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The Formation of the State-socialism System in East-Central Europe in 1947-1949 – the Cominform

My study is about a very special topic – about an international organisation of which the goal was the introduction of soviet style state-socialism system in East-Central Europe.¹ Its name was *Information Bureau of Communist and Workers' Parties, in German: Informationsbüro der Kommunistischen und Arbeiterparteien*, but in the world press and the political literature it acquired the abbreviation „*Cominform*”. In preparing and executing of all transitions in this area the „*Cominform*” had a significant role.

The Cominform was established in September 1947 and was in existence until 1956, formally to 1957. Its periodical, a quarterly had also complicated name: „*For Lasting Peace, for People's Democracy!*”

This period of European history from 1945 to 1950 can be characterized as transition period. After WWII there were two principal kinds of transition periods in the World.

The first kind was the Breton Woods process - the establishment of IMF, the World Bank and other financial measures.² It was the monetary concept of the new post war reconstruction of western culture, based on the ideas of J.M. Keynes enunciated 1919.

In his book „*The economic consequences of the peace*”³ Keynes discusses whether reparations or territorial changes can stabilize international relations in Europe. The Keynes plan for reconstruction of Europe after 1945 and as part of this project the Marshall Plan, could only partially revive Europe - on the western part of the continent. Partially, because although was meant the target of the Marshall Plan to help the badly damaged Europe recover from WWII, the other part of the Marshall Plan was meant *to prevent communism „from gaining a stronghold in war devastated countries”*. So the economic reconstruction was combined with political commitments.

In July 12-15. 1947 16 Western European nations met at Paris to consult about the Marshall Plan. Great Britain and France received the most aid, over 2.000 million each (3.297 million and 2.296). Other countries receiving funds

¹ About the specialities of the state-socialism system in East-Central Europe: *Államszocializmus. Értelmezések-viták-tanulmányok*. Ed. Krausz Tamás, Szigeti Péter. L'Harmattan, Budapest, 2007. 283. About the book: Székely Gábor: *Sokféle államszocializmus - több országban*. Múltunk, Napvilág Kiadó, Budapest, 2009/1.

² The address of Henry Morgenthau Jr., Secretary of the Treasury of the USA see: *Proceedings and Documents of the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference*. Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, July 1-22, 1944. Washington 1948. 1227.

³ In Hungarian Keynes, John Maynard: *A békeszerződés gazdasági következményei (The economic consequences of the peace)*, Európa Kiadó, Budapest, 1991.

for reconstruction were Austria (468 million), Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. Certain countries either refused aid (the Soviet Union and the East-Central European team) or received very little aid. Japan, for example, did not receive aid, but West Germany did.

In line with this the communists like the Belgian and French ministers or Italian former vice prime minister Palmiro Togliatti, were *removed from* political power. About Togliatti: Palmiro Togliatti leader of KPI from 1943 served several years as minister without portfolio in several cabinets and ministries (under Pietro Badoglio and Ivanoe Bonomi), as vice-president of the Council of Ministers with Bonomi, and as minister of justice with Ferruccio Parri and Alcide De Gasperi. Togliatti's „*collaborationist policy*” was aimed at defusing the opposition of conservative elements in Italian society. Togliatti's policy failed, however. The Italian Communists and socialists lost their positions in the government: the Communist-Socialist bloc was defeated in the 1948 elections, and the Communists were isolated. In the same year an attempt on Togliatti's life scandalized the nation, and only his insistence on calm prevented a bloody insurrection.

It was not coincidence that in June 1948 Italy was allocated 1204 million and 594 million USD under the Marshall Plan „*to aid her economic rehabilitation*” and in June 1949. Italy signed the *North Atlantic Treaty* despite strong opposition from the left.

