

Eastern Europe, cont'd

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Let us continue with the trajectory of the East European revolution which we have been talking about. In the course of that East European revolution, we've tried to describe some kind of non-American, some kind of revolutionary space in Europe after the Second World War. Surely the year 1948 is a very decisive and a very tragic turning point. Because by 1948 what had been, after all, the construction of those popular democracies in 1945, those coalition governments which had been installed in all of the East European countries, by 1948, the structures of those popular democracies were very fragile — rather, artificial — in all of those countries, with the exception of Yugoslavia, collapsed under the weight of the Cold War.

What you are talking about is the fact that the most conservative of the parties in those coalitions went first and were purged out of those coalitions by 1948. You are talking about the peasant and the liberal parties, the non-socialist and the non-Communist members of those coalitions. You are talking about [Stanisław] Mikołajczyk's Peasant Party in Poland, which by the beginning of 1947, really, is purged out of the government. You are talking about the Smallholders' Party in Hungary under the command of Ferenc Nagy, which by the middle of 1947, really, is purged out of the government. And you are even talking about that National Socialist Party of Edvard Beneš in Czechoslovakia, which, as a result of the events of February of 1948, will be purged out of that government.

And why? In part, quite obviously, because those liberal and peasant parties did become a refuge for remnants of the old order. They became, in a sense, a cover for all of those remnants of the old order that no longer could mount insurrection against this revolutionary process. And, consequently, sought some kind of home within these parties, and, consequently, tried to turn these parties into counter-revolutionary instruments. That surely was true in Poland, in that Peasant Party of Mikołajczyk. It's even more true in Hungary, where that Smallholders' Party really is the predominant party and where, for example, right through 1947, it maintains very close relations with a very reactionary Hungarian Church. By the beginning of 1948, the bishops in Hungary are still the highest paid social officials, the highest paid civil servants in that country. And you are talking about a Church, after all, under the command of that prince-primate József Mindszenty, who even in the eleventh century would be a mediocre mind — who here in the twentieth century, after all, was preaching a return to the great estates, preaching a return to the Habsburg monarchy, even overtly preaching, if you please, an atomic attack upon that Soviet Union — and all of that, after all, under the cover of the Smallholders' Party in Hungary.

And consequently, in part, they bring that destruction upon themselves. In part, it is that in those parties, the leadership, after all, absorbed certain illusions from American propagandists. They listened to what American policymakers said, and they had certain illusions that somehow, if they resisted, the United States would come to their rescue — and, consequently, unseat those pro-Communist governments in Eastern Europe. And, of course, in the main, it is because, ultimately, they turned against the Soviet alliance. And that is the sine qua non of these particular regimes. In the final analysis they resented that Soviet presence. They resented the alliance with the Soviet Union, and, consequently, began overtly and very vocally to attack that kind of Russian presence. And, quite obviously, they would have to go.

But the point is this. Now, if you purge these liberal and peasant parties in the course of a revolution — if they were purged on the basis, really, of a confrontation with the revolutionary process, with a militant working class, with a mass growing more radicalized — then, quite obviously, it is within the dialectic of history. It is within the very process of the radicalization of those regimes. But that is not the way those parties were purged. And here you begin to get something of what I call the tragedy of this turning point of 1948: that, fundamentally, those parties were purged by the remnant Communist and socialist parties that remained in the government were purged on the basis of trickery and falsification. They were purged on the basis of treason trials that were really fabricated, and were purged on the basis of elections that really were tricked and really were stolen. And you see what one gets. You don't get a real confrontation; you don't get a real evolution from the point of view of radicalizing the mass. What you get, if you please, is a kind of debasement of what socialism is because it runs behind a facade of a kind of false democracy, a kind of false parliamentarianism.

And the socialist parties were the second to go out of those coalitions. Now, you know very well that the socialist parties of Europe engaged in a certain kind of alliance with the Communists from 1945 down to 1947. And you know, in the second place, that in Western Europe especially, those socialist parties by the middle of 1947, really had opted, in the Cold War, for the American side. And, consequently, they began to drop the Communists from governmental coalitions — as they did in France in May of 1947, as they did in Belgium at much the same time. And consequently, the question was: What would the social democratic parties of those Eastern countries do? Would they bloc with the socialist parties of the West? Would they then come out foursquare in favor of the American side after all?

And when the Cominform was founded in September of 1947, at that founding congress of the Cominform, the Communist parties were at pains to attack the socialist movement of Europe, and to say it really was a cat's paw for the United States — it really was a front agent for American imperialism. And that put all of the pressure upon the social democratic parties of those Eastern countries. What would they do? Would they, after all, collaborate with those Communist parties very closely? Well, you know what happened. What happened was that from

the middle of 1947 and into the middle of 1948, those social democratic parties in Eastern Europe were purged. The so-called centers and the right wings were purged by, again, bogus treason trials. And what was left, by way of a remnant, of those social democratic parties was simply fused into the Communist parties and ceased to exist as independent entities. All of which leaves you with the dictatorship of the Communist parties in those particular countries.

And that, in itself, is not something that you criticize if it is within the framework, really, of a revolutionary process. If those Communist parties are independent Communist parties, if they are radical Communist parties, if they are Communist parties with some ingenious idea of how to catalyze mass action, and devolve power into the mass — but that is not the kind of Communist party that you get.

