

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

WWU - 31
YUGOSLAVIA I: COMRADE NEUTRAL

Hotel Metropol,
Bulevar Revolucije, 69,
Beograd, Yugoslavia.
October 3, 1959.

Mr. Richard H. Nolte.
Institute of Current World Affairs.
366 Madison Ave., New York 17, N.Y.

Dear Dick:



NEW AND OLD: Trade Union Center & Communist Central Committee headquarters in downtown Beograd (left); & 81-year-old retired Serbian Gen. Dimitrijevic reminiscing on a park bench overlooking the confluence of the Danube & Sava and saying, "Ike's a good soldier."

As you know, I have been gone now a little more than 10 months of my 13-month, round-the-world study of the arguments for neutralism and non-alignment. And of the 30 countries and colonies I've visited so far, Yugoslavia is unique in being the only "neutral" which is avowedly communist, successful at it and proud of it.

In my 2½ weeks here I've found it is quite a cards-above-the-table game. For hard, practical reasons, I'm told Yugoslavia is truly non-aligned today. She still very well may be a sorrowful Soviet apostate; her United Nations votes nearly always coincide with those of the Eastern bloc. She very well may be a frustrated neutral; since, by all acknowledgement, President Tito is a far bigger man and leader than the Wyoming-sized little country of 18 million people he leads. And his attempts at leading a world neutral bloc seem to boil down to letter writing.

But it has long been no secret that Yugoslavia can't get along with Russia, China and her satellite neighbors, particularly Albania, since she is regarded as a communistic heretic. And it is no secret that Yugoslavia has and does accept assistance from the West, particularly the U.S., and makes no apologies for it. She says she knows the West gives for selfish reasons, just as she accepts. And as long as both sides understand neither is going to convert the other -- nor even try -- Yugoslavian neutrality is not being compromised.

I'm always forgetting dates and events so let me start with a little historical chronology. Before World War II, Josip Broz Tito learned his Marxist catechism on home ground, Russia. During World War II, Tito was back in Yugoslavia leading the Partisan army against the Germans and Italians while England gave shelter to a refugee King Peter. After the War, the West, playing host to a Yugoslav Government-in-Exile and encouraging its controversial General in the field, Mihailovic, was no match for Marshal Tito and his communist liberators. Tito, then unchallenged, carried on in a comradely way with fellow communist Marshal Stalin for three years -- until 1948. It was then that Stalin excommunicated him and Yugoslavia for the equivalent of high treason: "Revisionism," inventing a national communism which placed Yugoslav communist goals ahead of Soviet Russia's and Uncle Joe-knows-bestism. Two years later, in 1950, the U.S. dispatched arms to give Yugoslavia the military wherewithal to defy Russia, and grains to give her the physical stamina after disastrous crop failures. The platonic relations with the West have continued ever since. The disaffection with the East lasted until 1955. Then came the "B & K" visit to Yugoslavia, Nikita Khrushchev and the now never-mentioned Comrade Bulganin. Stalin was dead and repudiated and B&K came humbly seeking rapprochement with Tito. Rapprochement it became, sweetened with mutual pledges of camaraderie and economic largesse from the Soviet Union. Tito returned their visit in 1956. The rapprochement lasted for almost three years, until the Fortieth Anniversary celebration of the Bolshevik Revolution in Moscow in November, 1957. Marshal Tito apparently knew the parting had come beforehand, because he stayed home and dispatched two vice presidents in his stead. And when the Yugoslavs were asked to contribute to the anniversary spirit by signing a 12-nation communist pledge reaffirming the pre-eminence of the Soviet Union they kept their pens closed and packed for home. Russia's economic exchange pact with Yugoslavia withered into an exchange of recriminations. And Communist China busied herself in Yugoslavia's apostasy with even more vehemence than the Soviet Union. Yugoslavia, and Tito, began reminding themselves all over again that they were Yugoslavs, that they were communists, and that they were neutral from East-West political and military entanglements. They were anxious to be friends with everybody. They were against war. And they didn't think revolution was the way to advance world socialism. And from what I gather, that's their thinking today, two years later.

But let the Yugoslav leaders talk for themselves.

