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THE BEGINNINGS OF THE COMINFORM.  
THE POLICY OF THE SOVIET UNION  
TOWARDS EUROPEAN COMMUNIST PARTIES  
IN CONNECTION WITH THE POLITICAL INITIATIVES  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN 1947

Heretofore scientific literature has not as yet proposed a thorough and all-sided presentation of the Cominform. Pertinent Polish works offer only brief and general information about the establishment of the Information Bureau and studies on the impact of this institution upon political life in Poland, predominantly on the struggle waged within the Polish Workers' Party (PPR) and associated, i.a. with the ousting of Władysław Gomułka and his supporters<sup>1</sup>. There is a particularly distinct absence of publications on the influence of the policy leading to the founding of the Cominform upon changes in the tactic of the international communist movement and a stricter, than was the case up to then, subjugation of Central-Eastern Europe to Soviet domination. The presented article attempts to fill the existing gap,

<sup>1</sup>See: B. Brzeziński, *Wpływ Biura Informacyjnego na politykę PPR (The Impact of the Information Bureau on the Policy of the Polish Workers' Party)*, in: *Problemy rozwoju socjalizmu w PRL. 40-lecie Polskiej Partii Robotniczej. Materiały sesji 5–6 stycznia 1982 (Problems of the Development of Socialism in the Polish People's Republic. The Fortieth Anniversary of the Polish Workers' Party. Materials from a Session held on 5–6 January 1982)*, Warszawa 1982; idem, *Gomułka a Kominform*, "Życie Literackie", № 4/1563, 7 March 1982, p. 1; J. Ptasiński, *Pierwszy z trzech zwrotów, czyli rzecz o Władysławie Gomułce (The First of Three Turnabouts, or about Władysław Gomułka)*, Warszawa 1983, p. 81 sqq.; A. Koryn, *Rumunia w polityce wielkich mocarstw 1944–1947 (Rumania in the Politics of the Great Powers 1944–1947)*, Wrocław 1983, p. 286–287; A. Werblan, *Gomułka, Sekretarz Generalny PPR (Gomułka, Secretary General of the Polish Workers' Party)*, Warszawa 1988, p. 503 sqq.; Interview with Jakub Berman in: T. Torańska, *Oni (They)*, Warszawa 1989, pp. 100–105; K. Kersten, *Narodziny systemu władzy. Polska 1943–1948 (The Birth of a System of Rule. Poland 1943–1948)*, Poznań 1990, pp. 352–356; M. P. Deszczyński, *Wykluczenie Komunistycznej Partii Jugosławii z Biura Informacyjnego Partii Komunistycznych i Robotniczych. Zarys konfliktu jugosłowiańsko-sowieckiego (The Exclusion of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia from the Information Bureau of Communist and Workers' Parties. An Outline of the Yugoslav–Soviet Conflict)*, "Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej", XXIII, 1993, pp. 112–113; K. Kersten, *Klub za Żelazną Kurtyną (The Beyond the Iron Curtain Club)*, "Polityka" № 1/2123, 3 January 1998, pp. 54–56.

if only partially. This task was made feasible, i.a. by recently accessible new and extremely important Soviet documents. Assorted works currently published in Russia discuss various aspects of the establishment of the Cominform, often unknown or so far omitted due to censorship.

The reasons for decisions concerning the emergence of the Cominform are divergent. We should take into consideration primarily the domestic and foreign policy pursued by Stalin, the international situation after the end of the Second World War, and Soviet–American rivalry.

A characteristic feature of the postwar domestic policy of the Kremlin was the imposition upon Soviet society of a conviction that a certain slight alleviation of the system after the collapse of Germany, and perceptible if only in reference to Russian patriotism and a changed attitude to the Orthodox Church, was transitory, and that no further developments should be expected. The Soviet Union was to continue being a totalitarian state. Soviet politicians accentuated that political and economic–social priorities as well as methods of governance observed in the 1930s, would be fully realised. Such a stand was expressed even in the rhetoric of Stalin's public appearances. Expressions referring to Russian patriotism and tradition, often used during the war, were gradually replaced by their communist counterparts. By way of example, Stalin's "election" speech of 9 February 1946 was addressed no longer to his "brothers and sisters" but to "comrades". At the same time, Stalin abandoned the suggestion that the war was won by the Russian nation, and let it be known that victory was due to the "Soviet social system [...], the Soviet political system [...] and Soviet armed forces"<sup>2</sup>.

In the same speech, Stalin praised the supposed merits of collective agriculture and spoke about the need for a threefold, in comparison to the prewar period, increase of industrial production. He had in mind predominantly the growth of the production of pig iron, steel, and coal and crude oil

<sup>2</sup>J. Stalin, *Przemówienie na zebraniu przedwyborczym wyborów stalinowskiego okręgu wyborczego m. Moskwy, 9 lutego 1946 r.* (Speech at an Election Meeting in the Stalinist Election District of the City of Moscow, 9 February 1946), Moskva 1946, pp. 1, 9–11 (concerning the "election" to the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union). Stalin was well aware of the true motives for the stand of the Russians during the war against Germany. In one of his talks with Averell Harriman, the United States Ambassador to Moscow, he declared: "They (i.e. the Russians — M. J. Z.) are not fighting for us. They are fighting for Mother Russia", see: J. B. Starobin, *Origins of the Cold War: the Communist Dimension*, "Foreign Affairs", July 1969, p. 685. During a visit paid by Yugoslav communists in Moscow in 1944 Milovan Djilas noted that "Stalin used the term Russia and not the Soviet Union which meant that he not only stirred Russian nationalism but took it to heart and identified himself with it", M. Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, Paris 1962, p. 251. Apparently, the Yugoslav politician treated Stalin's rhetoric of the time much too literally, without noticing its tactical aspect. Bypassing provisional wartime expressions, one could rather say that Stalin's "nationalism" was not so much Russian as Soviet.

mining. "We are entitled to believe", Stalin declared, "that only then will our motherland be protected against possible surprises"<sup>3</sup>.

This last statement alluded undoubtedly to the need for preparations for war. In an earlier fragment of his speech, Stalin stated that wars will exist as long as there is a capitalist system<sup>4</sup>.

The totalitarian consolidation of the Soviet Union was accompanied by sealing off the state and its isolation from the world. This goal was served by various undertakings, i.a. the law of February 1947 forbidding Soviet citizens to marry foreigners, and, to an even greater degree, by repressions against those persons who during the war maintained any sort of foreign contacts and a battle waged against "cosmopolitanism" and novel currents in culture, science and the arts. A struggle against those tendencies was conducted particularly fervently by Andrei Zhdanov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party/Bolsheviks<sup>5</sup>.

A special feature of Stalin's postwar policy was the restriction of the role played by the army. Once basking in glory for its struggle against the Germans, it became suspected of intending to undermine the position of the Party and Stalin personally. These suspicions were the prime reason for the degradation of Marshall Georgi Zhukov, who at the end of the war was Stalin's deputy as commander-in-chief of the armed forces as well as a commander of the Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany and a representative of the Soviet Union in the Allied Control Council. In 1946, Zhukov was demoted to the rank of commander of the Odessa and then the Ural Army Region. Similarly to the period prior to the German offensive, the Soviet Army was envisaged as a subservient instrument of the policy pursued by Stalin<sup>6</sup>.

This form of domestic policy was accompanied by a change of accents in foreign policy. The Kremlin leaders spoke increasingly frequently about basic differences between the socialist and capitalist worlds. This trend was visible both in Stalin's speech of 9 February 1946, dealing with the superiority of the Soviet system and the internal rent of the capitalist world, and in the speech given by Zhdanov on 6 November 1946, on the anniversary of the October Revolution, in which he condemned the stand of the Anglo-

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<sup>3</sup>J. Stalin, *Przemówienie na zebraniu przedwyborczym*, pp. 18, 21.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>M. Heller, A. Niekriech, *Utopia u władzy. Historia Związku Sowieckiego (Utopia Rules. History of the Soviet Union)*, Wrocław 1989, p. 153 sqq.; J. S m a g a, *Narodziny i upadek imperium. ZSRR 1917–1991 (The Birth and Fall of an Empire. The Soviet Union 1917–1991)*, Kraków 1992, p. 184 sqq.

<sup>6</sup>A. Bullock, *Hitler i Stalin. Żywy równoległe (Hitler and Stalin. Parallel Lives)*, vol. 2, Warszawa 1994, pp. 375–376.

American powers *vis à vis* the Soviet Union and their policy in East–Central Europe. Zhdanov mentioned “reactionary groups” in Great Britain and the United States, and used expressions such as: “the Soviet Union as the leading force of democratic countries” or “the Soviet Union — the avantgarde of the democratic movement”. His declarations contained a vividly outlined vision of a world divided into two hostile camps, one of which was led by the “progressive” Soviet Union<sup>7</sup>.

Soon after the war, the Soviet Union skillfully expanded its influence on the international arena. It was favoured by pacifistic moods, clear–cut sympathy for communism among a significant part of European societies, mainly Western, and, first and foremost, by the concession policy of the United States and Great Britain. In those circumstances, Moscow subjugated Central–Eastern Europe together with its own occupation zone in Germany. The local communist parties won increasing domination in the battle for power. Certain countries, such as Poland and Yugoslavia, disclosed distinct symptoms of a civil war. Such a war developed in Greece and primarily on the opposite side of the globe, i. e. in China where the communists forced their opponents — Kuomintang supporters — to embark upon desperate resistance.

The communist impact, albeit in a different form, became apparent also in Western Europe, chiefly in France and Italy. The local communist parties, reinforced during the struggle against the occupant, and totalling hundreds of thousands or even millions of members<sup>8</sup>, expanded their influence by means of parliamentary competition. In the October 1945 election, the French communists won the largest number of seats (27%) and became a co–ruling party. A similar phenomenon took place in Italy where from the summer of 1945 the communists were members of the ruling coalition. During the first postwar parliamentary election, held in June 1946, they won 19% of all seats, becoming the third most influential party in the country (after the Christian Democrats and the socialists).

The world–wide anti–capitalist offensive was favoured by national–liberation movements in the colonies, especially in India, Indochina, Indonesia, Burma, Korea and the Philippines. Those currents weakened the heretofore traditional colonial powers, headed by Great Britain and France, and were conducive for the interests of the Soviet Union. Soon after the end of

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<sup>7</sup>Z. Brzeziński, *Jedność czy konflikty (Unity or Conflicts)*, London 1964, p. 38.

<sup>8</sup>In 1946, the Italian Communist Party had about 2 million members, and the French one — about one million; see: F. Claudin, *The Communist Movement. From Comintern to Cominform*, London 1975, p. 308; A. Bullock, *Hitler i Stalin*, vol. 2, p. 392. Cf. also P. Radzikowski, *Od stalinizmu do socjaldemokracji. Komunizm włoski 1945–1991 (From Stalinism to Socialdemocracy. Italian Communism 1945–1991)*, Kielce 1996, p. 62.

the war, the Soviet authorities became interested in winning influence in the Near East, North Africa and the Black Sea straits. Such plans threatened, above all, the interests of Turkey which, according to designs conceived in Moscow, was to agree to the creation of Soviet military bases in the Bosphorus and to resign from its borderland provinces — Kars and Ardahan<sup>9</sup>.

This situation, tantamount to an enormous increase in the influence enjoyed by the Kremlin and communism throughout the world, questioned the success of the U.S. and British policies, and led to growing convictions that heretofore concessions would not satisfy the appetite of the Soviet dictator. Both states, therefore, were thinking about the need to change their policy towards the Kremlin.

Symptomatic for this conviction was the stand expressed by George Kennan, the U.S. chargé d'affaires in Moscow. In his so-called "long telegram", sent to Washington on 22 February 1946<sup>10</sup>, Kennan criticised American policy towards Moscow, claiming that the "Soviet party line is not based on an objective analysis of situation beyond Russia's borders". It follows "mainly from basic inner-Russian necessities which existed before recent war and exist today". The Bolsheviks felt threatened by the capitalists surrounding them, and, at the same time, in accordance with the Marxist style of thinking, believed that the capitalist system was subject to inner disintegration. Kennan made it known that they were ready to accelerate this process by means of their own aggressive policy and would not be halted by any sort of negotiations or agreements. The only power capable of stopping them was "logic of force", denoting decisive resistance against the opponent, rendered possible by the superior potential of the Western world. If Western societies, chiefly the American, retained their "health and vigour", and if the Americans solved their own social problems, then they would win "a diplomatic victory over Moscow" since "world communism is like a malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue"<sup>11</sup>. The need for a change in the policy towards the Kremlin was also mentioned by Winston S. Churchill, former British Prime Minister. In a speech given at Fulton University (Missouri) on 5 March 1946, Churchill spoke about an "iron curtain" located along the border of regions situated within the sphere of Soviet influence. He enjoined the Anglo-American powers to embark upon close cooperation, and maintained that only their unity, force and

<sup>9</sup>A. Bullock, *Hitler i Stalin*, vol. 2, p. 384.

<sup>10</sup>*Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers* (further as: FRUS), 1946, vol. VI, *Eastern Europe: The Soviet Union*, Washington 1969, p. 696–709; *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945–1950*, ed. Th. E. Etzold, J. L. Gaddis, New York 1978, pp. 50–63.

<sup>11</sup>FRUS, 1946, vol. VI, pp. 699, 707 and 708.

determination could hinder Moscow<sup>12</sup>. In other words, his views resembled those expounded by Kennan.

Kennan developed and rendered precise his views in an anonymous article published in "Foreign Affairs" in July 1947<sup>13</sup>. He wrote "that the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies". In his opinion, Soviet pressure upon the free institutions of the West "can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and manoeuvres of Soviet policy, but which cannot be charmed or talked out of existence"<sup>14</sup>. The ultimate although unmentioned target of the United States was to be not so much the seizure of heretofore trophies, but stopping Moscow from further expansion. Hence the ensuing strategy became known as "containment"<sup>15</sup>.