What you get, from 1948, are Communist parties that are not interested in being the avant-garde of the working class, but rather the representative of Soviet interests in their particular countries — to safeguard and always to guarantee that Soviet interest within that particular Eastern bloc. What I mean by that are really two things. First of all, those Communist parties are national and independent. That is, the national leaders of those Communist parties, the guys that really had fought with their people, the ones who had come out of the ranks and who understood the institutions and the needs of their countries — people like [Władysław] Gomułka in Poland or like [László] Rajk in Hungary, people who really came out of the mass struggle — they were replaced. And they were replaced, in general, by the apparatchiks, by those who were trained in Moscow, who really were perfect Soviet agents: people like [Mátyás] Rákosi in Hungary, people like [Bolesław] Bierut in Poland, those who really would make no mistakes from the Moscow point of view.

And I mean, in the second place, when talking about that lack of independence, that when these Communist parties planned an economic strategy, when they planned a strategy of development — which is so crucial if you are to make any kind of a test of whether these regimes really required their people or not — when they make a strategy of economic development, it is not based, as it was in the earliest years, upon the potentiality, economically, of their countries — upon the need to keep the living standards up, upon the necessity of deploying the natural resources as rationally as possible — but the strategy of economic development is based, essentially, upon Soviet need.

There is a slavish following of the Soviet model, a slavish copying of the Soviet model of economic development, so that the stress goes down on heavy industry. Even in Hungary, which has no coal and iron, there is insistence upon a steel industry. In countries, after all, where there were certain kinds of resources, the wrong emphasis was placed. And, certainly, the wrong emphasis was placed in agriculture, upon enforced and immediate collectivization. All of which was going to make for such abrasive relations with the peasantry. And it meant that what was

produced had to be integrated with Soviet market needs. Because it became an economic bloc. And, consequently, what was produced had to conform to what the Soviet Union needed in terms of its own development. No, no; there is nothing national or independent about these Communist parties. And that is crucial.

But, in the second place, and what is just as crucial: that these Communist parties are really not radical. They're not radical in the fundamental sense of the word — in the sense, really, of going to the mass, enrolling that mass, catalyzing them into action, developing power into their hands. No, no; this is a period when it is that you move from the popular democracy to the dictatorship of the proletariat. But you move to that dictatorship of the proletariat in Stalinist terms, in the terms that were defined in the Stalinist era. Which means that the dictatorship of the proletariat is the dictatorship of the party — and a party, after all, which shall be a proper client to the needs of Moscow and to its desire to integrate that entire bloc. And I call that a tragedy.

A tragedy if you believe in socialism, and if you think that it is terribly important, if not the most significant thing in history — that there has been a perpetual effort, after all, among peoples to equalize powers, to collaborate in order to control environments, to be able to end subordination and dominion; to be able, if you please, to control the process which, in turn, controls human beings — if you think that that is a terribly crucial, if not the most important, phenomenon in history, then it is a tragedy because it gives us a false image of what socialism can be or should be. And that is not over. In 1956, as we know, there was popular rebellion in Poland, and there was popular rebellion in Hungary. And we know that in 1968, in that "Prague Spring," there was a revolution within a revolution that was perfectly magnificent in the insights that it gave into what socialism could be. And it was not to be. And it didn't change very much. But the process goes on.

But our concern is to find out why and how that happened. And, in the large, you know why that happened. In the large, the explanation, obviously, is within the framework of the Cold War. There were the purposes of American policymakers — certainly, as Stalin and the Russians interpreted the Marshall Plan to consolidate and infeudate a Western bloc. And, more than that, to disaggregate an Eastern bloc, which had become the prime motivation of the Russians: to consolidate that Eastern bloc, and make it tight and defensive. The Marshall Plan was all important in that regard. I have already told you that the countries of Eastern Europe were interested in that Marshall Plan. They were magnetized by the thought of it. The composition of their trade with the Western countries was growing larger, and with Russia growing smaller. And they had those plans on the drawing boards. And they needed that Western aid. And, especially, Poland and Czechoslovakia really wanted into the Marshall Plan. And they wanted to send delegations to that meeting of the "Twenty-Two," which would create that Marshall Plan organization for Europe.

And here the Russians, of course, got paranoid. And the Czechs sent a trade delegation up to Moscow in the beginning of July of 1947. And they sent that trade delegation up to Moscow simply to negotiate a treaty of trade that had been in the cards. And when they got there, that delegation — headed by Jan Masaryk, who was the foreign minister, and by Hubert Ripka, who was the minister of trade — said to Stalin, "Would you mind if we, the Czechs, went into the Marshall Plan and got Marshall Plan help?" And Stalin was polite, but his answer was very decisive. And he said, according to what Masaryk reports, he said that through the bondage of credits, the great powers were seeking to form a Western bloc and to isolate the USSR. He said that the Marshall Plan placed the Czech-Soviet friendship alliance in danger. In other words, the Russians clamped down, and they said there could be no Marshall Plan for Eastern Europe. And immediately they formed the Cominform, the Communist Information Organization.

Now that Cominform was not the Comintern, as I have been at pains to point out. It was not an offensive agency to try to catalyze world revolution. It was a defensive instrumentality. It was an instrumentality to bind those Eastern countries together, to integrate them in a single bloc: economically, politically and militarily. And so the obligation was placed upon those Communist parties of those East European coalitions to purge out of the government all of the wishy-washy parties — the ones that really were tempted into a Western alliance, whether they be the peasant party, the liberals or even the socialist parties. And that the Communists then did.

And so you understand that framework. But understand something else: that there is a second framework within which to understand this great change that takes place in '48. And that is in the terms that [Jean-Paul] Sartre used in that magnificent quotation that I read to you: that it is impossible, really, to export a revolution; that a revolution, as you saw in that great film about Algeria [*The Battle of Algiers*, 1966], that it must come out of the modalities and the actions of people themselves; that they must become radicalized; they must become forged in a cauldron of action. Now, you see, in Eastern Europe, that happened in only one country. It happened in Yugoslavia.

