b/12.
[44] Tito, *Works*, IV, pp. 196-197, 233.
[45] Cenčić, *Kopinič*, I, p. 103.
[46] Tito, *Works*, V, p. 25.
[47] Clissold, *A Documentary Survey*, p. 155.

2 Working with Moscow

In later years Tito explained how easy he had found it to carry out a Comintern request to write a proclamation which took into account the new international situation. He simply took the line that the job of Yugoslav communists was to fight, and not to concern themselves with the behaviour of the Soviet government.[48] On his return to Yugoslavia he made similar comments in some notes on the relationship between Leninism and Stalinism. Stalin's ideas, he wrote, were those of constructing socialism: Stalin was a comrade who had saved the Soviet state from crisis and built socialism. "But," he went on, "the revolutionary struggle in capitalist countries is mainly led by Lenin's thought." Stalin and his ideas were of more importance to the Soviet proletariat than to the workers in countries where the revolution had still to occur. The workers' of the capitalist world were guided not by Stalin but "Lenin's thought, the thought of revolution".[49] From this point on Tito operated according to the rule of thumb that if he avoided international affairs, he would have a free hand in working towards a Leninist revolution.

In its statement endorsing Tito's leadership, the Comintern endorsed Tito's rhetoric. The general crisis of capitalism which had led to the war, it stated, had struck Yugoslavia particularly acutely. The unresolved national problem, the unresolved agrarian problem, the general exploitation of semi-colonial peoples by the imperialists all meant ever increasing opposition to the Great Serb bourgeoisie and "gave the party great opportunities for the revolutionary mobilization of the working masses" in a war during which the conditions would ripen for abolishing the very system which caused imperialist wars, capitalism.[50] In short, Tito stood on the eve of the second imperialist war, as Lenin had stood on the eve of the first; on the threshold of revolution.

With the defeat of the Spanish republic and the crackdown on the French communists once war had begun, the Comintern had to reassess the situation in Europe: in this reassessment the CPY became something of a model for other parties to follow. Tito returned to Yugoslavia to prepare

[48] Josip Broz Tito, *The Struggle and Development of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia Between the Two Wars* (Belgrade, 1979), pp. 62-63.

[49] ACK, CK KPJ 1940/28. An archivist has written on these notes – made on the content of *Proleter*, no. 2, 1940 – that they were "probably" written by Tito. The tone of the criticisms of various aspects of the paper makes it virtually impossible to imagine the author was anyone but Tito. In a comment on the "imperialist" war the author notes that communist propaganda for neutrality and good trade relations between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany meant communists were "actually on the side of the Germans"; this perhaps explains why the editors of Tito's *Works* preferred to leave out the notes.

[50] Tito, *Works*, V, p. 197.

for the Fifth Party Conference. During the spring, summer and autumn of 1940 conferences were held of all the national and regional parties which constituted the CPY. These developments were welcomed within the Comintern: the Czech Comintern emissary Jan Šverma returned favourably impressed from the Second Slovene Party Conference held on 31 December-1 January 1940.[51] An even more positive assessment of the state of the party was given by Franz Honer, an Austrian Comintern emissary, after a meeting with Tito on 5 May 1940.[52]

Tito's views at this time were indeed at one with the Comintern. Quoting Stalin's *Short Course*, the CPY continued to argue that an illegal party could win mass support if illegal work were correctly combined with legal work: every legal opportunity had to be exploited, but under the guidance of the party hierarchy. This lesson was repeated in the Comintern journal, the *Communist International*, which published a statement at this time from the British, French, German, American and Italian parties calling for detailed study of the *Short Course* to help once legal parties like the Spanish and the French adapt to the new exigencies of life underground.[53] The results of correctly combined legal and illegal work were certainly fairly impressive in Yugoslavia. The outbreak of the Second World War saw an upturn in working class unrest: after two general strikes in Split in the autumn of 1940 the Government decided to close down the communist influenced URSS.[54]

During 1940 the CPY could claim with some justification to be the model for the new illegal communist movement, the party to which the old legal parties of the popular front era could turn to for advice. That claim was reinforced by the Comintern's decision to use Zagreb as the base for its new radio transmitter for communications with the Italian, Swiss, Austrian, Czechoslovak, Hungarian, Greek, and Yugoslav parties. The operator of the transmitter was to be Tito's ally Josip Kopinič.[55] The CPY, from being on the verge of dissolution, had emerged as one of the few viable and strategically important communist parties in Europe.