On the same lines France. In 1946 was the largest political party the KPF. The communists got 186 seats in the November elections for the national assembly. 166 seats got the Popular Republican Movement founded by the Christian resistance movement, and the socialists 103 seats. By the time the Cominform was actually organized, the situation had changed significantly. The French communist members of the cabinet were removed of power - that time with the assistance of the Socialist party. In May 9 1947 the US political pressure and the political confrontations between the French parties led to exclusion of the 5 communists ministers. The long political and economical process ended in 1951: in Washington premier André Plevin and President Truman declared that the French and American views were in agreement. In April 18 France signed the Schumann Plan – to set up a single market for coal and steel in the 6 nations of West Europe (West-Germany, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium, Italy and France). In 1947 the Belgian communists were also squeezed out of the government, and the Finns a year later.

But the main success was the establishing of the NATO in 1949 on April 4. With this became Western Europe unanimously, if not unquestionably a unified block, which was to the advantage of the West. So we can ascertain: starting in 1947, *the political goal as well as economical reconstruction was quickly realized*. Both process, the economical and the political, needed *great financial resources, plus political and military influence*. The USA possessed all three.

The situation in Eastern part of Central Europe (geographically correctly: East-Central-Europe), was completely different. At Yalta and Potsdam conferences the Soviet Union (SU) was awarded the former Cordon Sanitaire territories established between the two world wars in Central-Europe. At that time this Cordon Sanitaire was established as protection against the revolutionary Soviet Union. After 1945 the Cordon becomes larger: Poland got almost all of East Prussia and a nice slice of Germany, the Czechoslovakia was reestablished. And an other situation also changed: Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria did not protect West-Europe from the SU. To the contrary, they become an outpost of soviet influence. The problem was only: how can the SU transform this Cordon to such a homogeneous degree in his economical and political sphere as it happened in West Europe. The solution was not so easy. The cordon-countries had various political and economical structures, plus cultural traditions. The only similarity was the significant difference from the soviet system. Because the SU did not have enough financial and other economical resources to influence this sphere, the only option was political and military pressure. I must emphasize. This was not possible without an arrangement with the other great powers like the USA, France and Great-Britain. Such reconstruction of the East side of Central Europe was within these arrangements. The problem for the SU was a problem of internal affairs: how to make it happen? *The most important and most effective instrument was the Cominform.*

In the literature about Cominform was the concept widespread, that the organization was a „creator of the cold war.”⁴ This concept was based partially on Cominform documents, but more so on the statements of politicians of that time. Of course the Cominform was established on orders from Moscow but *had no direct connection with cold war politics* – its task was to work in background of the cold war, first for the coordination of the activities of the communist and workers parties, then for stability of the new system.

The second myth about the Cominform is the common view that the Cominform was the successor of the similar sounding Comintern, the *Communist International*.⁵ However, that was not and could not be the case and

⁴ The latter position is represented by G. M. Adybekov in his monograph on the history of the Comintern. His work was prepared from documents made public for a while and then withdrawn from public access again. Adybekov came to the conclusion that this period of the cold war „*Ended in the 1990s and the results were heavy losses to the communist parties of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.*” (Adybekov, G. M.: *Kominform i poslevoiennaia Jevropa 1947 - 1956*, Rossija Moldaia, Moscow, 1943. 3.)

⁵ This was the view publicized in the Western literature and was not without foundation. The largest chapter of Adybekov's book is dedicated to the period between the Comintern and Cominform. He cites with great precision those secret organizations (Scientific Research Institutes 100 and 205) which were created after the dissolution of the Comintern and were operated by the Soviet party leadership, who were responsible for the coordination and support of communist parties. The „*institute*”, which had several

this was known by the leaders who had earlier worked for Comintern and who were creating the Cominform at the same time - among them were also Hungarians – like Ernő Gerő, the last Moscowite (from the Moscow emigration homecoming) leader of the Hungarian party in 1956, or the Austrian party leader Johann Koplénig.⁶ The Comintern and Cominform were very distant relatives. The most important difference between the Comintern and Cominform was that the former was a world party with national sections – these were the communist parties. The Cominform was established only for the coordination of some parties.

The history of the Cominform was until recent times in the realm of *secret topics*.⁷ The most important sources are still classified „*top secret*” (soversenno sekretno), so the conditions of research for historians - except a few influential researchers - have not changed. Naturally the most rigorously guarded information were the protocols of the nominally „*plenary*,” but in reality secret meetings.⁸ The versions published in large numbers and in many languages, and publicized in the member nations, were „*face lifted*” (that means:

hundred employees, did not become part of Cominform. Instead, they were assigned to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the foreign affairs division of the Soviet Communist Party. Adybekov, op cit, 6-22.

