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IN SEARCH OF AN AUTHENTIC POSITION: THE FIRST PHASE OF POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN YUGOSLAVIA AND THE WEST EUROPEAN LEFT, 1948–1953

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ABSTRACT

The Cominform resolution of 1948 created an unexpected situation for the Yugoslav communist leadership. Isolated from the East, the country had to look westwards for the way out of the blockade. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia started searching for new partners and ideological allies amongst West European left. The aim of this article is to outline the transformation of the Yugoslav Communist Party's foreign policy between 1948 and 1953, from alliance with communist parties to supporting "independent socialists" across Europe and to cooperation with social democrats. The article is based mainly on Yugoslav sources and literature.

Keywords: Communist Party of Yugoslavia, independent socialists, social democracy, communism, West European left

ALLA RICERCA DI UNA POSIZIONE AUTENTICA: LA PRIMA FASE DELLA COOPERAZIONE POLITICA E IDEOLOGICA TRA LA JUGOSLAVIA E LA SINISTRA DELL'EUROPA OCCIDENTALE, 1948–1953

SINTESI

La Risoluzione del Cominform nel 1948 creò una situazione inaspettata per la leadership comunista jugoslava. Isolato dall'Est, il paese dovette volgere il suo sguardo all'Ovest per trovare una via d'uscita da una situazione di blocco. Il Partito Comunista jugoslavo si mise a cercare nuovi partner e alleati ideologici tra i partiti di sinistra dell'Europa occidentale. Lo scopo del presente articolo è di delineare la trasformazione della politica estera dei comunisti jugoslavi tra il 1948 e il 1953, dall'alleanza con partiti comunisti al supporto dei "socialisti indipendenti" in tutta Europa, alla cooperazione con i socialdemocratici. L'articolo si basa principalmente sulle fonti e la letteratura jugoslave.

Parole chiave: Partito Comunista jugoslavo, socialisti indipendenti, socialdemocrazia, comunismo, sinistra dell'Europa occidentale

The summer of 1948 heralded what nowadays seems to be one of the most important turning points in the post-war history of Yugoslavia.¹ For the Yugoslav communists the Cominform Resolution represented both an unexpected blow and a major challenge. Until 1948, they were among the firmest and most loyal Stalinists. Not only domestic and foreign policy of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY), but the whole worldview of the Yugoslav communists was in line with the directives from Moscow. However, as Edvard Kardelj later wrote "*the belief in the protagonists of our own ideology disappeared, practically, overnight*" (Kardelj, 1980, 132). The letters which started arriving from Moscow in the spring of 1948² must have reminded the Yugoslav communists of the already well-known methods of liquidation – in the words of Branko Petranović: "*Tito, Kardelj and others who worked in the USSR knew all too well what Stalinist anathemas meant*" (Petranović & Dautović, 1999, 29) – "*There would be no mercy. Heads would roll*" (Dedijer, 1991, 339).

Tito later stated that in June 1948 "*we did not lose faith in socialism; we began to lose faith in Stalin, who had betrayed the cause of socialism*" (Dedijer, 1953, 390). In the spring of 1948, however, it was not only the faith in socialism that concerned the Yugoslav leadership. At the Politburo meeting already in March 1948, when the first misunderstandings in the relations with the USSR arose, Tito stated: "*This is about the independence of our country.*" (Petranović, 1995, 238). There were two main motives behind the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) foreign political moves in the years to come – the one of breaking through the isolation, and the other of fighting the Cominform. The conflict with Moscow created temporary disorientation among the Yugoslav leadership and dilemmas about the future steps arose. The following period marked a thorough political and ideological transformation for Yugoslavia. Although state and party organs were institutionally separated, due to the fact that the same people usually had both functions there were little differences between the two lines. So, how did the foreign political strategy of the CPY change during those crucial years?

While opening the meeting of the Commission for International Relations of the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Yugoslavia (SAWPY) on February 3rd, 1955, Veljko Vlahović outlined several phases that CPY's cooperation with European socialists underwent since the break with the Cominform:

*There was this initial period with a certain amount of dogmatism [...]. In the beginning, we oriented almost exclusively on right-wing groups that followed the Cominform, but later we shifted towards the so-called left within the socialist movements, and at the last stage we focused on mass contacts and penetration among the syndicates.*³

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- 1 The article has been written within the project *Tradition and Transformation—Historical Heritage and National Identity in Serbia in 20th Century* (No. 47019), funded by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia.
 - 2 The letters in question were sent by the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) on the March 27th and May 4th, 1948, in which accusations were brought against the CPY leadership.
 - 3 AJ, 142, 36–113, Minutes from the meeting of the Commission for international relations of the SAWPY, February 3rd, 1955.

Although Vlahović's short description highlights the key directions of party cooperation after 1948, the reconstruction of contacts with West European left during the late 1940s and early 1950s demonstrates that those directions were not just successive phases but rather simultaneous processes. Both state and party were shunned from the East, and the ties with the West were still undeveloped. Period after the Yugoslav-Soviet split was devoted to finding new partners (Yugoslavs employed all measures available – state, intelligence, party, and personal contacts), searching for ideological inspiration for further moves through readings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, and formulating ideological explanations for their practical steps.

Until the break with the USSR, the Yugoslav communists perceived the social democracy as an integral part of the “bourgeois society”. They internalized the decades of rivalry and strife within the international workers' movement and harbored the same attitudes in the first years after the Second World War. The attitude towards the West and social democracy could not have been changed overnight by the Cominform resolution. It, however, initiated a necessity to search for new allies, and to tell the Yugoslav side of the affair as means of shattering the isolation in which the country lay. The first step was refuting of charges and the explanation of the Yugoslav position. Radio broadcasts, brochures, translations of the speeches, and articles of the Yugoslav leadership were employed in this cause. The Yugoslav representatives abroad were tasked with disseminating propaganda material amongst those interested in the “Yugoslav case”.⁴ However, this propaganda initiative was almost exclusively aimed at the members of the communist parties abroad and those who came from a communist background.

The propaganda activity was followed with establishing contacts with pro-Yugoslav (ex) members of communist parties across Europe, as well as with the individuals, such as journalists, syndical representatives, ex-partisans and others, who were deemed as potentially friendly towards Yugoslavia. This task was especially well carried out by the Yugoslav intelligence service, which even organized the arrival of pro-Yugoslav communists from the East in Yugoslavia. Those among them who were assessed to be “most conscious” and “most capable” were employed directly in the Yugoslav propaganda apparatus. One of them was the East German communist Wolfgang Leonhard,⁵ who fled in March 1949 to Yugoslavia, due to his disagreement with the policy of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. For the next year and a half Leonhard was employed in the Direction for Information⁶ and the German section of Radio Belgrade (AJ, 507/IX, 87/III-1-1).