There you had had a great war of liberation. And the people had forged together. And in their great militant struggle, they had been infuriated by revolutionary ideology, as infused by the Yugoslavian Communist Party. But for the rest it was not that way. I don't underestimate what the Communists did, for example, in the resistance movements in the other countries. I don't underestimate how popular they were. But the point of the matter is that their power, in the post-war period, depended upon the presence of the Soviet Union and upon the power of the Soviet army.

Now, if you say that you pass from popular democracy to the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is all well and good — you should — but that means that you begin another process: a long

process of frontal struggle. And that was not the idea. The idea was to import revolution, via Soviet arms and Soviet power, in order to make those particular countries — what? Satellites!

And 1948 was the turning point in two decisive ways, and in two great, great episodes. And both of those episodes worth, really, holding in your consciousness: one, the episode in Czechoslovakia in February of 1948. And the other: the Tito-Stalin split between March and July of 1948. And both of those with tremendous, tremendous consequences.

Now, about the Czech coup, let me try to demystify a little bit. Because there is a lot of mystification about it. You see, the Czech coup was like the Greek crisis of 1947. It was a great instrument for American policymakers. With the Greek crisis of 1947, Harry Truman could go to the Congress in that horrendous speech, and, consequently, get a kind of a carte blanche for universal intervention wherever American power wanted to go. Well, you see, the Czech coup served the same purpose in 1948. Because in 1948, when there was a certain reluctance in the Congress to vote credits for all of this economic aid of the Marshall Plan, suddenly came the Czech coup. And American policymakers could say, "You see what is afoot. You see that the Russians are trying, really, to make satellites out of all of these countries in Eastern Europe." And, consequently, there was an open door. But, you see, it's more complicated than that.

Look at it this way. In the evolution of this Czech development after the war, there was a very deep contradiction. And that contradiction was growing deeper. And, by 1948, it really had come almost to a breaking point. Look at it this way: that the primary social force in Czechoslovakia is the working class. It is the only one of the Eastern countries in which that is the case. It is the only one of the Eastern countries that has been that much industrialized. And, consequently, it has a sizable proletariat. And that proletariat is overwhelmingly Communist — and, consequently, the prime support for the Czechoslovakian Communist Party. But what you get by way of a political structure and what you get by way of ideology is a much narrower, much more confined definition of that reality than the facts themselves would warrant. What you get is a coalition government in which the Communists have only seven ministers out of the twenty-six — in which the key places belong to the Beneš party, the National Socialist Party, which is the liberal — in which, if you please, there is a parliamentary method that doesn't really bring the mass of workers into the daily process of social and political change.

What I am saying is that you have compressed the Czech revolution within the framework and the rather narrow confines of a kind of liberal formulation. And, by the fall of 1947, there already were deep contradictions in that particular structure. Take, in the first place, the fact that the Beneš party, and as a matter of fact the three liberal parties — the Nationalist Socialist Party of Beneš, the so-called Populist Party, and the Democratic Party of Slovakia — all of them wanted to desert the Russian alliance, to move into the Marshall Plan. Now, we have very good evidence for that in the excellent memoirs of Hubert Ripka. Ripka was the Minister of Trade and he was a

close associate of Beneš in that particular party. And in his memoirs, a book translated into English as *Czechoslovakia Enslaved* (which was published in 1950), he says that, after Stalin had shut the door on the Marshall Plan for Czechoslovakia, the top leadership of Beneš's party decided that they would go into that Marshall Plan as soon as they could. And they identified the Russians and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia as the prime enemies to that particular desire. In other words, there is the possibility of trying to bring Czechoslovakia, basically, into the Western alliance system and that, surely, will deepen the contradiction in a society that has a much more revolutionary perspective than that.

Or consider the second important phenomenon, and that is that the elections are coming up in Czechoslovakia in early 1948. And there is the possibility that the Communist Party, for a specific reason, may begin to lose support. And that really is the calculation of the liberals in Czechoslovakia, and surely the calculation of American diplomacy. What you had had, you see, in 1947, was a very serious drought in Czechoslovakia, as in most of the agrarian zones of Europe. And that meant that the agricultural crop was down so that, in order to get a proper food supply, the Czechs in 1947 had to trade off virtually all of the consumer goods by which they had hoped to raise the standard of living. And so there was considerable grumbling. And the idea on the part of Beneš and his party was that the Communists, because they were the key party in Czechoslovakia, would bear the onus of that turn of events and possibly lose the elections. And that is the calculation of the American ambassador, Laurence Steinhardt. Steinhardt, who understood Czech affairs rather well — and who was asked over and again by Masaryk and by Ripka whether the United States would send relief aid, and turned down those requests — wrote to the State Department, on the 29th of October of 1947, the following: "The Czech misfortunes are very much to the good. When this Czechoslovak government realizes that Santa Claus expects"...

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... in 1948. And that, quite obviously, again, creating a critical question as to where that regime would go and what direction it would follow.

Or take the third fact. And that is that there really were anti-government and anti-Communist plots. And those plots in many instances centered in Slovakia. Now, Slovakia was, after all, separate from the Czech part. And it had been, under the Nazis, a kind of independent puppet state. And there's a lot of anti-Czech hostility in Slovakia. And they had a Nazi puppet regime under Monsignor [Jozef] Tiso, and there were a lot of people who really liked that. And now they look at Prague, and they say in Bratislava, which is the capital of Slovakia, they say, "We are being run by these Czech Communists."

