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Britain and Dissent in Tito's Yugoslavia: The Djilas Affair, ca. 1956

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On 12 April 1956, 7 months before he was arrested and sentenced to 3 years in prison because of his criticism of the Soviet intervention in Hungary,¹ Milovan Djilas, once one of the leading members of the Yugoslav regime, secretly wrote a letter to Morgan Phillips, then secretary of the British Labour Party and President of the Socialist International.² In the letter, Djilas described his difficult predicament and the harassment the Yugoslav authorities effected upon him and his family.³ Phillips did not send a reply, most probably because the Yugoslav police would have intercepted it. Instead, he wrote directly to President Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, expressing his concern for the way the Yugoslav regime treated its leading dissident. Tito never replied, but instead the Yugoslav Party organ *Borba* (*Struggle*) published a public reply in the form of an open letter written by the paper's editor, Veljko Vlahović. The whole episode caused a small diplomatic incident and nearly led to a deterioration in the relations between Yugoslavia and Britain.

Milovan Djilas (1911–95) had been, prior to his fall in early 1954, one of Tito's three vice presidents, responsible for ideology and propaganda. The other two were Aleksandar Ranković (1909–83), in charge of internal affairs, and Edvard Kardelj (1910–79), a chief party ideologist. Djilas was born in Montenegro, Ranković was a Serb and Kardelj a Slovene. Together with Tito (1892–1980), who came from a mixed Croat-Slovene family, they embodied the new, communist-led Yugoslavia that emphasized its multi-ethnic character, and, following the 1948 break with the Soviet Union, its own road to socialism. By the early 1950s, Djilas gradually grew disillusioned with the way Yugoslavia and other socialist states were developing. Between November 1953 and January 1954, he published a series of articles in *Borba*, calling for an end of the Party

monopoly. Djilas believed that the class struggle was over, that the main enemy of the people was no longer the bourgeoisie but communist bureaucracy, and that Yugoslavia should move towards 'democratic socialism'.⁴ Although his articles initially received support both from the party rank and file and, judging by letters of support, from the public, Djilas was accused of 'revisionism' by Tito at the Third Plenum of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, held on 16 and 17 January 1954 in Belgrade. He was stripped of all functions and the following year, he resigned from the Party. In 1957, while in prison, Djilas' most important book, *The New Class*, was published in the USA. This powerful critique of communist bureaucracy made him the most significant communist dissident in Eastern Europe, but after its publication Djilas was sentenced to a further 7 years. In total, he spent 9 years in prison in socialist Yugoslavia (in addition to 3 years in captivity in royalist Yugoslavia between 1933 and 1936, as a member of the then illegal Communist Party of Yugoslavia).⁵

What follows is a short analysis of an important episode in the early history of Djilas' dissent, based largely on primary sources, in particular the relevant papers held in the National Archives, Kew. The two letters – Djilas' to Phillips and Phillips' to Tito – are reproduced in an English-language publication for the first time,⁶ while, to the best of my knowledge, this is the first work that provides an analysis of circumstances in which the two letters were sent. There are but brief references to the whole episode in an article by Phillips⁷ and in Stephen Clissold's biography of Djilas.⁸ Somewhat surprisingly, Djilas did not mention it in his memoirs, although he wrote about the support he received from some prominent members of the Labour Party, above all Aneurin Bevan and his wife Jennie Lee.⁹ Bevan wrote to Tito as early as February 1954 to express his concern about the trial against Djilas and Vladimir Dedijer, a member of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia who initially sided with Djilas.¹⁰ In his pioneering study on the relations between Yugoslavia and the great powers during the first years of the Cold War, Darko Bekić also only referred to Bevan's letter to Tito of February 1954,¹¹ while C.L. Sulzberger, another biographer of Djilas, briefly describes Bevan and Lee's support for the Yugoslav dissident.¹²

The Context

Two brief points are necessary in order to sketch the wider context in which the episode occurred. The first one concerns the relationship between Yugoslavia and Britain in the mid-1950s. The opposition Labour Party had enjoyed a friendly relationship with Yugoslav Communists, especially after the 1948 Tito–Stalin

split. As Michael Foot explains, the Labour party, regardless of any internal differences, universally admired the Yugoslavs for their heroic and victorious resistance against the Nazis and their allies during the war and for refusing to be mere Soviet satellites after the war.¹³ The Conservative government preferred to see Yugoslavia, the only Communist country in Europe outside the Soviet bloc after 1948, on its side of the Iron Curtain. This was generally the main strategy towards Yugoslavia in London and Washington during the 1950s and throughout the Cold War.¹⁴ Second, the relations between Belgrade and Moscow had begun gradually to improve following Stalin's death in March 1953, although Yugoslavia continued to pursue its own road to socialism. In 1954, Khrushchev suggested to the Yugoslavs that the Djilas affair showed they too had troublesome elements to deal with, just as the Soviet communists had in the past, citing the example of Lavrenty Beria, the former head of the Soviet secret police executed in December 1953. Khrushchev even attempted to place the blame on Beria and Djilas for the Soviet–Yugoslav conflict, but Tito rightly rejected the suggestion.¹⁵ However, by 1956, the Yugoslav leader grew more anxious about the interest shown in Djilas in the West, at the time when the reconciliation with Moscow was being achieved. At the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Party in February 1956, Khrushchev denounced Stalin and accepted that different forms of socialism may coexist. In May that year he visited Belgrade, thus essentially 'rehabilitating' the Yugoslavs, though still hoping they would return to the Moscow camp, a proposition which Tito would continue to gently reject. In early June, Tito repaid the visit, and later that month the two countries officially restored full relations. In September and October, the two leaders paid private visits to each other, while in November Tito supported the (second) Soviet intervention in Hungary.¹⁶

It would be wrong to conclude that Tito was bullied by Khrushchev into supporting the intervention. The Yugoslav leader feared that the events in Hungary could trigger calls for radical changes in Yugoslavia; this is why Djilas' dissent suddenly gained an additional dimension. Tito saw himself as a leading communist in the global arena, perhaps second only to the Soviet leader. Although the Yugoslav president preferred to balance between East and West, and to receive aid from both sides, he remained loyal to communism, which ultimately brought him closer to Khrushchev, rather than to revolutionaries in Budapest. During their meetings in 1956, Tito and Khrushchev 'made the mutual discovery that they are both, in the last resort, good Party men', wrote a contemporary observer. 'Hence, though their policies towards the satellites may continue to vary, and may even, at times, appear to be in conflict, they will, in future, be co-ordinated in advance'.¹⁷ In the words of authors of an authoritative study of Eastern Europe

after the Second World War, '[t]ogether, Khrushchev and Tito seemed to be planning the renewal of communism'.¹⁸

The First Letter

In the letter to Phillips, Djilas described his predicament following the conflict with his former comrades from the Yugoslav leadership. After he was sentenced to 18 months in prison, suspended for 3 years, in January 1955 (following an interview in *The New York Times* where he criticized the situation in Yugoslavia and called for an end to the Party monopoly¹⁹), Djilas' war pension was taken away from him, while the whole family were moved from a villa into a flat which was, Djilas believed, bugged. He was not allowed to publish his work even though writing was one of his sources of income. The authorities planned to move the Djilases to another, smaller flat; the official explanation was that Djilas was not entitled to a separate study, since he was not considered an intellectual. At the time Djilas lived with his wife, 3-year-old son and ailing mother.

The secret police did not conceal that it kept Djilas under surveillance. His mail was opened, and some letters, especially from abroad, never reached him. Everyone who entered and left building No. 8 in Palmotićevea Street, where Djilas lived, was photographed from a flat opposite, while a car with police agents inside was parked outside the entrance to his building. The agents often tried to verbally provoke Djilas and his wife, sometimes threatening them with physical violence. Djilas was convinced that because these measures failed to have the desired effect, the authorities would try to discredit him morally and ruin his marriage. In an essay written years later and as yet unpublished, Djilas revealed that he had been forewarned by a friend from the secret police about the imminent 'moral crusade' against him.²⁰ Soon afterwards he wrote the letter to Phillips.

