

YUGOSLAVIA AFTER TITO: CERTAIN UNCERTAINTY

by

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Yugoslavia is a country which is of direct importance to the defense of the North Atlantic area . . . and to the security of the United States.

—President Harry S. Truman, 7 November 1951

This paper will examine the environment in post-Tito Yugoslavia. The potential for Soviet involvement there may radically affect the European balance of power. Thus, the future of this country will have significance far beyond the European scene. It is reasonably certain that the USSR will play an important role in the future of post-Tito Yugoslavia, yet whether the West will react responsibly to protect its best interests is not so certain.

When Yugoslavia became a political issue in the 1976 Presidential campaign, Henry Kissinger stated: "It is important that the Soviet Union understand that pressure on Yugoslavia would have the gravest consequences for the relationship with the United States." Thus, Dr. Kissinger capsulized the potential for confrontation between the two superpowers.

Nonetheless, the ultimate influences on the future course of Yugoslavia will be internal factors.

Consideration of the historical background is essential to understand the complex congenital problems which have plagued Yugoslavia, especially since the Communists seized power in 1944-45. These problems are a result of external pressures generated by its diplomatic stance as leader of the nonaligned nations, together with the internal ones stemming from the ethnic composition of nonmiscible nationalities, with their cultural,

social, and religious frictions. However, the best indicator of Yugoslavia's importance is its geostrategic position as a physical bridge between East and West.

Yugoslavia, one of the most volatile areas in Europe, has long been the focus of crisis: The assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand at Sarajevo triggered World War I; German-Soviet relations disintegrated in the spring of 1941, in part over Balkan rivalries; and the first important break between the Soviet Union and a satellite involved Yugoslavia. There is little reason to believe its potential for crisis has dissipated. The next major confrontation between East and West could well occur there.

Yugoslavia was created as a kingdom as an aftermath of World War I, with the union of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Its 98,760 square miles encompass a mosaic of seven frontiers, six republics, two autonomous provinces, five nationalities, four languages, three major religions, two alphabets, and one political party. In 1929, much to the delight of cartographers, it was renamed Yugoslavia.

The present form of Communist "federal" government was proclaimed on 29 November 1945 by the Constituent Assembly which abolished the monarchy. This "one party" assembly was composed only of the Communist-dominated People's Front. Recent constitutional change (February 1974) has permitted a very limited degree of



regional autonomy; moreover, matters of defense, state security, foreign affairs, and external economic relationships remain the sole responsibility of the central government. Josip Broz Tito is supreme executive, chairman-for-life of the new collective Presidency, President of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), and Supreme Commander of the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA). Tito has personally made every major decision concerning Yugoslavia's role in international affairs, particularly nonalignment policy and relations with the Soviet Union. By constitutional mandate, the powers of Tito's

office after his death will revert to the eight other members of the Presidency (Tito is the ninth member). It will then elect a chairman, who will hold office for a one-year term. The chairmanship will thereafter rotate annually among the individual republics. A chairman with such limited "shelf life" will find it almost impossible to marshal the strength or discharge the responsibility that is now held by Tito.

The Yugoslav Constitution, one of the most complex ever written, remains in a state of continuous change. It establishes a political system dominated by a single party—the 1.5 million members of the LCY.

This is the seat of real political power. In April 1958, the seventh Congress of the League emphatically stressed: "The Communists will continue the struggle for keeping key positions of state authority in firm revolutionary hands."¹ Political domination of the domestic and foreign affairs of the country remains a fundamental characteristic of the LCY.

RECENT HISTORY

During the past two World Wars, the young country attempted to dampen the bitter Serbian-Croatian dispute that threatened the unity of the state and the security of its borders, undermined by scheming neighbors attempting to extend their influence. By 1941, most of Western Europe was under German occupation, and Great Britain stood virtually alone against the German-Italian alliance. Hitler decided at the end of 1940 to attack the Soviet Union on 15 May 1941 if Germany's Southern Flank could be secured.² Consequently, Yugoslavia came under concerted German pressure to join the Tripartite Pact.³ Prince Paul, the Regent, skillfully attempted to avoid an alliance with Germany in the interest of preserving both a fragile Yugoslav unity and neutrality. However, additional pressure from Croatian and Slovenian minorities forced the Yugoslav Government to sign the pact on 25 March, an unpopular decision with the Serbs. Two days after joining the pact, a military coup led by Serbian officers overthrew the regency. The coup enraged Hitler, who ordered immediate preparations for an invasion of Yugoslavia. An air attack on Belgrade that killed more than 5000 persons initiated hostilities.