4 See the lists of brochures translated into foreign languages (English, French, Italian, and German), in: AJ, 142, 44. For an overview of articles published in the Yugoslav press, see: O neistinim i nepravednim optužbama protiv KPJ, izabrani materijali, 1948; O kontrarevolucionarnoj i klevetničkoj kampanji protiv socialističke Jugoslavije, knj. 1, 1949; O kontrarevolucionarnoj i klevetničkoj kampanji protiv socialističke Jugoslavije, knj. 2, 1950.

5 Wolfgang Leonhard (1921–2014) was a German communist, a member of the “Ulbricht group”, who arrived in 1945 from Moscow to the Soviet occupation zone. He had been in touch with the members of the Yugoslav Military Mission in Berlin since 1946. Leonhard visited Yugoslavia for the first time in 1947, as a delegate of the Free German Youth. In 1948, he supported Yugoslavia, was accused of being a “Titoist”, and with help of Yugoslav representatives in Berlin he fled to Yugoslavia in 1949, where he worked until autumn 1950, when he moved to West Germany and worked within the pro-Yugoslav Independent Workers' Party of Germany (UAPD).

6 The Direction for Information was an institution responsible for Yugoslav propaganda abroad. It existed until 1952, when it transformed into Department for Press and Information of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The pro-Yugoslav stance of Wolfgang Leonhard was not an isolated phenomenon among European communists, and was not merely a result of their insights in the Yugoslav development, but much more a product of the way they perceived their own position, or, as Leonhard put it, because of the feeling of a “political sickness” (*politische Bauchschmerzen*) (Leonhard, 1955, 487–488). Their personal disagreements with the official party line, their dissatisfaction with the party life, as well as a “satellite” dependence on Moscow culminated in the question of Yugoslavia. As German communists themselves stated during a discussion about the Yugoslav issue: “*This does not concern only the CPY – it concerns all of us.*” (DAMSP, PA, 1949, f. 80, dos. 4, br. 413811). Purges of the “Titoists” from communist parties across Europe only increased the number of those who identified their own struggles with that of Yugoslavia. Consequently, the Yugoslav Military mission in Berlin was showered by letters of support and solidarity (DAMSP, PA, 1949, f. 81, dos. 22, br. 414581). Radio Belgrade and the Yugoslav Embassy in Paris were contacted in August 1948 by the Spanish communist José del Barrio⁷ with a request for a constant supply of informational materials about the CPY (AJ, 507/IX, 122/III-1). Yugoslav representatives abroad also strove to establish personal contacts with potential Yugoslav allies, albeit in the first time almost exclusively with (ex) members of communist parties (AJ, 507/IX, 48/III-1).⁸

Although the ideological framework dictated the quest for support only amongst communists, when Yugoslav foreign policy started searching for other ways out of the isolation, those ideological explanations and qualifications had to be revised. The key shift occurred during 1949 and the new foreign political orientation was proclaimed at the end of the year in Edvard Kardelj’s speeches in the UN General Assembly,⁹ and at the Third Plenum of the CPY. Having in mind, on the one hand, the “*aggressive Soviet policy towards Yugoslavia*”, and on the other hand, “*the US role in protecting the small countries’ sovereignty*”, Kardelj suggested that Yugoslavia should make most of the existing “contradictions” within the “capitalist” world. Lessons from the East should help Yugoslavia establish ties with as many western countries as possible, in order to avoid becoming politically and economically dependent on a single country. Kardelj’s words imply that, led by the aim of breaking through isolation, the Yugoslav leadership abandoned looking at the West as a monolithic capitalist and anti-democratic camp, a thesis which they wholeheartedly supported only two years before.¹⁰ In late 1949, they

7 José del Barrio Navarro (1907–1989) was a Spanish communist, a former member of the Central Committee of the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia. He participated in the Spanish civil war. Del Barrio was expelled from the party for his disapproval of the Soviet foreign policy in 1943. He was one of the founding members of the pro-Yugoslav *Acción socialista*.

8 In the summer of 1948, the CPY started paying more attention to foreign political issues. Consequently, the Foreign Minister became Edvard Kardelj, and Ambassadors to those capitals which were deemed most important became “trusted” party members, usually pre-war communists (Selinić, 2011; Selinić, 2014). Therefore, Yugoslav diplomatic representatives abroad also played a significant role in the foreign policy of the CPY.

9 For more on Kardelj’s speech in the UN General Assembly on September 26th, 1949, see: Jovanović, 1985.

10 At the first meeting of the Cominform in September 1947, the Yugoslav representatives supported the Soviet thesis laid out in Zhdanov’s speech, that the world was divided in two camps, the “anti-imperialist and democratic”, one under the leadership of the USSR and an “imperialist and reactionary” one led by the USA (Pons, 2014, 162–167).

saw “contradictions” within the West, which were to be used to their own advantage (Petranović, Končar & Radonjić, 1985, 469–482).

Regarding the situation within the international workers’ movement, Edvard Kardelj assessed that the Soviet Union’s influence was in decline, as was the power of the communist parties in the West. However, he was sure that the crisis within the workers’ movement, caused by the Yugoslav-Soviet split, would develop at the expense of the “imperialist” countries, and in favor of Yugoslavia. Kardelj insisted that it was the support of the “masses” that would prove decisive in the battle against the USSR. Yugoslavia was, therefore, to capitalize on growing spontaneous sympathies for its cause, as well as to actively fight for support “from below” both within communist and social-democratic “masses” and against their party leaderships. Kardelj underlined that there were certain “currents within the workers’ movement” in the West, that hoped for an emergence of a political force connected with and devoted to their countries and people. He was sure that “subjective forces” capable of gathering all these currents would appear in these countries, and “*we are obliged to contribute as much as we can*” to help them. Furthermore, Yugoslavia had to cooperate more actively with “*all progressive democratic movements in the world*”, although not “*through a new International, but through democratic cooperation on equal basis*” (Petranović, Končar & Radonjić, 1985, 469–482).

