

‘Diplomatic relations between Germany and Yugoslavia have been broken off’ from the Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung

Caption: In its issue of 22 October 1957, the Bulletin of the Press and Information Office of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) justifies the decision taken by the German Government to sever diplomatic relations with the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia following that country’s official recognition of the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

Source: Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung. Hrsg. Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung. 22.10.1957, Nr. 197. Bonn: Deutscher Verlag. "Der Abbruch der deutsch-jugoslawischen Beziehungen", p. 1807-1808.

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Diplomatic relations between Germany and Yugoslavia have been broken off

A retrospective appreciation of the most recent events clearly reveals the considerations that led to the serious decision taken by the Federal Government to sever diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia.

The position taken by the Federal Government on the question of the *de jure* recognition of the so-called GDR by third countries has been frequently made clear over a lengthy period of time now, both generally and also individually to the countries with which the Federal Republic maintains diplomatic relations. This applies to an even greater extent in the case of Yugoslavia, as is demonstrated by the note handed to the Yugoslav Ambassador in Bonn on 19 October 1957. The note stated that the establishment of diplomatic relations with the so-called GDR by a country with which the Federal Republic already maintains diplomatic relations represents an unfriendly act directed against the vital interests of the German people and forces the Federal Government to review its relationship with that country. This statement is based on the well-founded and carefully considered principles of German policy which are also generally acknowledged and have been laid down not only by the Federal Government but also in formal and unanimous decisions by the Bundestag, the sole freely-elected representation of the German people.

A decisive point for these principles is the fact that the present government system in the Soviet occupied zone of Germany, which is still run by Stalinists, is devoid of any democratic legitimacy and is vehemently rejected by the vast majority of the people living there, that it is holding on to power only through brute force and that it is only able to do that because — as the government in Yugoslavia is very well aware — it is being supported in wielding this power by constant foreign interference. This means that it does not possess the decisive characteristics of genuine statehood as defined in international law. It is, therefore, not on the basis of 'unrealistic principles' and 'legal hypotheses' but out of loyalty to the fundamental freedoms of its national existence that the entire German nation, i.e. the 52 million people on this side and the 18 million on the other side of the Iron Curtain, regard the Federal Government as the only government able to speak for them legitimately.

As a result of its diplomatic recognition of Pankow, the Yugoslav leadership is intentionally becoming party to the intervention by force of a foreign power in internal German affairs. It expressly rejects the solution of the reunification question by means of free elections, which is the aim of the Federal Government, the Bundestag and the overwhelming majority of the German people, and expects the German nation consciously to relinquish freedom and independence for a part of its population, after it had learned, during the years of National Socialist and Stalinist tyranny, to prize that most valuable commodity of freedom above all other political ideals. The Yugoslav Government is therefore also unambiguously supporting the Soviet Union on the reunification question and is identifying itself with the Soviet concept of reunification of the German nation by means of negotiations between 'the two German states'. The breaking-off of diplomatic relations underlines in the eyes of the entire world that, by taking this most recent and serious step, the Yugoslav leadership has relinquished one of the final essential characteristics of its foreign policy that had, until now, still given it an independent profile in comparison with other Eastern Bloc states. Following Yugoslavia's pro-Soviet position towards the Hungarian uprising and towards the questions of disarmament, this most recent decision taken by Belgrade means that the government of Marshal Tito is in open breach of the non-aligned policy which it proclaims and has gone along with the line that was previously followed only by the Soviet Union, Red China and their satellite states. This was the unavoidable conclusion not only for the Federal Government in Germany but also for people throughout the world. And its accuracy is in no way diminished by counterclaims put out by the Yugoslav authorities.

