

July 9, 1955
**Central Committee Plenum of the CPSU Ninth
Session, N. A. Bulganin Address**

Citation:

"Central Committee Plenum of the CPSU Ninth Session, N. A. Bulganin Address", July 9, 1955, Wilson Center Digital Archive, TsKhSD f.2 op. 1 d. 173 ll. 76 ff. Translated for CWIHP by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/111993>

Summary:

Discussion in the CPSU CC Plenum on Soviet-Yugoslav relations. Bulganin deplores the situation reached due to the Soviet-Yugoslav split and calls for a rapprochement with Tito. Other CPSU members including Nikita Khrushchev agree.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Bulganin. [Ed. note: Bulganin begins his speech by laying out the 31 May 1954 Presidium resolution on the turn towards friendly relations with Yugoslavia. He then summarizes the positive reactions of key socialist leaders consulted, including Ulbricht, Mao Zedong and others.]

As for military potential, we lost the strongest country in Europe. Not one state in Europe has an army like Yugoslavia's, which today has 42 divisions. The Yugoslav army has modern equipment, including artillery, tanks, air power, even jets supplied for free by the Americans.

By its geographical position, Yugoslavia occupies a very important and very vulnerable place for the Soviet Union. If you look at a map, you will see that Yugoslavia has driven a wedge deep into the east. And now imagine future military events. Let's assume that we had to rush our military forces toward the west. In such a case, we would have 40-50 divisions of the Yugoslav army on our left flank.

Khrushchev. Plus American ones.

Bulganin. We would be so pinned down that we would have to send a covering force of at least 70-80 divisions there.

Mikoian. And not on plains, but in the mountains.

Bulganin. And if we must fight in the south...

Khrushchev. With the Turks, for instance. Such a possibility is not ruled out, either.

Bulganin. Yes, such a possibility is not ruled out... Then on our right flank we would have the Yugoslav army with a contingent of 50, and perhaps more, divisions.

Yugoslavia controls the Adriatic Sea, which is connected with the Mediterranean Sea, one of the very important, decisive lines of communication of the Anglo-American military forces, since the Americans and English receive vital strategic raw materials and other sorts of supplies through the Suez canal and across the Mediterranean. Controlling the Adriatic, Yugoslavia threatens the Mediterranean. It must be remembered how significant this state is.

And, finally, comrades, there are the people and the cadres. The Yugoslavs are superb fighters, superb people, who like us.

Khrushchev. It would be well if com. Molotov looked at these cadres, and saw what sort of people they are, what sort of life path they have traveled...

[Ed. note: Khrushchev and Bulganin then begin to sing the praises of Yugoslav comrades in counterpoint, remembering shared service in the Spanish Civil War, earlier meetings in the USSR, etc.. Discussion then turned to the origins of the split and the withdrawal of Soviet military advisers from Yugoslavia.]

Bulganin. The [Soviet] military and civilian advisers who were told to leave were perplexed. What was going on? They believed that there would be a military confrontation, even war, and some wept.

Khrushchev. Tito told us that when the military advisers left Yugoslavia, some of them wept.

Bulganin. Here, then, comrades, is the reason. There was no mention of internationalism at all. There was pride and ambition. This is how the rupture began. Com. Molotov was there then; he should know.

At the same time [as the withdrawal of advisers] there came a communication from Albania that Tito had decided to move a division into Albania, without having asked Stalin about it. That poured even more oil on the fire.

And, finally, the third reason is the one about which com. Molotov spoke, although entirely incorrectly. He correctly depicted the fact, but gave the issue his own evaluation. That is in relation to Trieste. On Trieste, I will say that com. Molotov's position was incorrect both then and recently.

[Ed. note: For more on Yugoslav-Albanian relations and the Trieste issue, see the Yugoslavia section of this Bulletin.]

Khrushchev. Both the beginning and the end were incorrect.

Bulganin. The beginning was incorrect and the end was especially incorrect. Tito wanted to get Trieste.

Khrushchev. And at that time we wanted Yugoslavia to get Trieste.

Bulganin. But what's wrong here? God grant that he get two Triestes [Dai bog, chtoby dva Triesta poluchil], but we objected to it then.

In 1954 there was also a scandal regarding Trieste. In October 1954, under pressure from the Americans and the English, Yugoslavia and Italy agreed on a division of the Trieste zone. The agreement did not wholly satisfy the Yugoslavs, but all the same Tito decided to agree to what they proposed. It would seem that we should have then, at the beginning and in 1954, supported the Yugoslavs and said that we were "for" [it]. But our MID [Ministry of Foreign Affairs] decided to protest and to submit the issue to the UN; it was said that they were violating the interests of the Soviet Union as an allied power and were undermining our prestige, because they didn't ask us.

In the Presidium it was decided that the MID's point of view was incorrect.

Khrushchev. That was the period when no one was any longer recognizing our allied rights in relation to Trieste.

Bulganin. We did not support MID's proposals, but proposed that we write that the Soviet Union agreed to support the Yugoslavs, for which our Yugoslav comrades thanked us when we were there.

That is how the rupture began. There were no facts to the effect that the Yugoslavs were creeping away from a Marxist-Leninist position, from internationalism, and were taking a nationalist path. There was nothing of the sort. Simply ambition, pride, and only afterwards the letters which you know about were written to the Yugoslavs. Com. Molotov wrote at Stalin's dictation. We all helped however we could.

Khrushchev. And the main material for this descended from the ceiling [bralsia s potolka], that is, was thought up.