⁶ Three Hungarian party leaders participated in the dissolution of the Comintern that took place in 1943. These were Mátyás Rákosi, who was a substitute Comintern secretary member at that time; Mihály Farkas, alias Wolf who in addition to being a substitute member was also an official; and Ernő Gerő who was the secretary of the Comintern politburo, the second most influential position right after Dimitri Manuilsky. All three participated in discussions held on May 24, 1943 that were organized by Dimitrov. Significant other participants were German party leader Walter Ulbricht, Anna Puker from Romania and Fredil Fűrberg from Austria. G. M. Adybekov, Z. N. Sahnazarova, K. K. Sirinia: *Organizacionnaia struktura Kominterna. 1919 - 1943*, ROSSPEN, Moscow, 1997, 321.

⁷ Of course, quality overviews of the Cominform had been published earlier (In Hungarian: Lipovics Károly: *A Tájékoztató Iroda Létrehozása* [The Establishment of the Bureau of Information], *Múltunk*, 1989, Issues 3-4, 3-5.; also, *A szovjet jugoszláv viszony és a Tájékoztató Iroda* [The Soviet-Yugoslav relationship and the Bureau of Information], *Múltunk*, 1990, Issue 1, pp. 5-32) From new sources, the first research study in Hungarian was *Az 1948-as szovjet-jugoszláv konfliktus és a Kominform* [The 1948 Soviet-Yugoslav conflict and the Cominform.] *Múltunk*, 1994, Issue 4, 111-144.). The International Division of the Institute of the History of Political Parties planned a document that was to be a compilation of the entire history of the Cominform in 1987, in Moscow, on the basis of material that was at that time already partially available. Events, however, quickly made the partially completed document irrelevant. A document review of the Comintern was planned (The first one was published by Béla Kun in 1934, the second, by the Institute of the History of Political Parties in 1969, which to date is the only periodical dedicated to international labor movements: *A nemzetközi munkásmozgalom történetéből*. [From the history of the international labour movement. Yearbook.] published since 1974 (The volume on the Cominform was edited by András Széchy and Gábor Székely.).

⁸ One indication of the magnitude of the secrecy was that the two Hungarian representatives to the first meeting of the Cominform (Mihály Farkas, József Révai and their assistants) were taken to Warsaw on a Soviet military aircraft without any travel documentation, like visas, that were required at that time.

„*significantly redacted*”) in Moscow.⁹ This was the conclusion of the authors of a detailed study of Cominform history of 1994, published in Milan - The Cominform. Minutes of three conferences. Milan 1994. 1054 pp. and in the Spring 1998 in Moscow which still contained also the whole records of the conferences as well as other related important documents.¹⁰

From the materials now accessible in the Moscow archives, it can be unmistakably demonstrated that the organization was created for a much more limited purpose: *Cominform was created principally to coordinate the transition that took place in East-Central-Europe in the years 1947 - 1949. It wasn't a „world party” like the Comintern, only a very useful tool for the Kremllins' political concepts.*

This can be illuminated from three facts.

The *first* is a formalistic but clear fact. By the end of its nearly decade-long history from 1947 to 1956, Cominform had organized only three conferences, so called „*councils*”, each one in the time frame of 1947 to 1949. The first one, the organizing conference, was held in 1947 near Warsaw in Szklarska Poręba, the second in 1948 in Bucharest, and the final meeting in 1949 was nominally in Budapest but actually near the capital, at the resort: Galyatető. It ended with the *exclusion of the Yugoslavs*, an act which signaled that the iron curtain had descended in the South as well.¹¹

The *second* fact that supports my proposition is that *the membership in Cominform* was limited to those parties that had a role in the transition or the implementation of the transition. Such parties were the Bulgarian, Czechoslovak, Yugoslavian, Polish, Hungarian and Rumanian communist parties), or such parties which, because of their influence, were expected to

