

New Evidence from the Former Yugoslav Archives

[The following set of documents, the 1954 exchange of letters between the Soviet leader Nikita S. Khrushchev and Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito, obtained from the Yugoslav National Archives in Belgrade and introduced for CWIHP by Svetozar Rajak, are the first result of a new "Former Yugoslavia Initiative" sponsored by the Cold War International History Project in collaboration with the Department of International History of the London School of Economics (Odd Arne Westad) and archives in the former Yugoslavia. The initiative, launched in the wake of the collapse of the Milosovic regime in and the recent re-opening of the National Archives of Yugoslavia, aims at integrating the wealth of the archives of the former Yugoslavia as well as the research of Yugoslav historians into the international scholarship on the Cold War. CWIHP is planning to publish additional materials from Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Slovenian and Macedonian archives as they become available.—Christian F. Ostermann]

THE TITO-KHRUSHCHEV CORRESPONDENCE, 1954¹

Introduced by Svetozar Rajak

The Tito-Khrushchev letters printed below represented a first contact between leaderships of two countries since the spectacular break-up of their relations in 1948 that created the first rift in the post-World War II Communist bloc. The communication occurred in utmost secrecy. The letters demonstrated deep mistrust that existed between the two countries, especially on the Yugoslav side. The timing was crucial to Khrushchev's initiative. It is highly possible that the motive behind it was to prevent a closer military alliance of Yugoslavia and the West, ahead of the planned signing of the Balkan Pact in July 1954.

The Tito-Khrushchev correspondence had far-reaching implications. It established a Yugoslav-Soviet dialogue that would lead to normalization of relations and a historic visit by Khrushchev to Belgrade in May 1955. It also defused a conflict, which existed since 1948 and threatened the fragile balance of power between the two blocs in one of the strategically most important regions of the Cold War—Southeast Europe. The exchange of letters of the two leaders and the ensuing normalization was also to have important implications on the process of liberalization in Eastern Europe and on the developments that led to the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The three letters and one cable by Soviet leader Nikita S. Khrushchev and the one letter by Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito exchanged between 22 June and 27 September 1954 represented a first contact between leaderships of the two countries since the break-up of their relations in 1948. Initiated by Khrushchev with his first letter of 22 June, the correspondence occurred in highest possible secrecy. Members of the Central Committee (CC) of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia were first informed of its existence in November. The importance of this correspondence can only be understood within the context of relations that existed between the two countries at the time. The 1948 Yugoslav-Soviet split was total, and the

ideological, political, and military hostility in the subsequent years comprehensive. Between 1948 and the time of the arrival of Khrushchev's first letter, Yugoslavia was under a real threat of a military invasion from the Soviets and their satellite states. Border incidents and armed clashes were an everyday occurrence. On 29 April 1953 Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov had received the Yugoslav chargé d'affaires in Moscow, Dragoje Djuric—for the first time since 1948. The meeting lasted merely ten minutes, and only very formal diplomatic niceties were exchanged. Two months later, again at Molotov's initiative, diplomatic relations between the two countries were restored to the ambassadorial level. Although unprecedented and positive steps, these initiatives of the new Soviet leadership remained isolated. Official Soviet and satellite propaganda still branded Yugoslavia as a "traitor and enemy of Marxism-Leninism" and its leadership around Tito as a "fascist clique." Under these circumstances, normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet diplomatic relations was understood by Yugoslavs merely as a return to common diplomatic decency and part of the new image that the post-Stalin leadership was eager to promote. It was impossible to envision direct communication between the Yugoslav and Soviet leaderships. The arrival of Khrushchev's first letter shocked Tito and the very few top Yugoslav leaders who were privy to its existence. Not surprisingly, Tito at first considered it to be another Soviet propaganda ploy against Yugoslavia.

The Tito-Khrushchev letters offer a unique insight into the extent to which an ideological rift had existed between the two countries since 1948 and the high stakes involved in their reconciliation. Both leaders were well aware of the implications that the nature of their relations had and could have for their countries' respective strategic positions, for the cohesion of the global Communist movement, and for developments in Eastern Europe. Thus both sides exercised extreme caution, evident throughout the correspondence. The new Soviet leaders emerging out of Stalin's shadow were victims of their own propaganda against Yugoslavia. As a result, their knowledge about Tito and the situation in Yugoslavia was surprisingly limited and distorted. They were unsure of the Yugoslav response to their initiative. There was a huge risk of humiliation

should the Yugoslavs chose not to respond but instead make public Khrushchev's offer of reconciliation. Furthermore, the fact that Khrushchev alone signed letters of such significance provides a glimpse into the existing balance of power within the Kremlin. It reflected both Khrushchev's ascendancy and the fragility of his position. Part of the Soviet leadership that initiated the new approach towards Yugoslavia, notably Khrushchev, Nikolai Bulganin and Anastas Mikoyan, were under close scrutiny from the more conservative members of the Politburo. Relations with Yugoslavia were of highest ideological significance, and any miscalculation could provide competitors in the ongoing leadership struggle, most notably Molotov and Georgy Malenkov, with valuable ammunition.

