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*"Do not forget, the national factor is stronger than all others; on this issue history, including our history, has not upheld Marx's theory."*<sup>1</sup>

In the first days of April 1981 the Yugoslav regime and public and equally unprepared outside observers of the Yugoslav scene were startled by reports of widespread and violent nationalist and irredentist disturbances in the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo. Constitutionally a sub-unit of Serbia, one of Yugoslavia's six federated republics, the Kosovo region borders on Albania and is predominantly inhabited by Albanians.

The scale of the disturbances was suggested, despite early local attempts to suppress details revealing their seriousness and extent, by references to police reinforcements from other regions and territorial militia assisting local police in quelling demonstrations in several parts of the province. Units of the Yugoslav People's Army with tanks guarding key facilities and communications were called in and state-of-emergency measures were invoked over an entire federal unit for the first time in postwar Yugoslav history. The stability and tranquility that had characterized Yugoslavia's transition from the Tito era for almost precisely one year had been rudely breached at their weakest point, on the "national question" in general and in Kosovo in particular, and with a violence the country had not experienced since an earlier armed uprising by Kosovar Albanians just after World War II, when Tito's Communist Partisans were consolidating their rule.

In the weeks that followed, with Kosovo still under a partial state of emergency and closed to foreign observers except for official conducted tours, Yugoslavia's own belatedly unleashed media gradually revealed that the depth, extent,

and potential significance of the trouble were indeed greater than initially admitted. There had apparently been more than the officially reported 9 dead and 250 wounded during the April riots, since many in both categories were said to have been taken into hiding by relatives and clansmen, a time-honored Balkan custom. More complete lists of places and incidents made it clear that no part of Kosovo had been untouched, and trials of persons with Albanian names were also reported from western Macedonia. The "security situation" in Kosovo was ominously being described as "still complicated" more than two months later. Spasmodic demonstrations, strikes, and acts of violence, usually directed against Serbian graves and monuments and the property of the Province's Serb and Montenegrin minorities, continued despite further police reinforcements from other regions and the threatening presence of the Army and its tanks (reportedly never used). The University of Pristina (Prishtine), among whose 45,000 students it all began, was closed in mid-May, 10 days before the academic year should have ended. Public gatherings continued to be banned, and theaters and cinemas remained closed. Meanwhile, as the press and the regime sought to explain the extent and violence of the disorders and the surprise and unpreparedness of the authorities when they occurred—irredentism and occasional nationalist demonstrations are old Kosovo stories, but not on this scale—it was said that Provincial Party and state organs, predominantly Albanian in personnel, had ignored warning tremors over a period of several years and even failed to report them to higher authorities in Belgrade, the capital of both Serbia and the federation.

Resignations by senior Albanian Party and state officials in Kosovo began. The first to go was Provincial Party boss Mahmut Bakalli, whose

blithe response to this reporter's suggestion—during a 3½ hour interview only 16 months earlier—that the situation at the university and in employment constituted a political time-bomb in the Kosovar national context was then interpreted as an effort to deceive a foreign observer, but now seems also to have included elements of self-deception.<sup>2</sup> Calls for more “assigning responsibility” and a campaign for “political differentiation,” a new euphemism for impending wider purges, were said to be meeting widespread resistance in the form of lip service and protective “family-ism” on the part of Kosovar Albanian Party cadres.

Polemics with neighboring Albania escalated sharply after the (Tirana) Albanian media took up the cause of their “brothers” in Yugoslavia, supporting the demonstrators' demand that Kosovo be elevated to the status of a seventh Yugoslav Republic, and that alleged Serbian domination and exploitation should cease. With demonstrators' demands for a separate federal republic interpreted as merely a first step toward detachment of Kosovo from Yugoslavia and its incorporation in a “Greater Albania” ruled from Tirana, and with “We are the soldiers of Enver Hoxha” (the Albanian head of state and Party) among the slogans of some of the student demonstrators in Kosovo, Yugoslav officials and media accused Albania of challenging Yugoslavia's territorial integrity and endangering peace in the Balkans, with inevitable repercussions for world peace.