Djilas also described difficulties his relatives and friends experienced because of their links with him. Several of his closest relatives lost their jobs while anyone who would make contact or show sympathy with him would be questioned by the police. Such measures successfully isolated the Djilas family. Even Dedijer, the only leading member of the Party, apart from Djilas' ex-wife Mitra Mitrović,²¹ who had supported him initially, severed all communication. Djilas reassured Phillips, however, that apart from making him even more bitter, the Yugoslav regime could not break him morally and ideologically; his belief in 'democratic socialism' remained firm.

It is not immediately obvious why Djilas wrote to Phillips, especially when the risk such an action carried is taken into account. He did not ask Phillips or the Labour Party to intervene on his behalf. Nor did he ask for financial help, which

he stressed he would not accept anyway. Although Djilas' financial situation was difficult, he described the flat in Palmotićeveva 8 as 'relatively good', and stated that his family still enjoyed a standard of living higher than the Yugoslav average. This was the reason why he refused an offer of financial aid from trade unions in the USA.²² It seems as if the purpose of the letter was to seek moral support from Phillips, his personal friend, but also a leading figure in the Labour Party and international socialist movement. Djilas wished to convey his own version of events to his friends and supporters abroad, and the letter may have been written 'for the record', in case something happened to its author. Djilas was being increasingly isolated within Yugoslavia, and it must have been a hard blow when even Dedijer abandoned him. He reassured Phillips that he had nothing to do with Dedijer's negotiations with the regime, which, he believed, had been ongoing.²³ Any signs of support from abroad, however symbolic, must have been important to the Yugoslav dissident, who increasingly lived the life of an 'internal émigré'.²⁴

In his *Encounter* article, Phillips wrote that he had known Tito personally since the summer of 1952, when he visited the Yugoslav president at his villa at the Adriatic island of Brioni.²⁵ In fact, Phillips had met Tito once before, in September 1950, when he went to Yugoslavia together with Sam Watson, head of the International Sub-Committee of the Labour Party and trade union leader, and Harry Earnshaw, member of the party's National Executive Committee.²⁶ Probably because it had been already decided that Djilas would visit Britain the following year,²⁷ he acted as a host to the Labour delegation, with whom the Yugoslav communists quickly established a friendly relationship.²⁸ Djilas in particular got on with British delegates, with some of whom he shared a similar social background and character.²⁹ Ironically, in the light of Djilas' probable reasons for writing the letter to Phillips, Tito invited the Labour Party delegation so that leading members of this 'largest workers' organisation in Europe', in Tito's words, could form an objective view of the situation in Yugoslavia, and presumably thus neutralize negative effects of the Moscow-inspired anti-Yugoslav propaganda.³⁰ In addition to Tito and Djilas, the British delegates also met with other leading Yugoslav communists, including Dedijer, who acted as an interpreter, Moša Pijade and Boris Kidrić. Apart from Belgrade, Yugoslavia's capital, the Labour delegates went to Zagreb and Ljubljana and visited several smaller towns, including Sremska Mitrovica and the state prison there.³¹ The visit to the prison was probably arranged so that the Yugoslavs could demonstrate to members of the British delegation their humane treatment of political prisoners. In another twist of irony, Djilas would return as a prisoner to Sremska Mitrovica only 5 years later, having served time in the same prison in the 1930s, as an

activist of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, illegal in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia since the early 1920s.³²

The Second Letter and Anglo-Yugoslav Reactions

Phillips believed a private letter to Tito would be the most effective way of helping Djilas.³³ He reassured Yugoslavia's President that he did not wish to interfere in the country's internal affairs. Instead, Phillips stressed that he was merely interested in the 'human aspect' of the Djilas affair, without mentioning that Djilas had written to him. Phillips reminded Tito that soon after Djilas was denounced in 1954, Sam Watson and he went to see the Yugoslav Ambassador in London informally.³⁴ They believed the Djilas case provided 'the kind of test that would demonstrate to progressive opinion throughout the world the measure of your progress towards a real socialist democracy'. Phillips was clearly of the same opinion 2 years later.

Unlike in 1954, when Tito wrote back to Bevan, this time there was to be no reply from the Yugoslav President. Instead, the above-mentioned fierce criticism of Phillips, the Labour Party and Britain was published in *Borba* on 20 May 1956. The article hardly referred to Djilas, but attempted instead to discredit Phillips as an uninformed, irresponsible and ill-intentioned person, whose understanding of the nature of Yugoslav socialism and of international relations in general was poor.³⁵ The Yugoslavs seemed particularly upset that Phillips suggested a possible connection between the treatment of Djilas and Yugoslavia's shift back towards the Soviet Union. Finally, Veljko Vlahović, officially the author of the public reply, accused Phillips of spreading anti-Yugoslav propaganda, by circulating his letter to other socialist parties in Western Europe.³⁶ The British imperialism was not spared either: Vlahović advised the leadership of the Labour Party to mind their government's business in Cyprus and Kenya, instead of interfering in Yugoslavia's internal affairs.³⁷ Because of the nature of the Yugoslav regime at the time, there was no doubt whatsoever that Vlahović's letter was in fact a collective, public response to Phillips on behalf of Tito and the Yugoslav leadership. Was this the reason why the Yugoslavs believed that rather than an individual act of solidarity with Djilas, Phillips' letter to Tito was similarly a collective, Labour Party effort? Or, even worse from their point of view, could the letter have represented the view of the Socialist International, which Phillips presided over?

It is not clear how Djilas' letter reached Phillips. Djilas first handed it over to Ed Clarke, the correspondent for the American magazines *Time* and *Life*, who then

passed the letter to Richard Williams, the BBC correspondent in Belgrade.³⁸ Both Clarke and Williams had hoped the British embassy in Belgrade would be able and willing to send the letter to Phillips using the diplomatic bag. However, the embassy rejected the suggestion, though not before first making several copies of the letter, both in English and Serbo-Croat. The original was then returned to Williams, who gave it back to Clarke.³⁹ Although the British embassy refused to act as an intermediary between Djilas and Phillips, a copy of the letter was sent to the Foreign Office – in a diplomatic bag. Another copy in English was passed onto the US embassy in Belgrade.⁴⁰

Phillips understandably did not give any details about the letter in his article in *Encounter*. He merely wrote that 'In April 1954,⁴¹ I learned that his [Djilas'] persecution was to be intensified by attempts to compromise him publicly on moral issues and to destroy his marriage and family life'.⁴² Phillips also added that he received the news about Djilas from several sources, without revealing those.⁴³ One of the sources, we now know, was Djilas himself. Phillips had also received information on Djilas through Bevan and Jennie Lee, who wrote regularly on events in Yugoslavia in *Tribune*; in addition, he probably read articles about Djilas published in the western press, in particular *The New York Times*.⁴⁴

How did Djilas manage to send the letter? The relevant Foreign Office papers available in the National Archives do not shed any light on this small mystery. Gwyneth Dunwoody, MP, Phillips' daughter, who has a vivid recollection of her late father's interest in Yugoslavia and his friendship with Djilas, could not answer this question either, nor could Michael Foot, who was close to Bevan and Jennie Lee and who had maintained a keen interest in the Djilas affair.⁴⁵ The only clue was given by Frank Roberts, the then British Ambassador to Yugoslavia, who in a report to London wrote that in all probability the letter was 'smuggled out of Yugoslavia for onward transmission with the help of an American correspondent friendly to Djilas'.⁴⁶ Was the American correspondent Roberts referred to Ed Clarke? Most likely. Clarke's wife Catherine later smuggled out of Yugoslavia the manuscript of Djilas' most important and most influential work, *The New Class*.⁴⁷

The British embassy's refusal to act as an intermediary was understandable. The government in London did not welcome Phillips' letter to Tito.⁴⁸ Although in 1954–5 Belgrade and Moscow had largely achieved a rapprochement, Yugoslavia remained the only Communist country in Europe friendly to the West. Britain, like other western countries, was therefore anxious to keep good relations with the Balkan country, as already suggested above. As recently as March 1953 (only days before Stalin's death which eventually paved the way for the Yugoslav–Soviet rapprochement) Tito visited Britain, thus becoming the first communist

leader to pay an official state visit to a western country. Although the official Britain could not turn a blind eye to the way the Yugoslav regime treated its leading dissident, it could not afford to risk deteriorating the relationship with Yugoslavia either.