Under the weight of the invasion, the internal bonds of unity gave way, leading to further minority polarization. The internal strife between Serbs and Croats resulted in a Croatian refusal to repel the invaders. This divisiveness, coupled with the unpreparedness of the Yugoslav Army, spelled the end of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in April 1941. Capitalizing on existing ethnic minority divisions, the Axis victors politically dismembered Yugoslavia. A new

"independent" state of Croatia, which included Bosnia and Herzegovina, was created under Ante Pavelich. The extermination of the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina became an official policy of that regime.

Soon after the collapse of Yugoslavia, the Western world began to receive news of significant armed resistance in occupied Yugoslavia, led by Draja Mihailovich, a former colonel of the Yugoslav general staff. On 22 June 1941, the day the Germans attacked the Soviet Union, instructions were sent out by the Comintern urging the Communist parties in occupied Europe to assist the Soviet Union in its struggle against Germany. The Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party (YCP) decided in principle to prepare for partisan warfare and to establish "national liberation" forces. Although this second resistance movement came to be recognized as being dominated by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the identity of its secretary general, Josip Broz Tito, was known only to higher echelons of the Party and to the Comintern in Moscow.

The two resistance movements initially collaborated, notwithstanding the fact that ideologically they were diametrically opposite. The ultimate aim of the YCP was to establish a Communist state. It was the royalist (Mihailovich) resistance movement that hoped for and made the planning and organization for an Allied landing in the Balkans. Clashes between the two resistance movements occurred with increasing

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frequency, with each side blaming the other for initiating the incidents. An agreement to coordinate the operation by the two movements was attempted, but it failed.

The British High Command was the first to dispatch a mission to Mihailovich, followed in 1942 by the United States. Eventually, both resistance movements received Allied missions, but the Allies decided that only Britain was to be directly involved in Yugoslav affairs. Although Washington favored Mihailovich, the British shifted their assistance to Tito because Mihailovich elected to limit active resistance to avoid terrible German retaliation on the civilian population. Mihailovich's defense concept was similar to Charles DeGaulle's for France. He refused to accept defeat and sought to organize guerrilla organizations capable of launching large-scale operations at the proper time.

The German objective was to exterminate all resistance, yet both movements were heavily engaged against each other. Tito instructed his subordinate commanders:

Your most important task at this moment is to annihilate Mihailovich's forces and to destroy their command structure, which represents the greatest danger to the development of the National Liberation Struggle. . . .⁴

At the same time, in March 1943, highly sensitive negotiations were being conducted with the German High Command by Tito emissaries, led by Milovan Djilas. A German memorandum reported that German and partisan negotiators were involved in prisoner exchange;⁵ that partisan delegates stressed that they saw no reason to fight the German Army; and that the partisans fought against German troops only in self-defense, wished only to engage the forces of Mihailovich, and vowed to fight the British should the latter land in Yugoslavia.⁶ The partisan delegation proposed a further exchange of prisoners, to include Tito's second wife, Herta Has, and, more importantly, the cessation of hostilities during the critical time that the partisan movement was striving to survive. The

partisan proposal involved a safe territory where they could concentrate for further military operations against Mihailovich. Djilas, in his book *Wartime*, substantiated the negotiations with the German High Command. The secret negotiations (which failed, due only to Hitler's opposition) were not made known to either the Allies or Mihailovich. This "dark" chapter is the most embarrassing to the Yugoslav Communists.

Despite an agreement concluded among the Allies at Yalta stipulating coalition regimes and free elections, the Communist Tito regime was installed from the beginning and free elections were never held. Yugoslavia was the first Communist country to consolidate its single party regime, eliminating all potential opposition during a brief civil war following the Nazi collapse. Yugoslavia became the most militant, Communist, pro-Soviet country in Eastern Europe and acted as a protagonist for Communist expansion into Central and Southern Europe, exerting pressure on Austria, Italy, and Greece. The distinguished scholar John C. Campbell has stated:

On two occasions, in 1945 at Trieste and 1946 when two American planes were shot down in Yugoslavia, it came to the verge of open conflict with the United States.⁷

On 28 June 1948, world attention was sharply focused on Yugoslavia. For the first time, a serious break occurred within the international Communist movement—Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform. The dispute centered around Yugoslavia's idea concerning a Balkan federation and the Yugoslav-Bulgarian agreement over Macedonia and Thrace.