Such containment of Soviet expansion was to be accomplished by restoring the balance of forces both in Europe and the world. Kennan was of the opinion that this balance had been upset by the Second World War which destroyed the power of Germany, Italy and Japan and weakened Great Britain and China. The outcome assumed the form of a specific vacuum which the Soviet Union was trying to fill. Kennan was an advocate of an economic and military restoration of the Western world, including the recent enemies of the Anglo-American powers — Germany and Japan<sup>16</sup>.

Adam B. Ulam noted that the "containment" formula rejected the tactic employed during the war and immediately afterwards, intent on creating a new world order by means of negotiations with Moscow. The latter were not spurned by "containment" but the main weapon was to be "the creation

<sup>12</sup>A. B. Ulam, *The Rivals. America and Russia since World War Two*, London 1973, p. 117. This was not Churchill's first statement about the Iron Curtain, which he mentioned to President Truman already four days after German capitulation, and in reference to the same region, see: F. Cludin, *The Communist Movement*, p. 433.

<sup>13</sup>X (G. F. Kennan), *The Sources of Soviet Conduct*, "Foreign Affairs", July 1947, pp. 566–582, reprinted in, i.a. G. F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy 1900–1950*, London 1952. Appendix I, pp. 107–124.

<sup>14</sup>X, *The Sources*, pp. 575–576.

<sup>15</sup>In the opinion of J. L. Gaddis, from the birth of the "containment" doctrine the authors of American foreign policy treated the Soviet Union not so much as an "estranged ally" but as a potential foe, whose vital interests cannot be recognised without threatening those of the United States; J. L. Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941–1947*, New York 1972, p. 284. It seems that this is an imprecise opinion and cannot be referred to that part of the "vital interests" of the Soviet Union connected with domination in Central–Eastern Europe with which the Americans were ready to come to terms.

<sup>16</sup>This is the manner in which Kennan interpreted the above problem in an analysis of the international situation, made in October 1947; see: D. Mischamble, *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Policy 1947–1950*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1992, pp. 73–74.

of a global environment which would defeat Russia's attempts to exploit economic weakness and social anarchy" in various parts of the world. Disillusioned with the anticipation that an economic crisis would lead to the collapse of the capitalist world, Soviet leaders would be compelled to accept a negotiation tactic used "in good faith"<sup>17</sup>. The "containment" doctrine was not interested in depriving the Soviet Union of its position of a world power but in forcing it to apply the same principles of conduct on the international area which at that time prevailed in Western world.

"Containment" was applied chiefly in those areas which possessed vital importance for the Anglo-American powers. At the beginning of 1947, Great Britain recognised that it would be incapable of fulfilling its defensive functions in relation to Greece and Turkey. On 21 February, the British turned to the Department of State, inquiring whether the United States would be ready to assume obligations *vis à vis* those countries. Fearing the emergence of a vacuum which could be easily filled by the Soviet Union, on 12 March President Harry S. Truman asked Congress to entrust him with financial assistance and the sending of "military personnel and military equipment" to Greece and Turkey. He motivated his request, i.a. by resorting to ideological arguments, declaring that "we are willing to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes". The President added: "I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures"<sup>18</sup>. This stand of the President denoted an essential change in U.S. policy and became known in history as the Truman Doctrine.

The region which the United States regarded as most important was Western Europe. Washington believed that submerged in postwar crisis and chaos Western Europe could become the prey of "a malignant parasite", to cite Kennan. It was assumed that an economic breakdown in France or Germany, accompanied by a political crisis and increased communist impact, would pose a serious threat to American goals in Europe and throughout the world. American politicians claimed that the greatest menace

<sup>17</sup>A. B. Ulam, *The Rivals*, p. 121.

<sup>18</sup>The text of the Truman speech of 12 March 1947: *The Origins of the Cold War 1941–1947: A Historical Problem with Interpretations and Documents*, ed. by W. LeFaber, New York–London–Toronto 1971, Doc. N° 40, pp. 151–156. In the opinion of Gaddis, the Presidential presentation of the American–Soviet conflict as a confrontation between two diverse and contradictory ideologies was a manoeuvre calculated to win the support of the Congress and the American public opinion for a tough political line *vis à vis* Moscow. The author maintains that ideological rhetoric constrained the future possibilities of a flexible attitude towards the Soviet Union; J. L. Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War*, pp. 317–318.

to the security of the United States was concealed in the possibility of a breakdown of Western Europe and an ensuing seizure of power by the communists. Such a situation would be utilised by Moscow not so much via military combat as the overlapping of political expansion and the growing influence of local communist parties<sup>19</sup>. In the opinion of Kennan, the great impact of French and Italian communists would enable them to wage a battle against the belief in the possibility of a democratic and non-communist path for the further development of those countries<sup>20</sup>. Hence the United States aimed at eliminating communist influence in the West. Under the sway of the new line in U.S. policy, the communists were ousted from co-rule with other parties: in Belgium on 19 March, in France on 5 May, and in Italy on 30 May 1947<sup>21</sup>. Finally, on 5 June 1947, given the guarantee that Western communists would be deprived of an opportunity for direct resistance against American policy, whose principal focus point was Western Europe, George C. Marshall, Secretary of State, speaking at Harvard University, presented his famous plan of an economic reconstruction of Europe, based on American capital<sup>22</sup>. To a considerable measure, the plan was the outcome of the impression made upon Marshall by his conversation with Stalin (15 April of that year) during the Moscow conference of ministers of foreign affairs. Marshall assumed that by avoiding the American conception of an agreement about Germany, Stalin hoped that the unresolved and thus chaotic situation in that country would contribute to an economic breakdown of Western Europe and thus to the reinforcement of Soviet influence in this part of the Continent<sup>23</sup>.

The Truman Doctrine and primarily the Marshall Plan were an obvious challenge to Soviet policy. No direct mention was made of the Soviet Union

<sup>19</sup>P. Grudziński, *Teologia bomby. Narodziny systemu nuklearnego odstraszania 1939–1952 (Theology of a Bomb. The Origin of the Nuclear Determent System 1939–1953)*, vol. 2, *Nuklearny pokój 1945–1949 (Nuclear Peace 1945–1949)*, Warszawa 1988, pp. 168–169.

<sup>20</sup>P. Petruř, *Marshallov plán*, Bratislava 1993, p. 72.

<sup>21</sup>J. Fauvet, *Histoire de partie communiste français*, vol. 2, *Vingt-cinq ans des drames 1939–1965*. En collaboration avec Alain Duhammel, Paris 1965, p. 197; *Histoire de partie communiste français (manuel)*, Paris 1964, p. 501; F. Claudin, *The Communist Movement*, pp. 341–342; F. Radziowski, *Od stalinizmu do socjaldemokracji*, p. 56.

<sup>22</sup>Text of the speech in: F. H. Hartmann, *Basic Documents of International Relations*, New York 1951, pp. 283–286; see also: P. Petruř, *Marshallov plán*, p. 86 sqq.

<sup>23</sup>See: S. D. Parrish, *The Turn toward Confrontation: The Soviet Reaction to the Marshall Plan, 1947*, in: S. D. Parrish, M. M. Narinsky, *New Evidence on the Soviet Rejection of the Marshall Plan, 1947: Two Reports, Working Paper N°9, Cold War International History Project*, Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars, March 1994, pp. 7–8. John Foster Dulles, another member of the American delegation to the conference of ministers of foreign relations wrote later that “the Moscow conference was to those who were there like a streak of lightning that illuminated the dark and stormy scene. We saw as never before the magnitude of the task of saving Europe for Western civilization”, J. F. Dulles, *War or Peace*, New York 1950, p. 105.



as an opponent but it was no longer a secret that the United States and its allies believed that Moscow nurtured expansionistic ambitions which had to be opposed, and that direct negotiations, which proved unsuccessful, had to be replaced by an active U.S. policy<sup>24</sup>. The situation was not altered by the fact that the Soviet Union and its satellites were invited to participate in the Marshall Plan. Kennan was of the opinion that if those countries were to “respond favourably, we would test their good faith by insisting that they contribute constructively to the programme”. If they were to refuse, then “we would simply let them exclude themselves”. Consequently, “we would not ourselves draw a line a division through Europe”<sup>25</sup>.

In reality, the Americans, similarly to their British and French partners, believed that the participation of Moscow was unfavourable. Full of reservations and harbouring assorted suspicions, Soviet politicians only proposed conditions and demands, and delayed the implementation of the Plan. One cannot exclude the possibility that Western politicians decided to invite Moscow chiefly for tactical reasons, remembering that the communists enjoyed great influence in France and Italy. In the aftermath of their relegation, an open “no” said to the Soviet Union would be a successive blow dealt to the left wing and could even lead to a political crisis in those countries, contrary to the premises of the Plan and hampering its realisation<sup>26</sup>.

There now arises the question whether such an interpretation, suggesting the aggressive attitude of Stalin, was apt. In other words, whether his later reaction to the Marshall Plan was the outcome of a general—expansive and confrontation—oriented stand, or rather of a view that the American initiative threatened Soviet policy and as a result should be opposed. A question posed in this manner actually concerns the sources of the so-called Cold War.

It would be difficult to discuss this issue in a relatively brief article. While referring the reader to appropriate literature<sup>27</sup> we must add that the origin of the Cold War was a complex phenomenon. Historians and politologists propose assorted interpretations of the attitude revealed by both sides in the conflict. Recent discussions on the policy of the Kremlin show a

<sup>24</sup>A. B. Ulam, *The Rivals*, p. 121.

<sup>25</sup>G. F. Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925–1950*, Boston 1967, p. 342.

<sup>26</sup>S. D. Parrish, *The Turn Toward Confrontation*, p. 15.

<sup>27</sup>See above all: R. Veitz, *Zapadniye teorii proiskhozhdeniya kholodnoy voyni*, in: *Kholodnaya voyna. Noviye podkhodi, noviye dokumenti*, ed. J. V. Gayduk, M. L. Korobochkin, M. M. Narinskiy, A. O. Chubaryan, Moskva 1995, pp. 11–47; see also: W. Borodziej, *Od Poczdamu do Szklarskiej Poręby. Polska w stosunkach międzynarodowych 1945–1947 (From Potsdam to Szklarska Poręba. Poland in International Relations 1945–1947)*, London 1990, pp. 11–23; *idem*, *Nowe prace o Zimnej Wojnie (New works on the Cold War)*, “Dzieje Najnowsze”, № 3–4: 1985, p. 247–261.

certain tendency, prevalent especially among Russian historians, towards accentuating that the stake of a confrontation with the British and the Americans was connected also with the hopes and expectations which a significant group of Soviet citizens attached to an alleviation (and perhaps liquidation?) of the totalitarian system in the Soviet Union. Yuriy Ak-syutin claims that Soviet citizens anticipated that Anglo-American politicians would contribute to imposing those transformations via diplomatic negotiations relating to the integration of the Soviet Union with the outer world. As a result, the perspective for such an evolution was to be the reason why Stalin was interested in presenting recent allies as the enemies of his country, a stand which by the very force of things simply had to favour confrontation. It also remained concurrent with the imperial and militarist moods of numerous army commanders and those Soviet citizens who did not want any transformations of the prevalent system<sup>28</sup>.

A definition of the degree to which the emphasis placed on the domestic determinants of confrontation with the United States was justified poses a complicated task. One way or another, it seems that greatest importance was ascribed to other aspects of the origin of the Cold War, i.e. those which were recently presented by Scott D. Parrish, who wrote that it was not so much the consequence of Soviet or American aggression as of “unstable international economic and political conditions in key European countries which led both sides to believe that the current *status quo* was unstable, and that assertive action was required to defend that *status quo*. It was in this environment that the Western powers felt compelled to design the details of the Marshall Plan in such a way that it would stabilise Western Europe, but only at the cost of provoking a confrontation with the U.S.S.R. And it was this same environment that compelled Stalin to respond to the Plan with a series of tactically offensive manoeuvres which fanned the flames of confrontation even higher. This decisive moment in the emergence of the Cold War was thus more a story of tragedy than evil. Neither the West nor the Soviet Union deliberately strove to provoke a confrontation with the other. Instead, the fluid political and economic conditions in post-war Europe compelled each side to design policies which were largely defensive, but had the unfortunate consequence of provoking conflict with the other”<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>28</sup>Y. Ak-syutin, *Pochemu Stalin dalnieyszemu sotrudnichestvu s soyushnikami poslie pobiedi predpochiel konfrontatsiyu s nimi? Niekotoriye sotsialno-psikhologcheskiye aspekti voznikovieniya kholodnoy voyni*, in: *Kholodnaya voyna*, pp. 48–63. On other aspects of the stand of the Soviet Union at this time see: *Sovetskaya vneshnaya politika v godi “Kholodnoy Voyni” (1945–1985). Novoye prochtienie*, ed. L. N. Niezhinskiy, Moskva 1995.

<sup>29</sup>S. D. Parrish, *The Turn Toward Confrontation*, p. 5.

Furthermore, it would be difficult to ascertain the degree to which such an interpretation of the sources of the Cold War is correct. We can only assume that the avoidance of aggression and confrontation does not always have to be tantamount to the rejection of wide-reaching strivings. This presupposition could be evidenced by the policy pursued by Hitler who in the 1930s formulated well known demands accompanied by the, at times, distinct hope of avoiding confrontations with the powers regardless of the fact that his demands were undoubtedly a symptom of the expansive policy of the Third Reich. One cannot exclude the possibility that similar calculations inspired Stalin's policy. Adherents of this view could argue that otherwise Soviet postulates and activity in the Near East, North Africa and the Black Sea Straits would be senseless.