Leo Mates is about as high as I could strike in a country which isn't too interested in traveling reporters. Mates, who looks to be in his mid-to-late 'forties, is an engineer by training. He was a Partisan during World War II, as were practically all of Yugoslavia's officials, and then he opened the first Yugoslav Information Center, in London. He served for 4½ years as Ambassador to Washington and, since a little more than a year ago, has been the Secretary to the President's Cabinet, Tito's close confidant and aide-de-camp, and a very well posted gentleman indeed. I had to wait almost a week before I could see Mates because he was traveling with Tito in Montenegro and only broke loose to come North when Tito decided Mates had better get things in order for his (Tito's) return to the capital. Mates has a very fine, an almost elegant,



face. His voice is soft. But his manner is firm. Our initial exchange may have been prejudiced by his overhearing a screaming American fight with a taxi driver just below his office window. The cabbie demanded the equivalent of \$2.25 for a 10-minute ride. And, anyway, how was I to know Mates' office would be overlooking the scene?

Does Yugoslavia regret the day she decided to accept U.S. arms, since she has never had to use them? "In 1948 we found ourselves in a very real danger of military pressures from the outside," Mates declared. "We had to realize the fact that in spite of our attitude, events had taken a course in which it was possible that we might become the subject of outright military attack which we could not prevent. So, not as a result of conviction, we did make arrangements for such an eventuality. We made it plain to the U.S. last year that we are very glad for that aid, but that it does

MATES: "We have only one label!"

not appear to be necessary now. A certain amount of military preparation has been achieved. The immense danger has been changed."

Does Yugoslavia have any misgivings over the recent statements by Mr. Khrushchev in America that there are only two Bigs now, the USSR and the U.S., and it is their decisions which count? Will the desirability of wooing neutrals wane if the Big Two find agreement? "Any such agreement is impossible because you have China and England and France and a combination of the whole force of Western Europe. And in the world economy of today smaller nations are not just a condition, but a factor. So any (aggressive action) by the Big Ones is unthinkable because it would mean they were making a boycott against their own interests."

What about the reports of a "neutralist bloc" which frequently mention President Tito as the chief exponent? "I think we have only one label and that is the name of our country," Mates replied, obviously annoyed at my reference to what he called "categories." "We have good relations with the West and very good relations with the Afro-Asian countries. Whenever a matter is discussed, nations of similar views would cooperate in putting forward these views. There is no nation in the world which can exist in prosperity in isolation."

Unlike some of the non-aligned countries, Yugoslavia's vote in the UN is nearly always with the East, is it not? "Just because we are not aligned with a bloc, we don't consider that a vote in the UN has to be defined by the nature of the one who makes the proposal, but by the substance of the proposal. It is not relevant whether it coincides with the friendliness of our relations with a country that is making the proposal. Anyway, voting is one word, raising your hand. In our case, we put on record our views and we make proposals. The fallacy in your thinking is that when Khrushchev failed to make Yugoslavia anti-West on his own, certain elements in the U.S. and the press fell into Mr. Khrushchev's game and did the job for him by alienating Yugoslavia from the U.S. by saying it had gone to Russia's camp. Only one key man was not taken in by this -- one with whom I had many other disagreements -- Mr. Dulles. He was never fooled by this."

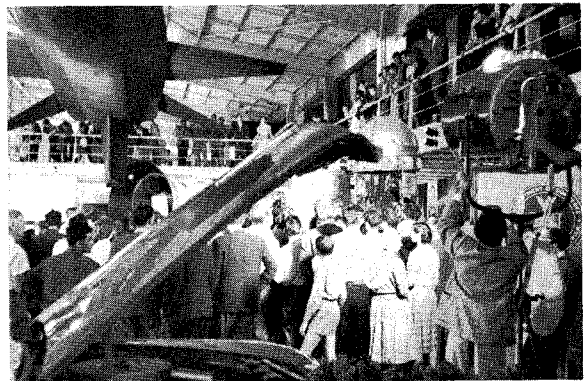
After my interview with Mates I avoided another taxicab fracas by hitching a ride in his car. He was going back to my hotel anyway, to have lunch with Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson. Benson had just checked into Beograd as Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic checked out. Earlier in the morning I had watched hotel porters scurry out of the Metropol's one VIP suite with Bernstein's baby grand in order to clear the way for the Benson family luggage.



KUNC

Drago Kunc is the spokesman for the Yugoslav Foreign Office and the man who supposedly is the Government's official contact with the foreign press. Even after writing ahead, I had to wait a week before this gentleman would receive me, so I am afraid I came to look upon him as the representative of a rather uncooperative bureaucracy. Nevertheless, he did eventually grant me an audience and came through with the answers I soon found were repeated with very little variation by everyone else in the Government.