And the plots begin to circulate around. Now, the minister of the interior is a Communist, and so the police are in on the plots. And consequently, they discover in September and October that there is a plot going in Slovakia. And there are state secrets passing from the hands of the secretary of a man named [Ján] Ursíny — who was the vice-premier of the government, and who was a member of this Slovak Democratic Party — to old members of the Tiso government that are now living in protection in the Vatican. And, consequently, quite obviously, something is afoot. This Slovak minister resigns, there are four hundred arrests in September and October. And I read to you the account, after all, of that particular moment that you find in Francis Ghetto's excellent history of those particular years, in which he talks about an atmosphere of plotting. He said, you see: "In Slovakia, plotting was in the air. In the anti-Communist atmosphere of the ministries, of the Slovak National Council, of the cafés of Bratislava, plotting was a daily occurrence among merchants, students, civil servants, and peasants." Well, you see what that means. The Communists may have to act before it is too late.

And then they deepen the class struggle. And they say, "Maybe we win great support from the workers, maybe we mobilize them, maybe we catalyze them." And the Communists begin in the late fall of 1947 to propose a series of measures — measures that will dig deeply into the class structure of the country. They propose a confiscatory tax on the rich in order to succor the peasants who are suffering from the drought. And that is opposed by the Beneš party and all of the liberals. Then, they propose that the civil servants, the worst paid, be given considerable increases and that at the expense of the better paid. And there is opposition to that. And when the government tries to denationalize certain industries, the Communists call out great strike movements. All of this, you see, begins to catalyze a struggle within the country. And that is the background for February.

And it is on the 13th of February of 1948 that the minister of the interior, who was a Communist, decides to appoint eight new police commissioners in the city of Prague; in all of the division of that police structure there shall be a new police commissioner, and he shall be a loyal Communist. Comes the ministry meeting of the 17th of February of 1948, and the liberals in that ministry gang together. And they refuse to pass this kind of action. And they demand the resignation of the Communist minister of the interior, and they threaten to resign if that doesn't happen.

And, you see, there is a tactic at work. What the three liberal parties (the National Socialists, the Democratic Party of Slovakia, and the Populists) thought was one of two things. Either they would resign *en bloc*, twelve ministers out of the twenty-six, and they would be followed by the Social Democrats — which meant that Beneš, the president, would refuse to accept their resignation — isolate the Communists in that way and force the Communists to withdraw this very hardline minister of the interior. Or, if Beneš decided to accept their resignation, he would dissolve the entire ministry and appoint just a caretaker government until the elections. And in

the elections, the Communists would lose strength. And that was the stratagem. And it didn't work.

The twelve resigned on the 20th of February in protest over the eight police commissioners. And the Social Democrats did not follow them. The seven Social Democratic ministers stayed in the government. And we have the excellent and expert witness of Dick Crossman — Richard Crossman of the British Labour Party, who happened to be in Czechoslovakia at the time — who wrote a remarkable series of articles in *The New Statesman and Nation* called "Prague 1948." Appeared in March and April 1948, in that magazine. And Dick Crossman said this about the Social Democrats, with whom he was in close touch: "When the Social Democrats saw that the organized workers were behind Gottwald and the Communists, they drew back and refused to resign."

Because something explosive happened. And note it well: between the 21st and the 27th of February of 1948 in Czechoslovakia, the Communists acted like revolutionaries. They did call out the working class. They did call out the Czech mass. They asked people in the factories, in the villages, in the cities to organize Committees of Revolutionary Action. They said, "Defend the revolution, push it further — it is your revolution!" They armed workers' militia. There was a great trade union congress that convened on the 22nd of February, and overwhelmingly it supported this initiative on the part of the Communists. There was a hubbub; there was an ebullience; there was a certain mass action suddenly in that country. And it could not be denied.

And for five days, Beneš tried to not to accept the resignation of those twelve ministers. Finally, on the 27th of February, he capitulated, accepted them. And the twelve who replaced them were either Communists or pro-Communist. And that was the coup! And it was extra-legal! And it was direct, and — note it well — there was nothing parliamentary about it! The Communists had gone outside that parliamentary structure. They had depended upon the mass, upon their control of the police, upon their support in the army.

But here is the conundrum. And see if you understand it. That when Gottwald presented — as the new prime minister — when he presented his ministerial list to the parliament on the 10th of March of 1948, he didn't say that this was a revolutionary process, that the people had spoken, that they had pushed their revolution further to a new plain. What he said before the parliament was this: "The reconstitution of the government has been carried out in a strictly constitutional, democratic, and parliamentary way. And we shall continue that way." And so the sham was built in. Because, by the 30th of May of 1948, trick elections were held. There was only one slate, the so-called National Front slate, which was controlled by the Communists. And of course it won over 90% of the vote. And when Beneš saw that, he resigned on the 6th of June of 1948. And Gottwald became the President of the Czech Republic.

You see what has been done: what has been done is to deny a revolutionary act. It has been compressed within the framework of a bogus parliamentary resolution, and for two very good reasons. One, quite obviously, because the whole Soviet bloc maintained that fiction that it was possible to go to socialism by peaceful means. You have, after all, the comment of [Anastas] Mikoyan at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Union, pointing back to those events of 1948 in this way: "The Czech Communists acceded to power by concluding an alliance, not only with the other parties of workers who were close to them, but also with the bourgeois parties which supported the National Front. The Czech people claimed, by the route of the peaceful development of socialism, by the peaceful evolution of the revolution." And that is perfectly wrong. It was not peaceful! It was extra-parliamentary and forceful! But it is denied. And why?