It must be stressed, however, that regardless of the motives of Soviet policy, Stalin's initial reaction to the Marshall Plan was by no means unambiguous and clearly disclosed a temporary wavering<sup>30</sup>. A wish to learn about the dimensions of and conditions for overseas economic aid was accompanied by fears of the political aims of the United States<sup>31</sup>. The Soviet

<sup>30</sup>M. K. Kamiński, *Polska i Czechosłowacja w polityce Stanów Zjednoczonych i Wielkiej Brytanii 1945–1948 (Poland and Czechoslovakia in the Policy of the United States and Great Britain 1945–1948)*, Warszawa 1991, p. 226. The Soviet dictator even made it known that there were certain possibilities for a compromise. This tendency was revealed in his relatively calm reaction to Truman's announcement of a plan to help Greece and Turkey (12 March 1947) and in the declaration which he made in mid-April 1947 to the American politician Harold Stassen. At the time, Stalin said that the United States and the Soviet Union "could cooperate with one another. The differences between them did not have any great significance, since one is speaking about cooperation. The economic systems of Germany and the United States are the same, but nevertheless war broke out between them. The United States and the Soviet Union had different economic systems, however they did not fight one another, but rather cooperated during the war. If two different systems could cooperate during the war, then why could they not do so during peacetime? Of course, it is implied that if there is a desire to cooperate then cooperation between different systems is entirely possible", J. V. Stalin, *Sochinnieniya (Works)*, vol. 16, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press 1967, p. 76; S. D. Parrish, *The Turn Toward Confrontation*, p. 10.

We should keep in mind that those declarations, probably determined by tactical reasons, were contradictory to the way of thinking of the Soviet leader convinced that the world was striving towards revolution and the fall of the capitalist system. Stalin claimed that "the First World War pulled one country out of capitalist slavery. The Second World War created a Socialist system, the third will put an end to imperialism once and for all", see: F. Chuyev, *Sto sorok besied s Molotovim: Iz dnevnika F. Chuyeva*, Moskva 1991, p. 90. V. Zubok and C. Pleshakov (*Inside the Kremlin's Cold War. From Stalin to Krushchev*, Cambridge Mass., London 1996, p. 63) aptly noted that "the statement about the interconnection between War and Revolution would seem trivial even for a Marxist: Lenin had formulated this dogma already during World War I. But by the late 1940s Joseph Stalin was again turning to ideology to explain a hostile and uncertain world". In those circumstances it would have been difficult to treat seriously his supposedly conciliatory stance which in reality was shaped by a conviction about the inevitable conflict with the West, cf. E. Topitsch, *Wojna Stalina. Długfalowa strategia radziecka wobec Zachodu jako racjonalna polityka siły (Stalin's War. Long-range Soviet Strategy toward the West as a Rational Policy of Force)*, Wrocław 1996, and especially p. 44 sqq.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. S. D. Parrish, *The Turn Toward Confrontation*, p. 13 sqq.

side was compelled to notice that cooperation with the Western states, in accordance with the rules presented in the Plan, would force it to reveal data concerning the Soviet economy, a move contrary to the principles of the hermetically closed Soviet system<sup>32</sup>. The acceptance of the Plan would also exert an undesirable impact upon the satellite states. Some of the latter, such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, originally attached hopes to U.S. economic help. On 4 July, the government of Czechoslovakia gave an affirmative answer to the American proposal, which Poland was ready to emulate<sup>33</sup>. Even the Yugoslav authorities, which at that time demonstrated exceptional eagerness in copying Soviet models<sup>34</sup>, tested the possibilities of profiting from Western economic assistance<sup>35</sup>. Presumably, the acceptance of the Plan by Moscow and its satellites could have been the first step on the path to undesirable Western impact upon Central–Eastern Europe, and perhaps even a destabilisation of this region and its emancipation from Soviet political control<sup>36</sup>. The rejection of the Marshall Plan thus became a target of Soviet policy.

It soon became obvious that Stalin was interested in burying the Marshall Plan. The Soviet leader was compelled to notice that the economic stability of Western Europe under the aegis of the United States would hinder and perhaps render impossible the realization of his goals in this part of the Continent. Available material makes it impossible to say with complete certainty whether those aims were identical with the ones pursued by the Soviet state in Central–Eastern Europe. Indubitably, however, the economic and political weakness of Western Europe and even a certain anarchy in those countries created the best possible premises for the implementation of his projects. This was particularly true for France, Italy and, predominantly, Germany. The Soviet leader was a determined opponent of the reconstruction and integration of the latter country with the West according to the principles proposed by American politicians. Already at the beginning of March 1947, i. e. prior not only to the proclamation of the Marshall Plan but even the Truman Doctrine, Stalin spoke about a “change” in “Western

<sup>32</sup>A. B. Ulam, *The Rivals*, pp. 129–130.

<sup>33</sup>M. K. Kamiński, *Polska i Czechosłowacja*, p. 226; H. Bartoszewicz, *Stosunki polityczne ZSRR z państwami Europy Środkowej i Południowo–Wschodniej w latach 1944–1948 (The Political Relations of the Soviet Union with Central and South–Eastern European States in the Years 1944–1948)*, Warszawa 1988, pp. 449–450.

<sup>34</sup>Cf. M. J. Zacharias, *System stalinowski w Jugosławii w latach 1944–1949 (The Stalinist System in Yugoslavia in the Years 1944–1949)*, “Kwartalnik Historyczny”, № 3: 1992, pp. 65–94.

<sup>35</sup>Z. Rutyńska, *Jugosławia na arenie międzynarodowej 1943–1948 (Yugoslavia on the International Arena 1943–1948)*, Warszawa 1981, pp. 317–318; H. Bartoszewicz, *Stosunki polityczne*, pp. 449–450.

<sup>36</sup>S. D. Parrish, *The Turn Toward Confrontation*, p. 25.

policies towards the Germans”, which consisted of a “struggle for their souls and gives rise to revanchist attitudes”. Plans of building various “bizones” and “trizones” would lead to a “separatist state of German capitalists, connected with multiple ties to American and British capital”<sup>37</sup>. Consequently, more or less a month after the declaration of the Marshall Plan, Stalin arrived at the conclusion that “one of the essential points of this plan was the restoration of the German economy, and in particular the Ruhr basin” which was to become an industrial base for the Western bloc<sup>38</sup>. Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, claimed that “under the guise of formulating a plan for the reconstruction of Europe”, the Americans and their allies “in fact desire to establish a Western bloc with the participation of Germany”<sup>39</sup>. Stalin believed that this was contrary to the interests of Moscow because “under the pretext of credit help for Europe the American organise something akin to a Western bloc directed against the Soviet Union”<sup>40</sup>.

Undoubtedly the perspective of the emergence of such a bloc, with the significant participation of Germany, was the prime reason for Stalin’s hostility towards the Marshall Plan. At least from the time of Rapallo, Soviet policy tried to stifle a coalition of the strongest capitalist states, which would be capable of thwarting Soviet plans. In 1947, everything seemed to indicate that such a policy had failed and that the Soviet authorities faced a coalition of the most powerful Western states. A situation of this sort could have decidedly weakened the international position of the Soviet Union, and in the ideological realm negate the doctrinal thesis about the frailty, inner divergencies and unavoidable dissolution of the capitalist system. Hence at the Paris conference of the Soviet, British and French ministers of foreign affairs, held on 27 June — 2 July 1947, Vyacheslav Molotov, after expressing initial doubts and the opinion that the United States intended to “inter-

<sup>37</sup>H. R ó z a ŋ i s k i, *Śladem wspomnień i dokumentów (1943–1948)* (*In the Footsteps of Reminiscences and Documents, 1943–1948*), Warszawa 1988, p. 474.

<sup>38</sup>A telegram from Maurice Dejean, French ambassador in Prague, to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris, 15 July 1947, in: Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères (further as: AMAE), Paris. *Z. Europe 1944–1949, Tszechoslovaquie–URSS*, vol. 58, p. 256.

<sup>39</sup>S. D. P a r r i s h, *The Turn Toward Confrontation*, p. 28.

<sup>40</sup>This was the statement made by Stalin during the Moscow talks with representatives of the Czechoslovak government on 9 July 1947, see: *Vostochnaya Yevropa v dokumentakh rossijskikh arkhivov 1944–1953 gg.*, vol. I, *1944–1948 gg.*, ed. T. V. V o l o k i t i n a, T. M. I s l a m o v, G. P. M u r a s h k o, A. F. N o s k o v a, L. A. R o g o v a y a, Moskva–Novosibirsk 1997, Doc. N° 227, p. 673. According to the Czechoslovak record of this talk, Stalin made a similar albeit more distinct declaration, and said that “under the pretext of loans, the powers wish to create a Western bloc and isolate the Soviet Union”, see: *Československo a Marshallův plán. Sbornik dokumentů*, ed. R. Jičín, K. Kaplan, K. Krátký, J. Šillar, Praha 1992, doc. 43, p. 59; in Polish literature: M. K. K a m i ŋ s k i, *Polska i Czechosłowacja*, p. 226.

vene” in the “economic and political issues of the European states”<sup>41</sup>, rejected the planned undertaking. Furthermore, he declared that the Soviet government “considers it necessary to warn the governments of England and France against the consequences of a conduct which strives not at combining the efforts of European countries in their postwar economic reconstruction but at attaining totally different goals, which have nothing in common with the actual interests of the European nations”<sup>42</sup>. This statement was to allude to the United States policy which, according to the Soviet interpretation, aimed at the exploitation and subjugation of the whole world. Gradually, this stand dominated Soviet foreign policy. In the first place, it forced Soviet satellites in Central–Eastern Europe, primarily Czechoslovakia and Poland, to refuse the offer of participation in the implementation of the American plan<sup>43</sup>.

Disturbed by the onset of integration processes in the West, Moscow decided to opt for a rapid political and ideological counter–offensive. On 18 September 1947 Andrei Vyshinsky, deputy Commissar of Foreign Affairs, spoke at a plenary session of the United Nations General Assembly criticising the policy of the United States and Great Britain in extremely harsh terms. The attitude represented by Washington, which was expressed fullest in the above mentioned conception of “containment”, was described as an attempt at instigating a war against the Soviet Union. Vyshinsky went on to say that such a war would be “a source of profit for American monopolists”<sup>44</sup>. It is under this impact that the authorities, institutions and American public figures, named in the speech and including John Foster Dulles, had already initiated anti–Soviet propaganda. The latter was supported by the British who, via their former Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill, encouraged the Americans to wage an anti–Soviet crusade. The rage of the Soviet

<sup>41</sup>M. M. Narinskiy, *SSR i Plan Marshalla. Po materialam Arkhiva Priesidenta RF*, “Novaya i Novieyshaya istoriya”, № 2 1993, p. 16.

<sup>42</sup>V. M. Molotov, *O demokratyczne podstawy współpracy międzynarodowej. Oświadczenie na paryskiej naradzie trzech ministrów 2 lipca 1947 (For Democratic Foundations of International Cooperation. A Declaration Made at the Paris Conference of Three Ministers on 2 July 1947)*, in: V. M. Molotov, *Zagadnienia polityki zagranicznej. Przemówienia i oświadczenia: kwiecień 1945 — czerwiec 1948 (Foreign Policy Problems. Speeches and Declarations: April 1945 — June 1948)*, Warszawa 1950, p. 362.

<sup>43</sup>M. K. Kamiński, *Polska i Czechosłowacja*, p. 226; H. Bartoszewicz, *Stosunki polityczne*, pp. 451–452.

<sup>44</sup>A. Vyshinsky, *Przemówienie na plenarnym posiedzeniu Zgromadzenia Generalnego Organizacji Narodów Zjednoczonych w dniu 18 września 1947 (Speech at a Plenary Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation on 18 September 1947)*, in: A. Vyshinsky, *O pokój i przyjaźń narodów. Przemówienia wygłoszone na Sesji Organizacji Narodów Zjednoczonych we wrześniu i październiku 1947 (For Peace and Friendship between Nations. Speeches Given at a Session of the United Nations Organisation in September and October 1947)*, Warszawa 1947, p. 25.

politician was so great that he compared Churchill to Hitler<sup>45</sup>, and alluded that in case of need the Soviet Union had in store for its opponents the same fate which had been the lot of the Germans and their allies.

The Soviet authorities conducted their propaganda campaign also through the intermediary of the press<sup>47</sup> which criticised United States foreign policy and all aspects of domestic life in the United States. On 20 September 1947, "Literaturnaya Gazeta" published an article signed by one Boris Leontievich Gorbатов, attacking the President of the United State. This incident led to a protest presented five days later to Molotov by the American ambassador Walter Bedell Smith, who drew attention to the fact that the propaganda of the Third Reich accused leaders of enemy states in the same manner as the one applied by "Mr. Gorbатов against the chief executive of a friendly and allied state"<sup>48</sup>.

The propaganda campaign involved Western trade unions, mainly French and Italian. In mid-September, Benoit Frachon, one of the leading activists of *Confederation General du Travail*, "promised to defend with all our strength the Soviet Union, a country which wants peace, is fighting for peace and is defending the cause of peace throughout the world". Another representative of this union, Louis Saillant, was "more than ever convinced that it is more and more necessary to understand, love and defend the Soviet Union". Declarations made by communist activists and pro-communist trade unions in Italy were formulated in the same vein<sup>49</sup>.

In this situation, the idea present in the reflections and activity of certain communist politicians from Eastern and Central-Eastern Europe began to assume concrete shape. In the opinion of Vladimir Dedijer, it appeared in the talks held by Stalin with Josip Broz Tito and Bulgarian communists, headed by Georgi Dimitrov<sup>50</sup>. Upon assorted occasions, these communists supposedly spoke about the need to hold a conference attended by representatives of communist parties, the creation of a press organ and, finally, the establishment of an information bureau of select communist parties. It

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<sup>45</sup>In his declaration, the Soviet politician charged Churchill with a supposed racist attitude that brought to mind the theories propounded by Hitler. "We all remember", he said, "that it was Churchill who opposed the United Nations Organisation, an association of nations speaking different tongues, with an association of nations speaking only English. In this way, he became similar to Hitler who initiated the 'instigation of war by proclaiming a racial theory, and announcing that only people speaking German comprise a fully worthwhile nation' (Stalin). Now, Churchill claims that only people speaking English are a fully worthwhile nation", *ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>47</sup>See: FRUS 1947, vol. IV, *Eastern Europe: The Soviet Union*, Washington 1972, pp. 588–589, 589–590.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 558 and ft. 1, p. 558; see also: Y. A k s y u t i n, *Pochemu Stalin*, p. 61.