From this position of strength, Tito felt able to confront the Comintern, on an issue which fell in the grey area between domestic and international affairs: in the new international climate, should the CPY continue to

[51] Djilas, *Memoires*, p. 340.
[52] Tito, *Works*, V, p. 203; and *Izvori za istoriju SKJ: peta zemaljska konferencija KPJ* (Belgrade, 1980), p. 247 [hereafter *Peta zemaljska konferencija*].
[53] *Proleter*, no. 1, 1940; and F. Fürnberg, "Ein geniales Lehrbuch der Bolschevistischer Taktik", *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, no. 3/4, 1940.
[54] Pero Damjanović, "Peta zemaljska konferencija u svetlost pripremanja KPJ za ustanak", *Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis*, no. 1-2, p. 85; and Jelić, *KPH*, I, pp. 410-413. See also *Proleter*, no. 7/8, 1940.
[55] Cenčić, *Kopinič*, I, p. 128.

campaign for a people's government as Tito had proposed in March 1939. While this slogan caused no problems in the first half of 1940, in June the international situation was radically altered by the defeat of France. This defeat was explained by Tito as stemming from the treachery of the French bourgeoisie. He therefore repeated the call for a people's government if Yugoslavia were to be defended. In its statement on the fall of France the Central Committee argued that French financiers had sold their own people to the erstwhile enemy. Only the communist party had shown itself ready to defend France's independence: only a workers' and peasant government could really defend the national interests of Yugoslavia.[56]

The summer of 1940 saw the incorporation of the Baltic states and Bessarabia into the Soviet Union. On 10 June 1940 the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia established diplomatic relations. These developments opened up the possibility of Yugoslavia sharing the same fate. In an article entitled 'Between two perspectives' *Proleter* discussed the parallels between those states and Yugoslavia: it cautioned that it would be a mistake simply to sit back and wait for the Red Army to save the Yugoslav peoples from the war; however, Lenin and Stalin had stated that in certain times and in certain conditions an offensive liberation war against imperialism was possible, but "for the Red Army to help a people that people had to be able to help itself".[57] The logic was that if the Yugoslav people established a people's government, the Soviet Union would come to their aid.

This the Comintern did not accept. When on the eve of the Fifth Party Conference Tito asked the Comintern to rule on whether the slogan "a genuine people's government" should be endorsed by the conference (it was used regularly in party documents in July and August 1940[58]) the Comintern rejected the slogan as inappropriate in a detailed response delivered to Tito by courier. This slogan, it explained, could be interpreted as a call for the dictatorship of the proletariat. For all the CPY's progress over the past year, the time was not right for that. The slogan would isolate the party from the masses and provide hostile powers with a justification for interfering in Yugoslav affairs. The Comintern added that if the slogan did lead to such consequences there was no point looking to the Red Army for help.[59] The clear message was that the route to revolution implied in "Between two perspectives" was out of the question.

The Conference, held illegally in Zagreb from 19-23 October 1940, was in essence a snub to the Comintern. The courier had warned Tito that it would not be possible to hold an assembly of over 100 delegates illegally in a police

[56] *Proleter*, no. 7/8, 1940.
[57] *Proleter*, no. 5, 1940.
[58] For examples of use by Tito, see *Works*, V, pp. 132, 149.
[59] Tito, *Works*, VI, p. 203.

state; therefore it refused to accept the risk of calling the assembly a congress.[60] Tito made a concession to the Comintern by agreeing not to call it a congress, but went ahead with an assembly of over 100 delegates without any arrests. Djilas saw the conference as cocking a snook at the Comintern, and the policy of a "people's government" was supported in spite of the Comintern's known views.