Bulganin. Yes, the material was a fabrication. It was then that they made fabrications

about Marxism-Leninism and nationalism. Let's speak plainly. After all, it was so. I understand that com. Molotov will say that Bulganin is simplifying. I am not simplifying; I am saying how it was. That is how the disagreements with Yugoslavia began, as a result of which we lost the friendship of this country.

Com. Molotov spoke here about 1945, about Trieste. The disagreements started, he said, not in 1948, but back in 1945.

From 1945 to 1948, we lived like great friends with Tito; both during the war and afterward, we had very good relations. Tito visited Moscow. You introduced him to me, com. Molotov; incidentally, together we drove with him to [visit] Stalin. We lived like friends. What sort of conflict did we have with Tito in 1945? There was no conflict. Everything happened in 1948.

I already talked about Albania, and now I will talk about the Balkan federation. Comrade Molotov spoke about how the idea arose, but he forgets that there were witnesses: myself, Mikoian, Malenkov and other members of the Presidium, Kaganovich, Voroshilov; Khrushchev at that time was not there; he was in the Ukraine.

Khrushchev. Yes, I was not there; at that time I was in the Ukraine.

Bulganin. Now com. Molotov is ascribing the Balkan federation to Tito. [Ed. Note: For more on this, see the article by Gibianskii in this Bulletin.] But the issue was first raised by Stalin in a conversation with Dimitrov-what if, he said, you united the Balkans, created a federation[?]

Khrushchev. There, in Yugoslavia, they almost built an office building for the federation's institutions, but did not finish it.

Bulganin. You would be supported, said Stalin to Dimitrov; try talking with Tito. Dimitrov went home, visited Tito, spoke with him, and then it [i.e. the federation] got underway [poshlo].

Khrushchev. And now he is being accused of straying from Leninism for that.

Bulganin. I state that with all responsibility. Let the other members of the Presidium confirm where the idea came from. Now com. Molotov is foisting the idea on com. Tito.

Malenkov. That's right.

Khrushchev. How is that! They directed such actions by com. Tito against Leninism.

Bulganin. That is how the matter stood. Now I want to speak about Yalta.[1] We were not there. Coms. Stalin and Molotov were there. Was Voroshilov there or not?

Voroshilov. I was not.

Bulganin. How did they divide Yugoslavia between England and the Soviet Union and how did Tito find out about it? This is a major embarrassment. Com. Khrushchev spoke about this in his report, [and] I will not dwell on it. A tactical conversation [takticheskii razgovor] with Churchill took place, but it came into the open.[2]

Khrushchev. Tito should have been informed in time.

Bulganin. Yes, Tito should have been informed. Churchill divulged the fact in his memoirs, which were recently published.

Khrushchev. The Yugoslav leaders found out from Churchill and not from us what we should have told them

Bulganin. I want to return somewhat to the beginning, when a letter of 31 May 1954 on the Yugoslav issue was written by the CC Presidium. At first we ordered the MID to write the letter. To write a draft and present it to us. Unfortunately, I do not have the text of the letter; com. Suslov has it. If only you knew what sort of letter it was! Com. Zorin wrote it on the order of com. Molotov. I do not know whether he reported on it to Molotov or not. Com. Molotov was then in Geneva. Zorin came to the Presidium and said that he had acquainted com. Molotov [with it] and that he had agreed. In the letter it talked about the necessity of doing a survey on our relations with fascist Yugoslavia. In the letter it was called fascist Yugoslavia, and its leaders, fascists...

On the issue of disarmament, com. Molotov took an incorrect position on the decrease of military forces by a third.

Khrushchev. And even committed a distortion of a CC decision.

Bulganin. Afterwards, the CC Presidium adopted a decision to the effect that our position had to be changed on the issue of cutting armaments. I will speak in greater detail of this. The Soviet proposal on the issue of disarmament, which was being looked into and discussed in different committees of the United Nations, stipulated a reduction in arms and armed forces of the five great powers by one third. The Westerners insisted on a reduction of armed forces to a definite level, because one third, let us say, of five million is one thing, and one third of one million is another. If we cut one third and France cuts one third, that would be different things. From this point of view our position was out of date [ustarela].

Khrushchev. That position is unwise.

Bulganin. But for several years we have been chewing [zhuem] the same thing over: one third, one third. Com. Gromyko sat on the subcommittee in London for a month and kept reporting that the most ideal thing was cutting by a third. Stupidity!

Khrushchev. Besides himself, he didn't convince anyone there.

Bulganin. In March 1955, the CC Presidium recognized the position of the MID on that issue to be incorrect [nepravil'noi] and adopted a resolution to reject that thesis. We said that we should agree with the Westerners as to levels. A directive went to London in fulfillment of our decision. And all of a sudden we read Malik's telegram from London, that he is continuing his line on one third. What was going on? It turns out that in the telegram which went to London as an instruction from com. Molotov, the following clarification was made: if necessary, if you are asked, what the term "agreed levels" means, you must say that we have in mind a reduction of arms and armed forces by one third. Com. Molotov then excused himself, saying that he had made an oversight, that it was a mistake, but I consider it necessary to speak about this.

[1] Ed. Note: In February 1945, Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin met in the Palace of Livadia at Yalta in the Crimea to discuss and agree on the postwar order.

[2] Ed. Note: In October 1944, Churchill and Stalin met in the Kremlin and divided up

spheres of influence in Europe, allegedly on the back of an envelope. For details, see Albert Resis, "The Churchill-Stalin Secret 'Percentages' Agreement on the Balkans, Moscow, October 1944," *American Historical Review* 83 (1977-78) pp. 368-87."