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YUGOSLAVIA'S FIRST POST-TITO PARTY CONGRESS

Part II: The Congress Copes

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The Twelfth Congress, called a "do-nothing Congress" of continuity and reaffirmation, nevertheless continued to protect the considerable autonomy and liberty that Yugoslavs enjoy as individuals, corporate groups, and nations.

Depending on one's view, it was either a symptom of fundamental frivolousness or a healthy indicator of what even Party functionaries rightly consider really important that the timing of the Twelfth Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) held from Saturday through Tuesday (June 26-29), was determined by soccer. When a nonspecific "late June" date was first announced many months earlier, the organizers had apparently failed to take into account that the quadrennial World Cup soccer competition would be under way at precisely the same time in Spain.

Yugoslavs, like most other Europeans and Latin Americans, take their soccer seriously and make it their national sport in two senses. The first is as the most popular spectator sport—an important match is the only thing capable of emptying Yugoslav city streets during the evening promenade hour and gluing the entire country to the television set, while international matches are the only exception to this dark year's energy-saving measures that ban all other outdoor evening events requiring illumination. The second is that competing teams in international matches are regarded as personifying their respective

nations, which vastly increases attendant passions. In this latter respect, Yugoslavs instinctively prove that each of them does have a double national identity after all: while a domestic match between a Serb and a Croat team can end in a violent display of Serbian and Croatian nationalist sentiments, there is an occasion once every four years, during the World Cup season, when there actually *is* a single, unified, and vociferously conscious Yugoslav nation, momentarily confounding the theory that no such thing exists.

It was therefore surely "no coincidence" (to use a favorite Marxist phrase) that by the time the precise congress dates were announced it was known from the schedule of World Cup matches that the Yugoslav national team, if successful in earlier rounds, might be playing through Friday, June 25, but certainly not again until the following Tuesday evening, making it quite safe to schedule a congress from Saturday morning to Tuesday noon. No one believed the lame official explanation that this timing, with its unprecedented weekend beginning, was chosen as a contribution to economic "stabilization," because this way worker-delegates attending the congress would lose two fewer workdays on the job.

Unfortunately for Yugoslav soccer fans and in a symbolic athletic counterpoint to the sad contemporary performance of the Yugoslav economy, Yugoslavia's team played so badly (the "domestic factor") and had such bad luck with the curious system used to weight World Cup wins, losses, and draws

(the uncontrollable "external factor") that they were eliminated from competition when Spain defeated Northern Ireland on the evening before the congress opened.

The piquant reason for its timing does not mean that the delegates, once they left their television sets and finished their critique of their team's miserable performance in Spain, did not take seriously this "congress of great expectations." That name was given to it by a leading Party intellectual in a pre-congress article, written for Yugoslavia's popular equivalent of *Playboy*, that wisely sought to deflate such expectations by reminding readers that most key political events and changes have taken place between and not at previous Party congresses.¹ As noted in Part I of this *Report*, the debate on the reports and draft resolutions submitted to the Twelfth Congress produced a wealth of open and often thoughtful and unsparing criticism, even if the congress proved in the end as unable to devise a winning strategy as the national soccer team on the playing fields of Spain.

On the second day Kiro Gligorov, an able senior federal Party functionary and economic specialist lately sidelined from the high federal office by lack of a solid political base in his native Macedonia (the "federalization" of "cadre policy" described in Part I), tried to square the circle of the Yugoslav dilemma in a later widely quoted speech to the gathering's First Commission, concerned with the economy. After noting that the Twelfth Congress had "for valid reasons" been called "a congress of continuity" before it even began, he promptly inserted a characteristic Yugoslav "however" that constituted a telling indictment:²

Continuity, however, cannot be a valid principle for present practice, for the existing economic and political situation.... Precisely in the name of continuity of the strategy of socialist self-management, the present situation and relations in society must be radically changed. That is our basic problem and here only discontinuity can be our orientation. There can be no continuity in existing statist and state-property relations, stagnation in self-management cannot be maintained or continued, and the present distribution of economic power and of relations

based on it cannot be allowed to continue. There can be no more political monopoly over self-management and arbitration in self-management relations by bureaucratic and technocratic combinations and powers.... We cannot stick with present conditions of work and business relations: low productivity, poor utilization of social resources, waste, and consumption greater than real income. We cannot progress, work, and live with losses, with false solidarity, nonwork, and privileges. We must not continue to reconcile ourselves to all this in the name of "continuity" in realizing the bravest and most humane ideals contained in socialist self-management.... In other words, we must change existing conditions at all those points of social and economic life where the inertia of what is old and monopolistic is ideologically entrenched and frequently cloaked in self-management phrases and practice.

