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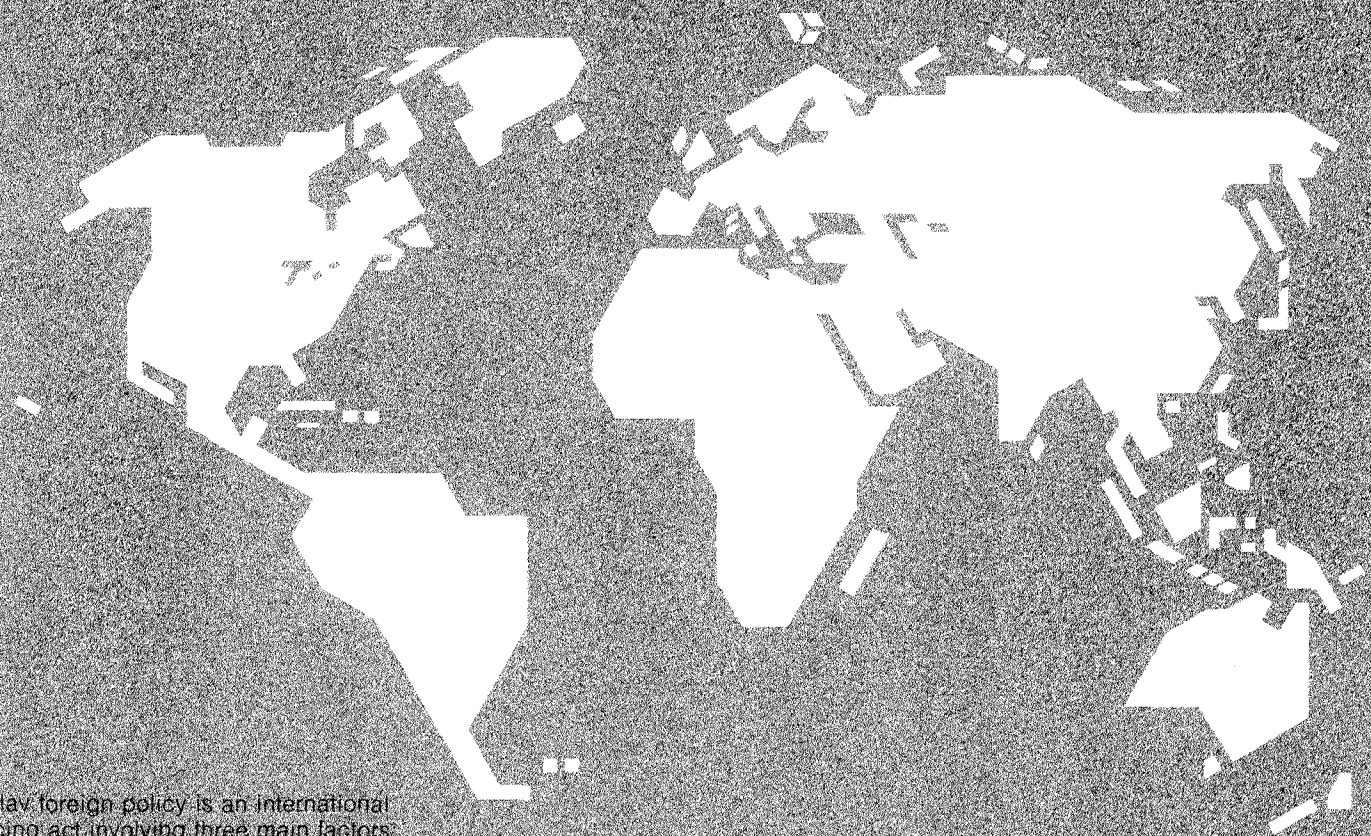
Yugoslav Foreign Policy
International Balancing on a High Wire

by Fred Warner Neal



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Yugoslav Foreign Policy

International Balancing on a High Wire

Since 1950 at least, Yugoslav foreign policy has been the world's greatest exhibition of international balancing on a high wire. The balancing has involved three main factors: Yugoslavia's unique socialist system; Yugoslav relations with the Soviet Union on the one hand and with the West, especially the United States, on the other; and Soviet-American relations. It has always been a dramatic feat. Today the drama is heightened by uncertainties in all three factors involved.

Looking at Yugoslav foreign policy broadly over a 30-year period, a number of related features merit recalling.

First is Yugoslavia's firm commitment to independence. Virtually nobody has any doubts on this score, including such critics of Yugoslav foreign policy as former Ambassador Silberman.[1]

Second is Yugoslavia's simultaneous and somewhat contradictory yen for "socialist solidarity," which leads it to take positions in harmony with the Soviet Union, and its fear of Soviet influence, which leads it to draw back. This has produced the seesaw effect so often worrisome for both Moscow and Washington, to say nothing of a large number of Yugoslavs.

Third is Yugoslavia's marshalling of nonaligned countries of the "Third World" into a sort of "non-bloc bloc." The nonalignment policy, undertaken for reasons both of ideology and self-defense, has propelled it to take positions on many issues that do not affect it directly and has given it a global stature wholly unrelated to its intrinsic power.