A change from the previous period is also noticeable in the attitude towards the international workers’ movement. The conviction that the crisis within the workers’ movement would ultimately have a positive outcome for the cause of socialism was based on the determinist presumption of a socialist future and a firm belief that the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was the one who took over and held high “*the banner of socialism, which Stalin had dragged through the mud*” (Dedijer, 1991, 330). The key distinction from the previous period laid in the choice of allies – alongside communist “masses” Kardelj underlined the “masses” gathered around social democratic parties as Yugoslav companions in this “historical” mission. Abandoning the vision of a monolithic imperialist western camp led to realizing that there were “contradictions” among western states and a “socialist potential” within western social democracy. However, there was a certain collision between Kardelj’s suggestion that the CPY should win over the “masses” from below against the party leaderships and an idea of “democratic cooperation on equal basis” with other “progressive” movements. It was precisely this contradiction which announced different methods in CPY’s cooperation with west European left in the early 1950s.

However, contacts with “masses” in the West were underdeveloped and weak, and so was Yugoslav knowledge on West European parties and movements. Since foreign policy was gaining in importance, a Commission for International Relations and Ties (CIRT) was established by the Central Committee of the CPY.¹¹ One of the first moves

11 At the Third plenum of the CPY in December 1949, Kardelj’s proposal to establish a foreign political commission of the Central Committee was adopted. Its purpose would be to coordinate the work of various institutions and bodies dealing with foreign policy (Petranović, Končar & Radonjić, 1985, 482). The Politburo of the CPY established the foreign political council/commission in February 1950. Its members were:

the Commission undertook was deploying of “trusted comrades”, tasked with gathering information and establishing contacts with West European leftists abroad. In March 1950, Vlado Kozak, a pre-war Slovenian communist and a man undoubtedly trusted by Edvard Kardelj,¹² embarked on a road to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). In his report from West Germany Vlado Kozak described political apathy among German communists, a lack of knowledge about the Yugoslav-Soviet split, and an insufficient awareness of the “*worldwide importance of the Yugoslav struggle against revisionism*”. He assessed that Josef Schappe,¹³ a CPY’s informant within the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) recently expelled from the party ranks under the accusation of being a “Titoist”, was most distinguished among the party “dissidents” in West Germany. Vlado Kozak suggested that the “dissidents” be given an initial capital necessary for founding a newspaper, which would serve as a “gathering point” for dissatisfied communists, social democrats, and the undecided – a sort of a “national front”, which would represent a nucleus of a new revolutionary communist party in Germany. “*Everyone who belongs to us socially has to be politically on our side as well,*” Vlado Kozak concluded (AJ, 507/IX, 87/I-22). Agitators were also sent to Italy in order to gain better insight into the political situation and potential perspectives for Yugoslav penetration there. Franc Štoka travelled to Rome, Torino, Milano, Naples, Bologna, and other Italian cities. Establishing a newspaper as a base for a wider movement was deemed the most suitable way for achieving influence in Italy as well (AJ, 507/IX, 48/III-2; Tenca Montini & Mišić, 2017, 797). Certain contacts with pro-Yugoslav communists in Italy had already existed, and even Kardelj himself mentioned the “independent communists” within the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) as an example of a “force” within the workers’ movement in Italy, which could serve as Yugoslavia’s stronghold (Petranović, Končar & Radonjić, 1985, 478).

Based partly on the reports of Yugoslav “comrades” who were on missions abroad, and mostly on the information gathered from Yugoslav informants in communist parties across Europe, a high intelligence officer Maks Baće¹⁴ prepared a report on the “Situation in the workers’ movement and progressive parties in Western European countries” for the CIRT meetings held on May 27th and June 12th, 1950 (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-1). Was spreading the truth about Yugoslavia and defending the country abroad the only task of the CPY in the West? – no, such an approach was “passive”, “insufficient”, and even “negative”, assessed Maks Baće. Yugoslavia had to be “active” and “offensive”. What mattered was not only who it fought against, but what it fought for. A struggle for the victory of so-

Edvard Kardelj, Veljko Vlahović, Vladimir Dedijer, Đuro Salaj, Rodoljub Čolaković, Milentije Popović, Vida Tomšič, Petar Stambolić, Milijan Neoričić, Pavle Gregorić, Slobodan Penezić, Miloš Minić, Otmar Kreačić, and Leo Mates (Petranović & Dautović, 1999, 65).

12 In 1920s Vlado Kozak drafted both Edvard Kardelj and Boris Kidrič to the Communist Party.

13 Josef Schappe (1907–1994) was a German communist, and resistance fighter. After the liberation of Buchenwald, Schappe re-joined the Communist Party of Germany, served as a high party functionary in North Rhine-Westphalia and the editor in chief of the Party organ *Freies Volk*. In early 1950, Schappe was expelled from the KPD under the accusation of being a “Titoist”. He was one of the founders of the pro-Yugoslav Independent Workers’ Party of Germany (UAPD).

14 Maks Baće was the head of the State Security Administration’s first department, which was responsible for gathering intelligence abroad.

cialism in the world was at the same the struggle for the victory of socialism in Europe and in Yugoslavia (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-1). Analogue to Kardelj's words that the CPY was to win over both communist and social democratic "masses", Maks Baće insisted that both communists and socialists were the CPY's target group, as well as individuals in syndicates, factories and workers' councils. "Anglo-American imperialism" and "reaction" in some European countries were still deemed as enemies of socialism (and, therefore of Yugoslavia), but the main obstacle to the victory of socialism was the policy of the USSR. Baće criticized the Soviet doctrine about the division of the world into two camps (which was unconditionally supported by the Yugoslavs at the first Cominform meeting in 1947), as a strategy serving the "great-Russian hegemonism", and not the interests of a socialist revolution. In such a situation, "*the Yugoslav resistance was a call to arms for a real socialism*" (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-1). Based on the information he gathered, Maks Baće concluded that there was a "revolutionary situation" in all western countries. It did not mean that the situation was ripe for a revolution, but that the workers' masses in the West were disorientated, which made it easier for the CPY to stand out as an ally and a signpost to the future. The CPY was meant to help the "forces of socialism" liberate themselves from both eastern and western hegemonies, achieve workers' unity, and ultimately seize power (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-2).