Not that the Yugoslav leadership was indifferent in respect of its relationship with the British government and with the opposition Labour Party. Tito feared that Phillips sent copies of his letter to other West European socialist parties and personally protested to the British Ambassador in Belgrade upon receiving the letter, as Roberts reported to Selwyn Lloyd, Britain's Foreign Secretary.⁴⁹ After the 1948 split with Moscow, the Yugoslav communists were particularly keen to keep good relations with the European Left, but especially with the Labour Party, regarded by Tito as the most important party of the left in Europe. At the time, both West German⁵⁰ and Swedish⁵¹ social-democrats protested to the Yugoslav authorities because of Djilas' predicament. For their own reasons, both Tito and Roberts must have been relieved when the Foreign Office received assurances on 8 June from the Labour Party that Phillips did not circulate his letter. Only 4 days previously Moša Pijade, another leading Yugoslav Communist, 'declared roundly [to Roberts] that the Morgan Phillips letter *had* been circulated to other Western Socialist Parties and indeed that this was the reason why the Yugoslav Government took the incident more seriously than they otherwise would have done'.⁵² Gwyneth Dunwoody does not know whether her father circulated the letter, but believes that Djilas wrote to him both as his personal friend *and* as president of the Socialist International.⁵³ Phillips' letter to Tito thus could not have been merely a personal letter, regardless of his motives. In any event, the manner of the Yugoslav response made it clear that Belgrade took the whole issue onto a more formal, inter-state level.

The False Mistress Affair and the Aftermath

The information Djilas received from his sources in the secret police proved correct. Only 4 days after he wrote the letter to Phillips, his wife Štefanija was approached by a young woman at a Belgrade street. The woman introduced herself in a loud voice as Djilas' mistress and demanded that Mrs Djilas grant her husband a divorce. The whole incident was clearly meant to discredit Djilas in public. Djilas' wife was briefly arrested and appeared in court 'on a charge of having created a public disturbance'.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the regime's attempt to ruin Djilas' marriage and discredit him morally in public backfired, not least because the Djilases had expected a similar incident.⁵⁵ Tipped by Djilas, the foreign press wrote about the regime's conspiracy, so not a single Yugoslav paper reported

the incident, although a fierce anti-Djilas campaign would have undoubtedly followed.⁵⁶

Roberts believed, probably correctly, that the incident was masterminded by Yugoslavia's vice president Aleksandar Ranković, in charge of the UDBa, the Yugoslav secret police.⁵⁷ The British Ambassador was of the opinion that the main reason why the Yugoslav authorities soon abandoned the plot to discredit Djilas was the article in *The New York Times* and Phillips' letter to Tito.⁵⁸ The Yugoslav leadership, Roberts correctly concluded, cared about its image in the West. Moreover, referring to the whole Djilas affair, Roberts was convinced that 'the Western press and Western public, whose goodwill is still valued [in Belgrade], prevented drastic action of the normal totalitarian type'.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, the official line in Belgrade was that Djilas was a marginal figure whose significance was blown out of all proportion by the Western press. In June 1956 Roberts reported to London that Ranković had told him the Yugoslav authorities did not take Phillips' letter seriously and that Djilas was only important in the eyes of Western journalists.⁶⁰ Ranković made similar statements to foreign journalists. When Eric Bourne, the *Christian Science Monitor* correspondent from Belgrade, met Ranković at a reception in the Italian embassy in Belgrade on 9 June 1956, he asked him what was his greatest challenge as the acting president of Yugoslavia (Tito was on a trip abroad). Ranković instantly replied: 'Milovan Djilas'. After a few moments, when he realized that the American journalist believed him, Ranković admitted he had been joking. 'Djilas was only a problem for *The Times* [of London] and *The New York Times* and not for the Yugoslav Government', he told Bourne, adding that he would be happy to be quoted as saying that 'the Yugoslav Government did not intend to do anything whatever to Djilas'.⁶¹ The implication was not only that Djilas had been left alone by the regime, but that he was a figure of marginal importance.

Although Ranković, as the person in charge of the secret police, was undoubtedly involved in the false mistress affair and even though his men were keeping Djilas under surveillance, the British diplomats appeared to have believed him. Ranković convincingly argued that Djilas portrayed himself as a victim, but that in reality he and his family enjoyed a standard of living higher than most Yugoslav citizens.⁶² However, the British diplomats seem to have forgotten that Djilas himself had stressed in the letter to Phillips that he did not need financial support, pointing out that his family enjoyed a higher standard of living than average Yugoslavs. A letter from the Foreign Office official Jack Ward to Roberts is indicative of the official British position in relation to the incident caused by Phillips' letter to Tito:

I was glad to learn from your letter [. . .] of June 19,⁶⁵ reporting your conversation with Rankovic, that Yugoslav feeling on the question of Morgan Phillips' letter is becoming less strong. Perhaps with the passage of time this tactless, if well intentioned, move by the Labour Party⁶⁴ may gradually come to be forgotten if not forgiven.⁶⁵ We noted that there was no reference to the Labour Party in the latest anti-Djilas outbursts in 'Borba' and 'Politika' which Hayman enclosed with his letter to Young of June 15.⁶⁶

London may not have been prepared to risk its relationship with Belgrade over Djilas, but Roberts' view that the fate of the Yugoslav dissident should concern the West was probably shared in the Foreign Office. In the aftermath of the whole affair, the British Ambassador wrote in a report to the Foreign Office that despite the damaging effects that the Labour support for Djilas might have had on the relations between Yugoslavia and the West, 'and however foolish and martyrdom-seeking Djilas may be, I am sure it would have been wrong for the West to have ignored the whole matter'.⁶⁷ He correctly assessed the Yugoslav leadership's reluctant 'liberalism' and a partial return to the pre-1948 position:

While advocating the 'encouragement of better tendencies' behind the Iron Curtain, the Yugoslavs are the first to deprecate over-rapid advances and such events as the Poznan riots provoke anxious thought rather than real pleasure. This contrasts notably with the sympathetic handling of the 1953 Berlin riots in Yugoslavia. In fact in some respects the Yugoslav rulers, having established themselves and developed their own distinctive brand of Communism, are becoming a conservative as well as liberating force or example in Eastern Europe.⁶⁸

As for Djilas, Roberts believed that it would have been better 'if some attempt had been made by the Yugoslav leaders to answer Djilas' arguments, instead of either ignoring them or dismissing them with the "Stalinist" interpretation [of those arguments]'.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, British diplomats were of the opinion that the relatively mild treatment at the hands of the Yugoslav authorities (presumably by standards set by the Soviets?) made it impossible for Djilas to turn himself into a hero and a victim.⁷⁰ Since Yugoslavia was not part of the Soviet bloc, it appears the British did not expect Belgrade's measures against opposition to be as harsh as those behind the Iron Curtain.