The Yugoslavs were, if anything, even more guarded and distrustful of the Soviets. In the first few weeks after receiving the letter, Tito seriously considered the possibility that Khrushchev's initiative was a Soviet maneuver aimed at undermining Yugoslavia's position. By making an enthusiastic Yugoslav response public, Khrushchev could either humiliate Tito in the Communist world or undermine Yugoslavia's strategic position vis-à-vis the West. Certainly the timing of Khrushchev's letter was most inopportune for Tito. The crisis over Trieste required Yugoslavia's close cooperation with the West in order to counter Italy's actions. For this reason, Tito chose not to respond with a letter. To keep his options open, however, he needed to acknowledge the initiative, should it prove to be genuine, and yet, in case of it being a Soviet ploy, to maintain the ability of plausible denial by keeping himself at distance. Tito thus chose Yugoslav Deputy Prime Minister Edvard Kardelj, his closest associate, to inform Khrushchev in mid-July via the Soviet ambassador in Belgrade that Yugoslavia had received the initiative favorably, but was in no position to respond for the time being. As an excuse, Kardelj cited considerations arising from the Trieste Crisis and the effect a possible breach of secrecy of Yugoslav-Soviet dialogue might have on its outcome. Tito's tactics proved to be correct, judging from Khrushchev's reaction in his second communication of 24 July. Indeed, Tito's full response came almost three months later, in his first letter to Khrushchev on 11 August.

Critical to an understanding of Khrushchev's initiative was its timing. Since May 1954, Yugoslavia had been engaged in final negotiations with Greece and Turkey regarding the creation of a "Balkan Pact." The formal signing of the pact was scheduled for 17 July, in Bled, Yugoslavia. One can reasonably assume that the Soviet leadership viewed the signing of the Balkan Pact as Yugoslavia's final slide into a closer alliance with NATO. (Both Greece and Turkey were full members of NATO.) Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation, in the Soviet assessment, could potentially pull Belgrade away from the Western alliance. Moreover, the impending signing of the Balkan Pact was probably the necessary catalyst that ensured support for new tactics towards Yugoslavia even from staunchest conservatives and "anti-Yugoslavs" within the

CPSU Politburo. It provided those favoring of a fresh approach to the "Yugoslav problem," notably Khrushchev, with the necessary strategic motive in pursuit of the initiative, while shielding them, at least for the time being, from possible attack by Molotov and other conservatives. In Moscow's calculations, finally, normalization of relations with Yugoslavia could also give a huge boost to the image of a peaceful Soviet foreign policy, vigorously pursued at the time by the new Soviet leadership.

The letters also suggest that both Tito and Khrushchev were eager, even at this early stage of their communication, to promote and force upon each other their own approach to the resolution of the conflict and normalization of their relations. In an attempt to evade responsibility for the 1948 break, the Soviets adhered to Stalin's formula of placing blame on an expelled, preferably dead, member of the leadership. The Beria affair provided an ideal opportunity. In the Yugoslav camp, longtime Tito associate Milovan Djilas, expelled from the Yugoslav Politburo in January 1954, seemed to the Soviets to be the obvious choice. Conveniently, both men had also been among the closest associates of their respective leaders in 1948. All past wrongdoings could thus be blamed on these two scapegoats, and the image of infallibility of the Communist Party and its leaders could be preserved. From the Soviet perspective, the existence of "culprits" in *both* countries would also allow responsibility for the conflict to be distributed evenly between Yugoslavia and the USSR.

The Soviets also insisted from the outset that normalization meant the reestablishment of inter-party relations. Hence, the Soviet letters were written on behalf of the CPSU Central Committee. This served at least three purposes. First, given Western sensitivity to closer party relations between the two countries, their normalization would fulfill the goal of estranging, if not isolating Yugoslavia from the West. Second, Tito's agreement to reconciliation between the parties would confirm that the 1948 break was nothing but a family quarrel, and that Yugoslavia was returning to the fold. Third, prompt normalization of party relations would reinforce the leading role of the Soviet Party and diminish Yugoslavia's corrosive ideological influence on the satellites.

Clearly aware of these dangerous implications, Tito resolutely resisted the path to normalization suggested by Moscow. Compared to 1948, Yugoslavia's strategic position had changed irrevocably and to the country's advantage. In addition, current foreign policy considerations, the pursuit of the Balkan Pact and accommodation with Italy over Trieste, demanded extreme caution. Stung by the experience of 1948, Tito was reluctant to relinquish the hard-won distance from the "Russian bear." In his first letter to Khrushchev, Tito hence insisted on the necessity of small positive steps that would confirm Soviet sincerity, and a gradual pace of the normalization. He was also adamant that the scope of normalization should, for the time being, be limited to government-to-government relations only. Party relations, according to Tito, could be

normalized only after the confidence between the two countries had been fully restored. Nevertheless, Tito quickly seized the opportunity provided by the Soviet approach. He recognized the potential for an ideological victory in a conflict that cost him dearly since 1948 and had banished him and his regime from the Communist community. In his letter, he therefore dismissed the relevance of Djilas to the Yugoslav decision-making in 1948. In a masterfully ambiguous sentence, he then added, ‘*As with regard to the extent of Beria’s guilt, you know best his role in the whole affair and we have no reason to repudiate your assertions.*’ Tito clearly suggested that the current Soviet leadership had sat together with Beria in the politburo and thus shared responsibility for the break. It also implicated the one person who was never mentioned in the letters but had unquestionably been in charge in 1948—Joseph Stalin. Consequently, the conflict could only be blamed on the Soviet Union.