Fourth is Yugoslavia's undoubted success in its foreign policy endeavors. It has squeezed advantages from both blocs, while belonging to neither, and has adroitly maneuvered between the superpowers in its own interest. In addition, it has, if only by example, played an important role in stimulating other Communist Parties to move away from a Soviet orientation.

Although one risks accusations from Belgrade of "great power chauvinism" by saying so, the overriding importance of Yugoslavia's international positions arose out of the Cold War and is a product of East-West relations, particularly between the United States and the Soviet Union. Both Moscow and Washington have difficulties understanding the basic Yugoslav foreign policy position. That position is best described as that of

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an independent Communist country—that is, outside the Soviet bloc—with a yen for "socialist solidarity" but fearful of Soviet influence and at the same time a commitment to what Tito has called "active coexistence."[2]

What this means is that, being independent, Yugoslavia seeks to follow paths that will enhance its national interest and its ideological beliefs whether or not these paths follow or run counter to those taken by the United States or the Soviet Union. But being communists—i.e., sort of Marxist-Leninists—the Yugoslavs in fact tend to see many international issues in the same light as the U.S.S.R. Being committed to "active coexistence," the Yugoslavs seek to promote peace in the world, as they see it, by taking sides on almost all questions, regardless of how their efforts may be interpreted by others.

Since Moscow tends to interpret "communist" as meaning support for its policies, Yugoslavia often offends when the interpretation in Belgrade differs from that in Moscow. The Kremlin finds it hard to realize that its choice is not between existing Yugoslav policies and Yugoslav policies more favorable to Moscow but between existing Yugoslav policies and Yugoslav policies less favorable to Moscow. Since Washington tends to interpret independent as meaning opposition to the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia often offends the United States by siding with the Russians. The United States finds it hard to realize that its choice is not between existing Yugoslav policies and Yugoslav policies more favorable to the West but between existing Yugoslav policies and policies more favorable to Moscow.

Without fully comprehending it, both superpowers have made partial adjustment to this dilemma. In some ways, however ironically, the United States has adjusted to the in-between position of Yugoslavia better than the Soviet Union, despite the fact that, overall, Belgrade has been much more in harmony with Moscow than Washington. This is because the United States usually seeks not so much support from Yugoslavia as an absence of Yugoslav support for the Soviet Union. The U.S.S.R., on the other hand, seeks to maneuver Yugoslavia into identifying itself with Kremlin positions. The former does not involve Yugoslav independence; the latter, at least sometimes, does. And no matter how much the Yugoslavs see international problems in the same light as their big Slav brothers, when Soviet policies are interpreted as infringing on Yugoslav independence, or threatening to infringe on it, both Yugoslav national interest and Titoist ideology have invariably led Belgrade to react sharply and critically. The Yugoslavs have proved they can be counted on to draw the line, even though its location sometimes seems dangerously far eastward.

Although nowadays they downplay it, the Yugoslavs have never forgotten that it was massive American economic and military assistance that enabled them to survive Soviet pressures after the break with Moscow. As a result, they have always kept their ties to the West—albeit sometimes tenuously. When Yugoslav foreign policy has appeared to move closer to the West, however, it has been less from choice than because Soviet policies were perceived as threatening. Once such policies were abandoned, or satisfactorily explained, by Moscow, Yugoslavia's tilt to the East has been resumed. The tilt has never been more than that—a tilt—even though, on occasion, a sharp one. It is also true that with each pendulum swing, the tilt to the East has been a little less than the preceding time. But this does not mean that ultimately there won't be any tilt.

This situation results primarily from two factors: the predilections of the Yugoslav Communist leadership and changes in Soviet policy.

The explanation for the tilt is that Tito and, at least initially, all his upper echelon comrades, were politically weaned in the days when the Communist movement was both international and monolithic and "International Communist unity" was prized above all things. That this turned out to mean for non-Soviet Communist regimes subservience to Soviet dictates led to the break with Stalin in 1948. But it should not be forgotten that it was Stalin, not Tito, who insisted on the break, and that, far from "escaping" from the Soviet enclave, the Yugoslavs were pushed out against their will. Stalin was quite right in thinking this was a terrible punishment, even if he was wrong in his expectations of its results. For several years

thereafter, "International Communist unity" continued to be an amorphous Yugoslav goal, and after Stalin's death the Yugoslav leaders nurtured hopes they could rejoin the fold with their "independent road to socialism" fully accepted by Moscow. The overtures of Khrushchev and Bulganin in 1955 encouraged these hopes. With the acceptance of "independent paths"—along with "peaceful coexistence"—given doctrinal status at the Twentieth Party Congress of the Soviet Communist Party a year later, it looked as though they might be fulfilled.

During the next few years, it was probably Soviet policies more than Yugoslav desire that kept the reunion from taking place. The situation just before, during, and after the Hungarian Revolution well illustrates the point.

Tito and Khrushchev, who in the months prior to Hungary had moved closer together, wanted from each other something that neither could provide. Both suffered from illusions. On the one hand, Tito felt he could influence Soviet policies. He believed and half-persuaded Khrushchev that liberalization with more independence would make socialism stronger in the bloc countries. On the other hand, Khrushchev believed that if he accepted Titoism as legitimate and endorsed "independent paths to socialism" for the other Eastern European states, Tito would in turn endorse Moscow's positions if not actually rejoin the bloc.