"We do not like the term 'neutralism,'" Kunc began, "because neutralism implies a certain passivity in foreign policy. We are not passive. We are not neutral because we are very active in our foreign policy. But we don't belong to blocs. We don't like blocs. Our desire is to be friendly with everybody in the world. But the fact is that today our relations are better with the West than with the East. The Eastern press, basically. For them, Yugoslavia does not exist. But even when our relations with the East were the worst, we always said we hoped to have good relations with the East too. The Western press, whenever our relations with the East comes better, they always consider it logical that we must have worse relations with the West. This is not true, not on the expense of our relations with other countries."



EAST AND WEST AT CURRENT ZAGREB FAIR: Red China boycotted the pavilion she built several years ago, leaving exhibit space to Yugoslavia's own products. Russia (just to right of Chinese pagoda) went all out for new passenger cars and heavy machinery U.S. pavillion (right) combined rockets with plastics.

How can a communist state remain neutral and still convert the world to its ways? "We don't believe national communism exists at all," Kunc said, "because the basic ideas of Marxism are the same. Some practices in Eastern European countries aren't communist at all. We consider that every country has to come to socialism in its own way. We consider that sooner or later every

country will become a socialist country. We don't use the term 'Communist' because, according to Marxism, Communism is just the latest stage. And we always support every move in every country towards this goal."

How is it that despite the volley of verbal charges between Beograd and Peking, you did not support India on Tibet? "According to our opinion, Tibet is not an international problem. Tibet is a part of China -- the same attitude as India took. (In WWU-11, you may recall the regret some Indians have that Nehru acknowledged Chinese suzerainty over Tibet in 1950.)"

Do you find it incumbent upon one neutral to support another when it runs against one of the blocs, such as is occurring right now between the UAR and the USSR over Iraq? "We openly supported Nasser because, in our opinion (I find everyone in Yugoslavia prefaces his remarks with the humble, 'In our opinion,' or the even more humble, 'This is my personal belief'), he (Nasser) was right. Not because he is a neutral. But because he is under the pressure of the Soviet Union. We were not called on to intervene. But nevertheless we expressed our opinion. We consider there is a great danger if the Arab world does not stick together. There may be intervention of the Big Powers there."

I asked Kunc how it is that Yugoslavia's UN votes consistently fall with the East. He said this was not so. I asked for examples. He fumbled, reddened, scratched his head and came to a dead halt. I thought I would be tactful and asked if an aide might get the record out for him. He rang and gave orders. Then, just before my interview was over, the aide returned. Kunc triumphantly announced three instances during the past UN General Assembly: Yugoslavia abstained when the Eastern bloc voted against a Korean debate in the General Assembly; Yugoslavia abstained when the East voted against a discussion of the United Nations Emergency Force in Gaza (the least Yugoslavia could do since she contributes troops to UNEF), and Yugoslavia voted for a report by the High Commissioner for Refugees which the East opposed. But Kunc didn't know which report this was. And when he cited Hungary as part of Yugoslavia's opposition in 1955, he didn't know which of the many votes taken included the Yugoslav abstention.

When I asked Kunc if he thought the American press misunderstood his country, he did not hesitate: "The relations between Yugoslavia and the Catholic Church: It is true that the relations with the Vatican are not settled yet. But this is half the truth. I've never seen in the American press that the Yugoslav Government has severed completely its relations with the Greek Orthodox Church, or with the Macedonian Church. It is only the relations with the Catholic Church, which is the second church here (Greek Orthodox, 48 per cent; Roman Catholics, 36 per cent), that are not settled. If you study the history, you will find that the Vatican was always against the very idea of Yugoslavia. Archbishop Stepinac was sentenced as a collaborator and then he was proclaimed a Cardinal, the second Cardinal from the Balkans in all history. Stepinac can leave Yugoslavia whenever the Vatican wishes. But he can't come back. But, intentionally, they keep him here. They like to have a martyr."

Josip Djerdja has been Yugoslav Ambassador to Burma, India and, most recently, to the UAR. Now he has been recalled home to be an Assistant Foreign Minister, presumably for Near East affairs.