The correspondence is remarkable for the extreme care in the choice of ideologically “correct” formulations. This can be attributed to the highly ideological character that the conflict between the two countries had acquired immediately after the rift in 1948. Both the Yugoslav and the Soviet leaders descended from a Stalinist heritage that commanded strict adherence to pamphlet-like formulations. Any divergence from truths declared in “correct” and rigid linguistic frameworks was looked upon as a betrayal of the “cause.” Neither Tito nor Khrushchev could afford to neglect this aspect. At stake were the prestige of both parties within the Communist movement and the responsibility for the great schism. The fear that the other side might make letters public, certainly contributed to the abundant use of ideologically “correct” proclamations. Khrushchev’s fourth letter in particular underlined the importance of the ideological context. The sole purpose of this letter was to inform Tito of disciplinary actions taken against editors who “allowed” accusations against Yugoslavia, a staple of official Soviet policy ever since 1948, to be reprinted in the latest edition of the publication “The Historical Materialism.” This gesture was an offer of truce in the ideological confrontation, an ultimate sacrifice in the existing Communist paradigm. As such, it was expected to serve as the final proof of Soviet sincerity.

The letters are also striking for the complexity of the language used by the two leaders. An abundant use of indirect speech and complicated syntax served to conceal the true meanings, as demonstrated by the above-quoted statement on Beria in Tito’s letter. Very often, however, a multi-faceted syntax helped to brush over essential disagreements. Undoubtedly, both Tito and Khrushchev were well aware of the huge gulf that still existed between them. In an effort to reach some basic common understanding, necessary for the reestablishment of communication between them, both leaders had to be careful to avoid confrontational language as much as possible. Take for example the statement in Tito’s letter on the character of normalization between the two countries: “*With regard to*

contacts between the CC of the Communist Party of Soviet Union and the CC of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, in principle, we are not against them. The League of Communists of Yugoslavia never discards cooperation with all those organizations and movements that wish to fight for peace in the world and cooperation between nations, in particular not with socialist movements and parties. However, before some progress in normalization of government relations is achieved, the meeting you are suggesting would not prove efficient in eliminating everything that instigates material and political damage to both countries.” In a response, Khrushchev’s formulation was equally multi-faceted: “*Expressing our agreement with your proposal that normalization of our relations should start with the government relations, at the same time we believe that fundamental interests of our countries, interests of the international workers’ movement, and the great cause of peace and socialism obligate our parties to invest all efforts so that established friendly relations are not limited to government relations only.*”

More importantly, however, the complex language resulted from efforts by both sides to avoid admission of the initiative for the normalization. In the eyes of the Communist fraternity, such an admission would mean acknowledging responsibility for the conflict. In Khrushchev’s first letter—which, after all, initiated the correspondence—statements of a position were often preceded by formulations such as, “... *there exist some conditions for the improvement of relations...*” or “... *unfriendly relations developed between our countries create certain damage ... to the interests of the peoples of our countries...*” Most illuminating, perhaps, is a phrase meant to be above suspicion: “*In light of new facts that have emerged...*” Expressions, such as “... *proceeding from your statement...*” were used extensively. Both Tito and Khrushchev thus articulated their positions as responding to other side’s initiative or statement. In his first letter, Khrushchev cleverly preceded his proposal with this sentence: “*President of Yugoslavia Tito and other leaders of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and the Government of FNRJ have in their speeches on numerous occasions expressed their desire for improved relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.*” That was followed by the phrase, “*With the existence of these shared ambitions...*” Linguistic complexities as found in these letters are therefore critically important for understanding the atmosphere, motivations, and the true meaning of the exchanges between Khrushchev and Tito. In an effort to present these complexities in full, the translation of the letters (below) veers conscientiously, from time to time, away from the correct English language syntax.

The Tito-Khrushchev letters had important implications: First, the letters established a dialogue between the Soviet and Yugoslav leaderships for the first time since the break-up of their relations in 1948. Second, this initial

exchange between Tito and Khrushchev set the pace and the character of normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations: The process of normalization would be gradual and confined to improvement of government relations. Not until Khrushchev's condemnation of Stalin in his "Secret Speech" in February 1956 and his admission of Stalin's guilt for the 1948 break did normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet party relations take place. Third, the exchange of letters laid the foundations for Khrushchev's historic visit to Belgrade in May 1955. At the time the visit was widely regarded as a diplomatic coup, as unexpected as Egyptian president Sadat's trip to Jerusalem would be some twenty-two years later. Fourth, the letters began the amelioration of a conflict that had existed since 1948—a conflict that had the potential to trigger a larger East-West military confrontation in Europe. Fifth, Khrushchev's offer for Yugoslav-Soviet normalization helped to solidify Yugoslavia's position in the closing stages of the Balkan Pact negotiations. By offering a strategic option for a more neutral position between the East and the West, it strengthened Tito's resolve to withstand US pressure to align the Balkan Pact more closely to NATO.