Tito's faith was not fazed even by Soviet military intervention in Hungary. Although the invasion produced confused soul-searching in Belgrade, in the end Tito endorsed it on the grounds it was necessary to prevent "chaos, civil war, counterrevolution and a new world war."[3] But he did it with so many qualifiers and with so much criticism of the Russians that Moscow was infuriated. Despite harsh words on both sides in the months following Hungary, however, Tito's collaboration with Khrushchev became closer than ever. Yugoslavia in fact virtually became a "nonmember" of the Soviet bloc before Moscow's renewed insistence on ideological tutelage and demands for international conformity made it clear that Tito had to draw back or jeopardize Yugoslav independence.[4]

Wholly aside from Tito's yen for socialist solidarity, the Yugoslavs were influenced by changes in Soviet ideology and policy. They were not too far from the truth when they said, somewhat blandly, that it was not Belgrade but Moscow that had changed. First there was Khrushchev's admission of error when he and Bulganin visited Tito in 1955. This was followed by explicit commitment to "independent paths to socialism" in the Program of the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, along with a modern theory of "peaceful coexistence" much like that the Titoists themselves had called for. Additionally, there were sweeping internal changes in the U.S.S.R. which the Yugoslavs interpreted as possible first steps in the direction of Titoism. With the wish father of the thought, it is not too surprising that Tito saw the possibility for Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union to march hand in hand toward the Communist future.

The Yugoslavs' chief error was their inability to see that the Soviet Union was perforce the leader of the international Communist movement and that, especially with inroads on unity made by China, it was bound to limit nonconformity in Eastern Europe, the more so when it was perceived in Moscow as exposing the area to Western influence. The Soviet error was not to realize that the Yugoslavs meant what they said. This stemmed at least in part from inadequate attention to Yugoslav ideology.

Although ideology can be twisted and in specific instances even ignored, for believing Communists it binds them to a general course of action and sets limits to what they will and won't do. There is little doubt that the Yugoslav leaders are for the most part deeply believing Communists, interpreting this, of course, according to their own version of what communism means. Yugoslav Communist ideology differs from the Soviet version in significant ways, involving not only national independence and "independent paths to socialism" but also the concepts of state and individual, party and democracy, war and imperialism, and capitalism and socialism. That Belgrade does not always strictly adhere to its own ideological beliefs does not detract from the fact that they are ideological beliefs and therefore condition what it does and does not do.

It is the development of a distinct Yugoslav Communist ideology that sets it apart from other non-Soviet Communist regimes. The other countries of Eastern Europe, and even the Chinese, have not departed from the Marxist-Leninist basics as they obtain in Soviet ideology. Neither have the Euro-Communists. The Yugo-Communists have, in a number of important particulars. As long as this ideology obtains, it is a formidable barrier in the way of any voluntary return to the Soviet bloc. It also keeps them out of "the West."

(One should say that this point is also often misunderstood in Washington. Tito himself has on occasion been at pains to explain it to the United States. "Don't take us for what we are not," he said in the 1950s, when there was anticipation that he might affiliate with NATO.)[5]

Moscow also underestimated Yugoslav ingenuity in establishing close links with the Third World. Belgrade had been expanding its ties with Third World countries before 1958, but now, with the collapse of Yugoslav-Soviet collaboration, it focused its attention on the concept of nonalignment as a major foreign policy thrust. Although also a logical extension of Titoism's "active peaceful coexistence," nonalignment served in addition to give Yugoslavia an opening to the world without having to embrace either Moscow or Washington.[6]

In large part as a result of Tito's initiatives, the nonaligned states came to be welded into a sort of "non-bloc bloc." Although there is as much disunity as unity among the nonaligned states as a whole, agreement on even some broad general principles has made nonalignment a force to be reckoned with by the superpowers. As a result, it has strengthened Belgrade's position with both of them, especially the U.S.S.R. With Moscow making a big pitch to the Third World nations in terms of national independence, the leading Yugoslav role in nonalignment makes the Soviet Union less likely to interfere overtly in Yugoslav affairs. Despite the relative disinterest of the Third World in Soviet military incursions into Eastern Europe, this is a firmly-held belief in Belgrade.

Yugoslavia's position among the nonaligned states has also been influential in encouraging them toward socialism. This had the result initially of irritating Moscow, because Belgrade's exhortations have been for socialism of the Titoist type, but as the Moscow-Peking conflict developed there is no doubt the Kremlin saw the utility of the Yugoslav role. Although Yugoslav efforts among the nonaligned were sometimes interpreted in the West as being a front for Moscow, in fact the Yugoslavs were simply "doing their thing," which in this case fitted Moscow's need. On the other hand, being under violent attack themselves from Peking, the Titoists needed no urging.

This coincidence of interest did, however, contribute to the Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement of the 1960s. Anxious to utilize Yugoslavia's status among nonaligned countries for his own ends, Khrushchev once more reversed himself and proclaimed that Yugoslav socialism really was socialism after all.[7] Once again Tito responded, albeit perhaps somewhat more cautiously than before.

Nevertheless, there is little doubt that for the Yugoslavs the fundamental international question is the nature of their relationship to the Soviet Union and the bloc. Whether they always perceive it clearly is something else.