<sup>49</sup>FRUS 1947, vol. IV, p. 599.

must be noted, however, that available source material, chiefly archival, does not confirm the information given by Dedijer about a discussion concerning such issues and held during Tito's visit to Moscow in April 1945<sup>51</sup>. Yugoslav documentation makes it possible to ascertain only that Stalin did speak about the creation of an information bureau to Tito, Dimitrov, Traycho Kostov and Vasil Kolarov in Moscow in May–June 1946. In accordance with the opinions voiced in the course of those talks, the future organisation was to respect the views of parties disagreeing with the stand of the majority. This suggestion was connected with Stalin's criticism of the style of the work performed by the Third International which the Soviet leader accused of a directive-based supervision of communist parties (as if such a charge had nothing in common with his own policy!). As Gibianskiy aptly noticed, this assurance was only a tactical trick<sup>52</sup>.

No concrete political decisions were made during the mentioned Moscow talks conducted in the spring of 1946. Presumably, Stalin still took into account the policies of the Anglo-Saxon powers and as result acted cautiously. He avoided the creation of an illusory coordination of the policies of different communist parties in Central-Eastern Europe. It seems that the foremost spokesman of such a policy was Tito, who expressed the opinion that isolated moves of particular communist parties "will break up the uniform workers' front", and that in international affairs all communist parties should observe a joint coordinated policy<sup>53</sup>.

Presumably, the question of the "cooperation" of various communist parties made progress only after the talks held in Moscow in 1947 between Stalin and Władysław Gomułka, Secretary General of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR). We do not know the exact date of these talks but may suppose that they took place in the spring of the same year<sup>54</sup>, and thus during the

<sup>51</sup>In the opinion of Dedijer, the conception of establishing a new international Communist organisation was proposed predominantly by Tito and was accepted by Stalin "with open arms", see: V. Dedijer, *Tito Speaks. His Portrait and Struggle with Stalin*, London 1953, pp. 300–301; idem, *Josip Broz Tito. Prispjevki za živeljenepis*, Ljubljana 1971, pp. 610–611; a similar opinion was expressed by the British historian S. Clissold referring to information in an article in the Yugoslav periodical "Review of International Affairs", Belgrade May 1955; see: *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union 1939–1973. A Documentary Survey*, ed. S. Clissold, London 1975; see also: B. Brzezinski, *Wpływ Biura Informacyjnego na politykę PPR*, p. 362.

<sup>52</sup>See: K. Y. Gibianskiy, *Kak voznik Kominform. Po novim arkhivnim materialam*, "Novaya i Novieyshaya Istoriya", № 4: 1993, p. 135; idem, *Problemi miezhduнародno-politicheskogo strukturizovaniya Vostochnoy Yevropi v period formirovaniya sovyetskogo bloka w 1940 godu*, in: *Kholdonaya Voyna*, p. 113.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 135–136 and 113–114.

<sup>54</sup>L. Y. Gibianskiy, *Kak voznik Kominform*, p. 135.

<sup>55</sup>A. Werblan, *Władysław Gomułka*, p. 505; see also: J. Ptasiński, *Pierwszy z trzech zwrotów*, p. 81; *Rozmowa z Jakubem Bermanem*, p. 100.



period of a criticism of the United States policy towards the Soviet Union<sup>55</sup>. Stalin spoke about the need to decide about the publication of a special press organ. The formal initiative of organising such a conference was to be assumed by *PPR* leaders who at the end of July 1947 sent invitations to the future participants of the meeting, mentioning the need to “discuss problems faced by the fraternal parties in Europe” and, consequently, to hold an “information conference attended by a number of communist parties”. Those present at the conference were expected to exchange views and information about the situation in their countries. The invitations stressed that “we do not aim at the creation of an organ of the international workers’ movement, with the exception of a daily that would cast light on problems of the working class movement in particular countries”<sup>56</sup>. The meeting was to be attended by representatives of the communist parties of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Hungary, and thus almost all the communist parties of Central–Eastern and Eastern Europe, as well as French and Italian communists. At the beginning of August, special envoys of the Polish Workers’ Party held talks with the leaders of the remaining parties about their participation and diverse problems connected with the planned conference<sup>57</sup>.

The initiative met with different reactions. Obviously, all parties expressed their approval but according to Roman Zambrowski, Secretary of the Central Committee of the *PPR* who conducted talks, i.a. in Czechoslovakia, Klement Gottwald, leader of the local communists, did not demonstrate particular enthusiasm<sup>58</sup>. A certain reserve was also noticeable in the attitude of Palmiro Togliatti, Secretary General of the Italian Communist Party<sup>59</sup>. In turn, Tito, who wholeheartedly supported the idea of holding a conference, was also in favour of inviting Greek Communists and requested the leaders of the *PPR* to discuss this matter with Moscow<sup>60</sup>.

<sup>55</sup>On the evolution of the policy of Washington towards Moscow in Polish literature see: M. J. Zacharias, *Krystalizacja polityki zagranicznej Stanów Zjednoczonych wobec Związku Sowieckiego w latach 1945–1947 (The Consolidation of the Foreign Policy of the United States towards the Soviet Union in the Years 1945–1947)*, “Mazowieckie Studia Humanistyczne”, № 1: 1996, pp. 53–74.

<sup>56</sup>K. Y. Gibianskiy, *Kak voznik Kominform*, pp. 138–139; idem, *Problemy mezhdunarodno-politicheskogo strukturizovaniya*, pp. 114–115.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 140–142 and 116–117.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 142 and 117.

<sup>59</sup>*Avec Jacques Duclos au banc des accusés à la reunion constitutive du Kominform à Szklarska Poreba (22–27 septembre 1947)*, Paris 1958, pp. 3–4; cf. also P. Radzikowski, *Od stalinizmu do socjaldemokracji*, pp. 59–60.

<sup>60</sup>L. Y. Gibianskiy, *Kak voznik Kominform*, p. 142; idem, *Problemy mezhdunarodno-politicheskogo strukturizovaniya*, p. 117.

Upon the basis of recently available Soviet documents we can say that Moscow did not inform “fraternal parties” about the real targets of its policy. At the end of August, Zhdanov proposed to Stalin that the conference should deal with two questions mentioned neither in the talks held by Gomułka with the Soviet leader nor in invitations sent by the PPR leadership. The first issue concerned the international situation to be depicted by a representative of the All–Union Communist Party/Bolsheviks and the second — the need for coordinating communist parties, to be presented by “the Poles”, to cite the expression used by Zhdanov. In accordance with this conception, the “interested parties” were to consult the Russian communists about those problems which concerned the interests of that party, and the latter “should consult other parties as regards issues pertaining to them”. Consequently, the Soviet side was to propose “the idea of creating a coordination centre for parties attending the conference, in the form of an information bureau”. In those conditions, the problem of a press organ, discussed by Stalin and Gomułka, and mentioned in the invitations, became secondary, and delegates gathering for the conference knew nothing about it<sup>61</sup>.

Ultimately, the conference held on 22–27 September in Szklarska Poręba (Poland) was attended by Edvard Kardelj and Milovan Djilas (Communist Party of Yugoslavia), Vylko Chervenkov and Vladimir Poptomov (Bulgarian Workers’ Party/Communists/), Gheorghe Gheorghiu –Dey and Anna Pauker (Rumanian Communist Party), Mihály Farkas and József Révai (Hungarian Communist Party), Władysław Gomułka and Hilary Minc (Polish Workers’ Party), Andrei Zhdanov and Georgi Malenkov (All–Union Communist Party/Bolsheviks/), Jacques Duclos and Etienne Fajon (French Communist Party), Rudolf Slánský and Stefan Baštovansky (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia), and Luigi Longo and Eugenio Reale (Italian Communist Party)<sup>62</sup>. The delegates arrived assisted by party functionaries of various rank as well as technical coworkers<sup>63</sup>.

<sup>61</sup>See: *Vostochnaya Yevropa v dokumentakh rossiyskikh arkhivov*, t. 3, pp. 690–691; L. Y. Gibianskiy, *Kak voznik Kominform*, p. 142; idem, *Problemy miezhdunarodno–politicheskogo strukturizovaniya*, pp. 115–117.

<sup>62</sup>See: *Narada dziesięciu partii*, Warszawa 1947, p. 3.

<sup>63</sup>L. Y. Gibianskiy, *Kak voznik Kominform*, p. 144; referring to unidentified “certain” Italian historians, P. Radzikowski wrote that the conference in Szklarska Poręba was preceded by a secret meeting between Zhdanov and “a group of devoted communist activists” in Białystok or Białowieża (*Od stalinizmu to socjaldemokracji*, p. 59). This supposition appears to be rather improbable, similarly to information given by the mentioned Italian historians that decisions made in Szklarska Poręba were prepared during that meeting. In reality, it follows from the facts and events discussed in this article that they were made in Moscow and only presented for approval to the “fraternal parties” gathered at the conference held in the Karkonosze Mts.

The small number of parties attending the conference seems to show that Stalin did not wish to refer to the old organisational patterns of the Comintern. The new organisation — the Information Bureau — was to be built only of those European parties which were most important in the struggle against the newly emergent bloc in the West. It is characteristic that Stalin invited predominantly communist parties from Central–Eastern European countries dominated by Moscow. He was interested in the Polish and Czechoslovak party as well as the parties of those countries which during the Moscow talks held by Stalin and Churchill in October 1944 were recognised by Churchill as a component of the Soviet zone of influence (Rumania and Bulgaria) or situated along its boundaries (Hungary and Yugoslavia)<sup>64</sup>. The striking feature is the absence of Albania, which had an uncertain state status<sup>65</sup>, and Greece, which in October 1944 was silently acknowledged by Stalin to be part of the British sphere of influence. Nonetheless, in response to Tito's proposal, the Soviet leader indicated that the presence of the Greek delegation would be undesirable also for other reasons. It could have been used by hostile elements for the purposes of discrediting the Greek party as "an expository of the communist parties of other countries", and "heeding outside orders"<sup>66</sup>. Probably, such an interpretation was to suggest that Greek attendance in Szklarska Poręba would hamper the struggle waged by Greek communists at home. Stalin was concerned with showing that the communists, who, after all, took an active part in the civil war, were an independent political factor. From the viewpoint of the Truman Doctrine one can doubt whether such camouflage of the ties between the Greek communists and Moscow yielded anticipated results. Those bonds existed unquestionably, regardless of the fact whether for tactical reasons Moscow refrained from demonstrating its support openly<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup>The Moscow talks between Churchill and Stalin in October 1944 concerning the division of spheres of influence in the Balkans were discussed by numerous historians. Among Polish authors, mention should be made of A. K o r y n who in his study (*Rumunia w polityce wielkich mocarstw*, p. 71, sqq.) cited numerous sources and an extensive pertinent literature.

<sup>65</sup>Attention was drawn to this fact, i.a. by British political observers. An official in the British embassy in Belgrade, Clutton, wrote to London that the Soviet authorities did not treat the government in Tirana seriously and would not oppose the incorporation of Albania by Yugoslavia; see: a telegram from Clutton to R. M. A. Hankey in the Foreign Office, 23 October 1947, Public Records Office (further as: PRO), London, F. O. 371, vol. 66476, p. 48. According to Kardelj, already in 1947 Stalin encouraged the Yugoslavs to create a federation with Albania; see: E. K a r d e l j, *Nasih pedeset let*, RTV Ljubljana programme in 1971, in: V. D. D e d i j e r, *Dokumenti 1948*, vol. 1, Beograd 1979, p. 178; see also: L. M a r c o u, *Le mouvement communiste international depuis 1945*, Paris 1980, p. 9.

<sup>66</sup>L. Y. G i b i a n s k i y, *Kak voznik Kominform*, p. 143; i d e m, *Problemy miedzunarodno-politicheskogo strukturizovaniya*, p. 117.

It must be stressed that Stalin invited to Szklarska Poręba only the most powerful Western communist parties, i. e. the French and the Italian. His decision could be explained by the specific, as we shall see, role assigned to them in the battle against the Americans and their allies. On the other hand, the absence of German communists was possibly due to the fact that at the time Stalin did not regard Germany as belonging to the Soviet sphere of influence, and because his policy towards that country had not yet assumed its final shape<sup>68</sup>. The absence of other smaller West European parties can be probably explained by Stalin's opinion that they were devoid of special significance in his struggle against representatives of the Western bloc.

During the first days of the debates, the participants presented papers on the activity of their parties and the situation in particular countries<sup>69</sup>. They did not, however, exert a great impact upon the final decisions made in Szklarska Poręba which were the outcome primarily of the contexts of the paper *On the International Situation*, read by Zhdanov on 25 September.

It seems worth drawing attention to several issues connected with the Zhdanov paper. The first is associated with the fact that the final version of the speech came about gradually and was presented after assorted changes, corrections, cuts and supplements, introduced probably also by Stalin and Lavrenti Beria<sup>70</sup>. As a result, it omitted, i.a. several earlier formulations indicating that the Soviet authorities held critical opinions about the activity of even their closest, or so it would seem, allies, namely, the leaders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The first were charged with excessive moderation in their struggle for power, and the second — with “gauchist errors”. The latter were supposedly expressed in declarations that the Soviet Union, observing the rules of great politics and wishing to retain good relations with the great powers, “does not support the demands of small countries, and in particular Yugoslavia,

<sup>67</sup> In a talk with Nicos Zachariadis, one of the Greek communist leaders, conducted in Moscow on 22 May 1947, Zhdanov stressed the need for a struggle against “the corrupt” Greek government and its American and British adherents. By placing national slogans in the foreground they supposedly concealed the actual communist targets of their activity. Presumably, Moscow wanted to use them in a battle against “imperialists” similarly as those parties which attended the Szklarska Poręba conference, but without manifesting assistance for their work in Greece itself. As a result, it not only incited them to attend the meeting but, via Zhdanov, refused to provide the Greek communist leadership with military equipment. Zubok and Pleshakov wrote that Zhdanov made it obvious “that the Greek Communists were just a small flute in the red orchestra of the future, conducted by the powerful Soviet Union”. Zhdanov stated that “big reserves had to be spared for big business”, see: V. Zubok, G. Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, pp. 127–128.