The final resolution made clear that the war had opened up the perspective of the "revolutionary overthrow of imperialism" and "new victories for socialism". The "decisive battle" lay in the "near future".[61] Dimitrov's opposition to the people's government slogan did not mean the Comintern had dropped its revolutionary rhetoric; he was at this stage more concerned with not overestimating the speed of revolutionary transformation than with the possible international repercussions of widespread social unrest in Yugoslavia. By the spring of 1941 this would no longer be the case.[62]

While Tito may have compared his position to that of Lenin on the eve of the First World War, he had to adapt Lenin's ideas somewhat to the changes which had taken place in the intervening twenty-five years: he was, however, entirely orthodox in any development he made to Lenin's thought, notably those key concepts of the nature of the party and of the state. He was in Moscow for the greater part of the Comintern's inquest into the Spanish civil war.[63] That inquest produced a report implicitly, yet bitterly, critical of the popular front policy foisted on the Spanish communists by Stalin. To avoid antagonizing Great Britain and France, Stalin had insisted that the communists play a minority role and leave the "bourgeois" state structure intact. The report concluded: "To defeat the enemy in a popular revolution, it is essential to destroy the old state apparatus, which serves reaction, and replace it with a new apparatus which serves the working class." The "people's" character of the revolution had to be recognized organizationally; keeping the old system had led to all sorts of problems, with reactionaries remaining in control of key posts.[64]

Such institutional changes could have led to the formation of a "proletarian government", the report pointed out. This would have meant the Republic being able to organize operations in territory controlled by Franco.[65] The Comintern and the Spanish communists had pressed for the

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 201.
[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 205, 225-226.
[62] For a more detailed discussion of the debates within the Comintern at this time, see Geoffrey Swain, "The Comintern in Southern Europe, 1938-43", in Tony Judt (ed.), *Resistance and Revolution in Mediterranean Europe* (London, 1989).
[63] We know Tito discussed events in Spain with Yugoslav volunteers who had taken refuge in Moscow, see Bozidar Maslarić, *Moskva-Madrid-Moskva* (Zagreb, 1952), pp. 95-96.
[64] José Diaz, "Ob urokakh voiny ispanskogo naroda", *Bol'shevik*, 1 (1940), pp. 31, 34.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

formation of guerrilla units as early as 1936: the Comintern even singled out the failure of the Spanish communists to do this as one of the main reasons for the Republic's defeat. Yet the socialist and republican parties consistently opposed the idea of permanent operations behind enemy lines. A "proletarian government", if formed, would have been able to undertake this important initiative.[66]

The theme of civil war leading to revolution was not particularly Leninist, but it was the clear lesson of the 1930s and could quite easily be accommodated within Leninism. In February 1941 the *Communist International* turned to precisely this question when it discussed the role of nationalism during an imperialist war. It compared the writings of Lenin, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg on the national question during the First World War and pointed to Lenin's belief that in certain circumstances national movements against imperialism could be revolutionary, something Liebknecht and Luxemburg denied.[67]

Commenting on the same theme, *Proleter* noted that Lenin had actually discussed the nature of Serbia's war against Austria-Hungary in 1914. Describing that war as "imperialist" because of Serbia's alliance with Britain, Lenin had pointed out that had the proletariat risen up against the Serbian bourgeoisie, revolutionary change could have developed from what had begun as a purely national war. For such a development, Lenin had stressed, the proletariat needed to dominate the nationalist movement and establish its "hegemony" over it.[68] The lesson seemed clear enough: if Lenin's view was accepted, an invasion of Yugoslavia could turn into a revolutionary war if the country's ally was the Soviet Union rather than Britain and if the CPY could gain hegemony over the resistance movement.