Members of the Conservative government, not unlike Phillips, believed that the Djilas affair served as a litmus test in respect of the future direction of Yugoslavia's domestic as well as foreign policy. A Foreign Office report, written

at Churchill's request in the immediate aftermath of Djilas' fall in January 1954, stated:

Djilas' fault was that he was several steps in advance of the Communist Old Guard in his political thinking. He was moving too fast towards liberalism. Even so he probably would not have been punished so drastically if he had not in a separate article attacked the personal behaviour of leading party members [...] Nevertheless, he is still alive and free. This in itself shows how Yugoslavia differs from the Cominformist countries. Tito has declared that the Djilas affair was not to be allowed to affect Yugoslav foreign policy.⁷¹

Even 8 years after the Yugoslav–Soviet split, the British were not sure whether Yugoslavia would remain indefinitely outside the Soviet bloc. This was understandable given the mixed signals coming from Belgrade after 1953.

In the first half of 1956, the British believed that Djilas had lost not only in political significance but also his touch with reality. However, they did not discount the possibility of him playing an important political role in future. In the final report on the incident involving the two letters, Roberts wrote:

Inevitably Djilas, at best an unbalanced, egotistical and patchily brilliant figure, has lost touch with events in his period of isolation; he has not at present any real following – even Dedijer is now at odds with him – and I doubt whether he has a future in this country as long as Tito controls it. But he is only 45 and I would certainly not exclude his re-emergence in any post-Tito era influenced by liberal tendencies in the outside communist world.⁷²

When Djilas was finally arrested in November 1956 for allegedly 'carrying on propaganda against the State' and his flat ransacked by the UDBa, Roberts seemed surprised. 'This sudden action is in marked contrast to the previous attitude of studied contempt towards Djilas shown by Ranković and others', he wrote in a confidential report to the Foreign Office.⁷³ The British Ambassador tried to explain the authorities' action by Tito's anxiety over how events elsewhere in Eastern Europe might impact Yugoslavia, citing the Yugoslav President's recent speech in Pula.⁷⁴ Roberts was obviously referring to the Hungarian revolution and the upheavals in Poland. In the Pula speech of 11 November 1956, Tito condemned the first Soviet intervention in Hungary of late October, but condoned the second intervention of early November. As already mentioned, Djilas was arrested in November for his criticism of both Soviet interventions.⁷⁵

A year later, Djilas was taken to court once again, this time because of the

publication of *The New Class*. The British continued to view the Djilas case primarily through the prism of international diplomacy, although they now took the Yugoslav dissident more seriously, judging by a detailed report sent to London by John Nicholls, the new British Ambassador to Belgrade. Nicholls believed the trial would lead to 'a new deterioration of relations between the Yugoslavs and the Labour Party' and other Western socialist parties, and that both external and internal factors were behind the clampdown on Djilas:

[W]hen *Borba*, in suitably obscurantist terms, indignantly refutes the suggestion that the trial was held to please the Russians, one is tempted to believe that there is a good deal in it. Similarly when the same newspaper asserts that it is not Djilas's ideas but his criminal conspiracy with the international forces of reaction which are on trial, there is good reason to consider what support there may be among the people of Yugoslavia for some of these ideas. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that both these factors weighed heavily in the decision to go through with a trial which could only offend Yugoslavia's friends in the Western world and injure her growing reputation as the centre of a new form of enlightened Communism.⁷⁶

Conclusions

What is the wider significance of and what conclusions can be drawn from this work? First, Djilas' letter to Morgan Phillips provides evidence about his treatment by the Yugoslav authorities 7 months before he was first arrested and before his dissent became internationally widely known. It also describes some of the methods used by a communist secret police against political and ideological enemies.

Second, the letter provides a unique insight into Djilas' character and personality. Although in April 1956 he was in a difficult situation, under the constant police surveillance and exposed to an increasing pressure by the regime, Djilas maintained a principled and brave position. The letter also provides some examples of his later well-known fair-mindedness. Although his family was in a difficult position financially, Djilas did not seek help in this respect, pointing out that they enjoyed a standard of living above the Yugoslav average. It is clear from the letter to Phillips that Djilas above all wanted to let his Western friends know his version of events. This seems to have been the main reason for writing the letter, the content of which suggested that Djilas could not be broken morally and ideologically, as the future events would confirm.

Third, Phillips' letter to Tito provides an example of the support for Djilas among some leading members of the Labour Party. It came not just from personal friends such as Phillips, Bevan and Lee, or Watson. Michael Foot recalls that Djilas' democratic socialism resonated strongly among members of the Labour Party and so did his writings on the Soviet Union.⁷⁷ Foot himself followed Djilas' work closely, immediately recognizing the importance of *The New Class*, 'a distinguished piece of writing, alive with the most pungent and revealing aphorisms and ranging far and wide over the whole field of Communist theory'.⁷⁸ In what was a thinly disguised reply to Djilas' detractors, Foot wrote soon after the book's publication: 'Anyone who attempts to dismiss it [*The New Class*] as a wild tirade of a disillusioned Communist will only brand himself'.⁷⁹ The relations between the Labour Party and the Yugoslav Communists, once warm, somewhat cooled down due to the Djilas affair. Nevertheless, the Party officially remained neutral, while there were those who publicly criticized Djilas and his work. For instance, neither Barbara Castle⁸⁰ nor Richard Crossman⁸¹ thought much of *The New Class*. Castle described the book as 'wild denunciation of Yugoslav Communism'; in her view Djilas' personal bitterness against his former colleagues has blinded him to the fact that they are groping their way along a road which has already led them to a mixed economy infinitely more humane than anything the Soviet bloc has produced'.⁸² Crossman was similarly critical of the book, though he also believed it 'may well prove as epoch-making as John Locke's treatise *Of Civil Government* [...] like Locke's *Of Civil Government*, it [*The New Class*] is one of those bad books which may well become a classic'.⁸³

When Ernest Davies, a Labour MP and a former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, visited Djilas in Belgrade at the end of summer 1954, Djilas expressed a desire to publish his views in the pro-Labour newspaper *The Daily Herald*. Although Davies, himself a journalist, promised to arrange this, the paper never published Djilas' articles. Djilas was convinced that the reason for this was the Labour leadership's reluctance to upset Tito and the Yugoslav government.⁸⁴ How deep these internal party divisions over Djilas were and whether there was much debate inside the party on the issue needs to be further explored. What is clear, however, is that the group around *Tribune* sided with Djilas (as well as Dedijer),⁸⁵ while those around *The New Statesman* tended to be more supportive of Tito. These allegiances, however, had little if anything to do with the division of the party on 'Bevanites' and 'Gaitskellites'; for instance, Barbara Castle was a 'Bevanite', while Morgan Phillips was not. In any event, some of those who supported Djilas from the start, such as Michael Foot, still held Tito in high esteem,⁸⁶ while even Djilas' loudest advocates, Bevan, Jennie Lee and Morgan Phillips, who could hardly hide their disappointment with and

anger at the Yugoslav leader,⁸⁷ continued to look fondly at socialist Yugoslavia.⁸⁸

Fourth, the Conservative Party, then in government, was more interested in maintaining good relations with Communist-ruled Yugoslavia than in supporting Djilas. However, the official Britain had hoped the Yugoslav regime did not replicate brutal measures against dissent common in the rest of Eastern Europe and in the USSR. The question remains what position a Labour government would have taken. The publication of *The New Class* made Djilas undoubtedly the most significant East European dissident. From then on, the Foreign Office would take considerably more interest in his work and destiny. This article shows that some British diplomats did not quite understand the significance of Djilas' dissent in 1956, 2 years after he fell from power.