In the long-term, the Tito-Khrushchev letters initiated developments of profound implications. Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation prevented Yugoslavia's closer association with the West. Between 1948 and 1953, amidst virtually daily hostilities, armed border incidents, and a ferocious propaganda war, Yugoslavia faced the threat of a Soviet and satellite invasion. This necessitated closer military cooperation between Yugoslavia and the West. Between 1950 and 1954, Yugoslavia received almost US \$ 1 billion in Western (mostly US) military aid. During the same period, a surprisingly high level of defense coordination and joint strategic planning was achieved between Yugoslavia and NATO. In addition, Yugoslavia's economy was surviving on huge Western economic aid. By all accounts, Yugoslavia was de-facto a member of the Western alliance confronting the Soviet bloc, in one of strategically most important regions—the Balkans. This high degree of dependence on the West belied Tito's true nature of a Communist and a fiercely independent nationalist. Normalization of relations with the Soviets offered Tito the necessary strategic opening, which, over the following seven years, would allow for the gradual transformation of Tito's vacillation between the blocs into a long-term strategy of equidistance from both blocs; from "neutrality" and "non-commitment" to the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961.

Yugoslav-Soviet normalization, initiated by the Tito-Khrushchev letters, was to have far-reaching consequences on Eastern Europe as well. It signaled the demise of the Stalinist system of relations between the USSR and the "satellites" that had prevailed to that point. It also weakened irrevocably the strength of Stalin's cronies in Eastern Europe and provided a crucial push to the processes of liberalization and national awakening in the satellite countries.

The Tito-Khrushchev correspondence was, moreover, an important first signal that those within the new Soviet leadership, led by Khrushchev, intent on deconstructing Stalin's foreign policy heritage, were gaining the upper hand in Moscow. Once started, this "deconstruction" process would lead to the questioning of the foundations of Stalin's domestic policies and his role in the history of the Soviet state. Just a year and a half after this exchange of letters, and merely nine months after Khrushchev's visit to Belgrade, this process culminated in Khrushchev's secret de-Stalinization speech in February 1956.

The Tito-Khrushchev correspondence of 1954 is of major importance for the study of the Cold War. The exchange of letters between the two leaders initiated a process of Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation. As much as the break-up of the Yugoslav-Soviet relations in 1948 introduced a new reality in the formative phase of the Cold War, the re-establishment of relations between the two countries in 1955 and 1956 had equally far-reaching implications. It prevented the redrawing of the European line of confrontation between the two blocs with Yugoslavia within the Western alliance. Furthermore, Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation signaled the beginning of the process of de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union and in the Eastern Bloc. Yugoslav-Soviet normalization preceded Khrushchev's denouncing of Stalin in February 1956 and had great influence on the liberalization processes within the countries of the Eastern Europe that peaked with the Hungarian Revolution of October/November 1956. Finally, Tito-Khrushchev correspondence and the ensuing normalization between the two countries, decidedly helped Tito create a new strategic position of equidistance between the two blocs. This new phenomenon in the fifties would decisively change the Cold War world. Together with leaders from newly liberated countries of Asia and Africa, in particular [Indian prime minister] Nehru and [Egyptian president] Nasser, Tito would, seven years later, create a "Third World" in the bipolar Cold War world—the non-aligned movement.

The Tito-Khrushchev letters are of primary historical significance as they provide insight into the ideological framework of Communist leaders in the first decades of the Cold War. Unlike any other correspondence between Soviet leaders and foreign Communist leaders, ideological precepts are freely confronted in the letters due to the lack of subordination. The fact that this exchange of letters occurred at the time of the post-Stalin leadership struggle within Kremlin and during the early stages of the dismantling of Stalin's heritage is of particular importance. The language of the letters is thus of extraordinary analytical value.

Presented here for the first time, the Tito-Khrushchev letters show the importance of Yugoslav archives for the study of the Cold War: to provide valuable new insights

into many aspects of the Cold War. This underlines the importance of projects, such as the Yugoslavia Initiative, aimed at reintegrating the wealth of Yugoslav archives and Yugoslav historiography into the international scholarship of the Cold War.



DOCUMENT No. 1
Letter from Nikita S. Khrushchev,
First Secretary of the Central Committee of the
Communist Party of the Soviet Union, to
Josip Broz Tito and the Central Committee
of the League of Communists Of Yugoslavia, 22
June 1954

To the Central Committee,
 League of Communists of Yugoslavia
 To Comrade Tito

The Central Committee [CC] of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [CPSU] discussed questions on the relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia, and additionally analyzed the circumstances that brought about the break between the CPSU and the CPY [Communist Party of Yugoslavia]² and the rapid deterioration of relations between our countries.

As a result, the CC CPSU concluded that there exist some conditions for the improvement of relations between our countries and for the establishment of contacts between the CC of the Communist Party of Soviet Union and the leadership of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia [LCY].