⁹ The most detailed material was published about the first meeting. (*A tartós békéért, népi demokráciáért. Kilenc kommunista párt legyelországi értekezletének beszámolója.* [For Lasting Peace and People's Democracy. Report from a Conference of Nine Communist Parties in Poland.] Szikra, Budapest, 1947, 213.). About the 1948 conference, numerous smaller pamphlets were published like the one entitled, *A Jugoszláv Kommunista Párt hibás politikájáról* [The flawed politics of the Yugoslav Communist Party.], Szikra, Budapest, 1948, 48., where the MDP KV [MDP-KV stands for *Magyar Dolgozók Pártja Központi Vezetősége*, or Hungarian Workers Party, Central Directorate.] decided that a speech by Rákosi and an article in the *Szabad Nép* [Communist Party Newspaper] addressed the topic. Material of the 1949 conference also appeared in a number of publications, mostly just the final communiqué. (Such as, *A jobboldali szociáldemokrácia az imperializmus támasza* [The Right Wing Social Democrats Support Imperialism.], Szikra, Budapest, 1950, 186.). Then, in 1950 all the resolutions of the Cominform were published, the last of which was entitled: *A Jugoszláv Kommunista Párt gyilkosok és kémek hatalmában.* [The Yugoslav Communist Party Under the Control of Murderers and Spies.], Szikra, Budapest, 1950, 51.).

¹⁰ Soveshstaniya Kominforma 1947, 1948, 1949. Dokumenti i material, Posnan, Moscow, 1998. In the introduction A. O. Tsubaryan, in the historiographic study L. Y. Gibianszky brings the distortion to our attention. G. M. Adybekov also analyzed the original documents. VII-XLVI.

¹¹ Moreover, when they started preparations for the next meeting of the council, Stalin just called it „*unnecessary*” (Adybekov, op cit, 219.). I find it likely that Stalin's decision was prompted by Palimiro Tolgatti's refusal of the Comintern Secretary General's position.

provide external support to the process (the French and Italian communist parties). And naturally, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which organized and directed the entire process. No less significant were the parties of the region that were not selected to be part of the Cominform - the missing were the Eastern Part of Germany's party, the Albanian and Austrian parties. The first two parties received *direct guidance*: Germany from the Soviet Union and Albania initially from the Yugoslavian party. Then from 1949 Albania also came under Soviet supervision, and also in the Cominform. But it was an other story. The whole of Austria was not a part of the soviet-sphere of influence or the cordon sanitaire that the allies gave to the SU in Yalta and Potsdam.

We can also learn from the newly available documents of the Russian archives that originally, at the time of the formation of the Cominform, there were discussions to include five communist parties from outside of the region. These were the French, Italian, Belgian, Finnish and Greek parties, the Greek party for just a fleeting moment.¹² The first two parties had significant parliamentary presence and their representatives had cabinet positions in their governments – as we saw in *Italy*. But the idea of membership of the Belgian and Finnish parties was quickly abandoned by Stalin, because it would be „pointless” to include them. More precisely, Stalin said that these two parties were in not very influential positions.¹³

The *third* fact is a much talked about, but it is completely without reality. We can see from the newly discovered documents, that the contemporary news reports¹⁴ about the establishment of the Asian Cominform were false. For example: a pamphlet published by the Japanese after the formation of the Cominform *voiced concern*, which the Chinese politely noted, that they [the Chinese] considered themselves the appropriate coordinators of the communist movements of their own region, a concept to which Moscow had no objection at that time.¹⁵

And now the story.

¹² While there were a number of reasons for bypassing the Belgian party, there was a specific reason for bypassing the Greek party, the immediate danger of civil war or having to go underground. Stalin's reasoning was that, outside of the region, only those parties that enjoyed strong parliamentary support should be included. Moscow let it be known that only those parties should join the Cominform, which would strengthen Stalin's position and not weaken it.