It is important to stress that Tito did not rebel against Stalin's Soviet model for Yugoslavia, but was excommunicated by him, and Tito was forced to embark on a separate Marxist path with independent internal and external policies. Concurrently, to avoid economic collapse, Tito, taking advantage of Western desires to fracture the

monolithic Soviet-oriented Communist bloc, sought economic assistance from the West.

Tito recognized that his best chance to survive required a stand on the issue of national sovereignty and independence and not on ideological grounds. Adjusting his course, Tito claimed that Yugoslavia was a true independent Marxist state and pledged to continue internal consolidation of the socialist transformation and to extend the system of "self-management" as a step in the "transition to socialism." The principle of self-management is a central and integral part of Titoism.

The external policy which Yugoslavia pursued was oriented on the Third World. The country shaped her foreign policy to accommodate the emerging nations of Asia and Africa and thereby influenced the so-called nonaligned world. Despite the on-again, off-again conflict with Moscow, Tito's foreign policy normally supported Communist objectives, to include stands on the Korean War, Vietnam, Cuba, the Middle East, Angola, and, most recently, Ethiopia. For example, throughout the Middle East crisis, Yugoslavia has been a fervent supporter of the Arab world and has urged the Soviet Union to become more decisively involved. Soviets planes and ships transited Yugoslavia's air space and used harbors to transport war equipment to the Arab nations. Yugoslavia has been generally critical of the United States in the United Nations and other international organizations. The benefits and costs are described as follows:

The nonalignment doctrine had brought Yugoslavia considerable diplomatic prestige for as long as there had been clearly defined blocs, but it had been economically extravagant and did not correspond to the regime's needs or possibilities.⁸

INTERNAL TRENDS

There are many people who do not wish us well. . . . We have many enemies even within our country, we have enemies who

would even be capable of destroying everything that we have accomplished.

—Josip Broz Tito
Titograd, 28 May 1976

The development of Yugoslavia—the land of the South Slavs—evinces one long historical contradiction.⁹ The most critical internal aspect that faces Yugoslavia today is the multiple and complex problem of heterogeneity that will impact upon, if not determine, the outcome once Tito disappears from the scene. Since the break with Moscow, the central party leadership has been pressured by the republics to adopt a more independent attitude toward the central government; but in spite of the internal divergencies, the Party remains as the only politically controlling factor in the country. A significant reform was the establishment of the Workers Council, followed later by a self-management socialist system. Due to economic improvement and trade expansion, regional nationalism is increasing.

Decentralization of authority revived ethnic animosity most notably between Serbs and Croats. The dispute among the republics is due in some part to localized economic prosperity which obliged richer republics to share benefits and to promote the development of poorer republics.

Interparty rivalries and Serb-Croatian animosity may have long-term repercussions extending beyond Yugoslavia's frontiers. A struggle for Tito's succession will emerge and may well be serious during the transition period.

When Alexander Rankovich, the powerful Minister of Interior and Tito's presumed successor, was dismissed from the government in 1966, the top central political apparatus was obviously shaken.

Croatian and Slovenian nationalism was supported by local party functionaries, which in turn has led to accentuated decentralization. This has not satisfied demands. To the contrary, it has simply whetted appetites for increased regional

autonomy. Although limited decentralization has had some beneficial economic and political impact, it has at the same time created a unity problem.

The crucial issue for the central government was to keep decentralization within limits that will not significantly compromise federal identity. Djilas wrote that:

The most important problem for Communism, in theory and practice, is the question of State. The question is a constant source of difficulties since it is such an obvious contradiction inside Communism.¹⁰

The "spontaneous" student revolt at Belgrade University in June 1968 complicated matters. The revolt could have spread beyond the University walls, but the students were without leadership or organization. The regime feared that the revolt would provide a working link between students and workers. Tito personally addressed the students and recognized that some of their criticism was justified. The central government denounced the intellectuals and professors who opposed the LCY, together with the "reactionary forces" that had tried to undermine the Party and subvert the University.