Based on the assessment that the communist parties were in crisis, and that new workers' movements were spontaneously emerging across Europe, Yugoslavia's assistance to the workers' movement in Western Europe was considered not only an option but a duty. In his report, Maks Baće focused on the newly emerging movements in Italy, West Germany, and among the Spanish emigres. Although no distinguished party functionary had left the Communist Party of Italy so far, in numerous towns and factories individuals or even whole groups were stepping out of the party. Furthermore, independent leftist intellectuals, former partisan fighters, "centrists" within the Socialist Party of Italy (PSI), left wing of Christian democrats, and Communist Party of Trieste were among those heterogeneous "currents" Yugoslavs counted on. However, the task at hand was to unite them. Contacts were also established with the Spanish emigres stationed in France and Mexico. Among them were several former Central Committee members of the Communist Party of Spain – José del Barrio, Jesus Hernandez, Felix Montiel. Despite certain disunity among them, and the fact that they were living in different countries, the Spanish were assessed as the most active allies when it came to pleas for help. Maks Baće considered the situation in West Germany to be "the ripest" for founding a new movement. Just like Vlado Kozak, Maks Baće also stated that the movement was developing around Josef Schappe (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-2).

Vladimir Dedijer later wrote that the "dogmatists" within the CPY, Aleksandar Ranković and Maks Baće above all, presented the main obstacle to cooperation with the social democrats, whereas Edvard Kardelj opted for establishing ties with massive socialist parties in the West as means of breaking through the isolation the country found itself in. Thanks to the arguments provided by Vlado Kozak, Kardelj managed to win over Đilas and then Tito (Dedijer, 1991, 333, 371–372). However, the already mentioned report Vlado Kozak wrote in March 1950 partially negates Dedijer's statements, given

the fact that Kozak gave almost no notice about the German social democrats and focused exclusively on the possibilities of cooperating with the KPD dissidents (AJ, 507/IX, 87/I-22). Still, the notes from the CIRT meeting do witness that already in May/June 1950 Kardelj was indeed skeptical towards the idea of establishing new revolutionary parties “between the two camps” – social democrats and communists – fearing that such an orientation would ultimately lead to marginalization (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-2). What he proposed, however, was still far from cooperation with social democratic leaderships based on the principle of non-interference. In Kardelj’s opinion, the CPY had to penetrate the communist, social-democratic, and “bourgeois-democratic” groups, and establish and “somehow” link those cells, which would support the Yugoslav position in certain questions. For him, the key issue was how to avoid turning those cells into “isolated groups”. The creation of newspapers and journals focused on critiquing and debating with the USSR was of utmost importance. Kardelj was not against providing financial, ideological and organizational aid to allies in the West, but was skeptical towards creation of “close, non-inclusionary” parties. Vladimir Dedijer himself stated at the same meeting that, depending on the situation in each of the countries, the CPY should sometimes create new parties and sometimes use already existing ones, or currents within them (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-2).

At the meeting of the CPY Politburo on June 28th, 1950, Kardelj pointed out that “*a mass movement based on the same principles*” as Yugoslavia was emerging abroad, but warned against the “sectarianism” of the CIRT’s members, which prevented them from getting in touch with socialists and made them susceptible to leftist, especially Trotskyist, phrases. A motion was carried that Ranković, Tempo, and Đilas join and lead the Commission. To Kardelj’s speech Tito added that

last year it was too early for creating an organization. Now it is not. We don’t have to be a command center. Our policy should be – counselling. In West Germany we were too slow. Now we need to have a strong leadership, which should not manage movements, but only our people (Bekić, 1988, 165).

Despite certain internal disagreements about the future steps, a broad concordance existed in the Yugoslav leadership that a new mass movement was arising in Western Europe. However, the CPY was not meant to establish and guide narrow parties unconditionally loyal to Yugoslavia, but to gather a mass workers’ movement instead. Although it was stated that Yugoslavia should not directly manage those movements, the principle of cooperation was still far from non-interference. Each of the groups was to be led by individuals with direct connection to Yugoslavia. Already established contacts with pro-Yugoslav leftists in various countries were to be used for the creation of “independent” socialist parties throughout Europe.

Already on March 24th, 1950, whilst meeting with Wolfgang Leonhard, the CIRT representatives discussed his departure for the FRG. Leonhard proposed the “minimal” and “maximal” goals of his return to Germany – the minimal would be disseminating Yugoslav propaganda material, and the maximal a creation of an “independent Marxist organization” from the members of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD),

ex-communists, and other minor leftist organizations (AJ, 507/IX, 87/III-1). The Yugoslavs supported his propositions but concluded that Leonhard was not the best choice for a leading figure, due to the fact that his ties to Belgrade were already well-known. However, as an undoubtedly “Yugoslav man” within the movement, he was crucial for the contacts with Belgrade, which were to be established via colonel Momčilo Sibinović from the Yugoslav Military mission in Berlin. The leading role in the new movement was therefore given to Josef Schappe. Leonhard moved to West Germany in November 1950, tasked with “joining” the movement around Schappe and the *Freie Tribüne* journal.¹⁵

The situation was somewhat more chaotic in Italy until 1951, when Valdo Cucchi and Aldo Magnani¹⁶ left the PCI. Already prior to 1950 contacts were established with certain groups in Italy, and during that year an action was taken for their uniting. The Yugoslavs bought the journals *Ombibus* from Milan and *Politica nuova* from Rome. Yugoslav diplomats in Italy, who handled these activities, placed the most trust in the “Roman group” led by Davide Domenico, Communardo Morelli and Pierleone Macini. They were already in contact with the Yugoslav side from 1949 and were all ex-communists (AJ, 507/IX, 48/III-2; Tenca Montini & Mišić, 2017, 798; Mišić, 2015, 288).

Contacts were also established with the Spanish ex-communist emigres in France and Mexico. Already in 1949 José del Barrio got in touch with the Yugoslavs in Paris, and in summer 1950 the CPY supported his journal and movement Acción socialista (MAS). In May 1950, Aleš Bebler was sent to Mexico to bolster the cooperation with the group around Jesús Hernández¹⁷ (AJ, 507/IX, 122/III-20). In September 1950, a delegation of the Spanish emigres visited Yugoslavia, and the Yugoslavs were committed to unifying the Spanish pro-Yugoslav emigres from various countries. All mentioned groups were financed by Yugoslavia. The money trail is hard to follow due to the lack of sources and the fact that only individuals were privy to the financial transactions.¹⁸