¹³ As Adybekov writes, many recommended that there should be more regional councils, or that an international communist organization should be created. Mátyás Rákosi was considering a Danube basin council in September 1947. Others were considering Asian or North European organizations. The last such attempt, proposing the combination of organizations functioning in Arab countries, took place in May 1948. Stalin did not approve any of them. (Adybekov, op cit, page 81). *Kak gotovilos pervoie soveshtsanie Kominforma*. In: *Soveshtsanija Kominforma 1947, 1948, 1949. Dokumenti i materiali*, Posnan, Moscow, 1998. (Soveshtsanija Kominforma...) 3.

¹⁴ Adybekov's source was a Reuter report which appeared in Asian newspapers (Kominform i poslevoiennaia Evropa... 80.)

¹⁵ Adybekov, op cit, 80-81.

The SU could not forget that in 1918 Britain and the USA had tried to destroy the Russian Revolution. *Stalin* also thought that they had not given him enough help in the Second World War. So the Cominform created in 1947 was also an instrument of international politics of the soviet union which was an answer to the politics of the USA. These were one of the main activities that during the political turn of events lead to the cold war. The principal result was that the two great world powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, allies during the war, turned against each other.

It was the most important part of this process *to gain the best and most effective access to nations: the organizations, factions and facilities that each world power could have for his own camp in this confrontation*. The Cominform was one of the most effective instruments in this international arena. As I mentioned earlier: *with the Cominform the SU wanted to secure its own sphere of influence*, which it acquired during the WWII – at Yalta and in Potsdam conferences. However, because of the nuclear bomb, as well as the economic power of the United States, and the loss of influence of the left wing politicians in Western Europe, *the balance of political and military power shifted to the advantage of the United States on the European continent*. However, *Stalin* hoped that he would *counterbalance* this shift with the huge territory from the Oder River to the Yellow sea and with increased political pressure in Europe.

This was also the reason why *Stalin did not change his position about the reorganization of the Comintern*. In 1943, principally because of pressure from Great-Britain and the USA, he decided to dissolve the world communists party established by Lenin.¹⁶ The goal of *Stalin* was also to avoid international forums where the Soviet Communist Party would have been just one of the members, like it was in the Comintern, which always complicated the realization of his political aims. I should note that we have no documents concerning the differences between the Comintern and *Stalin*. However we can see from the Comintern Presidium documents dated in 1943, that the dissolution of the Comintern was made not only as a necessity to secure the cooperation of the allies. Naturally *Washington and London viewed communist parties in their countries as agents of Moscow*.¹⁷ The goal of *Stalin* was precisely to avoid international forums where the Soviet Communist Party would have been just one member, like in the Comintern, which always complicated the realization of his interests. This concept is supported by the fact that after the dissolution of the Comintern, its function became a division in the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs led by Georgi Dimitrov.

¹⁶ Agreeing with Anna Di Biaggio's opinion that this was not the only reason, I doubt that *Stalin* was thinking about a central organization where communist parties would work side by side and win certain regions like the central bureaus in some European countries. (Soveshtsanija Kominforma ... 22.)

¹⁷ Organizacionnaia struktura Kominterna... 230.

Stalin also made use these circumstances to disestablish the Comintern. And so it was absolutely impossible that a new Comintern would be created. At the same time, Stalin stopped the financial aid that the international anti-fascist and anti-military organizations and movements were receiving, aid which at times the Soviet state could ill afford.¹⁸ According to Georgi Dimitrov, the leader of the Comintern and hero the Reichstags-fire trial of 1933, Stalin had also ideologically justified the dissolution. *He said: „Experience teaches that it is impossible to sustain an international organization that dictates policy to all nations. This was known by Marx and Lenin and it continues to be true. Maybe we should experiment with regional organizations, in regions like South America, the United States and Canada, and certain European countries, but this should not be rushed.”*¹⁹ But all the regional organizations such as the plans Danube federation from 1946-1948 were abandoned and the principal initiators repressed – most off all Josip Broz Tito.

The *dismissal* of these efforts by Moscow²⁰, in connection with our subject, will clarify two facts.