The Croatian discontent late in 1971 obliged Tito to purge the leadership of the Croatian Communist Party. That purge, followed in other republics, removed those who demonstrated strong nationalist sentiments. The first threat to the central government came from the Croatian Republican Assembly when, following the ever popular regional defense concept, it established the initial territorial defense units in Yugoslavia.¹¹ The Croat Assembly announced that territorial forces were responsible for the "sovereignty, constitutional order, inviolability and wholeness of the (Croat) territory."¹² Additionally, there was the "Communist party abroad" which all but invited the Red Army into Yugoslavia. The political bureau of this organization not only drafted a six-

point resolution calling for a sovereign socialist Croat state allied with the Warsaw Pact countries, but also declared that the Soviet Union had the duty on the basis of "socialist solidarity" to protect Croatian national territory.¹³ This invocation of the Brezhnev Doctrine constituted an interesting meld of limited national sovereignty, subject to attack from within and from without, under a banner of internal nationalism.

Thus, the indications are that the Croatian extremists will ally themselves with any internal separatist group or cooperate with any external power to further their goal of autonomy. This group may be the internal force on which the Soviets key their decisions as to the degree of interference. An unlikely variation of this scenario is for a pro-Moscow faction to gain sufficient influence to be able to grant those concessions previously requested by the USSR.

Within the Bosnia-Herzegovina Republic, Serb-Croatian animosity may become a central focus for the central government. This mosaic Republic is 39.6 percent Moslem, 37.2 percent Serb, and 20.6 percent Croatian. The Croatian minority outside of the Republic of Croatia may be tempted to exploit the turmoil and overthrow the status quo.

Troublesome Macedonia may become more serious and almost certainly will bring intensified Soviet and Bulgarian political and military pressure.

Kosovo, with large numbers of ethnic Albanians, may be another potential crisis region particularly during the transition period.

THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT

The task of our Army is not merely to defend the territorial integrity of our country, but also to defend our socialism when we see that it is in danger and that it cannot be defended by other means.

—Josip Broz Tito, 22 December 1971

The Yugoslav military establishment has its roots in the partisan struggle of World War II, is steeped in the principles of Marxism,

and looks with admiration toward the Soviet Union. The political structure within the Army was built and remains dominated by former partisans, who, on the whole, look toward Moscow rather than the West. Most leading military elements view the West as a traditional adversary and potential enemy.

The Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) more than those of other European Communist states, plays an integral part in the political affairs of the nation. Military officials have been prominently incorporated into the totality of political leadership especially in areas impacting on internal security, e.g., General Franjo Herljevic is Minister of the Interior and has control of the police. They have also been integrated into the political mainstream by expanded participation at all levels of Party and state organizations. Recently, the military has assumed greater ideological-educational functions.¹⁴

The role and influence of the Yugoslav Army has been considerably expanded in the LCY. For example, in 1974, 12 percent of the members of the LCY Central Committee came from the Army (as compared to about 6 percent in 1964). Moreover, in the future, Army participants in that committee will be chosen by the membership of the LCY and not by the Central Committee alone. Since it is apparent that the YPA will play a key role in determining Yugoslavia's future, it is now being given a greater voice in structuring the present. The interlocking relationship between the Army and the Party works in both directions. Within the armed forces, 36 percent are currently members of the Party, including 90 percent of the NCOs and 98.5 percent of the officers.¹⁵

The Yugoslav People's Army has developed an institutional identity by virtue of its discipline and organization. As an example of the ethnic composition, Serbs, about 40 percent of the total Yugoslav population, comprise over 60 percent of the YPA officers corps and 46 percent of the generals. Croats make up 22 percent of the population, only 14 percent of the officers, and 19 percent of the generals. However, Serbs total only 33 percent of the High Command, while Croats hold the majority

with 38 percent. Because the Army is less subject to the nationality conflict, it has evolved into the most important element of cohesion in the country and appropriately regards itself as the guarantor of Yugoslavia's unity.¹⁶ For example, during the Croatian "revolt," the Army is known to have intervened energetically against the Croatian nationalist movement. It was military leaders who convinced Tito to act as they viewed with apprehension, if not dismay, the mounting demands for decentralization of the military structure as well as of the country's political institutions. The Army has also backed Tito in his purge of liberals, notably in Serbia.

In the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Yugoslavia reorganized its national defense and enhanced its posture. Military training was provided to the civilian population, within their working communities. In February 1969, territorial defense organizations were established under the regional republics. It was this action that precipitated the problem of command relationship between the People's Army and the Territorial Defense Organization, which was placed under a republican territorial defense military staff and the YPA Command. The territorial defense units were not subordinated to the YPA, "perhaps the most direct alteration of Army authority."¹⁷ The Croatian crisis of 1971 was a direct result of this action and highlights the conflict of authority between central unified armed forces and the respective republics. A new law on national defense which limited the level of authority and contention of the separate republics was promulgated in 1974. The need for operational flexibility, however, precluded simply assigning complete command authority to the YPA. The new law restored a balance without compromising the capabilities of the YPA to respond to domestic security contingencies.