And that the second point: that, fundamentally, you see, the Communist leaders of Czechoslovakia sent the workers home after those events of February. They took the guns away from them, and they dissolved those worker committees. And they said there were no more Committees of Revolutionary Action. Because, you see, workers armed — or workers on whom power had devolved — they are unreliable. What is to be installed here is a satellite government. It is not to be a creative Communist regime. And the people, yes, the people are unreliable and they must be contained. And so you talk about the perfect parliamentary evolution. And you lose on two scores: A) You do not admit that there is a potentiality for mass revolutionary action; and, B) you besmirch the regime by all of this bogus parliamentarianism, by all of these fixed elections.

But look, look, look. If the people are unreliable, if what bugs Stalin is hersey — if hersey, after all, cannot be admitted; if you cannot let people find out that maybe the "Soviet way" isn't the best way, if you to demystify them, if you begin to give them enough power so that they don't have to alienate themselves always to a mythology about the Soviet Union — well, they are unreliable and they may not do the Russian bidding.

But suppose a whole regime is heretic. And that takes you to the second part of the problem. Because the root of the whole Tito-Stalin dispute, if you want to use that mild word, is precisely that Titoism was heresy, and a whole heretical regime. Now, look. The 28th of June of 1948 — note the date well, the 28th June of 1948 — the Cominform meets for its second meeting. And in that Second Cominform meeting of 1948, there is a resolution passed on the Czech, on the Yugoslavian question. And it reads, in part, this way — and I read from this collection of documents on this matter called *The Battle Stalin Lost*, by the Yugoslavian [Vladimir] Dedijer — and in that document of the 28th of June, we read this. Listen carefully:

"The Cominform asserts that, in consequence of all this" — and there had been before this a whole list of heretical charges or charges of heresy — "the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia is expelling itself and the Communist Party of

Yugoslavia from the family of fraternal Communist parties, from the united Communist front, and, therefore, from the ranks of the Cominform...

"The Yugoslav Communists probably do not realize, or pretend not to realize, that such nationalistic conceptions can only lead to the degeneration of Yugoslavia into an ordinary bourgeois republic, to loss of Yugoslavia's independence, and to the transformation of Yugoslavia into a colony of the imperialist countries.

"The Cominform does not doubt that there are within the Communist Party of Yugoslavia sound elements, loyal to Marxism-Leninism... It is the task of these sound party members to force the present leadership to abandon its mistakes openly and honestly and to correct them, to abandon nationalism, to return to internationalism..."

Which, of course, means to return to the bosom of the Soviet Union.

Now, behind that resolution of June of 1948 is a whole history. It begins, of course, during the war, and for reasons that you're already clear on. Stalin hated the independence and the autonomy of that Yugoslavian movement; they were making their own war of liberation; they weren't depending upon the Soviet Union, and in addition to that, they were mucking up his strategy with the West. They were not supporting [Draža] Mihailović. They were not supporting the king. They were destroying that nice fifty-fifty deal that he had made with Churchill in October of 1944. No, no. Something is wrong with these Yugoslavians that Stalin knows.

Then, in the years immediately after the war, a whole cluster of issues. The issue over Trieste in 1945, when the Yugoslavs saw the Russians really desert their claims to Trieste. And then the very crucial question of economic relations — now, a question so very important in the relations between the Soviet Union and all of these Eastern countries. And you see what economic relations here mean. It means mixed companies, for example, in which the Soviet Union really profits much more than the indigenous country; it means trade relations in which the Soviet Union takes what it wants and pays what it wants. Here is the way in which Dedijer recalls the nature of those economic relations:

"Stalin treated us not as a socialist country but like any other nation which, as he and his associates felt, belonged to their sphere of influence — that is, under their hegemony, with all the economic exploitation that implied.

"The purpose was to keep Yugoslavia as an agricultural and raw-materials-producing appendage, which is why they opposed our setting up basic industries that would help us to become independent.

"We were offended by their opposition to our economic plan and our industrialization program. As a matter of fact, we had hoped that they would invest in the major projects of our first five-year plan.

"After Tito's visit to Stalin in 1946, when agreement was achieved in principle on a treaty for economic cooperation between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union... the Soviet side immediately submitted proposals for the establishment of joint-stock companies. We accepted the idea in the hope that their investment in the companies would help us to develop and systematically exploit the great natural wealth in the country.

"But differences arose immediately. They called us megalomaniacs and said that our industrialization program was a Utopian dream. But we agreed to the initial establishment of two joint-stock companies — one for civil aviation, JUSTA, and one for shipping, JUSPAD — in the belief that the Russians would eventually give in and help us industrialize."

What follows are several pages about how those joint-stock companies worked and how the Russians really exploited them, not only for their own profit, but for their own good. That question of economic relations, very crucial.

Then, the question of the Balkan federation. It is in interest of Tito, by 1947 and the beginning of '48, to try to establish a Balkan federation — in other words, a federation of these East European governments that really can stand head, not only against the imperialist West, but that can instead head against the imperialism of the Soviet Union also. And that really freaked Stalin out. And, consequently, in February of 1948, he ripostes to that particular schema and he says to the Yugoslavians, the 10th of February: "I give you this ultimatum. Yes, there will be a federation, but it will be a joint Yugoslav-Bulgarian federation." Why? It means the absorption of Yugoslavia by Bulgaria, over which the Russians have pretty good control. All of that gives you the idea that relations are not good.