I also asked Djerdja about the attitude of Yugoslavia in the Nasser-Khrushchev dispute. "We are not in favor of Russian intervention (in



DJERDJA

Iraq) even though she is a communist country. The fight against Russia began with the attempt to put their nose in our internal affairs. So how can we abstain when our neighbors have this? We consider that the Arab Communist and the Arab individual must first of all be an Arab patriot. Otherwise, he is not a Communist nor a patriot. If he is not an honest man and a good patriot, he is not a Communist. He is a foreign agent." Djerdja had an interesting footnote on Yugoslav policy: "If we take a position, we look always around and say, 'What are the positions of those who are more interested than us?'" He also said that he believed Iraq's Kassem to be "a very clear nationalist, like Nasser," but that his flirtation with the communists indicates he "is playing a game that can be dangerous some times." This from a fellow Communist!

I was curious to know how neutral Yugoslavia remains impartial between fellow neutrals Israel and the UAR, particularly since Yugoslavia is one of the eight countries represented in the UNEF in Gaza. "Our feelings are more on the part of the Arabs, being the victims of aggression. But we think Nasser is wrong regarding (the blocking of Israeli ships from) the Canal. I don't know why Israel doesn't go to the World Court at the Hague because I think she would win. And Egypt isn't particularly happy now, being in the middle of this unsolved dispute."

Yugoslavia signed a "Balkan Pact" with Turkey and Greece in 1954. What has come of it and how does this prejudice Yugoslavia's non-alignment? "We are more in conflict with the Turkish interpretation of it because it may some day be NATO and this would affect our relations with Russia. For us, the pact was never a means for war, but a means for avoiding war. In our opinion, the vitality of the pact is the direct result of the Russian action. If she (Russia) is making trade agreements, contacts, we may put the pact in the pocket." (Later I heard that the Balkan Pact was fairly well torpedoed by the Cyprus dispute which pitted pact member Greece against pact member Turkey.)

Djerdja also had an interesting comment on the Khrushchev-Eisenhower meeting: "You may like it or not. But if you compare the situation between Stalin and Truman and today, there is something different. In some way, the reason is prevailing."

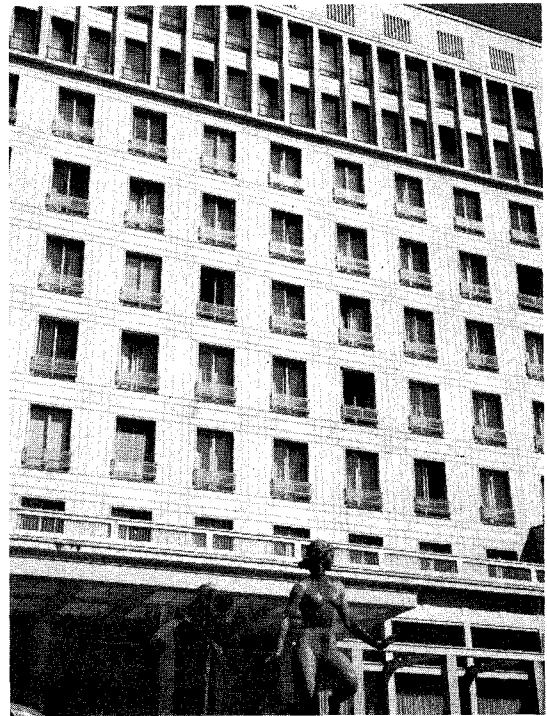


CRNOBRNJA

I saw another Assistant Foreign Minister here, Bogdan Crnobrnja (you pronounce it), who watches over the Ministry's economic affairs. In the past nine years, the U.S., which accounts for the major share (95 per cent) of Western assistance, has allocated some \$890.4 million to Yugoslavia. More than one-third of this (\$253.3 million) was programmed between fiscal 1952 and 1957 for military aid. Almost one-half (\$416.7 million) has been in the form of Public Law 480 aid in which surplus U.S. crops (principally wheat) are sold to Yugoslavia and a good amount of the local currency used in their purchase is left in the country for other types of aid. U.S. funds have been used to build the new Zagreb-Ljubljana highway (a stellar attraction in a country where most of the roads are boulder-strewn wagon tracks), a new bridge across the Danube here in Beograd, and the elegant be-glassed and be-fountained Hotel Metropol in which I am now writing. England dispatched £3 million in assistance to Yugoslavia last year. Russia, in

late years, has sent nothing.