According to Robert Dean, the YPA had two defense roles: first, to blunt and delay the invader's attacks, thus buying time for the mobilization of the country-wide territorial organization; second, to serve as the basis for

mobilization by providing the nucleus for wartime units. In its reevaluated role, the YPA is viewed more as a force in being, the main striking element and core of the combined defense forces, to be organized and ready for its wartime role.¹⁸

The YPA and Territorial Defense Forces (TDF) are integral parts of a unified defense command. The territorial defense system is more a political/nationalistic initiative, as it provides both a focus and vehicle for encouraging Yugoslav unity. The system is designed to galvanize society against a variety of indigenous ideological threats.¹⁹

The command and control of the Yugoslav armed forces is a combat function not comparable to Western systems. It is more difficult to define and describe because it incorporates political, ethnic, and sociological, as well as military, motives and objectives. Whether this approach supports or complicates military effectiveness is open to question, but it is an issue tainted by the necessity for the system to adapt to the potential pace of change.

Given these complexities, it is quite difficult to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the YPA command and control. The ability of the YPA centralized command to control the TDF, which are ethnically linked to their respective republics, is the key question. Tito has claimed the Army is being used "to defend the achievement of our revolution, if needed, from internal enemies,"²⁰ but he has made no such statement with regard to the TDF. According to Gavriel Ra'anana:

It is quite possible that Tito is disinclined to trust these local forces, during the times of stress, not to join dissidents of the same nationality, rather than firing upon them. . . . The competency of the Yugoslav army to effectively resist a Warsaw Pact invasion without external assistance must be considered to be in question.²¹

Yugoslavia's physical geography creates

inherent weaknesses in defense capacity except far to the rear. Yugoslav armed forces would be unable to maintain the integrity of forward areas in the face of a large-scale invasion. The geographic defensive potential lies primarily in the mountainous southern sector and even there is limited to unconventional warfare. A scenario similar to the Axis attack on Yugoslavia in 1941 may well be repeated by the Warsaw Pact forces: a coordinated attack by Soviet ground forces based in Hungary to drive into such undefendable regions as Slavonia (which is part of Croatia) and Vojvodina; then from Bulgaria, an attack with supporting Soviet divisions toward the strategic Vardar Valley (Macedonia), with a possible supporting attack from Romania. If these coordinated attacks can encircle the Yugoslav forward forces, and with simultaneous internal ethnic revolts in Croatia, Macedonia, and Vojvodina, the rapid collapse of the fragile Yugoslav unity and resistance is certain.

On the other hand, the Soviets may perceive that Yugoslav cohesion and resolve are sufficient to resist aggression. The Yugoslav military has made it clear that they intend to defend their independence at any cost. The armed forces will insure continuity of the present Yugoslav policy only if Tito's successors are in a position to control the country effectively. In an address to the Army on 22 December 1977, Tito said that "The Army guarantees the future of Yugoslavia."²²

POLICY EVOLUTION

Since World War II, Yugoslav internal and foreign policies have gone through three phases:

- 1945-1948: Tito consolidated Communist power and assumed total control of the country.
- 1948-1955: Following the expulsion from the Soviet Bloc, Yugoslavia successfully resisted the Soviet Union and turned to the West seeking economic and military assistance. This phase is manifested by the

experimentation of the self-management system.

The Balkan Pact was signed with two NATO members: Greece and Turkey. The most significant of Tito's actions was his role in the building and evolution of the bloc of nonaligned countries. The nonalignment policy strengthened Tito and the LCY both domestically and in the outside world.

- 1955 to present: After Stalin's death, the Soviets started seeking normalization with Yugoslavia; Khrushchev's visit to Belgrade tended to heal the seven-year rift between the two countries. In 1967, the relations renewed rapprochement between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. It was Yugoslavia that pushed the Soviet Union toward a total commitment in support of the Arab world during the 1967 Middle East crisis. Only after the invasion of Czechoslovakia a year later did Yugoslav relations with the Soviet Union begin to appear compromised by the fear that the Brezhnev Doctrine might be applied to Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia strengthened relations with neighboring countries, particularly Romania.