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- 15 After being expelled from the KPD Josef Schappe and Georg Fischer organized two meetings of (ex-)communists disappointed in the KPD (in May and July 1950) in Rattigen. As a result, the weekly newspaper *Freie Tribüne* (the first issue was published on August 12th, 1950) and a committee responsible for preparing the founding congress of the Party were established. The independent workers’ movement consisted of several groups: ex-members of the communist party, Trotskyists, and several local groups of independent socialists. Wolfgang Leonhard joined the movement in November 1950 and became responsible for preparing the program of the new party, which was founded in March 1951. The Independent Workers’ Party of Germany (UAPD) disbanded in 1952. For more on the UAPD, see: Kulemann, 1978; Kritidis, 2008.
- 16 Aldo Cucchi (1911–1983) and Valdo Magnani (1912–1982) were Italian communists. Cucchi was a surgeon and a member of the resistance movement during the war. Magnani was a philosophy professor and a member of the Garibaldi brigade in Yugoslavia. After they left the PCI in January 1951, the Party launched a campaign against them. They soon got in touch with the CPY, which supported them both politically and financially.
- 17 Jesús Hernández Tomás (1907–1971) was a distinguished Spanish communist, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Spain, and of the Executive Committee of the Communist International after the end of the Spanish Civil War. In 1943 he was sent from Moscow to Mexico but was expelled from the Party in 1944. He was the leading figure of the Acción socialista movement in Mexico.
- 18 It is difficult to say with certainty how much money the CPY spent on financial assistance to “independent socialists” in West Europe. The money was usually being transferred to them via Yugoslav diplomatic representatives abroad. However, neither were all members of the embassy staff informed about these activities (usually only “trusted” CPY members in the embassies knew about it), nor were all members of the movements in question aware of the Yugoslav financial help. The CPY covered the costs of publishing

Although there was a unique political situation in each of the countries, as were the Yugoslav allies, the general political line of the CPY towards anti-Cominform communists was well coordinated. In late 1950, it was expressed in the address of Rodoljub Čolaković, the president of the Subcommittee for Germany and Austria. In his words, the goal of the Subcommittee “*was not merely to study the situation in those countries, but to substantially aid the comrades in Germany in creating a mass democratic movement of the working class within our possibilities.*” Schappe’s movement faced the “danger” of turning into a narrow, isolated party, and not a mass revolutionary movement the Yugoslavs foresaw. “*We have to make sure that it does not happen,*” stated Čolaković (AJ, 507/IX, 87/IX-7).

These “dangers” partly derived from the difficulties Yugoslavia experienced in penetrating the social-democratic “masses”. Kardelj’s idea of gaining support “from below” and against the party leaderships, was only a limited success. The first substantial contacts the CPY established with big socialist parties were those with the British Labour Party.¹⁹ However, they were not a result of a “penetration from below” but the cooperation with the leadership. The fact that the Labour Party was the first western socialist party to establish contacts with Yugoslavia was probably the result of the fact that it was in power, which meant that a confluence of state and party interests occurred in this case. A Labour Party delegation visited Yugoslavia in September 1950, and it was soon followed by the visit of Đilas and Dedijer to London (and Paris) in January 1951. For the general public, their visit had a “private” character, but in fact its main aim was procurement of military aid. The nature of these contacts crucially influenced how the CPY leaders further perceived the methods and goals of their cooperation with the European left.

Đilas’ report from his trip to Britain marked a break from the party policy Kardelj outlined in December 1949. The focus was no longer on fighting for “masses from below”. Instead, Đilas suggested cooperation with the Labour Party, without confronting its leadership. He added though that it was necessary to “*support various left groups [within the Labour Party] ideologically, through discussions and contacts*”. Đilas assessed that socialist parties would not split into two wings and that it was more prudent “*to create strong conscious groups within the movements, which would gain followers, and [...] start assuming leading positions*” in the party and state. He further claimed that the Commission needed to abandon the misconception of looking at “*the revolutionary socialist movement only through communist parties which broke away from the Cominform.*” The goal should rather be a creation of a “*certain ideological left, which would, on the far-left*

newspapers abroad and payed monthly salaries to the movements’ leaderships. According to P. Kulemann, 14 members of the UAPD received salaries from the CPY, and the overall amount of money at their disposal was far bigger than that of any other leftist movement (apart from SPD and KPD) in West Germany at the time (Kulemann, 1978, 69–85). According to Yugoslav sources, the money spent on the UAPD until August 1951 amounted to ca. 500.000 marks (AJ, 507/IX, III-1-49). For the costs of publishing the newspaper *Risorgimento socialista* and several brochures, the CPY assisted the USI with 18 million liras only in the first half of 1954. The USI representatives assessed that they would need around 5 million liras for the forthcoming elections in Sicilia, and ca. 20 million for elections in Northern Italy, and counted on “socialist solidarity” of the CPY. (AJ, 507/IX, 48/III-17).

19 For more on Yugoslav relations with the British Labour Party, see: Štrbac, 1988; Miletić, 2011; Unkovski-Korica, 2014; Mijatov, 2015; Miletić, 2017; Režek, 2018.

wing of these parties [mass socialist parties], lead the fight for [workers'] unity." Dedijer seconded his belief that in Yugoslavia the development of the workers' movement was still observed "through the Soviet lenses" and that people did not understand that there were "elements of socialism" in the capitalist West as well. Kardelj also shared their new convictions and emphasized Đilas' stay in Britain as an example for future policy towards the West European left. "He went to the Labour Party and what was the outcome? On the one hand, a pure benefit for the state, and on the other hand the left there was encouraged, and it now exudes much more pressure onto the party leadership regarding Yugoslavia." Therefore, it was not in Yugoslavia's interest to weaken the Labour and to support its dissolution, but rather to aid those ideas which were "growing on the left of social democracy – to dominate those parties" (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-4). For Kardelj as a Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia, state benefits were playing a major role.

The cooperation with the British Labour Party slowly paved the way for the cooperation with other social-democratic parties (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-6). The ideological explanation for these steps was not found only in the existence of "elements of socialism" in the West but also in the claim that through cooperation with the mass parties Yugoslavia actually fought the battle for the unity of the workers' movement. However, suspicions arose that Yugoslav activities around the formation and organization of anti-Cominform communists could harm their relations with social democracy. As Dedijer stated, Schappe's movement was "gaining traction and questions were raised in Germany whether Yugoslavia was behind it" (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-4). The Social Democratic Party of Germany also protested to the Yugoslavs for creating "a rift in Germany" by supporting Schappe's Independent Workers' Party (UAPD), which had no chances of success (AJ 507/IX, 87/II-13). While discussing the perspectives of Domenico's movement in Italy in late 1950, Yugoslavs assessed that that it was still incapable of transforming into a party, due to the fact that it was overly "sectarian", and not willing to attract other "democratic elements" (AJ, 507/IX, s/b-4). Kardelj and Đilas recommended that the political platform of *Politica nuova* be the struggle for peace, the hostility towards NATO and the USSR, and the defense of the state. "They should not parrot our stances," and they should not focus only on anti-Cominform communists. Their key goal should be socialist unity (AJ, 507/IX, s/b-5).