Roberts was largely correct when he wrote that Djilas did not enjoy support inside Yugoslavia in the mid-1950s,⁸⁹ but his belief that Djilas could still play a role in post-Tito Yugoslavia would be proven wrong. When Tito died in 1980, Djilas was 69 years old. By the time the League of Communists of Yugoslavia broke up and a multi-party system was re-introduced in 1990, Djilas was perhaps too old to resume his political career. However, it is indicative of the then state of Yugoslav politics and society that not a single political party deemed it appropriate to seek advice from someone with such invaluable experience and an unparalleled prestige abroad. At the time of the collapse of Yugoslavia, Djilas clearly could not have played a major public role. As a non-nationalist, pro-Yugoslav and an advocate of moderate, social-democratic ideas, his views were as alien to Tito's mostly anti-communist and nationalist successors in the 1990s as they had been in Tito's Yugoslavia since the mid-1950s.

Finally, this article may serve as a point from which some wider issues could be approached: the relationship between the Labour Party and other socialist parties in Western Europe and Yugoslav Communists during the Cold War; internal arguments inside Labour over the conflict between Tito and Djilas; the official British position towards the Yugoslav regime and opposition, and, more generally, post-1945 Anglo-Yugoslav relations; and the treatment of ideological enemies in Communist-dominated Eastern Europe. These topics remain under-researched.

Appendix 1: Milovan Djilas to Morgan Phillips⁹⁰

[p. 1]

Milovan Djilas

Belgrade, Palmotićevo 8

Belgrade, 12 April 1956

Mr. Morgan Phillips

Member of Parliament

Secretary of Labour Party

The House of Commons

London

Dear Friend,

I think that the contents of this letter will explain my motives in writing to you.

As you well know, just over two years ago I came into public conflict with my former friends in the leadership of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. I know that the essential reasons for that conflict are known to you – a conflict which from that time has unavoidably become sharper. Thanks to the support of public opinion, and especially that given by the working-class movement in the West (including yourself and Mr. Bevan), I have not been arrested, although all public activity has been denied to me.

My position, since that time, has become increasingly more painful and complicated, due to Government measures against me.

I make so free as to inform you, in brief, of the situation. When very young I became a revolutionary and prison barred the way to my finishing my studies. I lived by my pen and my revolutionary activity. After the war and the revolution I was for ten years a Minister in the Yugoslav Government. After the staged trial in January 1955, the Government took away my war pension. This measure was illegal and its sole aim was to exert pressure on me. Similar measures were taken against my family. My brother was dismissed from his job on the grounds that he had not sufficiently cut himself off from me that he continued to visit me. And my sister who has four children (you met her

[p. 2]

in London in January 1951)^[91] was thrown out of her job without any justification whatsoever.

The same treatment was accorded to her husband, Komnen Cerović, a Minister in the Montenegrin Government. Later he obtained a position as a junior official – otherwise his family would have died of starvation. A relative of mine, an Army Major, was dismissed without rights after 15 years' service because he twice visited my family.

Thus I am reduced to the position where I, my son and my mother, subsist on my wife's pay as an official and from the sale of household property. As a political journalist I am naturally not in a position to publish anything.

Immediately after the row, I had to move from my villa into a reasonably good flat in the town. Now, however, I have received notification of the decision – an illegal one – to dispossess me, on the grounds that I have no right to a separate work-room, as I am not an 'intellectual'.

The same treatment has been accorded to my friend, Colonel Jovan Barović,^[92] a disabled ex-serviceman. First they threw him out of the Army. Now they have thrown him out of his civilian job, although he has a wife, also an invalid, and two small children. This action a senior Government official, Vuksan Ljumović justified on the grounds that he (Barović) visits me and associates with me.

There are other instances of the same sort of thing. People have been given court sentences for showing sympathy towards me.

[p. 3]

Every citizen who in any way comes into contact with me is interrogated by the police and pressure [is] put on him either to cut himself off from all contact with me or inform the police of my views, behaviour etc.

Secret police have taken a flat opposite mine and installed a camera with which they photograph everyone who enters or leaves. Day and night a car full of police agents cruises around the house. Never less than two agents follow me wherever I go. Now there is a car escort as well. The agents make no secret of the fact they are following me and try to provoke me and my wife to physical violence.

People who come into contact with me these days are, apart from close relatives and the rare visits of two foreign newspaper men, confined to agent provocateurs.

I have serious reasons for suspecting that modern secret microphones have been installed in my apartment.

I also have reasons for believing that my post is not only intercepted but that everything not in the interests of the regime's plan to 'kill me by silencing me' as a prominent member of the Government put it, is lifted from it. From foreigners who have succeeded in visiting me I heard of letters, messages of greeting and invitations which never reached me. So I heard that legal defence at my trial was offered from abroad, but I was never informed about it.

Having failed to destroy me ideologically and politically by slandering me in the press and by rigging

[p. 4]

the trial, the Government is now preparing measures to compromise me publicly on moral issues and to destroy my marriage and family. With this aim they have continued their provocations combined with an ever stricter and unrestricted control of my movements.

I do not intend to tell you about the other discriminatory measures and historical falsifications which have been carried out against me: in any case they are of a similar pattern to those in similar systems.

I believe that the Government's actions and preparations against me are closely connected with the present shifts in the internal and foreign policy of Yugoslavia. I do not wish to enter into an analysis of this shift, because I do not wish to influence your own judgement of the policy of the Government of my country. My object is to acquaint you with the truth, hoping for your moral support. Please do not think that I am asking you to intervene or help in any way. Material assistance I would not accept. I was indeed offered such assistance by the American Trade Unions, but rejected it, because my standard of living is

not lower than that of the average Yugoslav – in other words, my family is not threatened with starvation.

I should also like to call your attention to the following: Vladimir Dedijer, who supported my action in the sense that he did not approve the undemocratic measures taken against me by the Party, is now having discussions with the Yugoslav Government, the nature of which is unknown to me, and which have no reference to me.

[p. 5]

I am sure that you yourselves [sic] will best decide how and where to use this letter, which I have been able to send thanks to the kindness and bravery of a friend.

Finally, I should like to assure you that, though the regime by its actions has embittered me, it has only strengthened my faith in democratic Socialism.

I must apologise for not being able to write this letter in English.

Yours sincerely,

(sgd) MILOVAN DJILAS

Appendix 2: Morgan Phillips to Josip Broz Tito, President of Yugoslavia⁹³

[p. 1]

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

MP/IL

21 April, 1956

Marshal Tito,

President of the Yugoslav Republic,

Belgrade,

Yugoslavia.

My dear Marshal,

It is indeed painful to me to have to write a letter of this kind because since my visit to you six years ago, I have been particularly interested in the experiments in your country, and have become attached to you and your colleagues.

I have appreciated the nature and the extent of the problems that you have had to overcome, but recently I have been disturbed by news that I have received.

I have no doubt that you are aware that when you put Djilas and Dedijer on trial, Mr. Sam Watson and myself had a private and informal talk with your Ambassador in London. At that time we made our view clear that this was the kind of test that would demonstrate to progressive opinion throughout the world the measure of your progress towards a real socialist democracy.

We were relieved at the result of the trial but now we find that as a result of evidence that has accumulated over the last eighteen months, our relief was a little misplaced.

I understand, for example, that you have deprived Mr. Djilas of his war pension; that you have dismissed members of his family from their jobs. This was extended even to the

husband of one of Mr. Djilas' sisters. Even more distant relatives have been dismissed without any rights from the army after long service because they visited his family.

[p. 2]

I appreciate that Djilas is a political journalist and that in a country such as yours with the publications you have, he is unable to earn a livelihood in that field, but I should have thought that some means could have been found to enable him to earn an honourable livelihood. Not only is his livelihood affected, but I understand that he has been moved from his villa into a flat and that he is now to be dispossessed of that because it is argued that he has no right to a separate work-room because he is not an intellectual.

The same kind of story is equally true of Colonel Jovan Barovic, and I am told that there are a number of people who have been given court sentences because they have shown sympathy to someone who is a former comrade in the struggle for the liberation of Yugoslavia.