Reporting from the congress the following morning (June 28, incidentally and almost unremarked, the 34th anniversary of Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Soviet bloc), the most influential Belgrade and Yugoslav newspaper, *Politika*, used the key sentence from this speech as its front page banner headline: "Precisely in the name of continuity, the present situation must be radically changed."

Gligorov's list of deficiencies was echoed, elaborated, and documented in speech after speech in the three commissions dealing with the economic system, the political system, and the party (three other congress commissions were concerned, respectively, with culture and science, foreign policy, and national defense). There was also no lack of disagreement on some of these issues and remedies and policies that were proposed or defended. A few random examples give something of the "flavor" of the congress, although none is saying anything original:

- A woman law student from Osijek (Croatia), discussing unemployment, attacked idiocies in present employment practices with well-documented specific examples from her home district, openness, compassion, and specific remedies, earning a round of enthusiastic applause. (Applause is significant. It

is one of the genuinely spontaneous features of Yugoslav Party congresses, even ones more inhibited than the Twelfth, and permits ordinary delegates to do a kind of "voting" in the security of collective anonymity. No one and no fear of political reprisals can control the way they apportion or withhold the applause they give to speakers in debates, members of their new Party leaderships when the lists are read or guest delegations when they are introduced. This last is a fascinating index of the current popularity ratings of "fraternal" Communist and Socialist parties, liberation movements, etc., in which the Italian Communist Party is always a clear winner, but the Twelfth Congress's favorite, thanks to contemporary events in Beirut, was the PLO.

- A delegate from Slovenia offered a thoughtful critique of current practice in "social planning" that is supposed to accompany and mitigate "market laws" in micro- and macro-economic behavior: the reasons for and consequences of failures to link enterprises and "sociopolitical" organs in the planning process; the level at which planning is done as a factor in economic "localization" in "closed" local and regional economies; and ways to make improvements in both these sectors.

- A young delegate from Novi Sad (Vojvodina), one of many criticizing disintegrated "closed" regional economies, presented some telling statistics. In 1980, she said, Yugoslavia's 20,674 "Basic Organizations of Associated Labor" (BOALs, the smallest economic units) were associated or integrated, through contractual arrangements, in 4,285 "Working Organizations" (WOs, formerly called "enterprises" and frequently comprised of several BOALs). Of these latter, 2,807 were further integrated in 364 "Complex Organizations of Associated Labor" (COALs, the Yugoslav equivalent of large corporations or conglomerates). However, the total number of WOs integrated into COALs based in another republic or province was only 66, or 2.4 percent of all WOs involved in COALs, while only 411 BOALs, 2 percent of the total, were involved in WOs from another republic or province. "In other words," she continued, "the level of

self-management linkage among producers of raw materials and processing and commercial organizations on the basis of common interests and shared income in a unified Yugoslav market is low. Inadequate self-management linkage along the production chain leads to lagging behind in the production of raw materials and producers' goods also for those kinds for which we have natural resources, and to dependence on imported raw materials—that is, a high level of import-dependency even for those kinds of raw materials and producers' goods that we could produce domestically if associated labor were better organized. On these questions real action by Communists, by basic organizations of the LC, has been lacking. In no way, in my opinion, can we justify that."

- Yes, please, let us have a more "real market," said Branislav Šoškić, a leading Montenegrin functionary, but this also means doing something about the organization and (excessive?) power of the BOALs, to make them more responsive to market forces by restricting their ability to use contractual arrangements with other economic and sociopolitical units ("self-management agreements" and "social contracts" in Yugoslav legal terminology) to establish pricing and other cartels rather than to achieve vertical integration, the intent of these provisions.