<sup>68</sup> L. Marcou, *Le mouvement communiste international*, p. 8.

<sup>69</sup> See, i.a.: S. D. Parrish, *The Turn Toward Confrontation*, pp. 33–34.

<sup>70</sup> G. M. Adibekov, *Kominform i poslyevoyennaya Yevropa 1947–1956 gg.*, Moskva 1994, pp. 49–50.

sufficiently energetically”<sup>71</sup>. In this concrete situation, demands concerned the annexation of Trieste and the nearby region, which before the war belonged to Italy<sup>72</sup>. We cannot exclude the possibility, however, that Soviet impatience was due to the general policy of the Yugoslav communists who already during the war were disappointed in the insufficient, in their opinion, support offered by Moscow<sup>73</sup>.

Another characteristic trait of the Zhdanov speech was the fact that its final version contained views formulated more sharply than in the original. This holds true for, i.a. the policies of European socialist parties, chiefly the French<sup>74</sup> and, predominantly, the main thesis of about the appearance of two opposing blocs. Formulated directly before the debate, this thesis maintained that the powers which cooperated during the war now became divided into two camps: “imperialistic and antidemocratic”, steered by the United States, and “anti-imperialistic and democratic”, headed by the Soviet Union. The reason for this state of things was the fact that in the new postwar situation “Wall Street rulers” decided to benefit from American power not only for the purposes of retaining and consolidating achieved positions but also to expand them by occupying on the world markets the place of vanquished Germany, Japan and Italy. The Americans also wished to strengthen their monopolistic position by exploiting the weakened conditions of their capitalist partners, i. e. Great Britain and France. This was the real aim of the project of supposed help, expressed fullest in the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. The prime target of this “assistance” is a struggle against the Soviet Union and its friends: “countries of the new democracy”, i.e. Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Albania, and “countries who severed ties with imperialism and decisively entered the path of democratic development”, i. e. Rumania, Hungary and Finland. American “help” was also to serve combating the sovereignty and independence of other countries. U.S. “imperialists” attached special hope to the “reconstruction of capitalist Germany”, which they perceived as the most suitable guarantee of an effective battle against democratic forces in Europe. They trusted neither the Labour Party in Great Britain nor the socialists in France, and despite the latter’s servile readiness to fulfil orders, regarded them as unworthy “semi-colonists”.

<sup>71</sup>K. Y. Gibianskiy, *Kak vznik Kominform*, pp. 147–148.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>73</sup>Cf. M. J. Zacharias, *Konflikt radziecko-jugoslawiański i przemiany ustrojowe w Jugosławii w latach 1948–1954 (The Soviet–Yugoslav Conflict and Transformations in the Yugoslav System in the Years 1948–1954)*, “Dzieje Najnowsze”, № 4: 1990, pp. 25–26.

<sup>74</sup>G. M. Adibekov, *Kominform*, pp. 147–148.

As result of the United States policy, Zhdanov proclaimed, all progressive forces of the world, mainly the communists, must resist the endeavours of the “imperialists”, and chiefly the Marshall Plan. “On its part, the Soviet Union will make all efforts to prevent the realisation of this plan”, so that the Americans could not take over the world, an intention for whose sake they would not hesitate to instigate a new world war. It was possible to foil their policy since America itself was facing an economic crisis. “There are important reasons”, claimed the Soviet politician, “for Marshall’s official generosity. If European countries do not receive American credits, then their need for American commodities will decline, causing an acceleration and intensification of the encroaching economic crisis in the United States This is why if European countries demonstrate indispensable fortitude and a readiness to oppose American servile conditions for obtaining credit, they could force the United States to withdraw”<sup>75</sup>.

Resorting to doctrinal arguments about the unavoidable crisis of capitalism, Zhdanov said that the “working class” could not “underestimate its own force” and overestimate “the force of the opponent”. He also alluded to the 1938 appeasement policy of the Western powers, adding that “similarly as the Munich policy paved the way for Nazi aggression in the past, so concessions to the new line of the United States and the Munich camp could render its instigators even more aggressive and blatant”<sup>76</sup>.

Although he never said it outright, it seems that Zhdanov was inclined to ascribe the role of new Munich partners predominately to socialists and social democrats, governing or co-ruling in the West. He attacked with particular ferocity the Social Democrat Schumacher and the Labourite Bevin, and charged the French socialists and English Labour Party with taking part in the “realisation of the ideological plan of American imperialists” and treating the Marshall Plan as their “last resort”<sup>77</sup>.

<sup>75</sup>The opinion about the existence of economic motivations inclining the Americans to propose the Marshall Plan was rather universal in Moscow. It was presented, i.a. by the then leading Soviet economist Yevgeniy Varga who accentuated the fact that “the economic situation in United States was the decisive factor in the putting forward of the Marshall Plan proposal. The Marshall Plan is intended in the first instance to serve as a means of softening economic crisis, the approach of which already no one in the United States denies”, see: S. D. P a r r i s h, *The Turn Toward Confrontation*, pp. 16–17.

<sup>76</sup>Paper by Zhdanov entitled *On the International Situation*, in: *Narada Informacyjna (Information Conference)*, pp. 29–50. The “Munich” line in the policy of the Western powers, headed by the United States, was also mentioned by Georgi Dimitrov in an interview for “Rude Pravo”, given after the Szklarska Poręba meeting; see: report by Jacques Emil Paris, French envoy in Sofia, to George Bidault, Minister of Foreign Affairs, 15 October 1947, AMAE, *Z. Europe, Généralités 1944–1949, Cominform*, vol. 32, pp. 73–79.

<sup>77</sup>*Narada Informacyjna*, pp. 42–43.

In this context, Zhdanov expressed an acute criticism of the French and Italian communist parties, which, characteristically, was not published in the official collection of conference documents. Preserved in a Russian archive, it was recently discussed by Russian historians, mainly Grant M. Adibiekov. The Zhdanov criticism was the outcome of the dissatisfaction of the Soviet authorities with the fact that the up to then policy of those parties, designed in Moscow and implemented in accordance with the latter's will, failed in the new international situation.

Talking about "the campaign of American imperialism against the working class", Zhdanov listed the "errors" committed by leaders of the above mentioned communist parties. He stressed that the leaders of the French party did nothing to disclose to the "masses" the true aims of Truman and Marshall as well as the striving towards the "subjugation" of Europe, and France in particular. As a result, they agreed to being expelled from the government, and protested only against the "violation of the principles of democracy" and "parliamentarian traditions" and not against the very crux of the matter, namely the violation of French sovereignty by a foreign power which made the relegation of the communists a condition for obtaining credit. Zhdanov insisted that the French Communist Party was obligated to face the nation and show that the issue concerns foreign intervention into French questions, the liquidation of the political independence of the country, and the sale of its national sovereignty.

The Italian communists, Zhdanov went on, behaved similarly to the French. Both became the victims of "imperialistic intimidation and blackmail". By overestimating the "reactionary forces", they underestimated their own strength and that of "democracy" in general, as well as the readiness of the "masses" to protect basic national rights and the interests of their countries.

In those conditions, particular importance was ascribed to that part of the Zhdanov paper which referred to the Italian and French parties, although due to the general nature of the directives presented by this politician, his words became a warning for every communist party. Since this fragment of the speech was also not included into the official conference documents, it should be presented in a full version: "Owing to the fact that the major force of resistance against new attempts at imperialistic expansion is the Soviet Union, fraternal communist parties should make it known that by enforcing (their own — M. J. Z.) position in their countries, they are simultaneously interested in strengthening the Soviet Union envisaged as the prime foundation of democracy and socialism. Such a policy of supporting the Soviet Union as the leading force in a struggle waged for the sake of permanent

peace, the struggle for democracy, must be conducted openly and earnestly. Emphatic stress must be placed on the fact that the efforts of fraternal parties aiming at reinforcing the Soviet Union concur with the basic interests of those countries. A constant (my emphasis — M. J. Z.) accent placed by certain activists of fraternal communist parties upon their independence *vis à vis* Moscow cannot be regarded as correct. The problem does not involve independence, since Moscow never reduced or wished to reduce anyone to a dependent position. An intentional accentuation of this ‘independence’ and ‘distancing’ from Moscow naturally denotes servility, compromise and toadying towards those who regard Moscow as an enemy. Communist parties should not fear saying aloud that they support the peaceful and democratic policy of Moscow and that the policy of the Soviet Union corresponds to the interests of other peace-oriented countries”<sup>78</sup>.

The Soviet politician made it known, therefore, that in the new situation all parties should speak univocally, while the tone of their declarations would be decided by Moscow. Consequently, the European communist parties were to become more than ever submissive instruments of the Kremlin policy. In a longer range, such a situation would be contrary predominantly to the political practice of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Regardless of their attachment to the Stalinist model, the Yugoslav communists did not always demonstrate uncritical support of the assorted steps made by the Soviet Union as regards concrete political issues, a tendency which, as we saw, was noticed in Moscow. In certain cases, they were willing to perceive them from their own particular perspective, much more openly than communists in other countries of Central-Eastern Europe<sup>79</sup>. Nonetheless, nothing seems to indicate that the Yugoslav delegates in Szklarska Poręba observed that, in accordance with the logic of the Zhdanov speech, the possibility of independent decision making and conduct were disappearing rapidly. Apparently, the Yugoslav representatives perceived the criticism of the French and Italian communists, conducted by the Soviet politician, primarily as a confirmation of their own part in implementing “socialism”. As a result, they supported the stand represented by Zhdanov and eagerly attacked the Italian and French communists after a previous coordination of plans with the Soviet delegation. In the opinion of Kardelj, the Yugoslav stand was the result of Soviet initiative, and according to Djilas — of Yugoslav initiative<sup>80</sup>.

<sup>78</sup>G. M. Adibiekov, *Kominform*, pp. 51–53.

<sup>79</sup>M. J. Zacharias, *System stalinowski w Jugosławii*, pp. 78–81.



Emphasis should be placed on the fact that regardless who was the initiator of the criticism, there was no special need to encourage the Yugoslav delegates. Already the Kardelj paper about the activity of the Yugoslav party, preceding the criticism proper expressed in the course of a “discussion”, contained distinct allusions to the French and Italian communists<sup>81</sup>, in keeping with the heretofore stand represented by Tito. Already in 1946, i. e. prior to the appearance of Soviet criticism, Tito branded “certain West European parties” for abandoning revolutionary undertakings and the immediate seizure of power in their countries<sup>82</sup>. The main axis of the criticism proposed by the Yugoslavs in Szklarska Poręba were charges against the French and Italian communist parties, accused of a rigid adherence to democratic principles and parliamentary forms of political struggle<sup>83</sup>. The Yugoslav delegates condemned attachment to “bourgeois-parliamentarian democracy”, contrasted with their own type of a “democratic” system, which came into being during the revolution in Yugoslavia and constituted a “specific form of Soviet democracy”<sup>84</sup>. In comparison with the contents of the Zhdanov speech, the Yugoslav attack disclosed a certain shift in accents; the Italian and French communists were attacked not so much for neglecting to oppose the United States policy, but for a general and, in the eyes of the

<sup>80</sup>See: E. Kardelj, *Reminiscences. The Struggle for Recognition and Independence: The New Yugoslavia 1944–1957*, London 1982, p. 100; M. Djilas, *Vlast i pobuna*, Beograd 1991, p. 114.

<sup>81</sup>*Komunistička partija Jugoslavije u borbi za nezavisnost sveih naroda, za narodnu vlat, za ekonomsku obnovu i socijalističku rekonstrukciju privrede*, in: E. Kardelj, M. Djilas, *Borba za novu Jugoslaviju. Informacioni referat na savetovanju komunističkih partija u Polskoj*, Beograd–Zagreb 1948.

<sup>82</sup>This stand was presented in Tito's article: *O specifičnosti oslobodilačke borbe i revolucionarnog preobražaja*, published in the first issue of the periodical “Komunist”, 1946; see: V. Dedijer, *Dokumenti 1948*, vol. 1, p. 156. Critical allusions contained in this article were repeated after the Szklarska Poręba conference when during a plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (30 September 1947) supreme authorities of the Yugoslav party noticed “revisionist tendencies among certain parties” and approved the stand represented by Kardelj and Djilas towards the Italian and French communists concerning the “opportunistic line” of those parties, disclosed in their acceptance of the principles of a parliamentary political game; see: Y. S. Girenko, *Stalin — Tito*, Moskva 1991, p. 321; V. Dedijer, *Dokumenti 1948*, vol. 1, p. 156.

<sup>83</sup>Details in: V. Dedijer, *Novi prilozii za biografiju Josipa Broza Tito*, vol. 3, Zagreb 1980, pp. 277–279; Y. S. Girenko, *Stalin — Tito*, pp. 320–321; G. M. Adibekov, *Kominform*, p. 57.

<sup>84</sup>E. Kardelj, *Komunistička partija Jugoslavije u borbi za nezavisnost svojih naroda*, pp. 30–31. Furthermore, in the mentioned criticism of the Italian and French communists, Kardelj indicated, by referring to one of Tito's statements, that “our nations” aimed at this “form of rule” due to a “similarity with the system of rule in the Soviet Union”, E. Kardelj, *ibid.*, pp. 30–31. The statements made by Kardelj are yet another confirmation of the thesis that in contrast to other Central European parties the Yugoslav communists intended to introduce the Soviet system model immediately, cf. M. J. Zacharias, *System stalinowski w Jugosławii*, especially p. 77 sqq.; idem, *Powstanie i modyfikacja systemu komunistycznego w Jugosławii w latach 1941–1950 (The Origin and Modification of the Communist System in Yugoslavia in the Years 1941–1950)*, in: “Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace historyczne”, fasc. 107, 1993, pp. 202–204.