Furthermore, your secret police have extended their activities; photograph people and follow around your former comrade and indeed, according to my evidence, make no secret of the fact that this is what they are doing.

I must confess that I am appalled that the country which in 1950 I supported in article and public speaking, and in private documents to the then Foreign Secretary of our own government – Ernest Bevin^[94] – should have slipped back into the evil ways of the Cominform countries. I do not know whether this is related to what appears to be a shift in the foreign policy of your country – that, however, is not my business. I am only concerned with the human aspect of administration, and I still hope that you can in your relation with individuals demonstrate to the world the fundamental superiority of a socialist system of society. I do not want to say anything publicly in this matter yet, but I shall be very glad indeed to receive your observations.

Yours sincerely,

(MORGAN PHILLIPS)

Secretary

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Dr Aleksa Djilas, Gwyneth Dunwoody, MP, and Michael Foot for sharing their invaluable knowledge and personal insights. I would also like to thank: two anonymous readers on their helpful comments and suggestions; Professor Ilaria Favretto for arranging the refereeing of this article and in the process raising some important questions; Professor John Young for agreeing to read the article in midst of a busy term; Dr Nina Fishman for unearthing some relevant documents from the Sam Watson papers; Igor Mrkalj for pointing out several factual errors; and two seminar audiences at Columbia University, New York, for a number of questions and comments. Needless to say, I am solely responsible for the content of the article, including any remaining errors. An earlier version of this article was published as 'Britanci i afera Djilas, 1956', in Branko Popović (ed.), *Djelo Milovana Djilasa* (Podgorica 2003), 159–78.

Notes

1. Milovan Djilas, *Vlast i pobuna* (Belgrade 1991), 305. This book was first published in English as *Rise and Fall* (San Diego, CA 1985). On the Yugoslav official position in relation to events in Hungary see Veljko Mićunović, *Moskovske godine, 1956–1958* (Zagreb 1977), 159–60. Mićunović was then the Yugoslav Ambassador to Moscow.
2. Morgan Phillips (1902–63) was a Member of Parliament, the Labour Party Secretary between 1944 and 1961, and president of the Socialist International between 1948 and 1957. He was one of the chief proponents of the unity of the Party and supported the 'moderate' faction led by Hugh Gaitskell (1906–63) against the 'left' faction, the so-called 'Bevanites', led by Aneurin Bevan (1897–1960) and against the 'right' faction. Phillips (like Bevan) opposed unilateral disarmament, the issue which divided the Labour Party during the early stages of the Cold War, although it was only one of several bones of contention following the 1951 election defeat. See Stephen Haseler, *The Gaitskellites: Revisionism in the British Labour Party, 1951–64* (London 1969), and Keith Laybourn, *A Century of Labour: A History of the Labour Party, 1900–2000* (Stroud 2000), 89–109.
3. See also Djilas, *Vlast*, op. cit., 295.
4. An early and still valuable analysis of Djilas' dissent is Thomas T. Hammond, 'The Djilas Affair and Yugoslav Communism', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (January 1955), 298–315.
5. Djilas wrote about his life extensively, most notably in *Land Without Justice* (New York 1958), *Memoir of a Revolutionary* (New York 1973), *Wartime* (New York 1977), *Conversations with Stalin* (New York 1962), and *Rise and Fall*, op. cit. (the books are listed in chronological order in respect of the period they cover). His other major books are the already mentioned *The New Class* (New York 1957) and *Anatomy of a Moral* (New York 1959). In addition to autobiographical and historical and political writings Djilas wrote novels, short stories and poetry. He also translated into Serbo-Croat works in Russian and English, including John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which he famously translated while in prison, writing on toilet paper. Among several biographies of Djilas in English, probably the best is Stephen Clissold, *Djilas: The Progress of a Revolutionary* (Hounslow 1983). Aleksa Djilas, 'Chronology of Milovan Djilas's Life and Work', *The South Slav Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 1–2, 95–6; (Spring–Summer 2004), 78–95, is a concise and informative account that provides a full list of Djilas' books in English and Serbo-Croat as well as a list of books on Djilas in these two languages.
6. In fact, Phillips' letter to Tito in English and Djilas' letter to Phillips in Serbo-Croat were for the first time published as appendices to the Serbian version of this article. See the acknowledgement note above.
7. Morgan Phillips, 'The Rebel and the Prisoner', *Encounter*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (October 1957), 39–43. The article was published together with contributions by R.H.S. Crossman and Richard Lowenthal in a separate section of the journal entitled 'L'Affaire Djilas', *ibid.*, 35–50.
8. Clissold, op. cit., 279.
9. Djilas, *Vlast*, op. cit., 265, 291.
10. For Bevan's letter to Tito and Tito's reply, see Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan: A Biography* (London 1973), 420–1. Despite some political differences that existed between Bevan and Djilas the two men were friends and shared a similar character and temper, according to Jennie Lee. See Lee, *My Life with Nye* (London 1980), 194. For Djilas' description of his friendship with Bevan see *Vlast*, op. cit., 265. Djilas' book *Conversations with Stalin*, op. cit. was dedicated to Bevan.

11. Darko Bekić, *Jugoslavija u Hladnom ratu: Odnosi s velikim silama, 1949–1955* (Zagreb 1988), 579.
12. C.L. Sulzberger, *Paradise Regained: Memoir of a Rebel* (New York 1989), 19.
13. Author's interview with Michael Foot, London, 14 December 2005.
14. See for instance Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Yugoslavia* (London 1971), Ch. 5, and Lorraine Lees, *Keeping Tito Afloat: The United States, Yugoslavia and the Cold War* (University Park, PA 1997). For Britain's policy towards the USSR see John Young, *Winston Churchill's Last Campaign: Britain and the Cold War, 1951–5* (Oxford 1996), and his chapter 'Cold War and Detente with Moscow', in John Young, ed., *The Foreign Policy of Churchill's Peacetime Administration, 1951–1955* (Leicester 1988), 55–80.
15. Geoffrey Swain and Nigel Swain, *Eastern Europe Since 1945* (London 1995), 81; John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a Country* (Cambridge 2002), 2nd edn., 267.
16. Soviet troops intervened twice: first on 24 October, 1 day after the revolution had begun, and again on 4 November when it became clear that communist rule in Hungary had *de facto* collapsed. The revolution was crushed by 7 November – ironically, the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution. Several thousand died and perhaps over 200,000 Hungarians fled to the West.
17. Paul Johnson, 'The Great Yalta Mystery', *The New Statesman and the Nation*, 20 October 1956.
18. Swain and Swain, op. cit., 84.
19. 'Purged Yugoslav Asks For Two Parties, More Democracy', *The New York Times*, 25 December 1954.
20. The Milovan Djilas Papers, 'Žena (zapis o Štefici)' [The Woman (An essay about Štefica)], unpublished manuscript, 91. I am grateful to Dr Aleksa Djilas for enabling me to read the relevant pages of the essay.
21. Mitra Mitrović (1912–2001) was a minister of education in the government of the People's Republic of Serbia in the years after the war.
22. However, Djilas later wrote that the family had no savings and no food reserves, while only his mother's room was heated during the winter months. In order to survive they had to sell furniture and other valuables. *Vlast*, op. cit., 289–99.
23. See also *ibid.*, 290–2, 296–303. The Yugoslav authorities, however, continued to keep Dedijer under close scrutiny. Following her visit to Yugoslavia in late 1956, Jennie Lee wrote to Sam Watson that 'Vladimir [Dedijer] considers the letters he gets from you both [i.e. Sam and his wife Jennie] now and again are an important lifeline to him. The Yugoslav authorities know that he has a number of friends in England and that there would be quite a bit of unpleasant fuss if he were arrested. I am only repeating what Vladimir himself has said; that it really matters to him that we continue to write from time to time'. Jennie Lee to Sam Watson, House of Commons, London, 21 December 1956, *Sam Watson Papers*, Durham County Record Office. Following a series of lectures Dedijer gave in the Scandinavian countries in May 1957, he was criticized by the Yugoslav government, which refused to allow him to leave the country to take up a lecturing post at the University of Manchester later that year. See Vladimir Dedijer, 'Only real democracy can bring us safely to our goal', *Tribune*, 7 June 1957, and Barbara Castle, 'Yugoslavia after Djilas', *The New Statesman*, 10 August 1957.
24. The term often used in relation to dissidents in Stalin's Soviet Union. Interestingly, Djilas was first described as an 'internal émigré' by Vlahović in 1954, soon after the Third Plenum. Vlahović, like most other former comrades who turned against him, had supported Djilas'