- A young worker from a Belgrade factory offered a detailed description of how "self-management" does not work in his enterprise and locale and the negative effect of political interventions and control—adding with great conviction that "all of us are for *real* self-management."

- A delegate from Celje (Slovenia) had an illuminatingly different story: a success story, for Celje generally and his enterprise in particular, in restructuring production (a key element in "stabilization," as he noted) and conforming to "self-management" norms during the 1970s, and so prospering even in these hard times. "Today," he concluded, "some claim that our difficulties are produced by the system. However, the results and experience we have had demonstrate the opposite. Accordingly, the blame for difficulties lies not in the self-

management system, but in individuals and institutions that have not adhered to decisions and agreements, from associated labor up to the Federation. Such behavior has step by step led to denial of economic laws."

- An elderly delegate from the Partisans veterans' organization, SUBNOR, was the authentic voice of concerned, conservative "old fighters": the way out lies simply in true "unity" (*jedinstvo*) of the nations and nationalities, not the divisions that the present system sustains and enlarges.

- A Bosnian miner with a Muslim name, who said he had been decorated as a "Hero of Socialist Labor" in 1948 (Yugoslavia's Stalinist period), offered a similar view: the road to "stabilization" lies through a return to old values, a central economic plan, and a Communist Party whose main task is to ensure its fulfillment.

- Najdan Pašić, a leading Serbian social scientist about to take a seat on the new LCY Central Committee, took a hard look at the complexity, duplication, and continued proliferation of "self-management" institutions and procedures and concluded, in effect, that a great idea has become muscle-bound on its way from drawing board to implementation. This is particularly true, he argued, of the "self-management communities of interest" (*SIZovi* in the Yugoslav acronym) that were developed in the 1970s to manage "de-statified" sectors like education, social services, employment, health, etc. and as places to negotiate "self-management agreements" and "social compacts." These *SIZovi*, Pašić said, had become bloated, inefficient, and expensive "quasi-state" bureaucracies little better in principle or in action than the state bureaucracies they had replaced. It was clear, he suggested bravely, that the political system in general must be subjected to the same critical and reforming re-examination that the economy has been receiving over the past year from a high-level special commission for "economic stabilization," usually called "the Krajer Commission" for its chairman, Sergej Krajer of Slovenia. Pašić therefore proposed the establishment of such a commission—a point he continued to press after the Congress, as a member of

the LCY Central Committee, and for which he won that Committee's agreement several months later.

- A number of delegates, high and low, emphasized the importance of the private sector—here sometimes called "the little economy" and further East "the second economy"—as a labor-intensive source of additional production, services, and employment more needed than ever in these hard times. "Dogmatic" ideological and special interest resistance to liberalization and promotion of the expansion of this sector was roundly denounced. Several of those who made this point, including Gligorov, also noted that the labor-intensive and other virtues of small-is-beautiful in the private sector could fruitfully be replicated in the socialist sector, where megalomania and capital—rather than labor-intensiveness have tended to dominate. Many spoke up in similar fashion for the private agricultural sector, still burdened by a 10-hectare limit on the size of most farms and other relics of "dogmatic" attitudes long but vainly described as major reasons why Yugoslav agriculture, said by a much-quoted Japanese specialist to have the potential to feed 60 million people, has difficulty feeding 23 million Yugoslavs without a negative agricultural foreign trade balance.

- Fuad Muhić, a Bosnian Muslim writer and theoretician lately also notorious for his contribution to polemics about the nature of Yugoslavia's "Muslim nation," was true to form, inspiring one of the third commission's sharpest controversies with his discussions of the degree to which three Communist sacred cows may have outlived their usefulness in Yugoslavia. On the question of "democratic centralism" he identified two current views: one that it no longer should apply, or at least not at the federal summit of LCY, because it contradicts Yugoslav principles of compromise, consensus, and right of veto for nationally diverse regions, principles that should be extended to the Party as well; the other that it must still apply with full Leninist force. The first "posed the question, will the League of Communists in this way rapidly grow into really a bourgeois party, a coalition of republican and provincial Leagues?" The second, "as we know from the experience of some other parties in power, has