The CC CPSU proceeds from the fact that unfriendly relations that developed between our countries create certain damage both to the interests of Yugoslavia and to those of the Soviet Union, and to the interests of the peoples of our countries, linked by centuries of friendship and joint struggle for liberation. However, from the point of view of essential interests of both countries, it is evident that there exist no serious contradictions that could become a source of hostility and constant acrimony between our countries and peoples.

The CC CPSU proceeds also from the fact that the governments of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have recently undertaken certain steps towards normalization of relations between our countries.³

President of Yugoslavia Tito and other leaders of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and the government of FNRJ [Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia]⁴ have in their speeches on numerous occasions expressed their desire for improved relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. This fully coincides with the wishes of the Soviet leaders.

With the existence of these shared ambitions, not only diplomatic relations but also balanced economic and cultural ties between our countries could be improved, based on full equality and mutual gain.

In light of new facts that have emerged, the CC of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union considers it feasible for us to reconsider also the issue of relations between our Parties.

From our side, we deem regrettable the circumstance that at the time, both sides did not use all available opportunities in an effort to regulate all contentious issues and grievances that emerged in 1948, all the more so as some facts, which were the immediate causes for the break between the CC CPSU and the CC CPY, now look different.

For example, as it is now exposed with regard to the position of Soviet advisors in Yugoslavia and the availability to them of various pieces of information, there were no valid foundations for the resulting dispute and accusations against Yugoslavia.

As the investigation against the agent of international imperialism, [former secret police chief Lavrenty] Beria, demonstrated, it is important to accentuate explicitly that his associates from the intelligence apparatus, without the knowledge of the CC and the government of the USSR, and for the purpose of provoking, have allowed themselves [to perform] inexcusable acts of recruiting individual citizens of Yugoslavia for intelligence purposes. Such a provocation of the enemy, now uncovered, inflicted huge damage to relations between our parties and countries.

On the other side, the CC CPSU is of the opinion that the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia did not take advantage of all opportunities to avoid conflict with the CC CPSU either. Thus, for example, non-Marxist statements and anti-Soviet outbursts by [Milovan] Djilas did not, at the time, meet with resistance from the leadership of the CC CPY. Djilas, this pseudo-Marxist, a man estranged from the cause of Communism, who propagated the liquidation of the party, has abundantly contributed to the deterioration of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. The exclusion of Djilas from the CC LCY and condemnation of his views hostile to Marxism-Leninism facilitate the improvement of relations between the CC CPSU and the CC LCY.

The CC CPSU takes into account the fact that leaders of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia have stated and continue to assert that communists of Yugoslavia are guided by teachings of Marxism-Leninism, that they are intent on continuing the building of socialism in their country, and regard preservation and strengthening of peace as indispensable. In light of this, there can be no excuse for the existence of a state of rift and acrimony between parties whose endeavors must be based on principles of Marxism-Leninism and the principle of non-interference into the affairs of others.

In such case, there truly exist objective conditions, not only for the improvement of political, economic, and cultural relations between our governments, but also for

the establishment of contacts between the CC of the Communist Party of Soviet Union and the CC of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

It is thoroughly understandable that elements of mistrust and prejudice, accumulated in previous years, cannot disappear overnight. Time will be needed, as well as patience and mutual good will, for an understanding to be reached. However, the shared fundamental interests of our countries, our peoples, and of the grand cause of peace and socialism must overcome various subjective moments and opinions.

We would like to know the opinion of the CC of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia on the above-addressed issues.

From its side, the CC CPSU is ready to hear and discuss the view of the CC of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia on issues regarding relations between our governments, as well as those regarding relations between the CPSU and the LCY.

To this end, we would regard as constructive a meeting of leading representatives of the CC CPSU and the CC LCY aimed at exchanging views on the above-mentioned issues. If you are in agreement with this proposal, the meeting could take place in the nearest future either in Moscow or in Yugoslavia, according to your convenience.

Secretary of the CC CPSU
N. Khrushchev

22 June 1954

[Source: Arhiv Jugoslavije [National Archives of Yugoslavia], Arhiv CK SKJ [Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia Collection], 507 / IX, 119/I-48. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Svetozar Rajak.]



DOCUMENT No. 2
Letter (Cable) from the
Central Committee of the Communist Party
of the Soviet Union to Tito and
Central Committee of the League Of
Communists Of Yugoslavia,
24 July 1954⁵

Received by Telegraph

To the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia

To Comrade Tito

The CC CPSU has received with satisfaction the communication from Comrade Kardelj stating that the

leadership of the CC LCY looks positively on suggestions proposed in the letter from the CC CPSU of 22 June 1954. We are confident that this road corresponds to the vital interests of our peoples and our Communist Parties. We acknowledge that the Yugoslav comrades could be in a position to respond to our letter in the nearest future.

The CC CPSU is aware of the great importance of the question of Trieste to Yugoslavia. We too consider it propitious that it be resolved in accordance with justified interests of Yugoslavia. Should, for Yugoslavia, there exist a possibility of a resolution of this question in the nearest future then it is perfectly obvious and understandable to us that it must not be encumbered by premature publication of our negotiations.