The *first fact*, more important theoretically, is that *Stalin completely abandoned* the hundred-year-old goal of the international labour movement: *the international solidarity of the labour movement*, and a wider range of collaboration of social actors on this basis. Stalin replaced all these with the interest of power politics. (This mindset of Stalin was already noticeable in the 1920s, particularly in the discussions concerning the so called workers opposition, the permanent revolution and in the theory of „*socialism in one country*”.) One of the most important interests of Soviet politics, - perhaps after lending support to the Chinese revolution - was the effort to maintain influence in the „*people’s republics*” – that means in East Central European countries - to counteract the influence of the United States and Western Europeans, but particularly the influence of the British and the French. This came to light during the discussions concerning the Marshall Plan, which were occurring at the same time. On July 4th and 6th, the Soviet Union was still recommending to the „*people’s democracies*” that they should participate in the Paris conference. It was only during the night on the 7th that telegrams went to Belgrade, Budapest, Bucharest, Prague, Sofia and Tirana advising against it. It was very likely that the Soviet Union learned just then that under no circumstances was it going to receive any of the billions of dollars that was

¹⁸ For information about the support of these organizations see Székely Gábor: *Béke és háború. A nemzetközi békemozgalom története.* [Peace and War. The history of the International Peace Movement.], Napvilág Kiadó, Budapest, 1998. 446.

¹⁹ *Organizacionnaia struktura Kominterna...* 228.

²⁰ In his biography of Tito, (Tito Speaks, Belgrade 1953.) Vladimir *Dedijer*, who represented the Yugoslav Communist Party in preliminary discussions, recounted the ways Stalin blocked even the information exchange function of the Cominform, blaming this determination on Dimitrov and Tito.

being made available under the Marshall Plan. Only the central European states were slated to receive any of it, providing they met the requirements of establishing a Western-oriented economy. This can be proven through American State Department documents.²¹ In June the Soviet leadership was unaware of the decision made in the West, that Moscow was going to be excluded from the Marshall Plan.

The *second fact* was most simple: *Stalin opposed all collaborative attempts that would have weakened Moscow's influence* in the region. This is why Moscow neglected the far eastern Cominform as well as the project of Balkan Federation.

The situation in second part of 1947 was quite complicated. A historian must take into account both the abandonment international solidarity and the abandonment of collaboration of communist parties on equal basis. Looking at both facts and events and the source material now available, we can recognize that the General Secretary of the Polish Communist Party, Wladislaw Gomulka was correct when he said about the formal task of the Cominform: „*We hope that in the course of this conference it becomes clear how we can best assist each other, and what our mutual relations and ideological cooperation will be in this time period.*”²² Gomulka said in his opening address on September 22, 1947. During the conference the answer also became much clearer. The correct criteria was not the relative positions of the frequently mentioned „*revolutionary and imperialist forces*” or weighing in against „*world capitalism,*” but that which was dictated by Stalin and the objectives set by him. In the case of the Cominform, this meant assigning responsibility for blocking American influence in Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland and Hungary, without diminishing Moscow's control. This was also a reason why the Cominform was created.

At the *first conference* of the Cominform, Moscow *could still count on the Yugoslavs* to help close ranks among the communist parties.²³ *During the*

²¹ Adybekov quotes a presentation by Parrish D. Scott in Moscow and a study by M. M. Narinszky (USSR i plan Masalla. Novaya I Noveyshaia Istoria, 1993, Vol. 3, 11.). However, he also voiced an opinion in opposition to Narinszky, who believed that the Marshall Plan concept contained provisions that would have been problematical for the entire [Central European] region. It is Adybekov's position - which I share - that this was the last serious attempt to detach the Central-European states. I also agree with Adybekov that any beliefs that the attempts would succeed were without foundation. The Soviet Union never would have allowed an encroachment in her sphere of influence and was ready to risk war to prevent it. (Soveshtsanija Kominforma ... 7.)

²² Soveshtsanija Kominforma ... 53.