For a small country, Yugoslavia always has exhibited a surprising degree of "ethnocentricity." Objecting to blocs and to "great power politics," Belgrade displays a tendency to downplay if not ignore the principles of international politics involved in its situation. It may be useful here, therefore, to take a brief look at some pertinent principles of international politics and how they operate in the arena of international reality.

The Soviet Union has worldwide interests, but if any one thing about Soviet policy is clear it is that Moscow regards Eastern Europe as the most important interest of all. It is, for the U.S.S.R., the clearest case of a core interest.[8] A core interest is one which a state regards as so vital to its existence that any threat to it is automatically considered as a threat to its own existence. A perceived threat to a core interest thus inevitably produces serious

international conflict. Conflicts over core interests cannot be compromised, any more than a state might compromise regarding its own existence. Such conflicts, therefore, have traditionally resulted in war.

The concept of core interests is a simple one. It is further clarified, perhaps, to think of it in geographical terms. Nongeographical factors—e.g., ideology—can be important in a state's determination of what its core interests are. But ultimately they are involved with territory. All states have core interests: for less powerful states, core interests tend to be limited to their territorial integrity; for more powerful states, core interests are wider. In the first instance, they are determined by geographical propinquity. Modern military technology has reduced the importance of distance, but it has not eliminated it. Even more important, human psychology being what it is, statesmen and their peoples invariably perceive areas adjacent to them as being more important to their security than more distant areas. The Cuban missile crisis is a good case in point.

There can be positive and negative core interests. A positive core interest is one where a state feels its security can be achieved only by active and direct control of an area. A negative core interest is one where the minimum requirement is only the absence of hostile power. In this sense, Cuba can be regarded as a negative core interest of the United States, Finland of the Soviet Union.

Russia's prerevolutionary interest in Eastern Europe was obvious. That it had to share it with the Prussians, the Austrians, and the Turks was a constant source of conflict. As much as anything else, World War I was caused by the Russian perception that challenge to Serbia from Germany and Austro-Hungary posed a threat to Russian core interests. The total exclusion of Soviet influence from Eastern Europe after the war was unnatural. The *Cordon Sanitaire* was possible only because the new Soviet state was too weak to do anything about it. From the time of Munich, if not before, a change in the situation in Eastern Europe was the number one goal of Moscow's foreign policy. Anglo-American sanction for some sort of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe was Stalin's constant and foremost goal in World War II diplomacy. There is reason to think that Stalin quite honestly interpreted Teheran and Yalta (with the second Moscow conference in between) as indications that he had such sanction. However that may be, ensuing Western challenges to the Soviet Union over Eastern Europe constituted a major factor—perhaps the major factor—in touching off the Cold War.[9]

In the new Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia occupied a peculiar position as the westernmost Eastern European state, and noncontiguous to the U.S.S.R. There can be little doubt that Stalin considered its strategic importance less than that of some other countries. Ideologically, he had doubts from the first about Tito's ability to operate a socialist regime there. Yet as the Soviet bloc emerged, in the immediate postwar years Yugoslavia was clearly an integral member of it, even if less clearly so than, say, Poland or Bulgaria. It also was a part of the Soviet core interest. At the time of the Soviet-Yugoslav dispute, Stalin hoped to bring Tito to heel and have a regime in Belgrade obedient to Moscow's tutelage. But just as clearly he was not—at that time anyway—prepared to go to war about it. What would have happened had Stalin lived, and had relations worsened rather than improved, with increasing American political and military influence in Yugoslavia, is difficult to say. As things turned out, Stalin's successors, convinced that Tito was not going into the "enemy camp," settled by regarding Yugoslavia as a negative core interest. Soviet acceptance of Belgrade's position outside the bloc was sanctified by the Twentieth Party Congress position on "independent paths to socialism."

Shortly after the Hungarian Revolution had been put down, Mikhail Suslov, the Kremlin's chief ideologist, spelled out the limits of independence for bloc countries. There was required at minimum, he said, "a Leninist system," which meant Communist Party dictatorship, and "adherence to proletarian internationalism," which meant going along with the Soviet Union in foreign policy.[10] Yugoslavia qualified under the

first rubric and, although it had not qualified under the second at the time of Hungary, Khrushchev considered it possible that it would. Khrushchev kept trying to bring Tito into the bloc. Tito kept refusing, but, at the same time, was careful never—after the short-lived Balkan Pact episode of 1954—to give any indication of joining the "imperialist camp."

All the evidence is that Khrushchev finally accepted that a Socialist Yugoslavia outside the bloc posed no serious threat to Soviet interests. This did not mean that Moscow had no interest in Yugoslavia, or that it would not try to influence what went on there. It did mean that Yugoslavia was, in Moscow's eyes, independent in a way the bloc countries were not. Whether its independence was considered more or less than that of, say, Finland, was a question that could not arise as long as socialism of some sort continued in Yugoslavia and Belgrade did not join the "imperialist camp."

Although continuing to be wary of many Soviet policies, Tito and the other Yugoslav leaders were convinced that Moscow considered them outside the bloc and would not try to impose standards of conformity required for the other socialist countries. Hungary raised doubts, but these were overcome. What really jarred the Yugoslavs, and caused a fundamental rethinking, was Czechoslovakia.