24 July 1954

CC CPSU

[Source: Arhiv Jugoslavije, Arhiv CK SKJ, 507 / IX, 119/I – 49. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Svetozar Rajak.]



DOCUMENT No.3
First Letter from Tito and the Executive
Committee [Politburo] of the CC LCY to
Nikita Khrushchev and Central Committee
of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,
11 August 1954

To the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
To Comrade Khrushchev

A session of the extended Executive Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia has deliberated the letter from the CC CPSU on the need for normalization of relations between our governments. In principle, we agree with most of its contents, in particular with the statement on the damage being done to both countries from the existence of the present abnormal state of relations and continuous tension between us.

We, too, nourish a desire for the necessity for elimination of elements that obstruct normalization between our governments and poison the atmosphere between our peoples, which ultimately contributes to the worsening of already tense situation not only in this part of Europe, but also in the world in general.

The very slow progress of normalization, to date, demonstrates the need for serious efforts in bringing clarity into our relations, and persistence in gradually removing negative elements that have accumulated since 1948, which continue to aggravate our relations thus creating an even bigger rift between our two countries.

We agree with the particular position in your letter, which asserts that improvement and normalization of our relations will benefit not only our countries, but also the consolidation of peace in the world in general. To this we add our belief that improvement of the relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR should also influence improvement of the relations between Yugoslavia and those countries that have also cut off relations with us in 1948, and with which our present relations cannot be called normal, much less friendly.

All this requires ample time and good will because it would be unrealistic to think that a quick and short process is possible for the creation of the necessary trust between our governments and peoples. We wish here to underline that we who are responsible before the people of our country cannot but emphasize that this normalization and improvement of our relations must be of such character and direction as to be in accordance with our policy of international cooperation, and not to jeopardize our country's position in the world or to create new internal strife, whether political or economic.

We have noticed with satisfaction that you write in the letter about respect for the principle of non-interference into affairs of other countries. This will certainly be favorably received by our peoples and thus facilitate the proper development of our relations.

We are resolute in preserving our principles of a socialist country, in our internal development as well as in our foreign policy, in particular with regard to the avoidance of the threat of war and preservation of peace in the world, to the defense of our independence, and to our readiness to cooperate with all countries that respect the principle of equality among states. It is this outlook on international relations that originates our faith not only in the prospect but also in the necessity of cooperation between states with different systems, and in a realistic possibility of coexistence. We do not see another alternative today, if we wish to preserve humanity from the biggest catastrophe in its history.

We should not subordinate normalization and improvement of our relations to an unrealistic expectation of uniformity of views on all international problems and on ways of resolving them. It should equally be unrealistic to allow our domestic issues, their progress and ways in how we solve them, to condition the development of our relations. It would only obstruct our cooperation in areas of mutual interest, such as economic, cultural, and other.

With regard to the position in your letter which examines the question of who is responsible for the break of our relations, we would not wish to discuss this in this letter. It is of no significance to normalization and improvement of relations between our governments if we proceed from the assumption that the present relations bring damage to both countries. But, as far as we are concerned, we need to say openly that an individual, for example Djilas, was not the cause of this conflict, regardless of his lack of balanced approach and his outbursts from one

extreme to another. It is precisely because of these traits that he had never played a decisive role in our leadership. We recognize other reasons behind the conflict and break of 1948, and the Fifth [1948] and later the Sixth [1952] Congress of our Party have expressed them. As with regard to the extent of Beria's guilt, you know best his role in the whole affair and we have no reason to repudiate your assertions.

With regard to contacts between the CC of the Communist Party of Soviet Union and the CC of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, in principle we are not against them. The League of Communists of Yugoslavia never rejects cooperation with any organizations and movement that wish to fight for peace in the world and cooperation among nations, in particular not with socialist movements and parties. However, before some progress in normalization of government relations is achieved, the meeting you are suggesting, would not prove efficient in eliminating everything that instigates material and political damage to both countries.

We believe that the above approach to the eradication of elements that contaminate our relations would be most advantageous to both countries.

11 August 1954
Belgrade
Executive Committee,
CCLCY

Tito

[Source: Arhiv Jugoslavije, Arhiv CK SKJ, 507 / IX, 119/I-50. Obtained and translated for CWHIP by Svetozar Rajak.]



DOCUMENT No 4.

Third Letter from Nikita S. Khrushchev, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, to Tito and the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, 23 September 1954

To the Executive Committee,
Central Committee of League of Communists of Yugoslavia
To Comrade Tito

The CC of the CPSU discussed the letter from the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia of 11 August, and notes with satisfaction the agreement expressed in it with

the proposal for improvement of relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR, presented in the letter from the CC CPSU of 22 June.

Your opinion regarding the necessity of investing greater effort towards full clarification of our relations and elimination of negative elements still spoiling those relations is receiving full support from our side.

We agree that normalization and improvement of relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia should not be conditioned upon [consensus regarding] issues of internal development and ways of resolving them. We also agree that development of these relations should support the enhancement of the international positions of our countries. We underline with satisfaction the existence of unanimity of views on a variety of foreign policy issues, such as: equality and non-interference into affairs of other countries, acceptance of the possibility of peaceful coexistence and cooperation between countries with different political systems, struggle for prevention of war and consolidation of peace. As is well known, the policy of the Soviet Union is aimed at the consolidation of peace in Europe and the whole world. We do not doubt that Yugoslavia will contribute towards the goal of the consolidation of peace.