Meanwhile, Yugoslav officials and the media wondered aloud, in hurt and bewildered tones, how it could be possible that an apparently large number of Kosovar Albanian students, workers, and peasants seemed to prefer Enver Hoxha's Stalinist Albania, with its notorious lack of personal, civic, and religious freedom as well as prosperity and modernity, to Titoist Yugoslavia, where all of these things are present in manifestly far greater abundance, even if less so in Kosovo. Some are suggesting that comparative counting of per capita television sets, refrigerators, personal automobiles, and industrial development, with which Yugoslav officialdom had traditionally comforted itself—and sought to persuade Yugoslavia's Albanians—that Albanian irredentism had no allure, may not be the best way either to understand or to respond to the problem. Perhaps not even far greater freedom of expression, religion, opportunity, participation, and movement in Yugoslavia than in Albania counts as much against the “national factor” as had been

thought. But if this is so, where else to begin again? Generalized condemnations of “Albanian nationalism and irredentism” and mutual re-cremations, including Kosovar accusations of “tendentious” (meaning ethnically prejudiced) reporting by “the central Belgrade media,” suggested more evasion and even panic than coherent strategy. Implicit in all this has been a broader question. Is the “Titoist solution” to Yugoslavia's “national question,” so long regarded as promising if problematic and incomplete, failing its first post-Tito test in Kosovo? And if so, where next?

The extent and violence of the nationalist disturbances in Kosovo in spring 1981 pale in comparison with similarly inspired events in many countries of the Third World and even Europe, to both of which Yugoslavia belongs. Priština is not yet Belfast or Beirut; Kosovo is not yet Kurdistan or the Basque country; and only extraordinary stupidities by the Yugoslav authorities (which cannot, however, be excluded if panic ultimately triumphs over policy) can erase these “not yet.” On the other hand, and as the Yugoslav media are now glumly and repeatedly reminding their readers and listeners, the trouble in Kosovo and its repercussions, whether imitative or reactive, are not likely to go away soon or with a small dose of combined repression and economic and political concessions.

As in the economy, where serious problems are also aggravating the national question and undermining stability as well as living standards and further economic development, a serious rethinking of solutions and systems inherited from the Tito era—which is not the same thing as their abandonment or a radical “de-Titoization”—is in order, and this is being said with all due circumspection at several official and popular levels. A lively public discussion of problems and deficiencies in the political and constitutional relationship between the Autonomous Provinces of Kosovo and the Vojvodina, and the Republic of Serbia to which they formally belong, is only one straw in the wind of critical reappraisal that was certain to blow before the first post-Tito Yugoslav Party Congress in 1982, and that has been spawned only a little prematurely by the storm centers in Kosovo and the economy. Other straws include parallel discussions of “responsibility” for a purportedly accelerating “disintegration” of the “unified Yugoslav market” into “closed, autarchic Republican and Provincial markets” that is substantiated by statistics on declining interregional



commerce, and about ways to make the system of "workers' and social self-management" economically more efficient. The first of these debates was generated by events in Kosovo, the second is part of the problem, and all three are bound to stir the embers of old conflicts between "centralists" and "de-centralizers," also intimately involving the national question.

Pending more information about what is still happening in Kosovo, a more thorough analysis of this new challenge from Albanian nationalism and irredentism would be premature, and the present writer has in any case had his say in anticipation about the background to these events.<sup>3</sup> As the general debate proceeds, however, a review of the more general legacy that the disturbances in Kosovo and their likely repercussions have called in question may be helpful to nonspecialists wanting a little more background useful in understanding a "current event" that is likely to be around for a while and that is capable of disturbing Balkan and hence European stability and peace. This legacy consists of policies and their consequences associated with Tito's attempt to solve the Yugoslav national question, which competes with his successful defiance of Stalin for the honor of being considered his most remarkable and indeed improbable accomplishment.