The CPY's new year communiqué for 1941 echoed the call for proletarian hegemony via the popular front "from below". Again ignoring the advice of the Comintern, the communiqué firmly called for a "genuine people's government" and concluded: "We communists consider that in this final hour it is essential to unite all those forces which are ready to struggle [. . .] however, we communists further consider that such militant unity will only really bring results *when it is achieved not only between leaders but from below, among the depths of the working masses.*'[69]

The call for a revolutionary war was made even more explicit in Tito's report on "The Strategy and Tactics of the Armed Uprising" probably

[66] *Ibid.*; M.T. Meshcheryakov, *Ispanskaya respublika i Komintern* (Moscow, 1981), p. 67; and Palmiro Togliatti, *Opere* (Rome, 1974), IV vol. I, p. 406.
[67] K. Funk, "Karl Liebknecht und Rosa Luxemburg: Internationaler der Tat", *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, 2 (1941), pp. 46-51.
[68] *Proleter*, no. 1, 1941.
[69] Tito, *Works*, VI, p. 126.

delivered at the party school held in Zagreb at the end of February and early March 1941. The report concentrated on the importance of party leadership: in Vienna in 1934 the workers had taken up arms, but with no leadership they had been crushed. The party should not allow the uprising to break out "spontaneously, beyond its organization and leadership"; the "hegemony" of the working class in the national revolutionary situation was essential. The key to a successful uprising, Tito argued, was to act offensively, even if momentarily on the retreat; an uprising needed to unleash the revolutionary energy of the masses.

Controlling that revolutionary energy, however, meant electing a single central staff which would lead the uprising. Equally, the party should form its own armed formations; Spain had shown that armed units should not be based on the trade union but be under central party control from the start. The key lesson of the Spanish civil war also formed part of the report. The revolutionary army should disarm the gendarmerie and overthrow the old local system of local government. They could then call mass meetings to elect a new form of local government which would at once begin to implement the party's programme.

The report was not a blueprint for the national liberation war which began in the summer of 1941. Its clear premise was that the uprising would begin with action in the towns. Rather as an afterthought Tito recognized that victory might not be immediate and that it was possible that a long civil war might develop. If, however, major towns had to be evacuated, those who fled to the mountains would make sure they left a secure underground organization behind them. Contact between guerrillas and the underground would be the key to eventual reconquest.[70]

This revolutionary talk was certainly reported to the Comintern by Josip Kopinič and his radio transmitter. Hardly surprisingly the Comintern took fright when the Yugoslav government was overthrown on 27 March by army officers angry at the decision to adhere to the Tripartite Pact. Would Tito overreact and assume a revolution was imminent? The Comintern's communication of 29 March 1941 was cautionary: avoid all armed conflict with the government at all costs, organize no street demonstrations and limit yourselves to propaganda. "Do not get carried away by the moment [. . .] do not jump ahead [. . .] do not give way to provocation [. . .]. The moment for decisive struggle with the class enemy is still a long way off."[71]

As we have seen, Tito did not always ignore Comintern advice. Early in January 1941 the CPY and the Bulgarian Communist Party began work on a joint statement about the future of Macedonia.[72] Although a leaflet on the

[70] *Ibid.*, pp. 151-181.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. 215.
[72] ACK, CK KPJ 1941/205.

subject was produced,[73] Tito agreed to Dimitrov's request of 22 March to drop these plans;[74] relations with the Bulgarian party were clearly the province of international affairs an area in which Tito trod warily after the experience of March 1939. As in the past, however, Tito chose to ignore instructions on domestic matters with which he fundamentally disagreed. The cautious advice on how to respond to internal developments was studiously ignored, and, when Yugoslavia was invaded by Germany in April and defeated, preparations for an armed uprising began at once.

