



## TITOISM AND BEYOND

*by Laurence Silberman*

What is Yugoslavia's significance now? What will it be after Tito? Conventional answers usually point to the country's anomalous international position—neither Eastern nor Western, neither capitalist nor (in the Soviet sense) communist, neither neutral nor satellite. But these are descriptive clichés, not answers.

A real analysis of Yugoslavia's importance must focus on more tangible factors: on its geographical position, its volatile ethnic situation, its much-touted internal system of "self-management," and its "nonaligned" foreign policy. These elements define modern Yugoslavia. And, collectively, they must underlie any speculation about Yugoslavia after Tito.

Yugoslavia's geostrategic importance, for example, cannot be denied, especially with Greece and Turkey feuding within the NATO alliance, with Italy sliding deeper into a political morass, and with the Middle East as troubled as ever. What are the ramifications of Yugoslavia returning completely to the Russian orbit? What are the consequences of closer ties with the West?

And what of the thorny nationalities question? Surely a resolution of Yugoslavia's ethnic tensions, particularly the centrifugal tendencies of Croats and Albanians, has implications for other nations facing similar challenges—Spain with its Basque minority, Great Britain with its Welsh and Scottish separatists, and most importantly, the Soviet Union, where more than half the population is not of Russian stock.

Then, too, there is Yugoslavia's precariously balanced internal structure, that indigenous brand of communism the Yugoslavs call "self-managing socialism" and outsiders dub "Titoism." Some Western analysts—among them, many State Department policymakers—view this hybrid regime as a possi-

ble model for the evolution of Eastern Europe. Others—Soviet planners, perhaps?—appear to find it a pattern for the evolution of *Western* Europe. And some American academics see it as a pacesetter example for the Third World. Indeed, they argue, there may be characteristics even the United States would do well to emulate.

Such analysts assume that Yugoslavia is important because it is betwixt and between: because it has forged an attractive middle course between the competing powers, ideologies, and cultures of capitalist West and communist East.\* Yugoslavia, in this analysis, is like Bossom, the young Member of Parliament who rose to deliver his maiden speech. "Bossom, Bossom," muttered Winston Churchill, rolling the name over on his tongue. "Why, it is neither the one thing nor the other." When in fact, I would argue, Yugoslavia is rather *more* one thing than the other: more communist than socialist, more authoritarian than democratic, more anti-American than nonaligned. And much of the country's significance lies in the fact that the United States has failed to realize this.

#### Joycean Fictions

Take its internal system, for example. One cannot deny that Yugoslavia has introduced elementary aspects of a market economy; that its businesses have some degree of autonomy; or that political repression is less heavy-handed than in other Eastern European countries. But these modifications of orthodox, Russian-style communism are minor compared to Yugoslavia's efforts to adapt and apply basic Marxist ideology. "Self-management," after all, was never intended as a break from communism; it was a *post hoc* rationale to soften the blow of Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Communist movement in 1948. The Yugoslavs wanted, and got, their own compass; but the needle points in the same general direction as before.

To be sure, one hears diaphanous lectures in Yugoslavia about "restrictions" on the Communist Party, about what it should and should not do. But although the Party is called the "League of Communists"—deliberately suggestive of a friendly discussion group that does not actually decide issues, like the Ripon Society or the League of Women Voters—the fiction wears thin when, as in December of 1975, Tito sternly reminds his countrymen that they are governed by a Communist Party

\* These scholars owe a considerable debt to Russian dissident Andrei Sakharov's controversial "convergence" theory. See *Progress, Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom*, New York: Norton, 1968.

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dictatorship whose function is to lead.

This inability to articulate squarely the extent of Communist Party control is reflected in the oft-amended Yugoslav Constitution (which reads like *Finnegans Wake*) and in a series of recent statutes (which Yugoslavs describe as an "impenetrable fog"). The Constitution is thought to point to greater *decentralization*—politically and economically. However, Belgrade's actual tendencies reveal a push toward greater *centralization*.

In Yugoslavia, there is still political repression; even private thoughts, privately confided to a private diary, can lead to imprisonment. The most effective way of dealing with a recalcitrant, "heretical" bureaucracy remains the purge. And since 1971, when Croatian and Serbian liberalism frightened Tito into tightening Belgrade's control, Yugoslavia, in my view, has been tending toward more repression, not less.