In August 1968, the Soviet Union decided that Dubcek had overstepped the bounds—or was in danger of doing so—and invaded Czechoslovakia to force a change in the Prague regime. At the time of the Hungarian invasion, the Yugoslav leadership did not really feel endangered, especially since Khrushchev had taken Tito into his confidence when he decided to move on Budapest. The Czechoslovak affair was altogether different. First, the sudden and drastic Soviet military move caught the Yugoslavs—and everybody else—by surprise. Second, it was considered a direct affront to Tito, who only a short time before had warmly endorsed the Prague Spring. Third, it was a military operation formally involving the Warsaw Pact rather than just the U.S.S.R.

The shocked Yugoslavs reacted with harsh denunciation.[11] They also worried whether the Kremlin might be embarking on a new and aggressive policy that would affect them. These fears were enormously exacerbated by Soviet statements that have come to be known as the "Brezhnev Doctrine."[12]

The "Brezhnev Doctrine" is a very curious episode, which has received insufficient dispassionate analysis in the West. There was first an article by a *Pravda* writer, followed by Gromyko's speech to the United Nations, and then Brezhnev's remarks in Poland, all asserting that national sovereignty is subordinate to "socialist sovereignty." They proclaimed the right and duty of "socialist forces" to intervene in a socialist country "in defense of socialism."[13]

Taken at face value, this seemed to be an assertion of the Soviet Union's right to intervene in any socialist country anywhere if the Kremlin did not approve of the type of socialism being practiced. In the case of Hungary, an argument could be made that once the Nagy regime renounced the Warsaw Pact agreement and called on outside forces for help, Hungary was definitely beyond acceptable limits and Moscow was, understandably, responding to a threat to a core interest. But Czechoslovakia was different. Even if the Kremlin had misgivings about burgeoning Czech-German relations in 1968, Dubcek was protesting his loyalty to Moscow, and the Communist Party claimed to be firmly in the saddle. The problem seemed to be, according to the Yugoslavs, that Moscow did not like the kind of socialism the Czech Party was practicing—a kind of socialism in many ways akin to that in Yugoslavia. More important, if the "Brezhnev Doctrine" meant what it said, then the Soviet Union was reserving the right to intervene not only in the bloc countries but wherever socialism existed, including, obviously, Yugoslavia.[14]

Belgrade's reaction to the perceived Soviet position was to proclaim a new type of defense, in which not only the regular Yugoslav army would be involved but also territorial defense units involving primarily the republics but in addition local government units. In short, if there were an invasion the Yugoslavs would fight both with

regular military units and an already organized guerrilla warfare in the manner they had proved in World War II they could do so well.[15]

There was no mistaking the genuine Yugoslav concern. Yet it was likely misplaced, because the "Brezhnev Doctrine" appears to have been no doctrine at all but merely a hasty and clumsy Soviet effort to justify to the Communists—Soviet and foreign—the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Since that time there has been no word of it whatsoever, and not a hint that a new Soviet concept of sovereignty is in existence. On the contrary, it seems the Soviet leadership considers the whole matter an embarrassment and a mistake.

As Suslov implied in 1956, the Soviet Union would use force if need be to make sure members of the bloc maintained a Communist Party dictatorship and generally followed Moscow's line in foreign policy. What the Czechoslovak invasion indicated primarily is that Moscow's definition of a Communist Party dictatorship was more narrow than had been thought. But the evidence is first that this applies only to countries in the Soviet bloc and second that Moscow continues to regard Yugoslavia as outside the bloc. The "Brezhnev Doctrine" thus apparently stands as a threat to, say, Romania, but not to Yugoslavia.[16] In short, it represented no change in the basic Soviet position.

This, at any rate, is more or less what Brezhnev told Tito when he visited Belgrade in September 1971; and he repeated it again in Moscow where Tito went in June 1972, to be assured that the hoped-for détente with the United States would not be at Yugoslavia's expense.[17]

Despite Brezhnev's explanations, the impact of Czechoslovakia, combined with the "Brezhnev Doctrine," seems to have altered the course of Yugoslav-Soviet relations in a significant way. The yen for "socialist solidarity" has always been stronger in Tito, the old Comintern agent, than in most of his comrades. Now, even for Tito, it became largely romantic and transcendental. The hope of influencing Moscow in any immediate sense seems to have diminished to the vanishing point. As a result, while Yugoslavia responded again to another Soviet olive branch and there are friendly relations between Moscow and Belgrade, there is a subtle but important new reserve in Belgrade's demeanor, not unmixed with a certain apprehension.

I have talked with Tito on occasion over a period of more than 20 years. He has always been concerned about "socialist solidarity" and about Yugoslav independence, sometimes stressing one, sometimes the other. In 1972, when I asked him about the apparent contradiction between the two, he replied,

> *"We Yugoslavs are committed to both independence and to 'socialist solidarity.' In a conceptual sense, there is no contradiction. Someday it may be more than conceptual. Someday there may be a different Soviet Union. Some of the omens are good. But this is not for now."*

The urge for solidarity with the Soviet Union is even less marked among other Yugoslav leaders. Kardelj, strongly committed to Titoist institutions, many of which he helped create some time ago, moved away from Soviet concepts. Bakarić was never Moscow-oriented in any significant way. The younger leaders, like Kiro Gligorov, Stane Dolanc, and Anton Vratuša, came to power in an atmosphere dominated by staying clear of the Kremlin, and for them the question of opting for a pro-Soviet orientation simply does not arise.