often led to the transformation of democratic centralism into undemocratic." Between this Scylla and Charybdis Muhić preferred a (vaguely defined) middle course. As for "Leninism" (here meaning Lenin's concept of the party as a small tightly disciplined "cadre party") and "the dictatorship of the proletariat," one should recognize, without denying their historic validity in Yugoslavia as well, that they have been largely "superseded" by official acceptance of Edvard Kardelj's Yugoslav "concept of a pluralism of self-management interests and their free expression." This last was too much for some other delegates, and Muhić felt obliged to return to the podium the following day to modify his views that "Leninism" and "the dictatorship of the proletariat" had been "superseded," while also thanking those comrades who had supported him in the intervening debate.

- Delegate Milivoje Bojanić was only a little harsher than several others, including Bogdan Crnobrna in the speech in which he proposed an extraordinary congress "in not longer than one year if the expected turnaround in the direction of agreed policies is still missing," when he told the same commission:

In the resolution for the Twelfth Congress, the report, and other materials we are claiming that we have achieved significant results in the period between two congresses. I only don't know where we see these results. Is it in an indebtedness that was about \$8 billion after the Eleventh Congress and has grown to \$20 billion or more before the Twelfth? Or in inflation that attains astronomical proportions? Is it in a number of unemployed that exceeds 800,000, or in strengthening brotherhood and unity, is it in a well-done reform of the school system? Maybe in brotherhood and unity, but in a fine economic situation in which it is said we are on a good road to recession or a moratorium, not to mention other "successes"...

Comrade delegates, we must not nurture illusions that we can solve all these problems quickly, because we don't have the material and other resources for that. But something of all this must be solved, ...although the materials before us do not offer us optimal solutions. If

we are not in a position to find the right solution to get rid of all these accumulated problems, at least we are in a position to adopt a resolution to free ourselves quickly of those cadres whose efforts—better said, whose non-efforts and non-wisdom—got us into all this, and to whom, according to the proposals before us, we are supposed to give a mandate to lead us further toward the precipice.

These are only fragments from an avalanche of words and ideas inundating Belgrade's Sava Center those four days in June. The First Commission, dealing with the economy, had 700 participants, heard 135 speakers, logged 124 additional written interventions for which there was no time for verbal presentation in 5 half-day sessions, and received 151 proposed amendments to draft resolutions and the report of the outgoing Central Committee, which were passed on to the commission in charge of preparing the final version for approval at the closing plenary sessions. The Second Commission, dealing with the political system, had 345 participants, 85 speakers, and 29 written interventions. The Third Commission, dealing with Party matters and the Party Statute, had 313 participants, 77 speakers, and 20 written submissions; 25 proposed amendments to resolutions and the Central Committee report and 14 proposed amendments to the Statute were received for consideration.³

Many of the speeches were as critical, deviant, or constructive as the fragments cited above—although many others were merely self-praise and humble self-criticism for local accomplishments and failures, and repetition of what they hoped was the "party line" by delegates whose mission was simply to report and to renew vows of fealty on behalf of their local organizations. Many of the proposed amendments were substantive in nature, designed to bring meaningful changes in organization, procedure, or policies if adopted, although many others concerned improvements in wording or insufficiently represented special interests.

All largely in vain, at least for the moment and except as a clear warning against further vacillation and impotence that may yet be heeded in time by a regime that has

managed to respond constructively to urgent warning signals in the past. A possibly too hasty collation of pre-congress drafts of the resolutions and Central Committee report with the final versions adopted on the last day reveals almost no significant alterations attributable to criticism of their alleged complacency, evasiveness, or inadequacy heard at the congress. The few substantive proposed amendments that had any impact did so in compromise and milder form—as with a less threatening party "conference," convocable on request, in place of a commitment to an extraordinary congress if things continue to go wrong and only limited acceptance of demands for secret voting, with multiple candidates for individual posts, in future elections of federal party organs.