On 4 May 1941 party leaders gathered to assess the new situation.[75] Tito distilled the experiences of six years as party leader and gave the following analysis: the country had been betrayed by the bourgeoisie, therefore only under communist leadership could the country regain its independence; this struggle, the struggle of a small nation for independence in alliance with the Soviet Union during an imperialist war, could lead to social transformation and revolution; to make sure this happened, learning the lesson of Spain, the old order had to be completely destroyed and a new state structure drawn up, a form of popular front which would guarantee proletarian hegemony;[76] finally, to enable the communist party to lead the struggle for national independence and social change, it had to gather around it a partisan army. Those present left the meeting having taken a decision in principle in favour of an armed uprising, and as the first step, military committees were to be set up at every party level.[77]

Tito's rule of thumb had again been to accept any Comintern instructions relating to international affairs, and to procrastinate when it came to domestic commands with which he disagreed. The defeat of Yugoslavia and the dismemberment of the state meant that Yugoslav domestic politics became *de facto* international affairs. Tito's ambitions could clearly have led to embarrassing consequences for Soviet diplomacy. The Soviet Union broke diplomatic relations with the old Yugoslav Government on 9 May and seriously considered recognizing the "independent" Croat state; it also made no protest when Bulgarian troops entered Macedonia, although there had been a protest when Hungarian troops crossed the frontier.[78] All this suggested a readiness among some Soviet diplomats to come to terms with the division of Yugoslavia, just as the division of the Czechoslovak state had

[73] ACK, CK KPJ 1941/15.
[74] Tito, *Works*, VI, p. 213.
[75] Ivan Jelić, "Majsko savjetovanje rukovodstva KPJ u Zagrebu 1941.g.", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* (1984), pp. 3-15.
[76] Tito, *Works*, VII, pp. 26-40.
[77] Jelić, "Majsko savjetovanje", p. 16.
[78] Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita* (Rijeka, 1981), I-II, pp. 421-422.

earlier been acknowledged. "Bolshevik" armed uprisings could prove to be extremely harmful in such circumstances.

Suspicious of Tito's real intentions, Moscow requested an urgent report.[79] Tito replied in generalities, devoting just half a paragraph to the May meeting and giving no details of the "decisions taken in view of the new circumstances".[80] Against this background another intrigue against Tito began, drawing on many of those involved in the previous machinations. Golubović, the NKVD man who had contacted Kusovac in Paris in 1938, met the journalist Vladimir Dedijer in Sarajevo in May 1941 and told him Tito was a Trotskyist who would not remain as leader of the party for long.[81] Golubović had access to the Kopinić transmitter in Zagreb: one of his messages to Moscow, as yet undeciphered, was intercepted by Tito and never reached its destination.[82]

The accusation of Trotskyism was almost certainly advanced also by the Macedonian party leader, M. Šatarov-Šarlo. He had described the revolutionary line adopted at the Fifth Party Conference as "Trotskyist", and refused to attend the May meeting of the party leadership in 1941 on the grounds that Macedonia was the concern of the Bulgarian Communist Party, now that the Serbian oppressors had been removed. Šatarov-Šarlo was a former Comintern official and retained good links with Moscow: it was a common complaint among Yugoslavs that Dimitrov had surrounded himself with fellow countrymen, particularly as far as the Balkan Secretariat was concerned.[83]

The Soviet Intelligence officer active in Paris in 1938, Ivan Srebrenjak, moved his base to Zagreb in April 1941. He became a confidant of the Croat party leadership, whom he apparently tried to turn against Tito.[84] The Croat party had been disciplined by Tito for "Right wing opportunism" on more than one occasion since the elections of December 1938. They were therefore likely to be opposed to talk of revolution; some may even have been prepared to accept working for reformist demands within the newly constituted "independent" Croat state.[85] Whatever the precise nature of