I asked Crnobrnja if he regretted accepting U.S. military aid. "We didn't feel in accepting military aid from the U.S. that we compromised our independence." Then how did Yugoslavia happen to curtail the program last year? "We felt the danger from the East less; the international atmosphere gave some hope of peace; and the military aid was almost a permanent source of trouble to your Administration and your President. It was an embarrassment. In Congress they would ask, 'Why are you giving arms to Communists?' Such things are not pleasant to any human being, or to any nation." I asked Crnobrnja if it was even more to the point that Yugoslavia had announced cancellation of her U.S. military aid program at the end of 1957, just after she had refused to sign the Fortieth Anniversary pledge of allegiance to the Soviet Union? Didn't you cancel the U.S. program to balance things in the light of neutrality? "Don't give much credit to that report," he replied. Anyway, Yugoslavia now manufactures a good deal of her own military equipment and buys the rest on a strictly commercial basis.



U.S. - AIDED HOTEL METROPOL

What about economic aid in the future? "If we have a need for our people, we are not going to hesitate to ask for help. But to be in the position of accepting economic aid is not a pleasant thing. To give aid is more normal. We would like to be able to reach such a position that we can say, 'Thank you very much. You were of great help but happily we are now able to cooperate in a more normal way.'

"Your assistance helped us," he continued. "It made it more possible for us to follow an independent policy. But there are some things we didn't like, like your regular criticism of Yugoslavia as a Communist country. On the one side, it helps; on the other side, it spoils it. And your legislation for economic assistance is somehow obsolete. Some provisions in your laws should be more democratic. For instance, a few days ago the Development Loan Fund demanded a chance to inspect a particular project for the entire 15-year life of its loan. Who likes that? They also want the loan to be publicized according to their instructions. Who likes that? I don't think we are going to accept it. These are small things, very minor things, but---" I couldn't resist editorializing. I told Crnobrnja that when I was in India (WWU-13), Harvey Slocum, the American contractor hired to strawboss Bhakra Dam, said the moment he turned his back and stopped supervising everything went wrong. "Well," said Crnobrnja with a laugh, "maybe we wouldn't object to supervision of the loan for five years. Just not the whole 15."

My interview with Ales Bebler was unique because he was the one Yugoslavian I met who seemed to relax, philosophize a bit and seem quite indifferent to whether or not his opinion agreed with the Government's daily dictum.



Bebler has been Yugoslav Foreign Minister, as well as his country's Ambassador to France and the UN. Now he's been kicked upstairs as President of the Foreign Political Committee of Parliament. While the title might be similar to Senator Fulbright's, Yugoslavia's Parliament, unlike the U.S. Senate, deliberates and listens, but does very little performing. I saw Bebler in his large office in the Parliament Building and while I sipped the usual over-sweet Turkish coffee he reminisced and repeated himself enough to convince me that he must be at least in his late 'fifties. I may be wrong, but I think Bebler gave me the compliment of speaking to me with a certain amount of candor.

BEBLER

What are the chances of President Tito regaining Mr. Khrushchev's good graces? "I can't imagine what would make Tito join with them again. And if he did, he would have a terrible time explaining it to the people. The future course of socialism will not follow Russia, China and the Yugoslav revolutions. And just as the capitalist world did not follow the pattern of revolution of your country, France and Reformation England, maybe socialism will not either. Any attempt by the Russians to extend the bloc to the rest of the world will have exactly the opposite effect. The conservatives will become stronger. We consider it 'counter-revolution' because it frightens people. Socialism then becomes a spectre."

How is it your UN voting is always so sympathetic to Russia's? (Forgive me for repeating this question with everybody, but I was determined to have a more complete answer.) "The Soviet bloc operates in their foreign policy very much in accordance with fundamentalist Marxist principles: anti-colonialism, disarmament. How could we vote differently? And what they call their 'peace offensive' -- whatever the double entendre -- it is there. They are more radical in pushing the German question. We cannot vote differently."

And your concern for Red China in the UN after the way she has lashed out against Yugoslavia? "At such a period, governments are inclined to exaggerate the foreign danger as one explanation of why they demand so much and such sacrifice (internally). That's why Stalin spoke so much of 'encirclement' and that's why China speaks so much about India. This does not fit at all into the political concept that Russia has come to. Russia has many problems with China. China is one big reason why Khrushchev is moving towards the West."