Whereas at the beginning of 1951, the Yugoslav leaders generally agreed that Schappe's movement had only slight chances to succeed, that its leaders were "sectarians" and "dogmatists", who were neglecting the idea of creating a mass movement, and favoring a narrow Bolshevik party instead, Aldo Cucchi and Valdo Magnani left the PCI. It seemed that the PCI was in a state of a deep crisis, in which the group around Cucchi and Magnani had great chances of transforming into a mass movement, which sparked enthusiasm within the CPY. Based on the assessments of Yugoslav Ambassador in Rome Mladen Iveković, and talks Tito's personal secretary Nikola Mandić held with Magnani, the Yugoslavs decided that the existing groups of "independent communists", which were up to that point assisted by the CPY, should join Cucchi's and Magnani's movement.²⁰ The newspapers *Omnibus* and *Po-*

20 After leaving the Communist Party of Italy in early 1951, Aldo Cucchi and Valdo Magnani founded a new Italian Workers' Movement (Movimento dei lavoratori italiani – MLI), and started publishing a new journal,

litica nuova were soon closed (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-4; AJ, 507/IX, s/b-13; Tenca Montini & Mišić, 2017, 800–803).

At the meeting of the Commission for International Relations and Ties in February 1951, Kardelj underlined that Magnani “*was right in aiming to gather all socialist forces into a single movement,*” unlike Schappe, who insisted on creating “a pure revolutionary party” (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-4). He suggested that the CPY focus on cooperation with the SPD but was still not ready to fully give up ties with the UAPD. Kardelj proposed that the CPY continue providing financial assistance to Schappe’s movement, hoping that it would either grow, or that new leading figures would emerge in West Germany, as it was the case in Italy (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-4). In other words, Kardelj still believed that there was a “revolutionary situation” in Germany, and that a new mass movement could emerge, but he increasingly doubted that Schappe and other UAPD leaders were capable of fulfilling this “historical” task.

The decision to foster cooperation with social democrats did not mean an immediate break of all ties with anti-Cominform communists. However, it did incite attempts to influence a change in their policies. To that aim Đilas met with Josef Schappe and Wolfgang Geese in January 1951, when he tried to persuade them that, as true socialists, they had to follow the masses, which were in West Germany gathered around the SPD. He underlined Aneurin Bevan’s decision to criticize the British Labour Party leadership but stay within the party as a righteous example (AJ, 507/IX, 87/III-8). At the meeting with Leonhard in the summer of 1951 Đilas repeated similar advice – he thought that it was not prudent to create factions within the SPD, and suggested supporting the social democrats in issues, in which they had a common stance, and in others to engage in constructive discussions. The official cooperation between the two parties (UAPD and SPD) should be established, the independence of the UAPD maintained, but “*the boundaries should be loosened*”. Đilas’ conclusion was that the UAPD should not be disbanded, but the eventual possibility of its integration into the SPD should not be ruled out. During the discussion of the Subcommission for Germany an argument was raised that it was easier to influence the SPD masses through an organization than individuals (AJ, 507/IX, III-29). Despite the fact that the financial aid to the UAPD was approved in August 1951, it was stopped already in December. The fact that the financing was continued for four months, even though the Yugoslav side was aware of the weaknesses of the UAPD, indicates that the CPY leaders considered the UAPD to be a potential mediator in the process of nearing to social democrats. However, such assessments were false and illusory, and soon after the party cooperation with the SPD became an imperative, all financial assistance to the UAPD was ceased. The UAPD disbanded shortly afterward.

The attempt to maintain simultaneous relations both with “independent socialists” and social democrats failed in the case of Germany. During spring 1951, it was also assessed that Yugoslavia made an error in dealing with the Spanish emigration, because it focused solely on Acción socialista (AJ, 507/IX, 122/III-11). In June 1951, discussions took place about the forthcoming visit of a Spanish delegation to the Congress for peace in Zagreb. This delegation

Risorgimento socialista. Together with several other socialist groups, the Movement merged into the Union of Independent Socialists (L’Unione Socialista Indipendente – USI) in March 1953. The CPY was interested in supporting the movement until the reconciliation with the USSR and consequently with the PCI as well.