The Inevitability of Evasion

There are many reasons why this "congress of great expectations," held when a coherent longer-term strategy to remedy economic and social miseries and avoid their political consequences is urgently needed, was nevertheless doomed to disappoint. The most important of these reasons, the core of what this *Report* has called and already obliquely defined as "the Yugoslav dilemma," was captured most dramatically, although in part unwittingly, in two speeches by one young delegate, the second of which generated a political furor.

Rade Končar, Congress delegate from the Party organization in New Belgrade and a reportedly able enterprise manager, is the son of another Rade Končar, who was a Serb from Croatia, a leading figure of the underground Communist Party there before World War II, and one of the most famous "National Heroes" of the wartime Partisan movement, killed by the Italians in 1942, two months before young Rade was born. The name is a Yugoslav "household word," not only because of the father's fame but because one of the country's largest industrial concerns and many streets and squares are named after him. There was therefore a stir of expectant interest in the press center and halls of Sava Center when the young Rade Končar came to the podium of the First Commission at its second session.

His opening salvos were already acquiring a familiar ring that others would continue to sound more or less as strongly, but they merit quotation for a style as well as content that won him sympathy and a propensity to applaud what came later:

Someone said here in our Commission, I think it was Comrade Vidić, that this Congress represents a turning point. However, I do not see any turning point in what we have had so far, and because of that I have to express my dissatisfaction. In fact, as a Comrade said a little while ago, and I treasure it, we find ourselves in a war and we behave as though we were on our summer vacation. I think we have to change something here. I expected polemics, battles, I expected an open confrontation of views, and that we would arrive at some agreed results, on the basis of which we will make provision for a surer and clearer future. However, I think this is missing, besides which the documents [draft resolution, etc.] are not such as to permit such a debate to develop. Comrades, I think that we must change radically. Especially we in the League of Communists....

After pleading for a more orderly selection of goals and policies to achieve them in rank-order rather than all at once ("That doesn't work, Comrades; whether we want to recognize it or not, it doesn't work"), he turned to the currently fashionable subject of "responsibility" for mistakes in policy and its execution:

The dominant idea is that we are all responsible. And we are all responsible. But we are not, Comrades, all equally responsible. Those with more influence are more responsible than those with less, and I think that workers are the least responsible of all. Accordingly, when we speak of responsibility, we should speak about the concrete responsibility of managing organs, responsibility of Communists in those organs and bodies where economic policy measures are really made. In the same way we must recognize that in our society, at this level of development of self-management, leaderships still have the greatest influence and so the greatest responsibility. That is so in organizations of associated labor, it is so in the state,

and we must not behave as though it were otherwise.

Then, becoming more controversial, he turned to the touchy theme of "unity." This term sounds all right in the Partisan and postwar slogan of "brotherhood and unity [*bratstvo i jedinstvo*] of the Yugoslav nations and nationalities," but when used by itself has developed alarming connotations for many Yugoslavs who associate it with historical experiences of Serb domination, centralized Communist dictatorship in early postwar years, and the idea that the separate South Slav nations should be made to dissolve into a single "Yugoslav nation" (an idea recalled nostalgically by a few Congress speakers). Končar on the subject:

We very hesitantly speak about unity, or we don't speak, or we speak about community, but Comrades, we need unity. Somewhere in the '70s we had foisted on us the thesis "let us differentiate ourselves [razjedinimo se, also meaning "dis-unite ourselves"] so that we may better unite ourselves," and I think we have so far very effectively differentiated ourselves. However, I'm not so sure about uniting.

Disintegrative tendencies are great in society, and that generally, from basic organizations of associated labor to the state. Territorialization exists from the commune to the republic, and it is often covered up by the need to realize the equality of a nation or a nationality, when it seems to me that what is really involved are the narrow interests of a group of people or an individual. And out of that grow activities designed to create "national economies," out of which grows a system of foreign currency allocation like the one we have, which divides us ever further, generating disagreements about planning, etc.

The economic decisions that we adopt are consequences of compromises among the republics and provinces, and because of that their fate is what it is. Or else we try to plan in a self-management way and so in a united way, but we neither plan in a united way nor do we plan at all, because we can't plan because we don't know the conditions the economy will be subject to, we don't know what will happen to us in three days, not to speak of

three years. The system is made by one bureaucracy, a political one, with here and there some science, and it is carried out by others, carried out by associated labor.