[79] Tito, *Works*, VII, p. 41.
[80] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[81] Dedijer, *Novi prilozi*, I-II, p. 430.
[82] *Ibid.*, p. 45.
[83] *Peta zemaljska konferencija*, pp. 210-213; and Jovan Marjanović, "Jugoslavija, KPJ i KI (april-septembar 1941)", *Zbornik filozofskog fakulteta*, knj. II-I, p. 738.
[84] *Izvori za istoriju SKJ: dokumenti centralnih organa KPJ, NOR, i Revolucije 1941-45* (Belgrade, 1985), I, p. 450 n. 136 [hereafter *Izvori*]; Dedijer, *Novi prilozi*, I-II, pp. 430, 474; and Cenčić, *Kopinič*, I, pp. 292, 303. There are numerous other negative comments on the role played by Srebrenjak: Kopinič believed Srebrenjak was also a German agent.
[85] Early in July 1941, Kopinič, claiming to be acting on the instructions of the Comintern, dismissed the Central Committee of the Croatian Communist Party and appointed a temporary leadership based on the Zagreb Municipal Committee. This "Kopinič affair"

the machinations, Kopinić warned Tito in one of his telegrams that he believed the Comintern to be "very dissatisfied with you".[86]

When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 the moves against Tito ended as suddenly as they had begun. The Comintern remained rather cautious, insisting in its correspondence with Tito that what was at stake was not the struggle for socialism but liberation from fascism.[87] However, as Nazi troops penetrated further and further into Soviet territory the Comintern was pleased with any guerrilla activity launched by Tito: whether the aim of the struggle was liberation, socialism or both could be left until the survival of the Soviet state had been assured. The rapid Nazi advance also meant that Red Army support for a proletarian uprising in Yugoslavia was impossible and Tito's plans for an urban centred insurrection had to be adapted.

3 Conclusion

That, however, is another story beyond the scope of this article. It is clear that Tito's reputation for being more "Stalinist than Stalin" rested on his orthodox Leninism. He saw himself fighting Liquidators and "Bolshevizing" the party as Lenin had done. In 1939 he saw himself in the same position as Lenin in 1914: the outbreak of the Second "imperialist" World War put socialist transformation on the agenda; this meant the small nation victims of imperialist aggression being able to turn the imperialist war into a revolutionary war, if hegemony for the proletariat could be achieved. The lessons of the civil war in Spain suggested to him just how that hegemony could be attained.

However, Tito's traumatic experiences with the Comintern during 1938 and 1939 taught him how to manoeuvre effectively within the straightjacket of Comintern instructions. During the two years when his position as party leader had been in doubt, Tito had got the measure of the Comintern. Experience taught him which initiatives would succeed, and which would not. On domestic matters Tito found instructions could be queried or ignored, so long as such moves were broadly in accordance with the Comin-

has prompted much polemical debate, for bound up in it are two of the most sensitive issues for the modern Yugoslav state, Serb-Croat relations and interference from Moscow. If, as I believe, Soviet Intelligence had been deliberately encouraging cautious reformism among the Croat leadership and an acceptance of the "independent" Croat state, the abrupt change of line after the German invasion of the Soviet Union required urgent action by the Comintern to undo these earlier machinations. Seen from this angle, Kopinič's insistence that he was acting more on Tito's behalf than against him is plausible.

[86] *Izvori*, I, p. 66.

[87] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

tern line: thus, so long as the line was one of revolution, the question of whether revolution was imminent or in the future could be debated with impunity. On international affairs, however, the security interests of the Soviet state were paramount and any challenge to the Comintern could end in disaster.

Tito rationalized this position in ideological terms by pointing to the difference between Leninism and Stalinism: Stalin's thought guided the construction and defence of socialism in the Soviet Union, Lenin's thought guided Yugoslavia's revolutionary proletariat. After 1941 this rule of thumb served both leaders well. Stalin allowed Tito a free hand in domestic matters, and Tito appeared to accept that Stalin knew best how to defend the Soviet Union through international diplomacy. In 1948 Tito's support for the Greek communist partisans led to his involvement in international affairs, prompting Stalin's interference in Yugoslavia's internal affairs and the renewal of the charge first heard in 1939 and repeated in May 1941 that Tito was a Trotskyist.