Yugoslav side, incorrect conception of the domestic policy. It seems that this stand was the result of the fact that the Yugoslav accusations transcended the Soviet criticism of the attitude of the French and Italian communists; it constituted an unambiguous allusion to the mistaken tactic of communist parties in general, engaged in seeking various, more or less feigned agreements with non-communist groups, as well as a directive showing that avoidance of this type of moves is the only successful tactic. The crucial element was to be an immediate revolutionary seizure of power, omitting all that which accompanied the transitory period of 1944–1947, inspired, after all, by Stalin. In those conditions, the visible inclination of the Yugoslav party leaders towards a constant and consistent presentation of themselves in the role of the only and “true” revolutionaries was undoubtedly a form of a criticism of the heretofore Kremlin policy towards the international communist movement. The same criticism was expressed after the Szklarska Poręba conference, e.g. in December 1947, when Tito confessed to a group of Hungarian communists that “comrade Stalin was too cautious after the war. He should have let the French and Italian comrades seize power the way we did — and he didn’t like what we were doing either”<sup>85</sup>. During the convention, the Yugoslav side underlined that *Les parties communistes occidentales n’avaient aucun intérêt à soutenir les efforts de reconstruction industrielle de leur pays respectif et à participer à la lutte contre les difficultés économiques*<sup>86</sup>. Obviously, such a stand concurred with the new Moscow tactic, created in 1947.

In the opinion of Eugenio Reale, who also attended the conference, attacks against the heretofore policies of the French and Italian communists were universal and supported, i.a. by Anna Pauker and Mihály Farkas. The latter charged the Italian communists with “parliamentarian cretinism” and formulated the accusation that they were incapable of taking over power, in contrast to the Hungarian communists who in the first election won only 17% votes but nonetheless managed to profit from it<sup>87</sup>.

Certain backing, albeit concealed, for the thesis about the “error” omitted by the French and Italian communists who had not assumed power in the last stage of the war by resorting to revolutionary methods, could be discerned in the stand represented by Władysław Gomułka. In his paper, the

<sup>85</sup>Ch. Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc*, Durham 1986, pp. 17–18. This opinion could have been the outcome of a lack of conviction on the part of Tito that the Soviet attitude presented in Szklarska Poręba signified an actual change in the Kremlin policy.

<sup>86</sup>E. Reale, *Avec Jacques Duclos*, pp. 33–34.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 36–38; the issue concerns the Hungarian parliamentary election of 4 November 1945; details in, i.a.: S. Balogh and S. Jakob, *The History of Hungary after the Second World War 1944–1980*, Budapest 1986, p. 32.

Polish communist leader declared that although “in Poland and countries liberated by the Soviet Army, revolutionary–democratic parties had basically more conducive conditions for organising their own state apparatus than the workers’ parties in countries with stationing Anglo–American armies, nonetheless it seems to us that the latter countries also created opportunities for essential changes in the composition of the reborn state apparatus, especially there where the workers’ parties organised an extensive national–liberation struggle and had at their disposal armed partisan units”<sup>88</sup>, namely in France and Italy.

It is quite possible that such a stand was one of reasons for the sympathy which Gomułka enjoyed among the Yugoslav delegates. They remained under the impression of his striving at retaining a certain independence of the Polish Workers’ Party *vis à vis* the Kremlin; on the other hand, the Yugoslavs remained critical of Gomułka’s conception “of a specific, Polish road to socialism” since, as Kardelj proclaimed, it differed too much from the Yugoslav one<sup>89</sup>. Presumably, representative of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia did not quite understand the arguments used by Gomułka who in his paper defined the “Polish road” which did not differ essentially from the idea victorious in Szklarska Poręba and concurred with the heretofore Yugoslav conception of “building socialism”. Gomułka said openly that if “the Polish road can be applied in any other country, then one must remember that its basic property is the seizure of the most important links of the state apparatus, from top to bottom, by the Marxist party and other truly democratic and anti–imperialistic parties”<sup>90</sup>.

We can assume with a great dose of probability that, in accordance with the general message of the Zhdanov speech, the attacks launched against the French and Italian communists referred also to those Central–Eastern communists who could be suspected of excessive trust in the possibility of assuming power via parliamentary methods. In the first place, this accusation could have pertained to the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which in the process of taking over power lagged behind other satellite parties<sup>91</sup>.

<sup>88</sup>W. Gomułka–Wiesław, *Polska Partia Robotnicza w walce o utrzymanie demokracji ludowej. Referat informacyjny wygłoszony na naradzie dziesięciu partii (The Polish Workers’ Party in a Struggle for the Retention of People’s Democracy. Information Paper Presented at a Conference of Nine Parties)*, in: *Narada Informacyjna*, pp. 51–52.

<sup>89</sup>E. Kardelj, *Nasih pedeset let*, RTV Ljubljana programme, in: V. Dedič, *Dokumenti 1948*, vol. 1, p. 159.

<sup>90</sup>W. Gomułka–Wiesław, *Polska Partia Robotnicza*, p. 52.

<sup>91</sup>Cf. J. Bloomfield, *Politics and the Czechoslovak Working Class 1945–1948*, New York 1979, pp. 75–76.

The Soviet policy presented in Szklarska Poręba led to the establishment of an institution whose purpose would be the coordination of the activity of parties present at the conference. This intention met with the disapprobation of certain delegates, symbolised by the stand taken by Gomułka. According to Kardelj, Jakub Berman and Jan Ptasiński, the Secretary General of the Polish Workers' Party was against the appearance of such an organ<sup>92</sup>. Moreover, he was to fear that in time it would turn into an organisation which, similarly to the Communist International in the past, would impose its policy on particular partners<sup>93</sup>. Gomułka could have been offended by the attitude of Stalin who coaxed him to invite representatives of select "fraternal" parties to Szklarska Poręba without disclosing the true reasons for the conference<sup>94</sup>. As a result, Gomułka supposedly even talked about resigning from his post of Secretary General and only pressure exerted by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party made him come to terms with the existing situation, i. e. with the suggested need to support the Soviet stand<sup>95</sup>. The latter was expressed in the unambiguous demand made by Stalin to the Soviet delegation during the conference, concerning the setting up an Information Bureau whose functions would entail the coordination of the policies of particular parties<sup>96</sup>. Ultimately, the Polish delegation resigned from previous "doubts", and on 27 September in a brief speech Gomułka proposed the creation of such an institution. The latter was to serve "the exchange of experiences" and, in case of need, the coordination of the political activity pursued by parties attending the conference "according to the principle of free will"<sup>97</sup>. This postulate harmonized with the earlier conception presented by Zhdanov, who suggested that such an initiative should be proposed by the Polish delegation.

Ultimately, participants of the conference issued a *Declaration* published in "Pravda" on 5 October as well as in the press of the other parties "conferring" in Szklarska Poręba. The *Declaration* contained the most important accusations and arguments presented in the Zhdanov paper and relating to the policy of the United States. It also included the statement that

<sup>92</sup>E. Kardelj, *Reminiscences*, pp. 101–102; i d e m, *Nasih pedeset let*, p. 157; Interview with Jakub Berman, p. 101; J. Ptasiński, *Pierwszy z trzech zwrotów*, p. 110.

<sup>93</sup>E. Kardelj, *Reminiscences*, p. 101.

<sup>94</sup>Berman recalled: "Stalin did not tell me, nor earlier Gomułka about the nature of the Information Bureau. He only stressed that in the current situation when America is attempting to take control over everyone..., we too must concentrate our forces", Interview with Jakub Berman, p. 100.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 101; J. Ptasiński, *Pierwszy z trzech zwrotów*, p. 82; L. Y. Gibianskiy, *Kak voznik Kominform*, pp. 149–150.

<sup>96</sup>L. Y. Gibianskiy, *Kak voznik Kominform*, p. 151; i d e m, *Problemy mezhdunarodno-politicheskogo strukturizovaniya*, p. 121.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 150; i d e m, p. 110.

“the democratic camp must become consolidated and prepare a coordinated policy of further activity”<sup>98</sup>. According to a separate resolution, such an undertaking was to be accomplished by means of “an exchange of experiences and a voluntary coordination of the activity of particular parties”. The task of “organising the exchange of experiences and, in case of need, the coordination of the activity of communist parties according to the principle of mutual understanding” was entrusted to the newly formed Information Bureau (Cominform), which was to be composed of two representatives of every Central Committee of the communist parties attending the conference<sup>99</sup>. The Information Bureau, with a seat in Belgrade, was to issue its own press organ which, it was assumed, in time would become a weekly<sup>100</sup>.

Despite clichés about “voluntary coordination” and “mutual understanding” it was by no means a secret that the Bureau would restrict the already modest possibilities of independent activity enjoyed by particular parties, and that it would turn into an instrument in Stalin’s hands. In the opinion of Djilas, “only two delegations were decidedly in favour of the Cominform: the Yugoslav and the Soviet”<sup>101</sup>. This problem calls for further studies. At present, it is possible to say that the available material does not confirm the categorical conclusion reached by the representative of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia<sup>102</sup>.

In the West, the conference in Szklarska Poręba and its results were accepted with astonishment by the American public and political opinion, the Department of State, and London. The location of the debates was concealed so carefully that first Western reports spoke about a meeting held in Warsaw, in Poland, or “some part of Poland”<sup>103</sup>. Nonetheless, there immediately appeared commentaries concerning the reasons for holding the conference.

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<sup>98</sup>Narada Informacyjna, p. 7.

<sup>99</sup>Rezolucja w sprawie wymiany doświadczeń i koordynacji działalności partii reprezentowanych na Naradzie (Resolution Concerning the Exchange of Experiences and Coordination of the Activity of Parties Represented at the Conference), in: *Narada Informacyjna*, p. 9.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>101</sup>M. Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, p. 97.

<sup>102</sup>Upon the basis of ciphered telegrams sent by Zhdanov and Malenkov during the debates to Stalin, and preserved in Russian archives, Gibianskiy wrote that the Soviet initiative of creating the Information Bureau, equipped with coordination functions, was unwaveringly supported by the following parties: Yugoslav, Czechoslovak, French and Bulgarian (*Kak vznik Kominform*, p. 146; *Problemy mezhdunarodno-politicheskogo strukturizovaniya*, p. 120). In turn, Kardelj maintains that originally the Soviet initiative met with the resistance of Gomulka and representatives of the Italian, French, Czechoslovak and Yugoslav parties, “and if I am not mistaken” “Zhdanov’s proposal” “was supported only by the Hungarians and Bulgarians” (*Reminiscences*, p. 102). It would follow, therefore, that the stand of particular parties was differentiated and that the Soviet delegates had to make considerable effort to incite them to accept the Kremlin policy.

A characteristic feature of the above mentioned commentaries was the, presumably, apt assumption that the conference was more than a mechanical reaction of the Soviet Union to the announcement of the Marshall Plan. Western observers accentuated the fact that nothing new was said during the debates and that particular statements contained in the *Declaration* were repeated “*ad nauseam* in speeches, lectures and articles in the daily and periodical press during the past year”. Those proclamations, containing fervent accusations of the policy of the Western powers and mainly the United States, were the outcome of a return “to orthodox ideology”, visible already “in the election speech” given by Stalin on 9 February 1946<sup>104</sup>.

Western commentators — American, British and French — univocally expressed a conviction that an explanation of the birth of the Cominform, and its decisions, would have been impossible without links with the propaganda—ideological slogans of the Kremlin rulers, contained in the “teaching” of Marx and Lenin and dealing predominantly with the impossibility of a co—existence of socialism and capitalism, the unavoidability of crises in the capitalist system, and the wars instigated by that system. Such conclusions were particularly vivid in the analysis conducted by Frank K. Roberts, the British chargé d’affaires in Moscow<sup>105</sup>, and approved by the Northern Department of the Foreign Office<sup>106</sup>. Roberts referred primarily to the Soviet thesis that wars were caused by capitalism in a stage of its unavoidable disintegration. In the opinion of this diplomat, Moscow feared that by aiming at a delay in the inevitable disintegration of the capitalist system in the United States, the Americans would attack the Soviet Union.

<sup>103</sup>See: a telegram from Maurice Dejean, French ambassador in Prague, to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 October 1947; report by Jean de Beausse, French chargé d’affaires in Warsaw to French Minister of Foreign Affairs Georges Bidault, 6 October 1947; telegram from Henri Bonnet, French ambassador in Washington to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6 October 1947; report by the French ambassador in London to Minister Bidault, 14 October 1947, AMAE, Z. *Europe. Généralités, 1944–1947, Kominform*, vol. 32, pp. 1, 2, 61; report by Frank K. Roberts, chargé d’affaires in Moscow to Ernest Bevin, British Minister of Foreign Affairs, 7 October 1947, PRO, F. O. 371, vol. 66475, p. 126.

<sup>104</sup>Roberts to Bevin, 7 October 1947; Note from the Northern Department of the Foreign Office of 15 October 1947 entitled *Conference of European Communist Parties*, PRO, F. O. 371, vol. 66475, pp. 126–127 and 125.

<sup>105</sup>Roberts to Bevin, 7 October 1947, PRO, F. O. 371, vol. 66475, pp. 126–127; in his report of 25 September 1947 to Minister Bidault, Pierre Charpentier, the French chargé d’affaires in Moscow, wrote that basing himself on the works of Lenin and Stalin every Soviet communist was convinced about the existence *de l’inégalité de l’évolution économique et politique des Etats en régime capitaliste* and believed *que la rupture de l’équilibre* (economic and political — M. J. Z.) *amène dans l’économie des crises, dans les idées l’imperialisme et dans la politique la guerre*, AMAE, Z. *Europe 1944–1949, URSS*, vol. 34, p. 129; cf. also report by Walter Bedell Smith, U.S. ambassador in Moscow, to the Secretary of State, 5 November 1947, FRUS, 1947, vol. IV, pp. 606–612.