²³ An anecdote of this was also characteristic: the leader soviet ideologist Andrei Zdanov asked the two Yugoslavs Edvard Kardelj and Milovan Djilas about their opinion on the French and Italian concept of the „*peaceful road to socialism,*” and he acknowledged their opposing opinions by shaking his head. The next day he asked that they should repeat their opinions at the plenary meeting thereby placing the two politicians, who thought that their communications were private, in an embarrassing situation. What weakened the story was that it was not likely that Djilas and Kardelj could have expected discretion on the part of Zdanov. A more likely

second meeting they were already the objects of most serious criticism. The conflict started not much after the publishing of an editorial in the Cominform quarterly „*For Lasting Peace and People’s Democracy.*” The office of the quarterly was located in Belgrade in the building of Pravda, which was the official newspaper of the Yugoslav Communist Party. The newspaper office also became the central office of the Cominform. The documents prove that here too Stalin kept to himself the control and direction of even the smallest of details. He personally decided not only the subject of the publication but also the headlines.

In January 1948 Mátyás Rákosi the Hungarian communist leader recommended a second meeting of the Cominform. At that time Rákosi took part in a meeting in Moscow, where he met the ideologist Mikhail Suslov, member of the Secretariat of the KPSU Central Committee, was one of the most influential personalities in the Cominform delegation of the KPSU. Rákosi proposed three items for the conference: first the recognition of the Marcos-government established by the Greek partisans. The second item important for Hungary: the matter of the Balkan Federation, and the third, that was the most important for the Hungarian party. The Czechoslovakia retaliatory measures against the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. None of the proposals received any support – and Suslov immediately informed Rákosi of Moscow’s negative position.

After the January meeting, in June 1948 at the *second conference* of the Cominform, besides the criticism of the politics of the KP of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, *the central problem was the clash of views with Yugoslavs.*

According to the latest sources, the basis of the Yugoslav-Soviet animosity was a resolution by the Yugoslav Communist Party Central Committee on February 19th. One of the purposes of the resolution was to try to avoid *Stalin’s plan for a Moscow supervised Yugoslav-Bulgarian-Albanian federation.* Tito also proclaimed Yugoslavia’s interest in Albania and emphatically rejected Soviet supervision in Albania as unnecessary. Nine days after the meeting of the Central Committee, Stalin told the Bulgarian (Dimitrov) and Yugoslavian (Kardelj) leaders, who were ordered to Moscow, that he was opposed to the Dimitrov initiative for an all East European federations (Bulgarian, Romania, Yugoslavia maybe Hungary) and that he did not agree that the Soviet army should be squeezed out of Albania.²⁴ Dimitrov recanted immediately. The Yugoslavs in Belgrade, however, had thrown down the gauntlet in the meantime. Tito felt that a federation with Bulgaria and Albania with Soviet influence and planned by Stalin would be to the disadvantage of Yugoslavia.

explanation was that Zdanov knew exactly what the Yugoslav position on the „*peaceful road*” was and he also knew that the Yugoslavs did not want an open confrontation with the French or their neighbors, the Italians either. (Soveshanija Kominforma ... 16.)

²⁴ Soveshsanija Kominforma ... 339.

He felt that the principal purpose for creating the federation would be to place Yugoslavia in an inferior position. (Albania would not be subordinate to Yugoslavia but would be an equal partner in a federation.)²⁵

Due to the lack of time, I must suspend further discussions of events, no matter how attractive the material that is available nowadays. The situation did not change, only the manifestations became harsher. It is certain that the decisions of the Soviet leadership in Yugoslavia's case were motivated by two misgivings. *The futile and half-hearted fear that after Greece the strategically located Albania would also be lost, and the alliance then forming in East Central Europe would break apart* and Western influence would increase in the region and this could have had unpredictable results. *This is why the Kremlin decided that permitting Yugoslavia to separate was the smaller loss.*

And now a timetable and two examples:

The *Polish screenplay*: In January the government announced the nationalization of all industries employing more than fifty workers. The in 1947 formed „*Democratic Bloc*” included the forerunner of the Communist Party and its leftist allies yet. On January in the general elections by use of fraud and violence the main non communist politicians were defeated - and they left the country. Wladyslaw Gomulka, leader of the Polish Worker's Party (Communist), became leader of the country, then, in September 1948, Gomulka was also dismissed. An era of *complete Stalinist dictatorship* and headlong industrialization began under the leadership of Boleslaw Bierut. In December 1947 the Polish Worker's Party and the Polish Socialist Party *fused* into the *Polish United Worker's Party*.