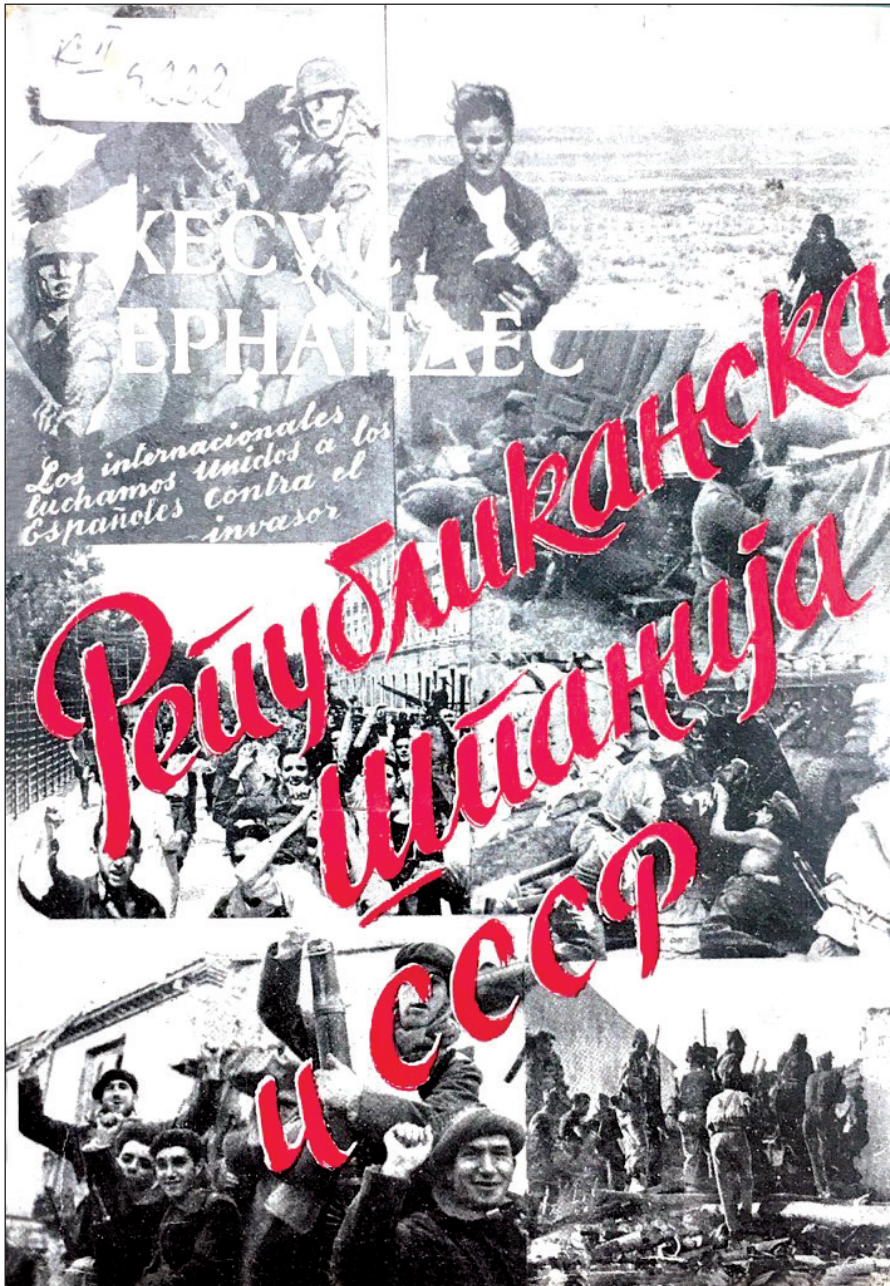


Fig. 2: Front page of the journal *Freie Tribüne* on the occasion of the foundation of the UAPD, 6 April 1951 (Library of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation).

was supposed to consist of the Acción socialista members, the representatives of the Spanish Republican Government in exile, and other Spanish socialists (AJ, 507/IX, 122/III-14). However, already at the meeting of the Subcommittee for France, Belgium, Holland and Spain in November 1951, its members concluded that the Acción socialista was internally torn, and that Yugoslavia should therefore focus on cooperation with socialists and anarchists. The Acción socialista was not meant to be disbanded, “*but should be given a different course*” (AJ, 507/IX, s/b-41). At a meeting with Đilas and Dedijer in December 1951, José del Barrio stated that “*we should primarily be focused on the unification of political forces in the emigration, and not on a creation of a narrow party. What we want to create is a broad movement of workers.*” However, in the original document his words were underlined by the Yugoslavs with a short note: “*Are they capable?*” (AJ, 507/IX, 122/III-17). Although Del Barrio’s plan was supported by the Yugoslavs, serious concerns about the capabilities of Acción socialista were already evident. Therefore, Spanish socialists and anarchists, who were described as groups which “mean something” in Spain, were to become the key partners in the future (AJ, 507/IX, s/b-44). The initial enthusiasm about Cucchi’s and Magnani’s movement in Italy was followed by a disappointment in their achievements already in October 1951, and a realization that they failed to establish a foothold in the syndicates (AJ, 507/IX, 48/III-9). Moreover, poor election results in 1952 and 1953, despite Yugoslav financial aid, also looked discouraging (Tenca Montini & Mišić, 2017, 803).

Although the CPY maintained contacts and financial assistance to the “independent socialists” in Italy and among the Spanish émigrés during 1952, cooperation with West European social democrats was gradually acquiring the central position in its relations with the European left. This was confirmed in an analysis of relations with socialist movements and parties in September 1952 (shortly before the Sixth Congress of the CPY), in which social democratic parties were underlined as CPY’s “most important” partners in Europe (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-6). The document provides a short chronological overview of steps the CPY undertook in the West after the break with the Cominform, thereby making a clear distinction between the “initial errors” caused by the “dogmatism” of certain party members, which manifested itself in cooperation with “sectarians” in West Germany, and a “justified” support for all those anti-Cominform movements in the West fighting for the workers’ unity, such as Italians and the Spanish (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-6). Such an explanation was an attempt to rationalize the steps the CPY had been making in previous years, given the fact that there had initially been no difference in Yugoslav policy towards anti-Cominform communists throughout Europe. In West Germany such a policy was least successful for a plenty of reasons. On the one hand, individuals gathered around the UAPD probably contributed to its failure, but on the other hand, the SPD made it clear that the CPY had to choose between cooperation with them, and support for Schappe’s movement. Relations with the SPD indeed improved considerably after the CPY ceased its financial assistance to the UAPD. Alongside all of this, West Germany had by the time become the most important economic partner of Yugoslavia in Western Europe. Under the circumstances of a prolonged economic blockade from the East, harsh winters and arising famine in the country, the Yugoslav leaders were not in a position to run the risk of losing economic assistance from Bonn, due to their interference into the political life of the FRG (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-11).

In the Spanish case, the attempt to simultaneously cooperate with social democrats and anti-Cominform communists ran into obstacles as well. Although the *Acción socialista* was outlawed by the French Government in the summer of 1952, contacts and financing continued. However, Jose del Barrio complained that the contacts were fading already before the Sixth Congress of the CPY, and that they almost completely stopped afterwards. As the key reason for this change of attitude he named the Yugoslav cooperation with the Spanish socialists. The Yugoslav side assessed that the MAS leaders “*had a sectarian point of view*”, since they complained about Radio Yugoslavia’s broadcasts about Spanish socialists, and the visit of Rodolfo Llopis²¹ to Yugoslavia, thereby aiming to monopolize the Yugoslav support. “*They are honest, albeit sectarians,*” concluded Veljko Vlahović (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-14). The Commission for International Relations and Ties concluded in March 1953 that “*all material assistance to a single movement in any country is in fact an interference in the internal affairs of that country and an aggression.*” Having that in mind, it was debated whether the aid to the Spanish emigres should be continued (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-5). Less than two months later, at a meeting of the Commission’s representatives with several Yugoslav ambassadors (to Rome, Paris, Bonn, and London), the same conclusion was reached: “*Supporting a movement in a country means turning it into our satellite. Internationalism is based on mutual discussion, moral and political support. We, therefore, ceased all financial support to Cucchi and Magnani.*” This was followed by a conclusion that “*in our foreign relations we must refrain from any covert activities*” (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-11).