Why did Yugo-

PARLIAMENT: Imposing but insignificant

slavia go out of its way to recognize East Germany in 1957? "We wanted to normalize relations (with Russia) after the Khrushchev visit. And we wanted to deprive the readers of Pravda as far as possible of the Stalinist argument in the East that Yugoslavia is not Marxist, that it is not independent from the Western Great Powers." But Bebler said the East German recognition was very unpopular in Yugoslavia and one of his constituents came up to him and said, "'They are both Germans and Stalinists, why should we do it?'" One Western newsman here said the real reason was Tito's ardent desire to be readmitted to the Communist family.

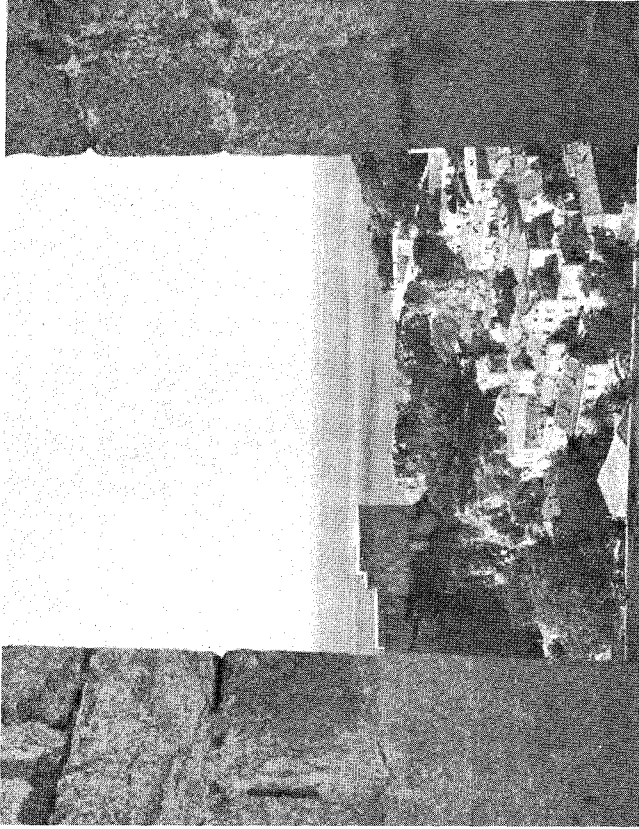
I said Bebler seemed to relax. Well Vlado Popovic did anything but. Popovic has the unusual distinction of having served as Ambassador to the three major capitals: Moscow, Washington and Peking. Popovic was Ambassador to the USSR from 1945 until the Stalin excommunication in 1948, when he was recalled. He was Ambassador to the U.S. from 1950 to 1954, without incident. He then went to China, from 1955 until last year when he was again recalled, this time with the Peking-Beograd rupture. Yugoslavia has had only a few minor secretaries there since. A handsome man with a cigarette holder, dark blue suit and the unruffled elegance of a Lord Calvert ad, Popovic is considered a comer, particularly because of his position on the Central Coordinating Committee.