Whether the Soviet Union also has given up hope of a Communist unity that would include Yugoslavia is less clear. Despite Brezhnev's repeated pledges of noninterference and acceptance of "independent paths to socialism," Soviet pressures of various kinds on Belgrade continue, even if they are sometimes exaggerated in Western reports. The Soviet effort appears to be more one of seeking to draw Yugoslavia back into its pre-Czechoslovak, if not pre-1958, collaboration with Moscow and the bloc than of attempting to change Titoist policies and concepts. At the same time, however, Moscow continues to insist on "only a single communism," with itself as leader. The implication for Belgrade is that the U.S.S.R. considers Yugoslavia a part of the "single communism" and thus subordinate to the Soviet Union.

The Yugoslavs see this as a way of denying their independence without actually saying so. The Soviet pressures may also involve more concrete matters. Western news reports following Brezhnev's 1976 visit to Belgrade stated that the Soviet leader vainly made "strategic" proposals, including greater facilities for Soviet naval vessels in Yugoslav ports and permission for Soviet fighter planes to use Yugoslav airspace.[18] Whether or not these reports were accurate, it seems clear both that Brezhnev has attempted to entice Yugoslavia into the Soviet foreign policy net and that the Yugoslavs have steadfastly refused to be so drawn.

A familiar pattern of Yugoslav-Soviet relations has developed. Soviet actions or statements arouse Yugoslav fears. The Soviet Union reassures Belgrade of its good intentions. The Yugoslavs purport to be satisfied. Then Moscow reasserts positions that Belgrade finds threatening, followed by new Soviet reassurances to calm the new Yugoslav fears. Involved in this repetitious drama have been various Brezhnev-Tito summits, the 1976 Berlin meeting of Communist parties, and the Soviet attacks on Euro-Communism. There even seems to be a standard form of communiqué which can be issued following summits in Belgrade or Moscow, requiring changes only in date and provenance.[19] It is, however, a communiqué that, for all its wordage about noninterference, does not quiet Yugoslav apprehensions.

The bottom line question is whether the Yugoslavs actually fear a Soviet military invasion. The answer seems to be a qualified no. That is, they don't think this is a likely danger but they aren't taking any chances. Hence, the constant stress on military preparedness. For example, the Yugoslavs professed full satisfaction with "a meeting of minds" at the Brezhnev-Tito summit in 1976.[20] But on the day Brezhnev left Belgrade a report of the Yugoslav Presidency on the armed forces declared that "due to the geostrategic importance of Yugoslavia and the ambitions of those powers for whom the fundamental characteristics of Yugoslavia's domestic and foreign policy are unacceptable, new pressures and new attempts at interference must be anticipated."[21]

As sincere as Yugoslav fears on this score might be, the recurrent veiled and guarded but nonetheless unmistakable warnings of a Soviet military threat do not arise from Soviet policies alone. There are at least three other explanations for them. One is that Yugoslavia has never wanted to sever its ties with the West, and Belgrade understands Western support has always been more a product of opposition to Moscow than of devotion to Yugoslav communism. Were the United States and its allies to become convinced that there was no Soviet military threat, their willingness to aid Yugoslavia in various ways would likely erode.

A second raison d'être for trotting out the specter of the Soviet military threat from time to time is that it is a powerful force for unity in a country where such forces are not in great supply. There are still many Yugoslavs who dislike the present system but infinitely prefer it to one dominated by the Soviet Union. Additionally, independence is one thing the Serbs and Croats can agree on, and perception of a threat to it makes them pull together if anything will.

The third reason, related to the second, and perhaps the most important of all, is subsumed by the question, "After Tito what?" The nationalities question has always been a source of concern to the Yugoslav leadership, no matter how much they sometimes pretend otherwise. The regime's efforts to cope with it by sidestepping the ethnic republics in favor of local governmental units have not worked. The official thinking that manifestations of the nationalities question were simply a product of uneven economic development among the republics has not been borne out. The decentralization of the League of Communists, the major unifying instrumentality of the country, plus the decentralization of government decision-making led to a state of affairs in 1971 that many—including Tito—felt threatened to break up the federation. The upshot was the Croatian crisis of that year and Tito's intervention and threat to use the army. It quickly developed that not all the centrifugal force came from Zagreb.[22] The fairly successful reimposition of democratic centralism in the Party, under Tito's direction, restored things to working order. Or so it seems. It was apparent, however, that ethnic-nationalism in

Yugoslavia was much more than a manifestation of uneven economic development and that its extent had been seriously underestimated by the regime. How strong it is now is still a question.

The 1971 affair revealed how anti-regime forces—at home and abroad—were able to take advantage of the crisis. Belgrade *kafana* (café) rumors connected the Soviet Union with *Ustaše* emigrés. Vladimir Bakarič, on the other hand, believes the rumors reflected an *Ustaše* ploy to cause trouble between Belgrade and Moscow.[23] Either way the Soviet Union was implicated. Later there were also unverified reports of Soviet connections with Cominformists groups in Yugoslavia.