As there now emerges a unity of outlook recognizing the necessity of radical improvement of relations between our countries, based on the exchange of views between us, we believe it possible also to proceed toward mutual, practical elimination of negative occurrences that obstruct rapprochement between Yugoslavia and the USSR. We are ready, in every way, to ensure that every proposal from your side, aimed at strengthening friendship and cooperation between the USSR and Yugoslavia receives due attention from Soviet government organs. From our side, in the interest of normalization of relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR, we have explicitly confronted the Association of Yugoslav Patriots⁶ with the question of the appropriateness of the continuation of their activity.

We hope that rapprochement between the USSR and Yugoslavia will reflect favorably on relations between Yugoslavia and countries with which Yugoslav relations deteriorated after 1948. The CC CPSU will inform the leaderships of the fraternal parties of your expressed wish to normalize relations with those countries. We believe that success in this respect will be achieved sooner, should necessary steps be undertaken from your side as well.

We wish to know what further practical measures, according to you, need to be undertaken in the nearest future, on both sides, for the purpose of contributing toward the establishment of mutual understanding and genuine cooperation between our countries.

As it can be understood from your letter, in principle, you are not against the renewal of contacts between the LCY and the CPSU, but regard the meeting between representatives of two parties to be premature. We do not insist on such a meeting at this moment, as the already exchanged letters represent a foundation for the clarifica-

tion of our relations. At the same time, we are of the opinion that lengthy postponement of the meeting between representatives of the CPSU and the LCY would be inopportune because personal contact would undoubtedly assist in the speeding up of normalization of relations between the CPSU and the LCY, and between our governments. Expressing our agreement with your proposal that normalization of our relations should start with government relations, at the same time we believe that fundamental interests of our countries, interests of the international workers' movement, and the great cause of peace and socialism obligate our parties to invest all efforts so that established friendly relations are not limited to government relations only.

In its foreign policy, the Soviet Union aspires toward establishing and maintaining normal relations with all countries, including the capitalist ones, irrespective of their socio-economic system. By sending you a proposal for the renewal of our relations, we considered it self-evident that in the course of their harmonization a full normalization of relations between our governments would be achieved. But, we have always believed and believe that normalization of relations between governments should only be taken as a beginning, and that there exist objective conditions not only for the improvement of bonds between Yugoslavia and the USSR, in accordance with universally accepted norms of relations between states, but for achieving mutual understanding and cooperation between the CPSU and the LCY.

The resolve to protect the socialist character of the Yugoslav state, expressed in your letter, represents an important prerequisite for establishment of mutual understanding and sincere cooperation between our parties. Unlike all other parties, the struggle for the victory of socialism and the building of a communist society are the ultimate goals of true Marxist parties. To reach these great goals, they could and should attain mutual understanding. Cooperation of our parties, based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism, is vital not only to the interests of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, but in the interest of consolidating the international workers' movement and unifying all forces fighting for the victory of socialism. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, created by great Lenin, considers these principles to be above all else.

Relating to your opinion with regard to those responsible for the break-up in 1948, we too believe that this question is not important if both you and we have agreed that we should aspire towards the improvement of political, economic, and other relations between our countries. In regard to the mention in your letter of decisions of the Fifth and the Sixth Congresses of the LCY, we deem it important to openly state our opinion. We believe that decisions of the Fifth Congress reflected mostly the relations between our parties as they were then constituted, and confirm our regret, as expressed in our letter of 22 June, that all opportunities available have not always been used to avoid misunderstandings. With regard to the decisions of

the Sixth Congress, they appeared in different circumstances, and one cannot deny that they had the imprint of then existing hostility and grave, often unjust, mutual accusations to which the logic of confrontation in those years had led both sides. One should admit that, unfortunately, such accusations still appear from time to time in both the Yugoslav and the Soviet press, as an already known result of relations between our countries in those years. From our side, we are taking measures to ensure the needed clarification of questions related to Yugoslavia in the Soviet press, journals, and books.

We are fully aware that elements of mistrust and prejudice, accumulated in previous years, cannot disappear at once. But, at the same time, we are firmly convinced that now that the existence of mutual good will and aspirations towards improvement of our relations based on equality and mutual advantage has been manifested, the cause of the Soviet and Yugoslav peoples coming together is moving forward because thus demand the interests of both countries and interests of peace and socialism.

The Secretary
Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Union
Moscow, 23 September 1954
N. Khrushchev

[Source: *Arhiv Jugoslavije, Arhiv CK SKJ, 507 / IX, 119/I-51. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Svetozar Rajak.*]



DOCUMENT No. 5
Fourth Letter from Nikita S. Khrushchev,
First Secretary of the Central Committee of the
Communist Party of the Soviet Union,
to Tito and the Executive Committee
of the Central Committee of the League of
Communists of Yugoslavia,
27 September 1954

To the Executive Committee,
Central Committee of the League of Communists of
Yugoslavia
To Comrade Tito

We consider it important to inform you of an inappropriate formulation, which is at the same time contradictory to directives from the CC CPSU, that was allowed to pass through in the book “Historical Materialism” (Second edition), published by GOSPOLITIZDAT⁷ in June 1954. In this book, contrary to our intentions, and as a result of an oversight by the author and GOSPOLITIZDAT, a disturbing provocation

appeared aimed against the leadership of Yugoslavia.