Along with this, and I am saying this deliberately, there is a lot of criticism of management structures, but I am one of the members of those management structures, I am the boss of an organization, and I don't accept that and such generalized criticism, because I think I do my job well. Instead I want us to talk about responsibility in a similarly selective way, to look at who is not working, and who is working, and to do it in the state as well. I think it's easy to look. Let's take an end-of-the-year look at results in working organizations, and in the state, at whether we have increased exports, at whether we have increased productivity, at whether we've succeeded in designing measures in economic policy that stimulate work, etc.

Accordingly I would very happily invite these critics of management structures and verbal fighters for self-management to come to the working organizations, even if self-management is little developed, and see how it looks [interrupted by applause]. Self-management is not the source of our problems, and everyone who goes along with that thesis is grievously wrong. Instead, the source of our problems is the insufficiently developed self-management that we have in working organizations. But I can tell you that self-management exists only in working organizations. That there is no self-management outside working organizations. Accordingly, let's have a look at that too [interrupted by applause].

Finally, a preoration unusual in style for Yugoslav political oratory.

I plead for unity. I plead for an affirmation of work rather than non-work. I plead for strengthening of class at the expense of exaggerated national [interest]. I plead for a strengthening of unity at the expense of exaggerated territorialization.... If that is unitarism, then I am a unitarist. But I think that the working class of Yugoslavia, associated labor of Yugoslavia, and the people of this land demand unity. Thank you [applause]

It was Končar's other intervention at the last plenary session and its aftermath that rightly caught the attention of the press at home and abroad.⁴ I have nevertheless quoted as length from his earlier speech because it is here, in the thread of argument and style, that one can best discern how simultaneously right and potentially dangerous Končar's position is, and why it therefore encapsulates that central dilemma.

The manifold and manifestly negative consequences, especially in present circumstances, of a disintegrated economy and a central political authority severely handicapped by its institutional and procedural arrangements and by the national and social factors they reflect are indeed as pervasive, grave, and capable of frustrating correct or indeed any solutions as described at the congress and elsewhere, in the media and in daily conversation. In this situation there is a strong case to be made for cutting the Gordian knot by restoring a central authority capable of deciding and imposing its will on the basis of its reading of country-wide long-term as well as short-term interests. Such an authority would clearly be a more efficient political arrangement and usually more likely to produce pertinent as well as timely decisions than one requiring prolonged negotiations and compromises among eight quasi-sovereign parties with frequently divergent desires—usually producing lowest-common-denominator decisions based on the principle “better a policy with which everyone is equally unhappy than one with which only some are happy.” It would also facilitate the destruction of those internal economic barriers, raised by regional political and narrow national interests, that inhibit economic integration and efficient free flows of capital and goods.

At the final plenary session Končar rose again to propose the most effective way, in the Yugoslav political context, to recreate this kind of authority without sacrificing much, except in the key national sector, of what is currently pluralistic, participant, and hence partly democratic. He did it dramatically, shocking the Congress by resubmitting amendments to the Party

Statute already rejected by the drafting commission and interrupting the solemn ritual in which all documents are adopted and new “leading bodies” are elected by the plenary without further discussion or dissent. Such interventions at this point are in fact so unprecedented that it took the session's chairman some moments to realize that a delegate had raised his hand and was coming forward to debate the motion, routinely made by the chairman of the drafting commission, to accept the “amendments and additions to the Statute of the LCY” he had just submitted.

The amendments that Končar resubmitted on behalf of the Party Committee of New Belgrade would revolutionize the vertical organization of the LCY, basing it on economic rather than territorial units. The present organizational hierarchy rises from Party “basic organizations” in work places and local communities through communal and city organizations to republican-provincial ones and from these last to the all-Yugoslav Central Committee and other organs. The New Belgrade proposal would strengthen the authority of the work place basic organizations and eliminate the communal, provincial, and republican Party organs as territorial organizations, replacing them with Party organizations for clusters of BOALs and enterprises and economic branches at the same levels. These changes, Končar explained, had two purposes. The first was to facilitate the “integration” of the Party and its members “into the self-management system,” a goal proclaimed at three successive Party congresses. The second was to reunite the Party, and under it the country, by liquidating the territorial organizations that promote political and economic divisions along republican-provincial and hence national lines.