POPOVIC

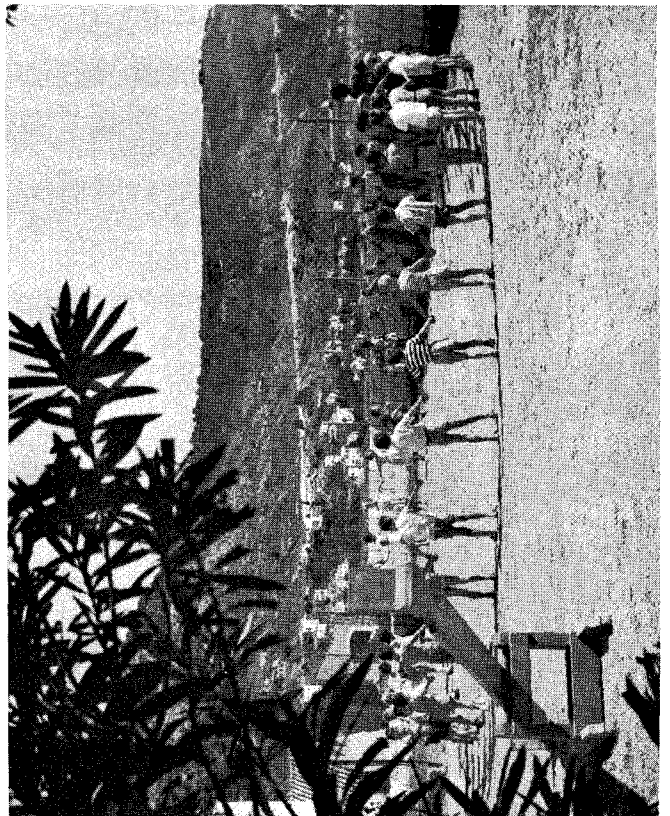
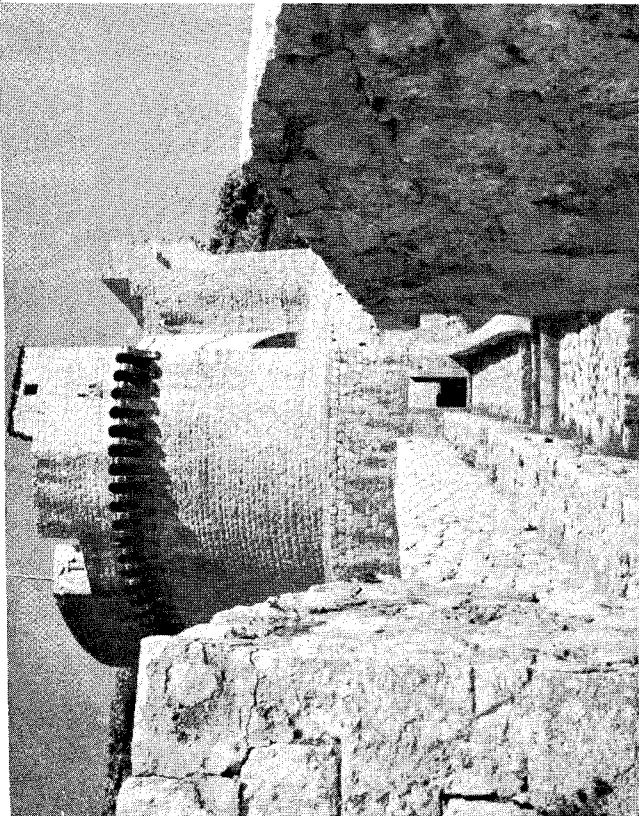
I had to repeat and repeat my questions to get Popovic to stop puffing on that cigarette holder and say something. But finally he gave, a little. Why has faraway China concerned herself so much with Yugoslavia? "Firstly, because of our internal policy. We are in favor of democracy -- to give more freedom to the people. Secondly, in international policy, we want to make great efforts for greater understanding and cooperation with other countries. In China, it was quite the opposite. They started with oppression of the people, centralization and great administrative -- almost military, control. In relations with other countries, they are in favor of imposing their own policy on other nations. When we're for good relations with Western countries, they say we are the agents of imperialism. Then in 1958 (after Peking denounced Yugoslavia), the Soviet Union said, 'We will not interfere in the internal affairs of China.' This is a crazy policy. Crazy policy. If they had been against this policy (of China's), they could say to China, 'We do not like it.' Slowly, they (China) will realize they must improve their relations with other countries."

While criticizing China, Popovic saved a few barbs for the West: "No doubt about it, the policy of Stalin was for interference in other countries. But at the same time, the Western countries made interference too. They were not innocent either. There was a point when they were interested in interfering in our internal affairs." I asked for particulars. At first, Popovic refused flatly, pleading diplomatic immunity. Finally, he grudgingly said a bit: "Immediately after the war, the Government in Exile in London supported Quisling forces in our country. In the Trieste issue, you accused us of all sorts of things. Your public opinion understands our foreign policy. But about our internal policy, they don't know very much about it. I would not say there is misunderstanding. There are so many problems. There are so many good things that we make in the way of a democratic life. I am quite sure that if the American people knew how we solve some of our problems they would like



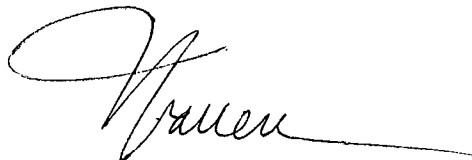
DUBROVNIK, 'PEARL OF THE ADRIATIC'

In the old days, they not only built a mighty wall around this rich trading city, complete with moats and turrets, but bribed would-be conquerors with tribute money. And it worked. On the left are some young Dubrovnikians excersing atop the high walls during their parochial school recess.



much better Yugoslavia. They would not have objections against Yugoslavia because Yugoslavia is a Socialist country with Communist ideas."

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Unna", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Warren W. Unna

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