All this is to say that centrifugal forces in Yugoslavia—with international overtones—abound if anybody wanted to exploit them. This was clearly in Tito's mind when he declared in 1971 that he took drastic action in Croatia because he could not "permit someone else to come and restore order and peace."[24]

Tito could restore order and peace. But he is 85 years old and living on borrowed time. Who else could do it? There seems to be no other charismatic national Titoist leader. Should it be necessary to "come and restore order and peace," the collective presidency—of either the government or party—is a dubious instrument.

Ten years ago I would have said there was almost no chance of serious disorder in Yugoslavia after Tito. Today I have to say that while I think it is unlikely—extremely unlikely, even—it is not impossible. The possibility must, therefore, be considered.

Even if—as I believe—the Soviet Union now has no thought of intervening in Yugoslavia, the question is whether a serious crisis would change Soviet intentions. Certainly a crisis that either jeopardized socialism in Yugoslavia or threatened to split up the country would try Soviet restraint enormously—perhaps not only a crisis but even the Soviet perception of one. There would also be the possibility of a Western intervention to halt a perceived Soviet intervention; and, additionally, the matter of Soviet perceptions of Western intentions.

Many—but not all—Yugoslav officials ostentatiously scorn such considerations, even in intimate friendly conversation. In fact, they protest too much. As unlikely as the possibility of a serious crisis may be and as confident as they are that they could handle it if it arose, it is much on their minds—as, indeed, it should be.

The Yugoslavs' concern about the future explains and at the same time raises questions about the ambivalence with which they view the idea of American-Soviet détente. Belgrade has always evidenced nervousness about the superpowers getting together. Even in 1958, when Eisenhower and Khrushchev met, the Yugoslav leaders worried about being "squeezed between two camps." Now, with uncertainties greater both about the U.S.S.R. and domestic stability, these worries have escalated. This has produced a sort of typical Yugoslav stance. On the one hand, they are for "peaceful coexistence," which, they admit, requires agreements between the United States and the Soviet Union. On the other, they fear a "spheres of influence" agreement that might recognize a Soviet priority of interest in Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslav attempt to solve this dilemma—realistic or not—was to call for international détente—"a détente which embraces all countries." This has resulted in what might be called "the Yugoslav offensive." Until 1975, however, Tito declined to go along with the idea of a meeting of the European Communist Parties. He agreed only when he was convinced it would result in an endorsement of "independent paths to socialism" and not the Soviet concept of "proletarian internationalism." Thereafter, Yugoslavia promoted Romania's association with the nonaligned group and enthusiastically heralded the appearance of "Euro-Communism." In summer 1977, Tito made a somewhat surprising visit to Peking, where he listened to Chinese speeches against "hegemonism." These various initiatives—none of which can be looked on with much favor by Moscow—are part of a continuing effort to "de-bloc-ize" communism and buttress Yugoslavia vis-à-vis the U.S.S.R.

Nearly 86 but still the boss, President Josip Broz Tito shakes hands with President Jimmy Carter during Tito's state visit to the United States, March 7-9, 1978 (to Tito's left: Yugoslav Ambassador to the United States, Dimče Belovski). Photograph by Fotoanjug, Belgrade.

The essence of the Yugoslavs' concern about détente is something they have never liked to admit, even to themselves—namely, dependence on the United States and NATO for security. Although supporting mutual force reductions, Belgrade has shied away from endorsing unilateral withdrawal of American troops from Europe, occasionally at the same time they complained about "Western militarism." Above all, however, the Yugoslavs worry about any American position that equates them with Eastern Europe. When Helmut Sonnenfeldt spoke in 1976 about the need for an "organic relationship" between the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and added that Yugoslavia should be encouraged to stand on its own feet in relations with Moscow, violent tremors ran through the Belgrade Establishment. Yugoslav officials referred to it as the "Brezhfeldt Doctrine." Despite specific explanations from Sonnenfeldt and other American officials that the "organic relationship" concept did not apply to Yugoslavia, Belgrade was unconvinced. Discussions in Belgrade during summer 1976 about the matter revealed Yugoslav officials still suffering from an acute case of jitters. The confusion about American interests in Yugoslavia appearing in the Presidential campaign only made them worse.

Not only jitters, but also annoyance, as if the United States were somehow shirking its responsibilities by not playing the Yugoslav game of wanting to be a private ally—and one without alliance responsibilities—at the same time it is often

a public adversary. It was an illustration of the one-way street attitude that in part provoked Ambassador Silberman's piquant if somewhat petulant complaint last year in *Foreign Policy*.[25]

Despite all this, it is difficult to see how meaningful security for Yugoslavia can ever be achieved short of a real détente between the Soviet Union and the United States. If—as I believe most likely—serious disorders will not erupt in Yugoslavia after Tito, there is no military danger from the Soviet Union in any case. Should serious disorders result in Soviet intervention, a full-scale military confrontation with the West might well result.

Nobody could conceivably "win" in such a confrontation. Therefore, the best thing for everybody—indeed, the only thing—is to avoid the possibility. Clearly, the first requirement is for Yugoslavia to maintain internal stability. But given uncertainties on this score, the only real insurance lies in an agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union that both sides would mutually abstain from intervention, no matter what. What this would amount to is an understanding that both the United States and the U.S.S.R. see their respective interests being best served by maintaining the Yugoslav status quo, an independent socialist Yugoslavia.