If these amendments were not accepted, Končar said, he would resign all his Party functions, because their rejection would indicate that he was wrong on an issue of crucial importance. When this threat brought a loud murmur of disapproval and disbelief, he cried out: “Someone has to make a start, because in this country nobody is prepared to accept responsibility for anything, not for Kosovo, not for

economic problems, not for unemployment, not for anything!”

The amendments were not accepted. Only Končar was clearly seen voting for them, after an emotional exchange in which the chairman of the commission for statutory questions, Bosnian Party chieftain Branko Mikulić, attacked his motives and behavior (“This is not the way to speak at a congress of the LCY!”) and the Slovene session chairman and President-elect of the new Party Presidency, Mitja Ribičič, was lamely conciliatory. Mikulić accused Končar of trying “to destroy the Leagues of Communists in the republics and autonomous provinces, as well as all the communal Party organizations,” which was true enough, and asked ominously: “What would then remain of the League of Communists, and whose hands would it fall into?” Ribičič reminded Končar and the delegates that the same proposal had been made and rejected during preparations for the Eleventh Congress (in 1978), where the late Edvard Kardelj—then Tito's chief lieutenant and ideologist—had explained its rejection by noting that it “would lead to an organizational structure built up to the very largest producing entities and to the banks, so that in the end the Party [pyramid] would ‘end’ in the banks.... The LCY would not be the ideological engine of the revolution, but rather an adjunct of technology.”⁵ Ribičič begged Končar to withdraw his motion and threat to resign, but Končar declined.

The Končar episode continued to make waves in the press and at meetings of the Belgrade and Serbian Party leaderships through the summer. Its “epilogue” came in September, when his resignations from the New Belgrade communal and Belgrade city committees of the Party were finally accepted, but only after initial resistance by the first of these bodies and an open debate in the second that found many agreeing, as one of them put it, “with 80 percent of Končar's positions.” Looking back in reporting this “epilogue,” a leading news-magazine published in Croatian Zagreb commented:

It is clear from these selected details from “the Končar program” that it is right about many things.... What is unacceptable, impossible in “the

Končar program" is what brings into question the principles on which the Yugoslav community is based and the only ones on which it can persist. Ivan Stambolić, President of the Belgrade City Committee of the LC, called those principles to mind most clearly...: the concepts from which Rade Končar takes his departure are unacceptable, they would lead us to the creation of a centralist state of the Stalinist type.⁶

The trouble with Končar's and similar proposals is not only that they would destroy the power of currently all-powerful republican and provincial "Party barons," which is enough to block them in any case. In Yugoslavia terms like integration and unity—especially from the lips of the "wrong" people, including almost any Serb—smack of "unitarism," of centralized authoritarian control of everything and everyone that tends to fall into the hands of members of the largest nation, the Serbs, along with their closest kinfolk, the Montenegrins. They are therefore instinctively and vehemently rejected by most non-Serbs on national grounds and by many Serbs as well on grounds of ideological preference or interest—a politically effective as well as numerical majority. The impasse remains. Centralized solutions are unacceptable, and decentralized ones are ineffective, often inappropriate, complicating, and above all further magnify divisions. It is in this sense that "the Končar program" and its ilk are socially and economically promising but politically subversive.

And this, even more than other reasons and fears described in this *Report*, is why "muddling through" with present systems, while tampering with them to try to make them work better, will continue as long as possible.

* * * * *

The congress, like the Krajger Commission whose first wordy product entitled "The Fundamentals of the

Long-Term Program of Economic Stabilization" was endorsed by the old Central Committee and Federal Assembly just before being re-endorsed by the congress, produced little more than a reaffirmation of timeworn principles and purposes. In this and the emphatic way it was done, however, both the congress and "The Fundamentals" were important events after all, for they closed the door, at least for the moment, on bad alternative courses.