Yugoslavia's economy improved more than any Eastern country due to the Western technology and trade. Yugoslavia will continue to enjoy this particular situation as long as detente between the two blocs continues without major crisis. Also, it must be noted that Yugoslavia's economy is helped by the influx of significant foreign currency provided by the earnings from the prosperous tourism industry and from the remittances of nearly one million workers in foreign countries, mostly in West Germany.

Tito's succession is going to be a difficult one. For example, the constitutional provision establishing the Collective State Presidency that would rotate on a yearly basis among different republics may create internal problems. Edward Kardelj, the chief Party ideologist, and Stane Dolanc, the present Party secretary, are considered potential Tito successors. Like Kardelj, Dolanc is Slovene, which should help him, because either a Serb or a Croat would arouse much more regional animosity. Soviet attempts to prey on these regional differences are almost certain.

TERRITORIAL CLAIMS

Ethnic problems may invite foreign interference in the transition period. Several neighboring countries have made claims upon territories of Yugoslavia. The provinces over which sovereignty is contested include:

- Macedonia.

Macedonia is one of the most ethnically mixed regions in Southeast Europe, and the scene of numerous Balkan conflicts and disputes. Bulgaria has claimed this historic territory. In the pre-World War II period, the Yugoslav Communist Party accepted Comintern instructions and directives to recognize an independent Macedonia. Subsequent to the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform in 1948, Bulgaria reestablished her claim upon Macedonia and is being tacitly supported by the USSR.

- Kosovo.

The province of Kosovo is perhaps the second most serious threat to the territorial integrity and unity of Yugoslavia. Approximately one million Albanians living within this province give impetus to Albania's claim. The Albanians have the highest birthrate in Europe and the demographic expansion may prove to be an additional source of tension in the near future. Many Albanians living in the province of Kosovo would prefer unification with Albania, even though they realize that the Yugoslav economic system is more advantageous to them. It is alleged that an underground "Albanian National Liberation Movement," advocating unification of Kosovo with Albania, has been organized. Furthermore, the autonomous province of Kosovo was carved out of the Serbian republic. Many Serbs consider Kosovo an integral part of their historical heartland. (The Serbian medieval kingdom was terminated in 1389 by the Ottoman victory at the Battle of Kosovo.) This dispute may also provide the Soviet Union with an opportunity or excuse to intervene during the potential succession crisis.

- Vojvodina.

The Vojvodina province question is the

least threatening of the ethnic problems facing the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Hungarians within this province are outnumbered by the Serbs five-to-two and therefore constitute a distinct minority. Vojvodina possesses the potential to precipitate a border dispute between Hungary and Yugoslavia which may also provide the Warsaw Pact nations with a pretext for an attack on Yugoslavia.

- Trieste.

The Trieste question was finally resolved between the Yugoslav and Italian governments in the 1976 Osimo agreements. However, a future spread of nationalism may cause the Italians to resurrect their claim on the basis that it was a territorial loss from World War II. It is appropriate to note that the Italian Communists have traditionally opposed territorial concessions made to Communist Yugoslavia.

WESTERN INFLUENCE

It was Moscow that expelled Yugoslavia from the Soviet bloc, a move that surprised the Western world. This event revealed the first fissure in the mythical monolithic international Communist movement. Stalin was counting on pro-Moscow elements within the Communist Party of Yugoslavia to eliminate Tito and replace him with a more controllable element. The Soviet political maneuvering to subvert national parties failed. Yugoslavia was also successful in adapting to the economic sanctions imposed on it by the Soviet bloc. Tito reshaped his foreign policy and reoriented the Yugoslav economy in the direction of the West, which, in turn, responded with expanded trade agreements to assist Tito to overcome the immediate crisis. According to Stephen Clissold:

These emergency measures were succeeded by long-term credits and trade agreements with the United States, France, and Britain, and by loans from the International Monetary Organization.²³

Tito's clash with Stalin gave rise to

Western hopes that Yugoslavia would ally itself with the West, and Washington even extended economic and political assistance to Yugoslavia as a model to encourage other Communist countries toward independent paths. The result of these policies, however, can be summarized by Ambassador Lawrence Silberman's statement:

The truth is, we are at the same time both tacit allies and active adversaries: allies in that we share the objective of diminishing Soviet dominance of Eastern Europe and particularly, preserving the relative independence of Yugoslavia but adversaries also, because a mainspring of Yugoslavia's socialist nonaligned policy is de facto opposition to Western ideals as well as to American political and economic power.²⁴

For more than a decade, Tito's regime was supported by enormous economic and military assistance which undoubtedly made his survival possible. Ambassador Silberman said:

We initially saw Yugoslavia's independent communist course weakening the Soviet hold on Eastern Europe, without realizing its other dimensions in Western Europe.²⁵

The value of the US assistance, in the period 1950-67, was approximately \$2 billion, of which \$700 million was military assistance. American capital and technology played a significant role in developing the Yugoslav economy. Expanded Western trade and tourism from the West also provided Tito with additional advantages. Tourism especially provided important foreign currency that spurred investment and domestic employment. This period also saw an accelerated private foreign investment from the West acting to bolster the Yugoslav economy. By 1973, even the European Economic Community (EEC) signed a nonpreferential trade agreement with Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, in some instances, sophisticated electronic equipment of strategic significance sold to Yugoslavia was later diverted to the Soviet Union. Certainly, this is a breach of faith as viewed

by the West in the political-military arena. In 1977, Yugoslavia sent to Ethiopia a number of M-47 tanks furnished by the United States under the Mutual Assistance Program and subject to its legal prohibitions.

Regardless of these obvious duplicities, Tito, in his recent visit to the United States, requested further trade expansion. Yugoslavia is also considering the purchase of some US weapons and equipment.

Yugoslavia continues to seek to improve economic ties with the West, particularly the EEC, although Tito stated that he intends to strengthen Yugoslav economy and trade with the West, while emphasizing that he will not make any political concessions. However, this economic course has also caused internal strife in terms of erratic economic rivalry among its national regions.

SOVIET DESIGNS

After Stalin's death, Russian policy toward Yugoslavia became an important issue in the Kremlin. In 1955, Khrushchev signed the Declaration of Belgrade and affirmed the right of each Communist country to "build socialism" in its own way and the right to do so without interference from others. This apparent reconciliation formally ended the seven-year rift between the two Communist countries. The newly restored relationship cooled again as a consequence of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Yugoslavia became concerned over the Brezhnev Doctrine, and it was perceived that the green light was on for further Soviet intervention elsewhere. Although Yugoslavia is not a "direct" satellite of the Soviet Union, it remains a Communist country. As Dr. Kissinger stated concerning Communist parties with an independent attitude towards Moscow,

Whether or not they are independent of Moscow, Communists represent a philosophy which by its very nature and their own testimony stands outside the 'bourgeois' framework of Western constitutional history. The Communist movement appeals to a different tradition and uses a largely misleading vocabulary.²⁶

Yugoslavia has neither declared itself an enemy of the Soviet Union, although there have been internal differences, nor opposed it on major issues. Naturally, it is difficult for the Soviet Union to admit that a "socialist" country would operate outside the Soviet sphere, and on an independent course toward socialism. In the eyes of the Soviets, national Communism within Yugoslavia may not appear permanent and this could represent a threat to international Communism.

In order to alleviate the Soviet threat, Tito's Yugoslavia has been extremely careful not to offend the Soviet Union, and on many occasions has tried to reestablish normal relationships between the two countries. However, for Moscow it became very clear there could be no change while Tito was in power, because he survived all Soviet pressure and had succeeded in maintaining control over the Communist League.

There is absolutely no doubt that the Soviet Union is preparing for the post-Tito period. In the future, we can expect the Soviet Union to attempt the "restoration" of a Moscow-approved Yugoslavia.

The Soviet Union's desire to further extend its influence into the Middle East, Africa, and the Mediterranean complex necessitates such action. Yugoslavia has the strategic geography that facilitates access to those regions. In addition to access, Yugoslavian territory can provide naval bases, air defense complexes, and radar installations to the Warsaw Pact. A subservient Yugoslavia can substantially improve Soviet security on the Southern Flank. The role and attitude of the Soviet Union toward Yugoslavia in the post-Tito era is the most critical factor affecting the future of Yugoslavia. Forecasting future Soviet attitudes toward Yugoslavia is complicated by the fact that one must also consider possible Western strategies and Soviet intentions which will result from opportunities or challenges these totally unpredictable Western strategies may produce.

ALTERNATIVES AND POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

The Soviet Union is in a better position to

interfere during the transition period and beyond. Conditions for Soviet interference/intervention will depend on several criteria:

- The Soviet perception of the probable successor to Tito.

- Operational capability, effectiveness, reliability, and willingness of the Yugoslav People's Army.

- Degree of support for intervention from ethnic minorities and pro-Soviet elements within the LCY.

- Perceived reaction of the Western world, particularly the United States.