Such an understanding would be possible, if at all, only under a blossoming détente relationship, one which, unfortunately, does not now obtain. Two years ago, Soviet leaders—at the Politburo level—stated their willingness to enter into a discussion with the United States about a mutual hands-off Yugoslavia understanding.[26] At the same time, many Yugoslav officials, persistently confusing a mutual nonintervention understanding with a spheres of influence agreement, refused to endorse the idea. This attitude may be understandable, but it is shortsighted.

The importance of Yugoslavia, and the uncertainties about Yugoslavia's future, are such that a mutual nonintervention understanding should be an item high on the agenda if Washington and Moscow are able to re-establish intimacy. Indeed, the desirability—if not the necessity—of such an agreement is an additional argument in favor of American-Soviet détente. The importance of such an American-Soviet relationship to the Yugoslavs is such that they should put aside their ambivalence and stand among the foremost advocates of détente.

(May 1978)

NOTES

1. Cf. Laurence H. Silberman, "Yugoslavia's Old Communism: Europe's Fiddler on the Roof," *Foreign Policy*, No. 26, Spring 1977, pp. 3-27. Mr. Silberman does not deny Yugoslavia's independent position but says we "overemphasize" it.

2. For an overview of Yugoslav foreign policy, see Fred Warner Neal, *Titoism in Action*, University of California Press, 1958, Chapter XI; and (with George Hoffman) *Yugoslavia and the New Communism*, Twentieth Century Fund, New York, 1962, Chapter 20; and Leo Mates, "Thirty Years of the SFRY's Foreign Policy," *Review of International Affairs*, Belgrade, XXVI (March 20, 1975). See also Paul Lendvai, *Eagles in Cobwebs: Nationalism and Communism in the Balkans*, New York: Doubleday, 1969; Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Yugoslavia*, Praeger, 1971; and A. Ross Johnson, *Yugoslavia: In the Twilight of Tito*, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1974. For a survey of certain documentary sources, see Stephen Clissold (ed.), *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union* 1939-1973, London: Oxford University Press, 1975.

3. *Borba*, November 16, 1956.

4. There is no suspicion that Tito considered formally rejoining the Soviet bloc, but he agreed to cooperate and, especially during 1957, did cooperate fully. See Hoffman and Neal, pp. 444-451.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 422.

6. Cf. Alvin B. Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, Princeton University Press, 1960; Leon Mates, *Nonalignment: Theory and Current Policy*, The Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, 1972; and Lars Nord, *Nonalignment and Socialism: Yugoslav Foreign Policy in Theory and Practice*, Stockholm: Raben and Sjogren, 1974.

7. See Khrushchev's remarks quoted (in footnote) in Pavlovitch, p. 291.

8. For a discussion of the concept of core interests, see Fred Warner Neal, "A New Foreign Policy Based on Core Interests," *The Center Magazine*, Vol. V, No. 3 (May/June 1972), pp. 61-66.

9. For a discussion, see Fred Warner Neal, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Soviet Union*, Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara, California, 1961, pp. 16-19.

10. *Pravda*, November 7, 1956. Suslov's speech, delivered during the Celebration of the 39th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, is translated in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, December 12, 1956, pp. 3-8.

11. For example, see various articles in *Borba*, August 30-September 10, 1968; Milan Bartos, "The Aggression on Czechoslovakia," *Review of International Affairs*, Belgrade, XIX (September 5, 1968); and Tito's speech to Ninth Congress of the League of Communists, *Borba*, March 12, 1969.

12. See Dennison Rusinow, *The Yugoslav Experiment 1948-1974*, University of California Press, 1977, pp. 239-244.

13. *Pravda*, September 26, October 4, and November 13, 1968.

14. Cf. *Borba*, November 20, 1968; and L. Erven, "'Limited Sovereignty' and the Problem of International Cooperation," *Review of International Affairs*, Belgrade, XIX (November 5, 1968).

15. A. Ross Johnson, *Total National Defense in Yugoslavia*, The Rand Corporation, December 1971. See also accounts in *Review of International Affairs*, Belgrade, XX (March 5, 1969) and XXVI (May 5, 1975).

16. Vernon Aspaturian tends to agree. See his "Moscow's Options in a Changing World," *Problems of Communism*, XXI (July-August 1972).

17. Personal conversations with Yugoslavs present at the Tito-Brezhnev meetings.

18. Cf. Dietrich Schlegel, "Yugoslavia's Independence from Moscow," *Aussenpolitik*, Vol. 28, Quarterly Edition, No. 2, pp. 178-193.

19. The Associated Press account of Tito's 1977 visit to Moscow stated that the wording of the communiqué issued after the talks was "identical to that of a communiqué issued when Brezhnev visited Belgrade last November." *The Los Angeles Times*, Part 1, p. 6, August 20, 1977.

20. Cf. *Borba*, November 20, 1976.

21. *Borba*, November 17, 1976.

22. For a good account, see Rusinow, Chapters 7 and 8.

23. Personal conversation in summer 1972.

24. *Politika*, December 18, 1971.

25. Laurence H. Silberman, "Yugoslavia's Old Communism: Europe's Fiddler on the Roof," *Foreign Policy*, No. 26, Spring 1977), pp. 3-27.

26. Personal conversations in June 1975.