Is this the Yugoslavia proffered as a model for East and West and South? Eastern Europeans may envy the relative freedom Yugoslavs now enjoy. But the Poles, Czechs, East Germans, and Hungarians—even the Russians—do not take Yugoslavia's institutional structures seriously. Without the presence of Soviet troops, as the Czechs tried to show in 1968, the rest of Eastern Europe would quickly liberalize beyond the point Yugoslavia has reached.

In Western Europe and America, only academic romantics enchanted by false images of workers' councils dancing around maypoles believe Yugoslav "self-management," with all its contradictions, worth emulation. Even the radicals of the Third World, infatuated with verbal Marxism, have not paid close attention to Yugoslavia's domestic policies. Indeed, during my time in Belgrade, Third World diplomats seemed particularly patronizing towards Yugoslavia's static experimentation.

### Anti-American Nonalignment

By contrast, Yugoslav foreign policy commands enormous Third World attention and admiration. Tito has deftly maneuvered between the two superpowers, and he helped found the 86-member "nonaligned" bloc that has successfully manipu-

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*The importance of Yugoslavia's strategic location on the Adriatic Sea is reinforced by the ideological diversity of her neighbors. The United States has no current aid agreement with Tito but did provide just under \$700 million in military assistance between 1951 and 1959. Economic aid totaled \$2.2 billion during the years 1951 through 1966, with most of this coming during the 1950s.*

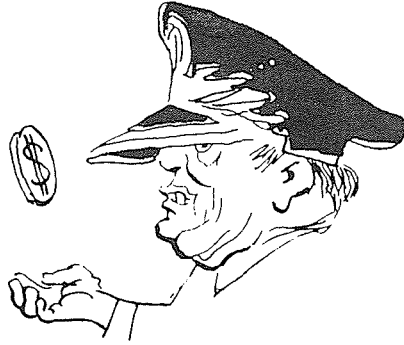
lated the United Nations in order to amplify and thereby exaggerate its own power. The mistake here is to take "nonalignment" to mean nonalignment. For it does not.

Yugoslavia follows an anti-American foreign policy. It is structurally independent of the Soviets but pursues similar basic goals. And while nonalignment has brought some tangible economic benefits to Yugoslavia—such as cheaper Libyan and Iraqi oil, as well as joint industrial ventures with African nations—it is a strategy based less on pragmatism than on ideology.

Tito, with India's Nehru and Egypt's Nasser, launched the nonaligned movement in 1961. Its members range from Brazil and Argentina on the right to Cuba and North Korea on the left; the fulcrum, however, is decidedly to the left of center. The nonaligned nations, led by Yugoslavia, consistently oppose the Western democracies—particularly American economic and political power. They have called for the "decolonization" of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands and for withdrawal

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*In October of 1949, the Soviet humor magazine Krokodil portrayed Tito as ready to sell Yugoslavia to Wall Street and likened him to Adolf Hitler.*



of U.S. troops from South Korea. In the United Nations, they supported the "Zionism-is-racism" resolution of 1975.

But that's not all. The Yugoslavs allowed Soviet overflights to supply the Arab armies in 1973 and the pro-Soviet MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) during the Angolan civil war in 1976. They have fed fictional accounts to the State Department concerning their violations of the terms of at least half a dozen trade contracts with the United States. And most recently, they have sent U.S.-built tanks to Ethiopia in blatant disregard of solemn agreements with this country.

#### **After Tito, What?**

As I have noted before,\* U.S. policy toward the Yugoslavs, oddly, takes little of this into account. To paraphrase Dr. Johnson, the State Department has but two ideas about Yugoslavia, and they are wrong ones: that our *only* interest in Yugoslavia is to prevent it from sliding back into the Soviet bloc; and that we further that end by providing open-ended military and economic support. On the first point, surely U.S. interests also include undercutting Yugoslav attempts to frustrate American aims throughout the world. Moreover, the Yugoslavs stayed Moscow's hand without our help for three years (1948-51) and have maintained a credible deterrent ever since. A Russian invasion against a "population in arms" on rugged Balkan terrain would cost Moscow dearly. On the second point, our one-way friendship seems only to have encouraged the Yugoslavs to see how far they can go. It may well be that the *less* support Yugoslavia got from the United States, the *more* it would feel obliged to resist Soviet pressure in order to maintain its autonomy.