Given the disappointing disloyalty and abuse of trust by the Yugoslav Government, it should be pointed out that, since the resumption of German-Yugoslav diplomatic relations after the Second World War, the Federal Government had been at pains to normalise relations between the two countries again, and to place them on a permanent footing based on trust, in order to draw a line under the tragic events of the war and of the post-war period. Evidence of the sincere efforts made by the Germans was that, despite serious misgivings on the part of wide swathes of the German public, they were prepared to conclude the German-Yugoslav economic agreements of 10 March 1956 which provided for reconstruction aid amounting to

DM 240 million for Yugoslavia and also for the settlement of demands made by Yugoslavia before and during the war, with particular regard to social insurance, which amounted to about DM 60 million. A further proof of our goodwill was the conversion, at a rate very advantageous for Yugoslavia, of the debts to commercial suppliers that had been run up for very considerable amounts.

As also referred to expressly in the note of 19 October 1957 addressed to the Government of Yugoslavia, the dispatch to Belgrade in 1955 of Ambassador Pfleiderer, a man who had always worked especially hard as an MP for an understanding between Germany, Yugoslavia and the other Eastern European states, was also a deliberate statement of German willingness to come to an understanding. Until the snub in the latest announcements made and measures taken by the Yugoslavs, the Federal Government had assumed that Yugoslavia would appreciate the especially high level of confidence displayed so honestly towards that country on the part of the Germans. In fact, it has even been recognised by eminent persons in Yugoslavia that Germany has faithfully fulfilled its contractual obligations in the letter as well as in spirit and has done its utmost to promote relations between Germany and Yugoslavia. It was, therefore, necessary to be all the more decisive towards its partner to the agreement in insisting that the most fundamental principles of our policy are not intentionally disregarded and that the Soviet tyranny in East Germany is not deliberately reinforced.

Also, from the point of view of freedom from any kind of foreign pressure in the pursuit of our plan to shape relations with the states of Eastern Europe which have 'long ago given diplomatic recognition to the puppet regime in the so-called GDR under pressure from Stalin', it was impossible for the Federal Government simply to accept this step by the Yugoslavs. It cannot allow either the substance or the timing of its political planning to be dictated by the Eastern Bloc or by a state associated with its policy towards Germany. However, the break with Yugoslavia has in no way restricted the Federal Government's freedom in decision-making with regard to the countries of the Eastern Bloc. The unequivocal conclusion that the Federal Government has drawn from the disloyal behaviour of Yugoslavia does not prevent it in any way — at an appropriate point in time and in an appropriate manner — from also considering the assumption of relations with countries that have been recognised by the regime in Pankow under essentially different conditions, such as Yugoslavia, which had friendly relations with the Federal Republic and which could have been expected to give more honest respect to the national interests of the German people than is demonstrated in its most recent statements and measures.

The Federal Republic's decision was taken not only in order to preserve the reputation of the Federal Republic of Germany but also in the interests of the community of free nations. Any measure other than breaking off diplomatic relations would, in practical terms, be tantamount to an acceptance of the step taken by Yugoslavia and would have considerably weakened the standing of the free Germany in the entire world. It would have increased the importance of the world dominated by the Soviets and Communists, and rendered the word of the Federal Government void of credibility in the future. But this would also have been contrary to the most fundamental interests of the free world. The consistent attitude taken towards Yugoslavia — this is what the German people are confidently hoping — will make it easier for all states that have given *de jure* recognition only to the Federal Republic of Germany to answer the question as to whether they also intend in future to maintain diplomatic relations with the freely elected German Government or with the Stalinist dictators kept in power in Pankow by the Soviet Union and with their 'system of government'.

The breaking-off of relations with Yugoslavia should also give the Government of the USSR some cause for thought. That government holds the key to German reunification. The German Federal Government, which is in agreement with its Western allies on this subject, remains unswervingly convinced that it is sensible to talk about German reunification only to the Soviet Union and not to the puppets in Pankow.

In reaching its decision, the Federal Government consulted fully with a committee formed of representatives of all the political parties and also with the governments of its allies. It took this decision in full awareness of its heavy responsibility for the freedom, independence and unity of the German nation.

The Federal Government can only hope that Yugoslavia's policy towards Germany will, one day, again be

guided by the independent spirit that once used to be the basis of the international respect enjoyed by the Government of Yugoslavia.