The new Polish government was controlled by polish communists who had spent the war in the Soviet Union – the so called Muscovites. They were „*assisted*” — and in some cases controlled — by Soviet „*advisers*” who were placed in every part of the government. 1949. November 7th Konstantin Rokossovsky (Konstanty Rokossowski in Polish) was appointed Defense Minister and commander-in-chief of the Polish Army. He had spent his adult life in the Soviet Union, and *had attained the rank of Marshal* in the Soviet Armed Forces. The intelligence and police were full of Soviet officers. But all so called „*satellite states*” had unique features. So Poland remained the only Soviet bloc country where individual peasants dominated agriculture.

The *Hungarian* screenplay was very similar: from the nationalization and the fusion of two workers parties into the one party system. (In Hungary this was complete.): without the so called People's Vanguard (Népfront) all political parties were dissolved. Fully Soviet-style centralized planning was introduced in the Five-Year Plan, which began in 1949. The plan called for accelerated development of heavy industry and forced collectivization of agriculture.

²⁵ Participation of Albania in the Cominform wasn't even mentioned. Yugoslavia insisted on representing Albanian interests and the resolution so stated. The representation did not include financial support however.

The *solution for economical cooperation* of the transition in East Central Europe was the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, the Comecon.

In 1949 representatives of the Soviet Union, Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania established the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. The communiqué announcing the event cited the refusal of these countries to „*subordinate themselves to the dictates of the Marshall Plan*” their intention to resist the trade boycott imposed by „*the United States, Britain and certain other countries of Western Europe*” As the major goal contributing to the decision was: „*to organize a more broadly based economic cooperation among the countries of the people's democracy and the USSR.*”

The reasons for Comecon's formation in the aftermath of WW II are quite complex, given the political and economic turmoil of the time. However, *Stalin's desire to enforce Soviet domination* of the small states of Eastern Europe and to mollify some states that had expressed interest in the Marshall Plan *were the primary factors* in Comecon's formation. The formal stated purpose of the organization was to enable member states „*to exchange economic experiences, extend technical aid to one another, and to render mutual assistance with respect to raw materials, foodstuffs, machines, equipment...*”

The final *military solution* of the transition in East Central Europe was the *Warsaw Pact*. *Contrary to popular belief*, the creation of the Warsaw Pact in 1955 *represented an actual lessening of central control from Moscow*. The establishment and maintenance of Soviet command and control were the reasons it was not created in 1949 in response to NATO as a similar military organization in the East. This would have given member states at least nominal say in connection with jealously guarded military affairs and would have complicated the political coordination of events. The Warsaw Pact could only have been created in 1955 during a period of „*thawing.*” The complications surrounding the 1956 Hungarian intervention and the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia gave credence to those who advocated direct control. In Afghanistan the Soviets did not make use of the „*socialist camp.*” The United States also did not hide behind the United Nations in Vietnam, granted the reasons were different.

Conclusion: the events in Yugoslavia were not the principal reason why the Cominform became irrelevant. *The fact was that by 1949 the Soviet sphere of influence was established politically, militarily and economically and with this the work of the Cominform complete.* This also ended the possibility that for a half century anywhere in East Central Europe a left wing communist or social democratic government could have been established that in any way deviated from the Stalinist model. Attempts to establish a new type of socialism subsequently were also unsuccessful, such as what happened in 1956 in Hungary and 1968 Czechoslovakia.

The *successor* of the Cominform in 1957, after the destalinization Congress (the XX.th in 1956) of the KPSU would be the *International Meetings of the Communist and Workers' Parties*. It had no abbreviation and was a much looser organization, which also recognized the leadership of the KPSU. It had only 3 meetings: in 1957, 1960 and 1969. The Chinese KP did not take part in the last meeting.– the new politics of the peaceful coexistence of the two systems and the aggression against the Czechoslovakia in 1968 divided the international labour movement. But this is an other story.