Some of these short-term positive functions of a "do-nothing congress" of continuity and reaffirmation therefore merit listing in closing this *Report*:

There may be precious little by way of a "real" market economy in present-day Yugoslavia, but the stubborn and emphatic recommitment to the principles of one in "The Fundamentals" and two Congress Resolutions tends to brake a retreat toward a partial or full-fledged Soviet-type "command economy" that could otherwise easily grow out of the increase in state regulation that has come, *nolens volens*, with attempts to cope with current economic problems. Instead, each such new regulation and other "administrative intervention" by the state must be accompanied by defensive assurances that it is a "temporary" or "emergency" measure that will be withdrawn as soon as possible because it does violate the principles of a free market economy, "economic laws," and self-management. This may be wishful thinking, but it creates an atmosphere in which each further step in the same direction is inhibited and must be justified.

The burden of hard currency indebtedness and the temptation to shirk it and take the consequences are enormous, so repeated commitments to bearing the burden, increasing exports and other economic relations with the hard currency area, and continuing to seek "Yugoslavia's place in the

international division of labor" are significant. Increasing economic dependence on the East, with all its attendant dangers for nonalignment, will continue to encounter resistance. So, too, will autarkic impulses that in the long run tend to close borders to the movement of people and ideas as well as goods.

"Self-management" may be partly myth and partly confused and confusing reality, but reaffirmation of the ideal and firm insistence that it is imperfections and unrealized aspects of self-management, not self-management itself, that are to blame for current difficulties put advocates of even some aspects of Eastern-style "true socialism" at a disadvantage.

All the above and rejection of proposals to "de-federalize" the Party and other institutions, however unhelpful in solving current problems, are additional guarantees that a "pluralism of self-management interests" and other forms of pluralism of active participants in making public policy, whether or not these are really "self-managed," will continue to differentiate Yugoslavia from societies where there is little or no pluralism of this kind.

All the above, finally, continues to protect the sometimes modest and sometimes considerable degree of various kinds of liberty and autonomy that Yugoslavs as individuals, corporate groups, and nations have gradually come to enjoy in the years of "Titoist" deviation from Stalinism and post-Stalinist "true socialism."

But the times are hard. In a conversation with a Yugoslav friend and senior official on the eve of the Twelfth Congress, the present writer mentioned that an earlier *Fieldstaff Report* had described the message projected by the Eleventh Congress, in 1978, as "a stable Yugoslavia in an unstable world." The friend responded: "Then your message from this Congress will be 'an unstable Yugoslavia in a still more unstable world!'"

(December 1982)

NOTES

1. Dušan Bilandžić, "Kongres velikog očekivanja," in *Start* (Zagreb), June 6, 1982.
2. This and other quotes from the Congress are taken from a three-foot pile of mimeographed and unedited stenographic reports ("*Neautorizovane magnetofonske beleške*") transcribed—and usually available within an hour of each speech's delivery—from tapes made during plenary and commission sessions, which are also open to foreign as well as domestic reporters. For details of congress atmosphere and procedures, the Yugoslav use of "however's" on such occasions, and a general description of the preceding (Eleventh) LCY Congress, see my "Notes from a Yugoslav Party Congress," *AUFS Reports*, no. 41, 1978. My observations on early LCY congresses, based largely on earlier *AUFS Reports*, can be found in Rusinow, *The Yugoslav Experiment* (London and Berkeley, 1979), passim.
3. The proceedings in the other three commissions, concerned with education and culture, foreign policy, and defense, produced analogous statistics but are not of interest in this *Report*.
4. E.g., David Binder, whose Washington-based nose for a good Yugoslav story is as keen as it was when Belgrade-based nearly 20 years ago. "War Hero's Son Jars Politics in Yugoslavia," *New York Times Service* in the *International Herald Tribune* (Paris, etc.), November 23, 1982.
5. See the *AUFS Report* cited in note 2 for the Eleventh Congress chapter of this story, with more of Kardelj's statement referred to by Ribičić and quoted here.
6. "Epilog Končarovih zabluda," in *Danas* (Zagreb), September 28, 1982.