The contacts with Del Barrio continued during the following decades, as did the financial aid, but they amounted to personal contacts. Del Barrio was financed through the Yugoslav embassy in Paris and in turn he provided regular reports about the state of the Spanish emigration, wrote articles for Yugoslav press and radio broadcasts, thereby becoming a sort of a Yugoslav informant abroad (AJ, 507/IX, 122/III-1-67; AJ, 507/IX, 122/III-68-112). The assistance to Cucchi and Magnani did not stop in 1953, although efforts were made to “legalize” it through the company OPIMES,²² which, however, proved unsuccessful. Yugoslavia continued financing them “in the old way” for a while, but ultimately stopped providing financial aid altogether (AJ, 507/IX, 48/III-21). The Union of Independent Socialists (USI) representatives complained that without it they could neither exist as a movement nor could they publish their journal (AJ, 507/IX, 48/III-26). The decision to quit aiding the USI coincided with the Yugoslav reconciliation with the USSR and the rapprochement with the PCI and the PSI. Yugoslavia provided financial aid to the USI for the last time in 1957 (Tenca Montini & Mišić, 2017, 806).

The fact that the CPY stopped giving financial aid to the anti-Cominform movements did not mean it stopped all contacts with individuals. For example, Wolfgang Leonhard wrote in January 1952 to Rodoljub Čolaković, notifying him that his new book about the

21 Rodolfo Llopis Ferrándiz (1895–1983) was the General Secretary of the Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party in exile (1944–1972).

22 OPIMES was an enterprise founded in 1954. It was meant to do business with Yugoslav companies and earn money necessary for financing political activities of the USI. However, the firm proved unprofitable and Yugoslavs continued their financial support for the USI.

USSR (*Sowjetunion – Schein und Wirklichkeit*) was ready for publishing. He enquired whether the Yugoslavs were willing to have it translated into Serbo-Croatian as well (AJ, 507/IX, 87/IX-55). The book was published in Belgrade in 1952 (Leonhard, 1952) and he soon agreed with Milovan Đilas to write a similar book about Yugoslavia (AJ, 507/IX, 87/IX-55). Contacts and financial aid to Del Barrio continued long after the Acción socialista disbanded. When institutional changes in Yugoslavia in 1973 put further financing at risk, Veljko Vlahović intervened. As a justification, he wrote: “*Those are friends who actively supported us in 1948, which costed them their jobs.*” Del Barrio is sick, and “*it is not humane to leave him without aid after 24 years, although he currently has almost no contacts with us*” (AJ, 507/IX, 122/III-108).

During the “Đilas affair”, all “independent communists” supported the Yugoslav leadership. Del Barrio stated in a letter to the CPY in spring 1954 that the “Đilas affair” was no surprise for him (AJ, 507/IX, 122/III-42), Magnani’s articles in the Italian press about the affair were deemed “positive” (AJ, 507/IX, 48/III-17), and Wolfgang Leonhard campaigned against Đilas amongst the SPD members and leadership (AdSD, SNN-8). Once again, just like in 1948, “independent communists” stood on Tito’s side and played their roles in Yugoslav propaganda abroad. However, five years after the break with the Cominform, the key foreign political orientation of the CPY was cooperation with social democracy. This cooperation went through several stages. After attempting to gain support of the “masses” against the party leadership, Yugoslavs turned to cooperating with the leadership whilst strengthening left-wing fractions within the parties. Finally, the CPY leaders decided to cooperate with socialist parties without interfering in their internal matters. At that point there was no need for an ideological justification:

With European socialist parties our connections are motivated by practical interests. The positions of those parties towards us should not be interpreted as a result of ideological understandings and we should keep in mind their geographical, international, and internal positions (AJ, 507/IX, s/a-11).

In his memoirs Milovan Đilas concluded:

In that way, the Labour Party, alongside other European socialists, acted not only as a stepping stone in our cooperation with the West, but as an active force, which liberated us from isolation and ideological prejudice about communists as the only true representatives of the working class and socialism (Đilas, 1983, 215).

For Đilas personally, these contacts may have been crucial for his renunciation of ideological dogmatism. However, the maturing of statesmanship instincts of the Yugoslav leaders was what crucially influenced this change of policy. Cooperation with social democratic parties proved to be far more efficient for breaking the isolation, as movements of “independent socialists” failed in becoming massive and influential parties. As rapprochement between Belgrade and Moscow took place after Stalin’s death, the role of anti-Cominform communists in the CPY’s struggle within the international workers’ movement lost much of its relevance.

V ISKANJU AVTENTIČNE POZICIJE: ZAČETKI POLITIČNEGA IN IDEOLOŠKEGA SODELOVANJA MED JUGOSLAVIJO IN ZAHODNOEVROPSKO LEVICO, 1948–1953

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POVZETEK

Do leta 1948 so bili jugoslovanski komunisti med najbolj zvestimi stalinisti, toda resolucija Informbiroja je radikalno spremenila ne le odnos med Beogradom in Moskvo, temveč tudi notranji in zunanjepolitični položaj Jugoslavije. Jugoslovansko vodstvo se je soočilo z dvema glavnima nalogama: prebojem mednarodne izolacije in bojem proti Informbiroju. Med junijem 1948 in koncem leta 1949 so se jugoslovanski voditelji na spremenjene razmere odzivali predvsem z zavračanjem obtožb z Vzhoda in vzpostavljanjem stikov s potencialnimi projugoslovanskimi zavezniki po Evropi, zlasti med (nekdanjimi) komunisti. Leta 1950 so se odločili za aktivnejšo politiko, ki se je izrazila v poskusih organiziranja različnih skupin nezadovoljnih komunistov in socialistov v širša gibanja "neodvisnih socialistov" v zahodnoevropskih državah. V ta namen so Jugoslovani zagotovili finančno in organizacijsko podporo Neodvisni delavski stranki v Zahodni Nemčiji, Italijanskemu delavskemu gibanju in gibanju španskih emigrantov Acción socialista. Jugoslovansko sodelovanje s temi gibanji je bilo spodbujeno tako s poskusi preboja izolacije kot z zmotnim prepričanjem, da se bodo razvila v množična gibanja, ki bodo sposobna spodkopati moskovsko prevlado v mednarodnem delavskem gibanju. Toda bolj kot to, se je za koristno izkazalo sodelovanje z zahodnoevropskimi socialdemokratskimi strankami, zato so Jugoslovani že leta 1951 začeli spreminjati svoj odnos do "neodvisnih socialistov".

Ključne besede: Komunistična partija Jugoslavije, neodvisni socialisti, socialdemokracija, komunizem, zahodnoevropska levica

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