<sup>106</sup>Notes from the Northern Department of the Foreign Office, 7 and 15 November 1947, entitled *Conference of European Communist Parties*, PRO, F. O. 371, vol. 66475, pp. 51–52 and 125.

On the other hand, Roberts expressed the conviction that this fear concerned the distant future and did not influence current Soviet policy. At the moment, Moscow was interested in something which in its opinion was just as inevitable, namely the intensification of the crisis in Western Europe and even the possibility of its emergence in the United States. Soviet leaders believed that they was capable of facing the challenge of the Marshall Plan and that with the aid of Western Communists, predominantly French and Italian, they could create in Western Europe a revolutionary situation favourable for them and primarily for Moscow<sup>107</sup>. It was exactly this situation which, in the view of the authors of the Cominform, was to become an effective remedy against the American policy of “containment”.

Upon the basis of this analysis we could say, therefore, that the prime target of the establishment of the Cominform, and the decisions announced by it, was the wish to perform a basic modification of the policies pursued of the international communist movement, steered by Moscow, in the face of the threats yielded by the new American policy. The most important component of this modification was to be the revolutionisation of Western Europe so that “the people of France and Italy” would turn “to the Soviet Union instead of to the Marshall Plan”<sup>108</sup>. Similar conclusions can be reached upon the basis of American documents, chiefly the report made by Walter Bedell Smith, the United States ambassador in Moscow, on 5 November 1947<sup>109</sup>.

In the opinion of Smith, from 1917 on, Soviet policy went through assorted phases: an attempt at revolutionising Europe, co-operation with social democrats within the National Front, an agreement with Hitler, and cooperation with the United States and Great Britain during the second world war. After the war, Moscow resorted to a diverse arsenal of means,

<sup>107</sup>Roberts to Bevin, 7 October 1947, PRO, F. O. 371, vol. 66475, pp. 126,127. Referring to the opinion of the “Spectator” and “New Statesman”, Henri Bonnet, French ambassador in Washington, expressed the opinion that *reconnaissant qu'il ne pouvait assurer la victoire des communistes en France et en Italie* (within the heretofore parliamentary tactic — M. J. Z.), *le Kremlin passerait à la défensive et s'attacherait à constituer dans ces pays le mouvements de résistance sous le forme d'organisation compactes, entraînées aux méthodes révolutionnaires et capable, en cas de nécessité, d'immobiliser les deux nations* — report by Bonnet for Minister Bidault, AMAE, *Z. Europe. Généralités, 1944–1947, Kominform*, vol. 32, p. 81; cf. also an analysis of Soviet politics, made in the French Embassy in Moscow on 17 November 1947: *L'URSS et les perspectives de guerre*, AMAE, *Z. Europe 1944–1949, URSS*, vol. 34, pp. 150–159.

<sup>108</sup>Note from the Northern Department of the Foreign Office, 6 October 1947, PRO, F. O. 371, vol. 66475, pp. 51–52. In the opinion of Jean Payart, French ambassador in Belgrade, the Soviet leaders created the Information Bureau in the belief that with time, by accepting new members and developing its activity, it would become an alternative to the United Nations Organisation, serving the interests of Moscow, see: report and telegram from Payart to Minister Bidault, 9 October 1947, AMAE, *Z. Europe, Généralités, 1944–1949, Kominform*, vol. 32, pp. 31, 40.

<sup>109</sup>FRUS, 1947, vol. IV, pp. 606–612.

i.a. conquests, deception, assorted political manoeuvres and the parliamentary cooperation of Western communists with non-communist parties. By means of these methods it extended its rule to the Lubeck–Triest line and almost captured France and Italy. Nonetheless, Moscow became aware of the fact that it was incapable of accomplishing anything more on the path of “cooperation” and parliamentary infiltration. With the assumption that a revolutionary situation was ripening in Western Europe, the Kremlin decided to revert to its original line of conduct — the realisation of its aims by means of a revolution. The Soviet leaders expected that this design would be rendered possible by a growing economic crisis in the western part of the Continent. They also cherished the hope that a predicted economic crisis in the United States would distract the latter from Western Europe. The ultimate goal of the Soviet politicians was domination over this part of the Continent. If this plan were to fail, then the “consolidation of the communist forces”, foretold during the conference of nine parties, would facilitate the defence of Soviet positions in the struggle against anti-communists<sup>110</sup>.

The 1947 change in Soviet policy should be perceived in connection with a new attitude towards social democrats. This transformation harmonised with the thesis that “it is impossible to put an end to capitalism without putting an end to social democracy in the labour movement”<sup>111</sup>. Consequently, the condemnation of the socialists and social democrats, visible predominantly in the paper presented by Zhdanov and the *Declaration*<sup>112</sup>, referred to the policy pursued by Moscow and the international communist movement prior to the Seventh Comintern Congress of 1935 although this did not signify an intention to rebuild the latter institution, dissolved in 1943. Such a policy was served also by the vehement condemnation of the Italian and French communists who, presumably, were inca-

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 611.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 607. Bedell Smith cited an opinion expressed by Stalin in 1927.

<sup>112</sup>The *Declaration* proclaimed, i.a. that “a distinct place in the arsenal of the tactical measures of the imperialists is occupied by profiting from the treacherous policy of rightist socialists such as Blum in France, Attlee and Bevin in England, Schumacher in Germany, Renner and Schärf in Austria, Saragat in Italy, etc. who aim at concealing the true pillaging essence of imperialist policy under the mask of democracy and socialist phraseology, and in reality are faithful adherents of the imperialists, who introduce disintegration into the ranks of the working class and poison its consciousness [...]. Stifling the plans of imperialist aggression calls for the efforts of all democratic and anti-imperialistic forces in Europe. Rightist socialists are traitors of the cause. With the exception of those countries of the new democracy where the bloc of communists and socialists, together with other progressive parties, creates a core of the resistance of those countries against imperialistic plans, the servile submission of the socialists in the majority of other countries, predominantly the French socialists and English Labourites — Ramadier, Blum, Attlee and Bevin — makes it easier for American capital to realise its aims, encourages it to resort to blackmail and thrusts their countries onto a path of vassal dependence upon the United States of America”, *Narada Informacyjna*, pp. 7–8.



pable of understanding the consecutive change in Stalin's policy and of attacking, at a suitable time, the socialists and social democrats in their own countries.

We cannot exclude the possibility that criticism of the Italian and French communists was conceived as part of a spectacle demonstrating to the world a sudden transformation in Moscow's policy as well as an indirect and preventive measure for curtailing those Eastern European communists who might have dared to express their doubts.

It is characteristic that in contrast to West European communists, their Eastern partners were to cooperate with the socialist parties in their own countries, suitably "prepared" owing to the earlier elimination from their ranks of all opponents of such cooperation. The latter was to subjugate those parties to the communists and then to achieve a "merger". The planned tactic of communists from this part of Europe was to differ from the tactic foreseen for Western Europe. Nonetheless, in both cases the goals were the same: the toppling of the socialist and social democratic parties in Europe. The near future was to prove that such a feat would be possible only in Central-Eastern Europe, directly controlled by Moscow.

In the opinion of Western observers reference to former revolutionary policy in Europe did not signify a Soviet intention to become embroiled in the West. They maintained that Stalin took into consideration the weakness, mainly economic, of his state which eliminated the possibility of long-term involvement in conducting a victorious war. He did not want to risk the loss of heretofore conquests and even the existence of the Soviet Union as a state<sup>113</sup>.

It seems that assessments of references made to the revolutionary political line contain a certain simplification. Their authors appear to ignore differences between the motivations of the Soviet politicians as regards the outside world in conditions prevailing after 1917 and thirty years later. In the wake of the October Revolution such motivations possessed a strong theoretical-ideological foundation and remained concurrent with the logic of the conception of a "world revolution". On the other hand, those motivations which influenced Moscow after the proclamation of the Marshall Plan were more pragmatic; it could be said that the basic difference consisted of the fact that the post-1917 political activity of the Kremlin was to a great

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<sup>113</sup>F. K. Roberts did not believe in Soviet aggression in the West, an opinion he expressed in the mentioned report to Bevin of 7 October 1947 (PRO, F. O. 371, vol. 66475, pp. 126-127); cf. also reports by Pierre Charpentier, French chargé d'affaires in Moscow, 25 September 1947, and Georges Catreux, French ambassador in Moscow, 19 November 1947 as well as a detailed analysis of Soviet politics made in the French Embassy in Moscow on 17 November 1947: *L'URSS et les perspectives de guerre*, AMAE, *Z. Europe 1944-1949, URSS*, vol. 34, pp. 130-137, 144-149, 150-159.

measure the outcome of a certain strategy, while in the wake of the second world war it became the result basically of a certain tactic. Consequently, there come into being certain doubts<sup>114</sup> whether the latter was actually associated predominantly with a wish to revolutionise Western Europe. In 1947, such a tendency entailed mainly sabotage conducted in the foreground of the opponent, i. e. the United States. Those acts were to be undertaken for the purpose of submerging the Western countries in chaos, weakness and uncertainty achieved with the help of strikes and street demonstrations organized by the local working class, communist parties and pro-communist trade unions. In Szklarska Poręba suggestions of such conduct were extremely vivid in declarations made by Zhdanov to the French delegates who heard that Western parties should strive at increasing the number of “party units”, “the unification of vital national forces” and, above all, at “toppling the capitalist economy” in their countries and opposing American assistance. On their part, the French communists admitted that “in the hands of American imperialism France” would become a source of “enormous harm to the Soviet Union and all democratic countries”. They promised to oppose “such a threat” by adapting the policy of the French Communist Party to the needs of “a struggle against American imperialism”. The latter was to consist of efforts made so that the idea of the struggle “would dominate the masses”<sup>115</sup>. It was precisely this idea and not the more general revolutionary aims, which was to define the policy pursued by Western communists. Slightly later, in December 1947, Stalin confirmed this tend-

<sup>114</sup>In the opinion of Henri Bonnet, French ambassador in Washington, these doubts appeared also in the United States, as evidenced by the fact that views about Soviet strivings at revolutionising Western Europe were by no means universal. In a report of 17 October Bonnet wrote that *les experts des questions russes au Département d'Etat* judged that the Kremlin aimed not such much at revolutionising countries in this part of Europe as preventing them from becoming an instrument of American policy. They still believed that *Moscou ne souhaite pas le triomphe du communisme en Europe occidentale* since if that were to happen then the Soviet leaders could lose their foremost role in the international communist movement. The Kremlin rulers feared above all the victory of communism in Germany — *le berceau du marxisme est terrain idéal pour ce mouvement, Berlin, capitale d'un grand état communiste, deviendrait a bref délai le centre de l'Internationale. Le Gouvernement de l'URSS ne saurait souhaiter pareille évolution*; see: report from Bonnet to Bidault, 17 October 1947 AMAE, Z. Europe, Généralités 1944–1949, *Kominform*, vol. 32, pp. 81–82.

<sup>115</sup>G. M. Adibiekov, *Kominform*, pp. 59–65. In this manner, loyal to the directives issued by the authorities of a state which was the first to carry out a communist revolution (G. Proccacci, *Historia Włochów (History of the Italian Nation)*, Warszawa 1983, p. 481; A. B. Ułam, *Stalin. The Man and His Era*, London 1989, pp. 660–661), the Italian and French communists adapted themselves to the new Soviet policy. Nonetheless, their previous parliamentary line of conduct, followed to 1947, could have been not only the outcome of the tactical demands of the Kremlin, which up to this time avoided open political confrontation with the West. A. B. Ułam (*Titoism*, in: *Marxism in the Modern World*, ed. by M. M. Drachovitsch, Stanford Ca., 1965, p. 141) suggests that the communists of both those Western countries were to a considerable degree inspired by national motives and a conviction about the possibility of realizing their targets with the aid of elections and parliamentary struggle.

ency in a talk held with Pietro Secchia, one of the leaders of the Italian Communist Party, accentuating that the matter at stake was not an armed uprising but a battle against the Marshall Plan and the emergence of political–military alliances in the West<sup>116</sup>.

In those conditions, the stand of the Kremlin dictator in 1947 was a derivative of his attitude towards revolutionary changes outside the Soviet Union in general. Stalin regarded them as necessary as long as they served the interests of his state. Hence the various meanders and zigzags in his approach towards the Spanish civil war and revolution, and later the events in Yugoslavia, Greece and China. This question still awaits its final explanation<sup>117</sup>. Note could be made of the stand of Fernand Claudin, who in an extensive and well documented study wrote that from the time of the victory

<sup>116</sup>P. Radzikowski, *Od stalinizmu do socjaldemokracji*, p. 61.

<sup>117</sup>Attention should be drawn to the stand represented by those scholars who claim that the Stalinist interpretation of the revolution in various parts of the world was the outcome of a willingness to accept decisions made by the Kremlin. In this instance, revolution would have been a natural factor strengthening and increasing the impact of the communist world, embodied primarily by the multi-national Soviet Union. It was necessary to make certain that such revolutions would be conducted from above and in accordance with the aims, interests and tactic of Moscow. A metaphorical but extremely apt observation made by Czesław Miłosz noted that every revolution should be “an event planned by officials of the Centre, and disseminated by means of military conquest”, Cz. Miłosz, *Zniewolony umysł (Enslaved Mind)*, Kraków 1990, p. 77.