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\* See "Yugoslavia's 'Old' Communism: Europe's Fiddler on the Roof," in *Foreign Policy*, Spring 1977.

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Whatever the merits of that argument, U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia will probably undergo a major upheaval when 85-year-old Josip Broz Tito finally relinquishes his astonishingly persistent hold on this life. The questions then facing the Yugoslavs will be the very ones confronting State Department planners: What will happen to Tito's foreign policy ventures? What will become of Yugoslavia's mixed-bag domestic program? And how will the Soviets respond? No one can answer these questions; at best we can only guess.

Even in the late 1930s, Tito was called *Stari* ("the old one") by his much younger subordinates—who today make up the aging Yugoslav leadership. No one in the country in a position of influence has known a time when Tito didn't potentially, if not actually, exercise ultimate authority. No matter how much the Yugoslavs seek to discount the impact of Tito's death by prior arrangements to assure continuity—the Constitution, for instance, provides for a collective nine-man presidency to succeed the Marshal—it is unlikely that Titoism, in *all* its unique manifestations, can long survive its creator.

Yugoslav foreign policy seems most likely to change. After Tito, it will probably recede in importance both to the Yugoslavs and to the world. When a leader achieves a greater impact on the global stage than his country's size or wealth would dictate, his death is usually followed by a period of retrenchment. India turned inward after Nehru, France after De Gaulle, Ghana after Nkrumah, Indonesia after Sukarno, Egypt after Nasser. (Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat's bold Mideast initiatives have been prompted largely by a desire to disentangle Egypt from foreign conflict.)

### Pluralism's Appeal

But what will turning inward do to Yugoslavia's internal development? Will the system gravitate towards the West? The Belgrade leadership denies this—as, of course, it must. But the average Yugoslav does, in fact, look towards Western Europe to see the direction of Yugoslav change. The influence of Western culture is pervasive and Western economic progress, which Yugoslavs envy, is seen by most Yugoslavs as inextricably linked to Western political structures.

Even the new middle class—those professionals, technocrats and intellectuals who achieved newfound status under Tito's Communism, and who might be thought to have much to gain by a continuation of the status quo—appear sympathetic to political pluralism and restraints on government power. Natu-

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rally, the Communist Party does not lightly contemplate loss of its influence. But there are diverging currents within that organization, and certainly some of its leaders are not immune to pluralism's appeal. Edvard Kardelj, the most influential Yugoslav after Tito, recently predicted in his typically elliptical fashion the evolution of a unique Yugoslav pluralism. That he spoke in such terms at all—"pluralism" had been officially taboo—reveals the party's sensitivity to underlying currents.

The Army is another matter; it is probably the most conservative force in Yugoslavia, and anti-Western attitudes are a good deal more prevalent in the military than many in the West have hoped or imagined. While the only real function of the Yugoslav military (Belgrade's propaganda to the contrary) is to deter and, if need be, counter a threat from the Soviet Union, the military is indoctrinated in training as if the primary threat were from NATO. Even a gradual move towards Western pluralism could be bumpy, and the Yugoslav military—like most militaries—prefers a stable political climate.

Post-Tito Yugoslavia could well move towards the West in fits and starts, dragging the military along like a sea anchor. But there are two unknowns: the nationalities problem and the Soviets. We simply cannot know how virulent Croatian or, for that matter, Albanian separatism will become. Some recent Croatian émigrés have displayed a shocking, devil-take-the-hindmost attitude towards Croatian independence. This view is not dominant inside Croatia, but one would be foolish to discount it. Any sign of real separatism, as opposed to simple Croatian desires for greater federalism, might decisively chill Belgrade's push for liberalization.

As for the Soviets, there may well be a small planning group in the Kremlin whose job it is to calculate the degree of Yugoslav deviance that amounts to abandonment of communism and, thereby, deals an unacceptable blow to the Leninist doctrine of inevitable triumph. If so, the Soviet response is unpredictable; unfortunately, so too is that of the United States.