And so it is that at the end of February of 1948, Stalin decides to apply pressure. And the pressure is economic pressure. And so he decrees at the end of February of '48 that there will be no renewal of the trade agreement of 1946 — that the trade mission that the Yugoslavs were supposed to send in April of '48, that that would not be welcome in the Soviet Union. And that, obviously, to force the Yugoslavs into accepting this plan for federation with Bulgaria. And so the Central Committee of the Yugoslavian Communist Party meets on the 1st of March of 1948, and it definitely says it will not capitulate even if it doesn't get this trade agreement, which will damage it terrifically. It sells 50% of all its exports to the Soviet Union. It depends upon Russia for raw materials like oil. But even at that expense, it will not capitulate. (That's the 1st of March.)

Comes the 17th of March of 1948, and Stalin sends then the message that, now, the technicians that the Soviet Union has sent to Yugoslavia — the military technicians to help to refurbish the Yugoslavian army, the civilian technicians to help to modernize Yugoslavian industry and to found it — that the technicians have been insulted. They have not been well treated, and the Russians are recalling them. And the Central Committee of the Yugoslavian Communist Party then meets on the 21st of March, and they write back to Stalin, and they say, "We don't accept your explanation. We haven't insulted these people. What are your real purposes?"

And Stalin writes the 27th of March of 1948, and we get a little closer to the real purposes. And suddenly you begin to see the heresy, and suddenly you begin to see the devil — and soon you will need an exorcist. Obviously, you have here in this letter of the 27th of March, and, note it well, because you bring in the name — you bring in the name of Trotsky. And so he says, "In the upper echelons of the Yugoslavian Communist Party, all kinds of anti-Soviet declarations can be heard: that the Bolshevik Party has degenerated, that in the USSR Great Russian chauvinism dominates, that the USSR wants to dominate the East European economy, that the Cominform is an instrument to enslave the member Communist parties. These anti-Soviet declarations are sheltered under the left-wing sentiments such as 'Socialism in the Soviet Union has ceased to be revolutionary.' It is not useless to recall that Trotsky used similar phrases when he declared his war on the Communist Party of the USSR."

And I want you to understand what that means when you mention Trotsky, when you talk about that within the framework of parties — where there really is belief in the Soviet Union, and is belief in the capacity and brilliance of Stalin — then to mention these things and to know that Trotsky has always been the agent of the imperialist West and has always been the agent of anti-Soviet propaganda and so forth, is to say something powerful. Stalin ends this letter by making specific accusations. He says that the Yugoslavian Communist Party is catering to the kulaks, and it is accused of Bukharinite kinds of heresies, that it is not collectivizing the land rapidly enough. And it is accused, in the second place, of not really taking command of the popular front in Yugoslavia — perfectly idiotic charge, because Yugoslavia was the only country in which the popular front was the Communist Party. And it had emerged that way in the course of the struggle. And so came this letter.

Now, Stalin decided then to bring in the Cominform. That's why the Cominform was formed: in order to provide information and, consequently, to do the Soviet bidding. But in bringing in the Cominform what Stalin did was to send to the Cominform headquarters the documents he had sent to the Yugoslavs — not the reply of the Yugoslavians. It was assumed that all that was necessary to know was what was included in Stalin's letters, and the Cominform would act upon that. And so the Central Committee of the Yugoslavian Communist Party meets on Stalin's letter. And note it well: it meets on that long night of the 12th and 13th of April of 1948. And it is an historic session. Because in that session, out of hand, the Central Committee of the Communist

Party of Yugoslavia, with two exceptions — the two who were agents of the NKVD, of the Soviet secret police who were in the Central Committee of the Yugoslavian Party — with those two exceptions, to a man, the members of that Central Committee opposed Stalin's letter, rejected its arguments, and said such things as this: "Despite our love for the USSR as the birthplace of socialism, we can hardly desert our own country which is working, marching toward socialism, and for which thousands of our best sons and daughters have died."

And it went on to do what was the unthinkable: to attack the Soviet secret police and the Soviet intelligence services for operating inside Yugoslavia. And it said in that reply of the 12th of April of 1948, "We consider it inadmissible that Soviet intelligence should recruit our own citizens to spy in our own country."

Well, what did all that mean? For the very first time, a Communist party had defied Stalin. For the very first time, a Communist party had refused the arguments, the exhortations, and the threats. For the first time, it had said that the Soviet Union was fabricating things by its intelligence services and using its secret police all over the damn country. And Stalin was upset!

And he answered on the 4th of May. And in his answer of the 4th of May, he rewrote a little history. Because, in that letter, what Stalin discovered was that the Yugoslavian liberation movement had not been autonomous, that it would never have succeeded except for the Soviet Army, that it was no different than the liberation movements in any other country. "In their letter, comrades Tito and [Edvard] Kardelj refer to the merits and achievements of the Yugoslav Communist Party" — and this is Stalin saying, you know, you have a certain all go; you are too prideful, you people; I am putting you down, because we are the master — "In their letter, comrades Tito and Kardelj refer to the merits and achievements of the Yugoslav Communist Party, saying that the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union previously recognized those merits and achievements, and now supposedly ignores them. This, of course, is untrue. No one can deny some achievements of the Yugoslav Communist Party — this is indisputable — but it must be said that the merits and achievements of, say, the Communist Parties of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania are not less than those of the Yugoslav Communist Party. Nevertheless, the leaders of those parties behave modestly and do not go about shouting of their achievement — in contrast to the Yugoslav leaders, who have pierced everyone's eardrums with their exaggerated bragging. It must be observed that the French and Italian Communist Parties deserve even greater credit than the Yugoslav party as far as revolution is concerned."