- ideas prior to January 1954. Djilas, *Vlast*, op. cit., 284.
25. Phillips, op. cit., 41.
 26. Razgovor maršala Tita i predstavnika engleske Laburističke partije – stenografske beleške, Arhiv Josipa Broza Tita, I-2/133 (Conversation between Marshal Tito and representatives of the English [sic] Labour Party – stenographic notes, The Josip Broz Tito Archives, Belgrade). See Čedomir Štrbac, 'Britanski laburisti u Jugoslaviji 1950', in *Jugoslovensko-britanski odnosi* (Belgrade 1988), 331–44, 335.
 27. See Note 91.
 28. Djilas, *Vlast*, op. cit., 223.
 29. At Brioni in 1952, Phillips politely corrected Tito that he was not an Englishman, but a Welshman; Wales was that small and mountainous country where people were romantic and temperamental, Phillips explained after the Yugoslav president made the common mistake by referring to all British as 'English'. Tito replied: 'But you are a Montenegrin then! You must get to know Djilas!' Author's interview with Gwyneth Dunwoody, MP (daughter of Morgan Phillips), London, 13 December 2005. Djilas and Bevan, another Welshman, also became good friends. See above, Note 10.
 30. Razgovor maršala Tita i predstavnika engleske Laburističke partije – stenografske beleške, cited in Štrbac, op. cit., 334.
 31. *Ibid.*, 335, 337.
 32. Years later Djilas would send a photo to Sulzberger, taken in prison in 1936, with the inscription: 'To C.L. Sulzberger. With friendship – this photo from prison 1936 because in prison[s] of Yugoslavia of which I was one of the creators photography is forbidden. Milovan Djilas'. Sulzberger, op. cit., 48.
 33. Phillips, op. cit., 41. Gwyneth Dunwoody recalls her father's anger and disappointment with Tito upon discovering the way Djilas was being treated. Interview with the author, London, 13 December 2005.
 34. The then Yugoslav Ambassador to Britain was Vladimir Velebit (1907–2004), one of Yugoslavia's leading diplomats, who headed Tito's military mission to London between 1943 and 1945, and who had been, during his distinguished career, also the Ambassador to Rome and to the World Bank, as well as the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) between 1960 and 1967.
 35. This in spite of Phillips being regarded only several years previously by the Yugoslavs as instrumental in securing British material aid to Yugoslavia in the aftermath of the September 1950 visit of the Labour delegation. Yugoslavia had been hit by a drought, and the Yugoslavs believed that Phillips and the Labour Party influenced the US decision to also send aid. Štrbac, op. cit., 341.
 36. National Archives, Kew, Foreign Office files, (hereafter *FO*) 536/107, Roberts to the Foreign Office, Belgrade, 20 May, 1956. See also Phillips, op. cit.
 37. Roberts to the Foreign Office, Belgrade, *FO* 536/107, 20 May, 1956. Vlahović clearly referred to the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya and to the violent clashes between Cypriot Greek insurgents led by Archbishop Makarios and the British troops in Cyprus. Criticism of Britain by Yugoslav officials after 1948 was rare, although in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and before the clash with Moscow the Yugoslav propaganda often targeted British imperialism. See Katarina Spehñjak, 'Propaganda prije svega: Kulturne veze Jugoslavije i Britanije 1945–1948', *Tokovi istorije* (Belgrade), No. 1–2 (2005), 112–33.
 38. I am grateful to Julie Snelling of the BBC archives in Reading, for providing the information

- about Williams, the BBC Balkans correspondent between September 1954 and September 1956, who is referred to in the correspondence as 'Williams' only.
39. P. T. Hayman, FO 536/107, 'Record of Meeting [with Williams]', Belgrade, 14 April 1956.
 40. Roberts to the Foreign Office, Belgrade, FO 376/107, 17 April 1956.
 41. This appears to be a typo: it should be April 1956, when Phillips actually received the letter from Djilas.
 42. Phillips, op. cit., 41.
 43. Ibid.
 44. Between 1954 and up until the late 1980s, *The New York Times* regularly reported on Djilas, published interviews with him and reviewed his books. See Jasna Dragović-Soso, 'Milovan Djilas u Njujork Tajmsu, 1954–1969', in Popović, ed., op. cit., 145–57.
 45. Author's interviews with Gwyneth Dunwoody, MP, London, 13 December 2005, and Michael Foot, London, 14 December 2005.
 46. Roberts to the Foreign Office, Belgrade, FO 536/107, 17 April 1956.
 47. Djilas, *Vlast*, op. cit., 305.
 48. As it is clear from the papers kept in the file FO 536/107.
 49. Roberts to Lloyd, Belgrade, FO 536/107, 11 July 1956.
 50. Ibid.
 51. Bekić, op. cit., 579.
 52. P.T. Hayman to W. H. Young, FO 536/107, 15 June, 1956. Emphasis in original.
 53. Author's interview with Gwyneth Dunwoody, MP, London, 13 December 2005.
 54. Sydney Gruson, 'Ex-Aide of Tito Sees New Smear: Djilas' Wife in Court in Row with Professed Mistress of Former Vice President', *The New York Times*, 21 April 1956.
 55. Officials in the British Embassy in Belgrade believed (correctly as it turned out; see above) that Djilas was secretly forewarned by someone from the secret police or the political establishment about the impending propaganda campaign. Roberts to the Foreign Office, Belgrade, FO 536/107, 17 April 1956.
 56. Gruson, 'Ex-Aide of Tito Sees New Smear', *The New York Times*, op. cit.
 57. Roberts to Selwyn Lloyd, Belgrade, FO 536/107, 11 July 1956. Roberts thought that Tito was not behind the incident, but it is debatable whether even Ranković could have made such a decision without Tito's consent.
 58. Ibid. Roberts believed the young woman was a 'prostitute' paid by the UDBa.
 59. Ibid.
 60. Roberts to Ward, Belgrade, FO 536/10719, June 1956. Roberts talked to Ranković at a reception in the Egyptian Embassy in Belgrade.
 61. FO 536/107, D.L. Stewart, Confidential minutes, 11 June 1956. Present during the conversation was also Eric Bourne's wife Desa (née Pavlović), later a well-known journalist Desa Trevisan of *The Times* of London.
 62. As Ranković told Roberts at a reception in the Egyptian Embassy in Belgrade. Roberts to Ward, Belgrade, FO 536/107, 19 June 1956.
 63. See Note 60.
 64. It is unclear whether Ward believed that Phillips' letter was approved by the Labour leadership, despite the assurances to the contrary on behalf of the Labour Party. Both the British Embassy in Belgrade and the Foreign Office probably could only guess the content of Phillips' letter, since Vlahović's public reply in *Borba* hardly referred to its contents, as already mentioned, and there is no evidence that they had an opportunity to read the letter.