- Soviet interpretation of the impact of their action upon the Communist parties in Western Europe and the Third World.

If the Soviets choose to intervene, either directly or indirectly, the West will probably regard that intervention as an "internal" matter taking place within what has come to be accepted as a Soviet sphere of influence. The Soviet Union may want to limit the visible level of intervention in deference to detente, and they could bring the country under complete Soviet control by slowly applying pressure.

Most of the above suggests a moderate Soviet approach to regaining control of Yugoslavia; however, the Soviets may wish to take advantage of the West's hesitancy to act decisively anywhere and capitalize on an opportunity to improve their sphere of influence. Occupation of Yugoslavia would add tremendous operational potential to the Soviet Mediterranean Fleet and would force NATO to make major revisions to its Southern Flank operational plans. The problems will be difficult even if the Greece-Turkey-Cyprus problem is solved. In the absence of a solution there, it will be almost impossible. Under Warsaw Pact influence, Turkey could be expected to take a more neutral position and begin a rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Greece might be

tempted to seek a similar course of action. The Soviet Union could then play Greece and Turkey against each other and paralyze Western capabilities to counter deeper Soviet penetration into the Mediterranean. Tito gets older and the danger increases.

The Soviet Union, following the intervention in Czechoslovakia, began actively supporting Cominformist elements opposed to Tito. Initially, they operated from Kiev, Budapest, and, most recently, from the Western European countries.

There is no doubt that pro-Cominformists in Yugoslavia would surface as an active element and would seek full reconciliation with the Soviet Union. Their objective is to replace the Titoist system and they are active inside as well as outside Yugoslavia. Soviet support of these elements is part of a campaign to encourage isolation of Yugoslavia from the Communist order and promote internal disintegration of the Yugoslav concept. An independent Croat state would place ports on the Adriatic coast and airfields in their region at the disposal of the Soviet Union.

The Yugoslav armed forces are expected to support continuity of the present Yugoslav policy only if Tito's successors are in a position to control the country effectively. Assuming that they are able, the Soviet Union has three basic options:

- Direct military and political intervention.
- Indirect intervention.
- Maintenance of the status quo.

The direct and indirect interventions could be employed simultaneously, separately, or consecutively. Direct action may come if the internal situation is not controlled by the Yugoslav central government. The internal dissenters and Cominformists may request external intervention. The Soviet Union may then favor these elements in forming a government that would return Yugoslavia to the Soviet bloc. Direct military action could,

for example, consist of a surprise airborne operation on the two main airfields, Belgrade and Zagreb, similar to the Czechoslovakian operation of 1968, rather than a large-scale (20-30 divisions) ground invasion. If the Soviets elect the indirect approach, they would have more favorable alternatives. Their strongest card in that case would be the exploitation of the menace posed by the numerous internal factions. Cominformist elements could set in motion an internal rearrangement that would be far more palatable to the Soviet Union. The Soviets may also choose to accomplish long-term objectives by tolerating the status quo while encouraging internal tensions and disorders by supporting Cominformist elements, or by exerting pressure and forcing Yugoslavia to provide political and strategic concessions. The Soviet Union is in a position to pursue its long-term objectives in Yugoslavia by using various methods—some drastic, some subtle. The capability of the West to react is a subject for another article.

Both internal and external events will influence the outcome of Tito's succession problem and the future of the country. Yugoslavia's Army will occupy a privileged position and may play a dominant role during the transition period. The post-Tito era may also have an impact on the European balance of power. There may be crisis situations with neighbors over historical-territorial claims, particularly the previously-mentioned Macedonia issue.

Soviet perception of potential political, military, economic, and psychological gains or losses will dictate their course of action. Factors impacting on these perceptions include:

- The impact of intervention on the solidarity of the Western European Communist parties and the image among the Third World and nonaligned countries;
- Potential NATO, and particularly American, economic, political, and military reaction, including activation of the previous Balkan Pact;

- The impact of Soviet actions on East-West relations, in particular trade, the strategic arms limitation talks, and other disarmament negotiations.

Predicting the reaction of Eurocommunism, NATO, and the US is far from easy. Predicting Soviet perceptions compounds an already difficult problem. That the final shape of the post-Tito environment will be profoundly different from the existing one is, however, certain. The direction and severity of these changes will depend to a large degree on how far the Soviets are willing to go to bring Yugoslavia back "into the fold" and how far the West is willing to go to prevent that occurrence.

NOTES

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