The attitude represented by Stalin towards revolution in different regions of the world is depicted in a similar manner by, i.a. H. Carré d'Encausse, *Staline. L'ordre par la terreur*, Paris 1979, p. 249. Djilas (*Rozmowy ze Stalinem*, p. 99) claimed that Stalin was inclined to abandon every revolutionary moment at a moment “when revolution transcended the interests of the Soviet state. He felt instinctively that the creation of revolutionary centres outside Moscow could become a threat to its supremacy in world communism [...] he assisted revolutions but only to a certain point — as long as he could control them”. Describing the Chinese revolution, Issak Deutscher, author of the classical biography of Stalin (*Stalin. A Political Biography*, Revised Edition, Middlesex New York 1979, p. 576) accentuated the fact that the Soviet leader, “the victorious Generalissimo of the world's largest army was contemptuous of partisans, sceptical of the chances of communism in China, and distrustful of any (my emphasis — M. J. Z.) revolution asserting itself without his fiat and beyond the range of his military power”.

Stalinist desire to subordinate every revolution, in this case, the Chinese revolution, is also underlined by A. B. Ulam (*Stalin, The Man and His Era*, p. 689 sqq.) and V. Zubeck and C. Pleshakov (*Inside Kremlin's Cold War*, pp. 56–57). The two latter wrote that Stalin “was not in a hurry to support the Chinese Communist cause of Mao Zedong, the leader of a relatively independent and undeniably strong revolutionary Communist movement [...] from the beginning the relations between the two Communist giants were greatly marred by Stalin's search for one-sided security advantages for the Soviet Union, as well as a position of superiority for himself in the Communist world”.

The Soviet policy towards worldwide revolution is evidence of the fact that Western assessments (cf. ft. 114 of this work) concerning the fears harboured by Moscow as regards a possible independence of those movements and an end to the Soviet centre of world communism, were to a considerable degree justified and discernible for already quite a long time. Already during the Fourth Comintern Congress held in 1922 Grigori Zinoviev said that “we know well that already in a few years numerous industrial countries will overtake us and assume first place in the Comintern and then, as comrade Lenin used to say, we shall become a backward Soviet country among developed Soviet countries”, M. Heller, A. Niekrich, *Utopia o władzy*, vol. 1, p. 207.

won by the thesis “about the construction of socialism in a single country”, and doubts in the revolutionary potential of the Western proletariat, especially after the accession of Hitler to power, Stalin’s policy towards the outside world tried to profit from contradictions not so much between the working class and the bourgeoisie — and thus provoke a revolution — as between different “imperialistic” states<sup>118</sup>. This approach produced the disillusionment of assorted revolutionaries, i.a. the Yugoslavs, who during the second world war were compelled to subordinate their own aims to Stalin’s policy towards the Western powers. Some even began to doubt in Stalin’s revolutionary attitude. In the autumn of 1944, Mosa Pjade, a politician from the closest retinue of Tito, expressed the opinion that “Stalin outlived his time as a revolutionary. He became a statesman and has no leanings towards revolution. He suffers from anxieties concerning the boundaries of great powers and agreements about zones of influence”<sup>119</sup>. Just as characteristic was the statement made by Jacques Duclos, one of the leaders of the French Communist Party, who during the birth of the Cominform said, referring to the Soviet and Yugoslav attacks against Western parties made in Szklarska Poręba, that it was necessary to understand the difference between the moderate and nuance-filled criticism presented by Zhdanov and the acute and vehement criticism formulated by the Yugoslavs, especially Djilas<sup>120</sup>. Quite possibly, this declaration was connected with a distinct difference of accents in the way Zhdanov treated the French and Italian communists, and the method applied by Djilas and Kardelj. In contrast to Soviet politicians, leaders of the French Communist party envisaged a revolutionary campaign undetermined by tactical reasons. Duclos seemed to suggest that despite such a stand the Soviet side would demand from the French and Italian communists not so much a revolution as a powerful sabotage campaign.

Nonetheless, the mentioned predictions by Western politicians and diplomats about the revolutionary mood in Western Europe were in their way justified. Indubitably, they had to take into consideration the activity of millions-strong communist parties in Italy and France, who enjoyed wide support among the workers, as well as other social strata — mainly a significant number of intellectuals. It must be kept in mind that a leftist, although by no means revolutionary attitude was the main political and social trend in Western Europe during the first postwar years. This applies mainly to France and Italy but also to other Western European countries, such as Great Britain<sup>121</sup>.

<sup>118</sup>F. Claudin, *The Communist Movement*, p. 387.

<sup>119</sup>V. Dedijer, *Dokumenti 1948*, vol. 1, pp. 59–60.

<sup>120</sup>L. Marceau, *Le Kominform: le communisme de Guerre Froide*, Paris 1977, p. 55.

Decisions made during the debates held by nine communist parties influenced the fate of Central–Eastern European countries. They did not denote, however, a change in the basic trends of the policy of local communist parties who acted under the impact and pressure of the Kremlin; the latter considered Central–Eastern Europe to be its own exclusive sphere of influence. Regardless, therefore, of the stand represented by Stalin as regards revolution in other parts of the world, this region of Europe was to become communist. As a result, local parties consolidated their impact while overlooking international turmoil, the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan and a new stage in Soviet–American relations.

This trend became perceptible earliest of all in Yugoslavia where the communists won full power by the end of 1945. The Slovak communists were interested in taking over the influence of the Democratic Party which on 26 May 1946 won an overwhelming election victory<sup>122</sup>. Such conceptions were announced already several days after the voting<sup>123</sup>. In Poland, the supremacy of the communist party grew distinctly after the falsification of the election held on 19 January 1947; from that moment, the influence of the Polish Peasant Party, already constrained, declined even more. In April 1947, the Hungarian communists, acting under Soviet pressure, accused Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy, one of the leaders of the Independent Small Farmers' Party, of joining a supposed conspiracy aimed against the Republic. In the ensuing situation, Nagy, at the time in Great Britain, resigned from the post of Prime Minister by not returning home, and his party was deprived of significant political impact. From that time, the Communist Party of Hungary began to dominate the political and social life of the country. Similar processes took place also in other countries of Central–Eastern Europe, the sole exception being Czechoslovakia where despite the tangible influence of the communist party, the equilibrium between the communists and their opponents lasted the longest.

In those conditions, the purpose of the decisions made in Szklarska Poręba was to achieve acceleration and not to alter the mentioned processes, with the assumption that transformations would take place according to the

<sup>121</sup>The defeat of Churchill and the Conservative Party in the 1945 election inclined Arthur Vandenberg, chairman of the U.S. Senate foreign affairs commission, to express an opinion about the increasing impact of the left wing upon the course of world events, see: A. H. Vandenberg Jr., *The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg*, London 1953, p. 219.

<sup>122</sup>In this election, the democratic party won 43% votes, the communists — 21%. Details in: M. Barnovský, *Ne ceste k monopolu moci. Mocenskopolitické zápasy na Slovensku v rokoch 1945–1948*, Bratislava 1993, pp. 96–98.

<sup>123</sup>See: *Závarečné slovo S. Širokého a zasadnutí predsedníctva 29 maja 1946*, in: Štátny Ustredný Archiv Slovenskej Republiky, Fond UV KSS. Predsedníctvo ÚV KSS. Zasadnutia predsedníctva r. 1945–1949, 788 Karton.

Soviet pattern, overlooking local political specificity. This fact must have been noticed also by Gomułka, reluctant towards the Cominform, when in the name of the Polish delegation he stressed in his closing speech the need “to organise effective activity in order to prevent the realisation of the plans of American imperialists”. In this context, recalling the tasks of the Polish Workers’ Party, he spoke about the necessity of accelerating the liquidation of the opposition, of stifling the “anti–state and pro–American” activity of the Catholic Church, of closing the “gate” for American and British “agents”, of eliminating ideological Anglo–American influence in culture, and of shifting the Polish economy and foreign trade from cooperation with “the United States and their vassals” to cooperation with the Soviet Union and “people’s democracies”<sup>124</sup>.

Decisions made by the Cominform hastened the development of events, i.a. in Rumania where King Michael I, devoid of all support, both foreign and domestic, was forced to abdicate on 30 December 1937<sup>125</sup>, an circumstance tantamount to an ultimate defeat of the opponents of communism in that country.

The events in Czechoslovakia, the only Central–Eastern European state where democratic forces still had something to say, veered in the same direction. On 2 October 1947, Rudolf Slansky presented a report from the debates and decisions of the Cominform, adding that in the opinion “of several delegations” Czechoslovakia achieved successes in economic development greater than those of other states of the region, but that in political life the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia attached excessive importance to the application of the methods “of formal parliamentary democracy”. He also talked about the onset of a new era for which the Party must prepare itself. From the viewpoint of international issues this meant the need to act “against Anglo–American imperialism and against Western Germany as its ally”. On the domestic arena, the Party was to concentrate its attention on several basic tasks: to increase its influence in the armed forces and security forces, to expel the “reactionaries” from the National Front, to deal a decisive blow to the Democratic Party, to intensify the ideological struggle against the “reactionaries” and to ideologically strengthen its own ranks. Slansky also asserted that the opponents of the communists used measures which could be described not so much as “reactionary” as “treasonable”, and ended with the proclamation that the Party must develop an offensive both on the domestic and the foreign front<sup>126</sup>.

<sup>124</sup>Cited after: B. Brzeziński, *Wpływ Biura Informacyjnego na politykę PPR*, pp. 368–369.

<sup>125</sup>A. Koryn, *Rumunia w polityce wielkich mocarstw*, pp. 286–289.

<sup>126</sup>J. Bloomfield, *Politics and the Czechoslovak Working Class*, pp. 75–77.

The Cominform decisions and the acceptance of the Slansky report contributed to an intensification of attacks launched by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia against non-communist groups. The latter were charged with undermining the alliance with the Soviet Union, favouring the “imperialists”, and arranging a “new Munich”<sup>127</sup>. As a result, the communists accomplished the coup of 25 February 1948 which deprived all non-communist groups of actual influence upon the course of events in the state and initiated a period of dictatorial communist rule in Czechoslovakia.

The above described events demonstrate that under the impact of new trends in U.S. policy Stalin decided to change his tactic. As a consequence of the resolutions of the Szklarska Poręba conference, which were an obvious and spectacular confirmation of the subjugation of the international communist movement to the interests of the Soviet Empire, Western communist parties were expected to abandon the heretofore parliamentary line of conduct and become a factor sowing chaos and disintegration in Western Europe and frustrating the realisation of the Marshall Plan. On the other hand, in accordance with the thesis about the division of the world into two hostile camps, Central–Eastern European countries were to change from a sphere of influence to a coherent bloc subjected to the Soviet Union. Leaders of particular countries — components of that bloc — were to carry out Kremlin directives as regards domestic and foreign policy more precisely than up to then. They were also supposed to accelerate the rate of the introduction of Soviet political and system models. Coming events were to show that these expectations encompassed also, i.a. an intensified struggle against the opposition, a “unification” with socialist parties, the collectivisation of agriculture, as well as a battle against religion and churches and thus a complete totalitarianisation of Central–Eastern Europe. Communist parties were envisaged as the only to wield power and dictate their will in all domains of life<sup>128</sup>.

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<sup>127</sup>Report by Dejean for Bidault, AMAE. *Z. Europe, Tschecoslovaquie, 1944–1949*, vol. 39, pp. 74–80.

<sup>128</sup>Writing about the reasons for the change in the Soviet political tactics, so obvious during the September conference, attention should be drawn to interpretations proposed by historians from former communist Yugoslavia. In their view, by coaxing Kardelj and Djilas to criticise Italian and French communists, the Kremlin leaders aimed at dividing the strongest, apart from their own, communist parties in Europe. This belief is probably correct. Nonetheless, a tendency towards accentuating precisely this goal, just as examining the origin of the Cominform exclusively from the viewpoint of Soviet–Yugoslav relations, appears to be erroneous. It overlooks the general determinants of the Soviet policy, presented in this article, for which the Yugoslav question was only one of the many factors, and by no means the most important, of a global political game. The leading representative of this tendency was V. D e d i j e r, who writing about the origin of the Cominform (*Josip Broz Tito. Prilozi za biografiju*, Beograd 1955, pp. 469–479,) arrived at the mistaken conclusion that the newly emergent organisation was to be “mainly an instrument of a certain policy” pursued by Moscow and directed “in the first place against Yugoslavia”.

The onset of the transformation of the Soviet sphere of influence in Central–Eastern Europe into a cohesive political bloc was decisive for the specificity of the steps taken in Szklarska Poręba as regards countries in this part of the Continent. The Yugoslav communists did not, or did not want to understand this fact and still tried to combine uncritical Stalinist orthodoxy towards the prevailing system with autonomy within the range of concrete political undertakings, thus becoming the target of Stalin’s wrath. In the conflict inaugurated in 1948, the Soviet leader wished to carry out a change within the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia with the help of “healthy forces” within the Party, and when this plan failed — he expelled the Yugoslav communists from the “fraternal community”. It remains an open question whether Stalin prepared Soviet military intervention in Yugoslavia, a predecessor of those conducted in Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968) and Afghanistan (1979)<sup>129</sup>.

The emergence of the mentioned bloc initiated close ties between Central–Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. They were not dictated by natural needs and conditions of development but solely by the interests and might of the Eastern power. Retained by means of compulsion, they remained basically different from integration, which was starting to rise in Western Europe and was dictated by the actual organic requirements of the involved states and nations. In a longer or briefer perspective, it came down not only to protection against the Soviet and communist menace, but to guaranteeing West European nations real economic, social and civilisational progress. It is precisely thanks to such progress that the integration of this part of Europe survived the collapse of the Soviet state and the Eastern bloc and continues to grow.

*(Translated by Aleksandra Rodzińska–Chojnowska)*

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<sup>129</sup> On the eventual Soviet armed intervention in Yugoslavia see: B. K. Kiraly, *The Aborted Soviet Military Plans Against Tito’s Yugoslavia*, in: *At the Brink of War and Peace: The Tito — Stalin Split in a Historic Perspective*, ed. by S. Vuchinich, New York 1982, pp. 273–288, especially pp. 286–287. See also: M. Marovic, *Tri izazova staljinizmu*, Opatija 1983, p. 95.