Now, this really is magnificent...

[*audio cuts out*]

... into becoming a tool for Western imperialism, and said, "Come, come — come to Bucharest. We have a nice meeting at Bucharest. The Cominform will meet, and we will hash all of this out." And the Yugoslav Communist Party met on the 19th of May of 1948, and they said, "No, we will not go to Bucharest. We will not want to go to Bucharest because the last time our Yugoslav leaders were invited to Moscow, in that particular instance, for a Comintern meeting — and that was in 1937 — we never saw any of them again. And, consequently, we decide that we will not go, but that it be thrashed out among our people because they are the ones who are concerned. And so what we do instead is to call for a 5th Great Congress of the Yugoslav Communist Party to meet in July, and until that time we will have a kind of thorough review of all of these documents — we will publish them, we will debate them, we will discuss them, and then we will let our own people decide at a Great Congress here in July of 1948."

It's within that context that the Cominform does meet in Bucharest in the third week of June of 1948 and passes that resolution with which I began the discussion. And when that resolution was so strong, and when it attacked everything about these Yugoslavs who have been considered heroes, there were even some Communists from other countries who said, "Now, wait, wait!" And they said to [Andrei] Zhdanov, and they said to [Georgy] Malenkov, and they said to [Mikhail] Suslov, "Maybe you are going too far. Maybe it is not quite so bad as that." And Zhdanov said, "We haven't even told the half — we have definitive proof, that we cannot publish yet, that Tito is a Western agent."

So it is passed. And in that particular resolution of the Cominform, there is a passage that is really is worth noting, because it turns out to be utterly untrue. And the passage has to do with the fact that the Yugoslavs will not publish this document. And the passage says: "The Yugoslav leadership, which has found itself without argument in the face of the criticism of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party and the Central Committee of its fraternal party, has gone the route of lying to its own party and people, of concealing the criticisms we have leveled." In other words, the assumption of this resolution is that the Yugoslavs will never permit this resolution to circulate around among their own people, which was perfectly untrue. That resolution is published on the 28th of June by the Cominform. On the 30th of June of 1948, the Yugoslavs took to the newspaper *Borba*: there was a special number of a million copies, with that resolution integrally printed and with the response of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party also. That on the 30th of June of 1948. Yet you can read in the French Communist paper *L'Humanité* the next week, the 5th of July — over the name of Jacques Duclos, that responsible of the French Communist Party — the following: "The fact that the Yugoslav leadership has hidden the resolution from its people and refused to publish it show that they are afraid of the truth." Of course, it had been published a week before in a million copies, but for the French Communist Party that was a minor detail.

And consequently, it suffices to say that all this was debated. Came that July congress, the 5th Congress of the Yugoslav Communist Party, and it really is something. And I want you to understand one thing: that when the Communists come together in a country like Yugoslavia in July of 1948, and they are at the point of a terrific, historic break — they are defying, after all the satellite status; they are standing up to this kind of great power domination over their party and over their movement — when they do that, do you understand how much alienation of free thought, how much alienation of creative insight they have to put up with? That the Soviet Union is a myth with people, after all, who are part of the Communist movement; that their own people, after all, believe in the Soviet Union, and they believe in Stalin. And, consequently, for that party, after all, in July in 1948 to have stood firm — to have said that we believe in our party's position, that we do not believe in the Russian charges — and then to permit all of the delegates by secret ballot — for the first time in a Communist congress — by secret ballot to elect the members of the Central Committee, and to have those members of the Central Committee reelected who had just defied Stalin and Russia, is to say something historic.

And to ask a question: What will become of Yugoslavia? And, you see, it was true, as Dedijer puts it, that suddenly there was a terrific frustration after this July meeting. Where would Yugoslavia go? What would the Russians do? There was a bit of exhilaration without that Russian weight. Perhaps it was possible to do anything inside Yugoslavia, to take their own road to socialism, not to have to slavishly follow behind the Soviet model. All of that was true. But suddenly, you see, it is the question that Kardelj puts to Stalin rhetorically at that 5th Congress meeting in July of 1948: "Are you throwing us, then, into the hands of the imperialists? Where will we get our help if you shut us off? And if your fraternal party shut us off, where will we trade? Where will we get our economic sustenance?" And, you see, on a platter Stalin gave Yugoslavia to the West.

Or over. Because there was a problem: the problem, of course, of whether the Soviet Union had betrayed Yugoslavia or not. And it decided against that. And it decided against it, I think, fundamentally because it felt that, economically, Yugoslavia could not go it alone. So what Yugoslavia did was to veer in the direction of the West in terms of its trade. And Tito tries to justify it in a speech at Pula on the 10th of July of 1949: "When we sell our goods to buy machines, we are not selling our consciences. With the machines we get from the West we will continue to build socialism." You see what the problem was. It was the same problem the Russians had after the October Revolution: surrounded by hostile countries, and they had to trade with the outside. But the Yugoslav case was worse, because the Russians were surrounded by a hostile capitalist world, but they had all over the world the fraternal help of revolutionary working-class movements. With the Yugoslavians, surrounded as they were by Russian imperialism, they had not only the hostility of the West, but they had also the disbelief of so many revolutionary movements (or pseudo-revolutionary movements) in other parts of the world. And all of that created the dilemma of the Yugoslavs.

But that's not the point we want to make. The point we want to make is that, when the Russians turn themselves against Tito and Titoism, what were they turning against? What was Tito's crime? Tito's crime is described, after all, not in exact charges of that resolution of June of 48. Tito's crime is *lèse-majesté*: it's the refusal to truckle the Russian leadership. And, consequently, Titoism becomes a heresy for which you must have an exorcist. And the exorcist becomes the trials.