65. Ward probably meant 'forgiven if not forgotten'.
66. Ward to Roberts, London, FO 536/107, 2 July 1956. Hayman to W.H. Young, Belgrade, Hayman's report: FO 536/107, 15 June 1956. *Politika* is the leading Belgrade daily.
67. Roberts to Lloyd, Belgrade, FO 536/107, 11 July 1956.
68. *Ibid.* For the anti-Soviet revolt in Poland, which started in the industrial town of Poznań on 28 June 1956, and the 1953 riots in east Berlin, see R.J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century – and After* (London 1997), 285–7 and 277–80, respectively.
69. Roberts to Lloyd, Belgrade, FO 536/107, 11 July 1956.
70. Hayman to W.H. Young, Belgrade, FO 536/107, 15 June 1956. In one of his first reports about Djilas' letter to Phillips, Roberts wrote to the Foreign Office that 'There may be something in this, although he [Djilas] is suffering from persecution mania and is probably exaggerating', Roberts to the Foreign Office, Belgrade, FO 536/107, 17 April 1956.
71. National Archives, Prime Minister's Office, PREM 11/1083, John D. Priestman to A.A.D. Montague-Browne, London, 23 January 1954. The citation shows that Foreign Office officials were from the start aware of the reasons behind the fall of Djilas, as well as that they were primarily concerned about the direction of Yugoslavia's foreign policy. The 'separate article' referred to in the report is most probably 'Anatomija jednog morala', published in January 1954 in *Nova misao* (*New Thought*), a journal Djilas founded a year before. The journal was banned due to the publication of this essay, which strongly criticized the snobbishness of the Yugoslav communist establishment. The article was published in English in *Anatomy of a Moral*, op. cit., a collection of Djilas' key articles published in *Borba* and *Nova misao*.
72. Roberts to Lloyd, Belgrade, FO 536/107, 11 July 1956.
73. Roberts to the Foreign Office, Belgrade, FO 536/107, 20 November 1956.
74. *Ibid.*
75. See Milovan Djilas, 'Stormy Days Ahead for the Kremlin', *Tribune*, 30 November 1956, an article published originally in the American magazine *The New Leader*, for Djilas' view of developments in Hungary. For a good background on events in Hungary and elsewhere in Eastern Europe in the revolutionary year of 1956, see Crampton, op. cit., 275–303.
76. Nicholls to Lloyd, Belgrade, FO 371/130490, 16 October 1957.
77. Author's interview with Michael Foot, London, 14 December 2005.
78. Michael Foot, 'Can the Communists answer this challenge?', *Tribune*, 6 September 1957.
79. *Ibid.*
80. Barbara Castle (1910–2002), was Chairperson of the Labour Party (1958–9), Minister of Overseas Development (1964–5), and Minister of Transport (1965–8) in Harold Wilson's governments.
81. Richard Crossman (1907–74), was a member of Harold Wilson's first government (1964–70) and editor of *The New Statesman*.
82. Castle, op. cit. Nevertheless, she did not advocate Djilas' imprisonment. In the same article she condemned the trial of Djilas for the publication of *The New Class* 'despite not liking the book', and also criticized the Yugoslav authorities for not allowing Dedijer to travel to Britain, in order 'to take up a lecturing post at Manchester University' (see also Note 23).
83. R.H.S Crossman, 'Standing Marx on his head', *Encounter*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (October 1957), 35. The correct title of Locke's work is *The Second Treatise of Civil Government* (1690).
84. *Vlast*, op. cit., 296.
85. See for instance the leading commentary 'Think again, Marshal Tito', *Tribune*, 22 June 1956, and a short text accompanying a photograph of Djilas' wife and young son, reproduced

- shortly after Djilas was sentenced to seven years in prison, for publishing *The New Class*. 'This picture shames Tito', *Tribune*, 11 October 1957. The accompanying text stated that the National Executive of the Labour Party had protested with the Yugoslav authorities for sentencing Djilas.
86. Author's interview with Michael Foot, London, 14 December 2005. Foot told Patricia Hollis that in hindsight Jennie Lee's instinctive support for Djilas and distrust of Tito were right. Patricia Hollis, *Jennie Lee: A Life* (Oxford 1997), 418n.
 87. Hollis, *op. cit.*, 179–80, 225. Sulzberger, *op. cit.*, 19; Phillips: author's interview with Gwyneth Dunwoody, MP, 13 December 2005. See also Jennie Lee's article 'What was the Real Crime of Djilas?', *Tribune*, 21 December 1956, which she wrote following a 'fact-finding mission to Yugoslavia'.
 88. A good example of pro-Yugoslav sympathies among leading members of the Labour Party, albeit predating the Tito–Djilas conflict, are the following lines from Sam Watson's letter to a Yugoslav friend: 'I had the pleasure of meeting the Yugoslav Football Team at the Embassy [of Yugoslavia in London], and once more had the opportunity of talking to Djejer [sic]. We were hoping the Yugoslav team would win, but they only managed to play a draw. I had several bets on with the members of the Embassy staff that Yugoslavia would win'. *Sam Watson Papers*, Durham County Record Office, Sam Watson to Steve Serdar, Durham, 5 January 1951. The game Watson was referring to was most probably a friendly match between England and Yugoslavia, played at Highbury, London, on 22 November 1950, which ended 2–2. The Football Association website, <http://www.thefa.com/Euro2004/Teams/Postings/2002/12/34541.htm> (accessed: 15 January 2006). Even if Watson was only being courteous, his solidarity with the Yugoslavs is indicative. The game took place only 2 months after the Labour Party delegation, which included Phillips, Watson and Earnshaw, visited Yugoslavia (see above).
 89. Yet, although there was no visible public support for Djilas after his fall, not long before Djilas' articles in *Borba* had been enthusiastically received across the country. Even after the fall, Djilas and his family were often greeted by friendly, if discreet, smiles and even hand-waves on the streets of Belgrade. (I am grateful to Dr Aleksa Djilas for this information.) On the day of Djilas and Dedijer's trial in January 1955 their sympathizers were apparently scattered on the streets of Belgrade. Djilas, *Vlast*, *op. cit.*, 298.
 90. The Labour History Archive and Study Centre, Manchester, Labour Party Archives (hereafter LPA), Labour Party International Files, 1945–64, Yugoslavia (Djilas file). I am grateful to Stephen Bird and Roy Lumb of The Labour History Archive and Study Centre for their help in locating and obtaining this letter as well as Phillips' letter to Tito. An English translation of Djilas' letter to Phillips, as well as a copy of the letter in Serbo-Croat are kept in FO 536/107. The two English translations of Djilas' letter differ marginally only, in terms of style, due to the fact that they were translated by two different translators. I have not altered the style or changed the letter in any way, with one exception: although the original letter and the English translation made in the British Embassy in Belgrade (kept today in the National Archives) contain the sender and the recipient's address in place of heading, the translation which Phillips read and which is here reproduced does not. However, for the sake of clarity, I decided to add those details to the letter reproduced here.
 91. Djilas led a Yugoslav delegation which visited Britain in late January and early February 1951. FO 371/95488, 'Arrangements for Mr Djilas' visit to the United Kingdom'. (As received from Transport House.) The Labour government made sure that the Yugoslav delegation was

received well. In addition to political meetings usual for this type of visit, the Yugoslavs were taken to London's Old Vic theatre to see 'Henry V' and to a football game between Newcastle United and Arsenal. Morgan Phillips accompanied them to the latter event. Ernest Davies to Charles Peake, London, FO 371/95488, 9 February 1951. Davies would visit Djilas in Belgrade in 1954, several months after Djilas fell from power, see above.

92. Barović had in fact been lieutenant-colonel, as Djilas correctly wrote in the original letter.
 93. LPA, Labour Party International Files, 1945–1964, Yugoslavia (Djilas file).
 94. Ernest Bevin (1881–1951) was a member of Winston Churchill's war cabinet (1940–5) and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Clement Attlee's government (1945–51).
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