The CC CPSU has discussed the question of this gross error, allowed in the book “Historical Materialism,” and has made an appropriate decision by harshly punishing those responsible for the violation of directives of the CC CPSU on the character of material on Yugoslavia that is published in the USSR. Enclosed please find the transcript of that decision.

We hope that from your side the case of the book “Historical Materialism” will be correctly understood and judged as an irrelevant misunderstanding.

The Secretary,
Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Union
N. Khrushchev

Moscow, 27 September 1954

[Source: *Arhiv Jugoslavije, Arhiv CK SKJ, 507 / IX, 119/I-52. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Svetozar Rajak.*]

Svetozar Rajak (London School of Economics) has done extensive research in The National Archives of Yugoslavia.

¹ This article is a result of research conducted by the author for his doctoral thesis on “Yugoslav-Soviet relations between 1953 and 1958” at the Department of International History of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). The author wishes to express gratitude to Odd Arne Westad (LSE), the staff of the National Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, and the Archives of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia for exceptional collaboration and assistance during difficult times of political turmoil. At the same time, he is indebted to a number of scholars in Belgrade, above all to Ljubodrag Dimic (Department of History, University of Belgrade).

² Communist Party of Yugoslavia, renamed as League of Communists of Yugoslavia, at its Sixth Congress in 1952.

³ In summer and autumn 1953, the USSR and Yugoslavia exchanged ambassadors.

⁴ FNRJ—Federativna Narodna Republika Jugoslavija [Federal Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia], the official name of Yugoslavia at the time.

⁵ For reasons of authenticity, the author has presented this Soviet-Yugoslav exchange of communication as first, second, etc. letter according to the depiction given by Tito himself when presenting them in November 1954 to the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. Each document is annotated on top of the first page accordingly, in Tito’s handwriting.) The presentation of the Khrushchev letters is based on their Serbo-Croatian translation

⁶ Moscow-based association of Yugoslavs who

supported the COMINFORM Resolution against Tito in 1948 and have since emigrated to the USSR. It was run by the KGB. The CPSU CC member charged with overseeing this association was Mikhail Suslov. These “true Yugoslav

communists and patriots” served as the “Fifth column” in the Soviet propaganda campaign and covert operations against Yugoslavia after 1948.

⁷ State Publishing House for Political Publications.

Teachers Become Students at Summer Institute

The 2001 National History Day Summer Institute brought twenty-five teachers from across the nation to the University of Maryland to examine *New Directions In Cold War History*. The teachers came from very diverse backgrounds and schools, but they all came to develop their teaching skills and share their knowledge with their peers. Judging from the participants’ tremendously positive response, the institute confirmed both the need for, as well as National History Day’s ability to provide, assistance and training to teachers. “In terms of content, accessibility of speakers, practical applications for the classroom, and excitement, this is *the best* workshop I’ve ever attended!” said one participant. The institute was produced in association with The Cold War International History Project and was graciously supported by the Annenberg/CPB Channel, funder of *A Biography of America* and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

Many times the focus of learning is concentrated on student rather than teacher development, but National History Day is working to reform history education by developing the skills of *both* teachers and students. The objectives of the institute were two-fold: to provide teachers with the latest in historical scholarship to bring them up to speed on the literature; and to provide teachers with practical applications for the classroom, particularly instruction regarding the importance and use of primary sources. To accomplish these goals National History Day worked closely with scholars from across the country to provide a hands-on learning experience for the teachers. “The institute really exceeded my expectations and I’m grateful to have had this unique experience, said a 2001 participant. “I’m significantly more knowledgeable now about the 20th century and Cold War history than I had been. Now, I can enhance my good teaching methods with a deeper knowledge of the Cold War and primary sources.”

Prominent scholars and collections specialists such as Robert Hutchings of Princeton University (formerly Director for European Affairs, National Security Council, 1989-1992; Special Adviser to the Secretary of State, 1992-1993), Bill Brands of Texas A&M University and Christian Ostermann of the Cold War International History Project introduced participants to the latest in historical scholarship and imaginative approaches for engaging students in the study of the history of the Cold War. In addition, the teachers visited historic sites and agencies. At the National Archives the teachers looked at the original Marshall Act and the most requested document in the archives – a picture of President Nixon and Elvis Presley in the Oval office. Teachers spoke with archivists and educators about the multitude of presidential documents and lesson plans available on line at the National Archive’s website (www.nara.gov/education). Jan Scruggs, Founder and President of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, gave a special tour of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The most important part about the workshop is that the teachers’ work has just begun. In addition to including new ideas and methods into their own teaching, those who participated in the program are committed to conducting workshops for teachers in their own states. Thus, teachers nationwide will benefit from the institute and National History Day’s commitment to education reform.

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