And this enters a period that is sad. And you must understand it, just for a moment, and cogitate about it. What happens between 1948 and the death of Stalin, the 6th of March of 1953 — twenty-one years ago last Wednesday — in that particular period, there were 2.5 million Communists that were purged of the parties in those East European countries. There were between 150,000 and 200,000 that were imprisoned; we don't know how many people actually were executed in that period of time. And what was the basis of the trials? What was the charge? What was the motive? In part, of course, it was a series of trials to document what had been said by Zhdanov that Cominform meeting in June: to document by innuendo, to document by the most remote connections, that Tito in fact was a Western agent, or an agent of the Gestapo, or both. And then to strike, after all, at the bad tendencies: to strike at those nationalists among Communists who wanted to follow their own way, to strike at the leftists who looked at Yugoslavia as a model for some kind of creative participation by the mass — those, after all who wanted question and reevaluate the relationship between their countries with the Soviet Union — all of those had to go. And they went on trial.

And you begin in September of 1949. And in September of 1949, you have a trial in Hungary, and it is the trial of László Rajk. And Rajk was a good Communist leader. And he has joined the Communist Party of Hungary, after all, when he was a young man in the early 30s, and he had struggled in Hungary, and he had gone off to Spain to fight in the Spanish Civil War, and he had been wounded three times in the Spanish Civil War, and he had put in a French concentration camp after that war. And he had escaped and he had gone back to Hungary, and he had been a leader in the underground, and he became a minister of the interior in the new regime, finally acceded to being minister of foreign affairs. Suddenly there is an accusation read out in court, the 17th of September of 1949, which says that László Rajk had from the beginning been a spy, that he was a spy for the Horthy regime, that when he had gone to Spain and been wounded three times it was in the service of the Gestapo, that when he had escaped from a French concentration camp he had come back to be a Gestapo agent, and that finally when the Gestapo was done in he had turned to the Anglo-American intelligence services and ended up in the CIA. And all of that was read out. And God only knows what they did to Rajek, what kind of moral or human suasion was used. All we know is that he confessed, and in the course of that confession said, "Yes, yes, in all of those spying ventures, yes, yes" — he knew lots of Yugoslavs.

And when it was Rajk, it had to be [Traicho] Kostov. And so Kostov, the Bulgarian, two-and-a-half months later, and note this well — an old tough, Kostov; really a guy who had fought in that Bulgarian movement, had helped found it along with Dimitrov, had been in every kind of armed insurrection — is brought to trial at the end of Nov of 1949. And all of the charges are read: the charge of being a Titoist, the charge of being a British agent, the charge of being in the pay of the Germans, all of those things are read, they're all rehearsed. There is a public trial, the Western press is invited, the prosecutor reads out all of these charges. Kostov is given the opportunity, of course, to say that they are true — and he says they're all a lie. And it hadn't taken, and it didn't work, and suddenly the public trial was stopped. And it went in camera, and ten days later, Kostov was executed. And two days after that, in the Bulgarian Communist press appeared a letter which he had written, presumably, before his execution, in which he said that his retraction had to be retracted and that he really was guilty. And, of course, we knew in 1956 not only that Rajk in Hungary was, after all, innocent, but that he was rehabilitated. And we knew it of Kostov too.

And so those trials went, culminating in the [Rudolf] Slánský trial in Czechoslovakia in 1952, with those incredible epithets — Slánský accused of being something called a "Judeo-Titoist," and executed for it. And why? Why? And it's the why and the exit out that I want you to think about. The why has to do, after all, with certain things that are very fundamental. The why has to do with the fact that Marxism — legitimate, functioning, vital, human, alive Marxism — is self-criticism, is truth, is putting everything on the line. And what passed as official Marxism-Leninism in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe was simply a way of negating that. And if you negated that and by your official line you said everything was good, and there were contradictions galore, and the economy was not going well, and the collectivization was hurting the peasants, and the big industry was not a success, and you have all of those problems — then you must find the devil that has to be exorcised.

And note, secondly, that all the time that Stalin is building satellite parties, he is building them not for revolution, but to hold the world in balance. And that is crucial. All during those late years of Stalin, there is not an anti-imperialist movement — there is a peace movement. And that is different. Millions of signatures on peace petitions all over the world, and the idea is not to change the structure of the world, but to prevent war. So that when Korea comes, the peace declarations of the Soviet Union, the peace petitions are not, after all, that you use that Chinese intervention, that you use that possibility of defeating the American position in Korea, really, to make a blow against imperialism — the petitions call for a status quo ante. And, consequently, for peace. And for that you need satellites that are not revolutionary that are not radical. And you have to purge them.

And then, you see, it changes. And Stalin dies. And the contradictions, after all, deepen. And there has to be movement. Of course, in a way, it does move. And in Hungary in 1953, Rákosi

goes. And Imre Nagy is there, and you begin to dismantle some of that big industry. And the thaw begins to come. And pretty soon, in 1955, the Russians are making overtures to the Yugoslavs. And then comes the 20th Congress, and everything hinges on how far that can go, and whether you can really solve problems so long as you don't make big structural changes. In that Eastern world, those are the problems.

And it was awful. It was awful in those years. And all the worse, you see, because there had been hope, and because those prewar regimes were so terrible — that it was awful to transform those regimes into satellites at that point. And it's been only twenty years, and they may work their way out. But it will take time. [*applause*]