At the same time, and precisely because they were so improbable, so associated with Tito's person, and so qualified and subject to renewed challenge, these two accomplishments—the nonaligned independence of Yugoslavia and the "brotherhood and unity" of its peoples—are often considered the most fragile of his legacies. Moreover, the two are linked in many pessimistic "scenarios" for the post-Tito era, which foresee a Soviet attempt to reassert control over Yugoslavia following and exploiting a crisis in relations among the country's nationalities.

### **Marxist Theory and Yugoslav History**

The "Titoist" solution to the national question was born of Marxist theory as it was transmitted by Stalin and tempered by Yugoslav prewar, wartime, and postwar experience.

The theory, somewhat oversimplified, holds that nationalism is a phenomenon of the capitalist epoch and that national conflicts as mass phenomena are at least primarily and usually based on misperceptions, most often because of lack of class consciousness, concerning what are in reality class differences and conflicts.

Examples, which the predominantly Austrian originators of this interpretation generally drew from Hapsburg and therefore in part Yugoslav experiences, included the oppression and exploitation of proletarian or peasant nations or parts of nations by capitalist or landowning ones or portions thereof. These and analogous phenomena may appear within individual multicultural countries or internationally in the form of imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism, and their ilk.

Nationalism and national conflicts, so understood, should therefore tend to disappear when the bourgeois carriers and economic reasons for them are eliminated under socialism. This, however, will be a slow process, since the perceptions, prejudices, loyalties, and suspicions characteristic of competing nationalisms have become an important part of "subjective" reality for the people concerned. Therefore national (but not nationalist) identities and concerns should be treated with special circumspection and sensitivity during the socialist "transition" phase, for example by guaranteeing cultural autonomy, equality of opportunity and access, and special protection for ethnic minorities, or through federalism for multinational states where the distribution of nationalities and their relations make this appropriate.

Stalin's formulation of this theory, done at Lenin's request, plagiarized early twentieth-century "Austro-Marxists" who were attempting to find a Marxist explanation and solution for the national question in the Hapsburg Monarchy, then in its acute phase. In post-1945 Yugoslavia the theory was thus returning to part of the land of its origin (along with similarly multinational ex-Ottoman lands) under the patronage of a former Hapsburg subject who had been a witness to both the monarchy's disintegration and the Bolshevik Revolution. It is in this sense quite appropriate to apply to Tito the often-quoted ironic title "last of the Hapsburgs," coined by British historian A.J.P. Taylor to describe Tito's relative success in ruling the most multinational and unruly of the Hapsburg successor states and in unifying its historically quarrelsome nations.

The Yugoslavia created after the First World War was the embodiment of an idea, a century-old aspiration which held that the South Slav peoples, the *Jugoslaveni*, should be united in one state in order to be free at last of alien rule. This aspiration was an adaptation to Balkan conditions of the prevailing ideology of the modern

world, which posits national emancipation and the nation-state as prerequisites of individual freedom and social progress. The adaptation consisted of a modification of this doctrine based on a prophetic recognition that the unity of diverse but related nationalities would provide a solution for small nations living in an ethnic patchwork, where pure ethnic boundaries among states are impossible and where Great Power interests interact and would inevitably dominate minuscule but still ethnically heterogeneous national states.

The trouble with this solution was that the South Slav peoples, never before united politically, in fact had little in common except the aspiration for unity in freedom and the similarities of language, of myths of historical origin, and of centuries of alien rule on which that aspiration was based. The Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Bosnians, Montenegrins, and numerous non-Yugoslav minorities included in the new Yugoslav state were divided by language or dialect, by religion (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Muslim), and also by the impact of more than a millenium of separation and incorporation for much or all of that period in different empires (Frankish, Byzantine, Magyar, Venetian, Hapsburg, and Ottoman) with enormous differences in political and social systems and cultures. These different historical experiences made a deep impact on their cultures and ethos and increased the differences between them.

It was not just that the South Slav peoples had lived under various and usually foreign masters before 1918, as had the Italians before 1860 and the Poles after the partitions of the eighteenth century. They had lived in effect on separate continents, partly in Catholic Hapsburg or Venetian Europe and partly in Ottoman-ruled Muslim and Orthodox Asia. The disruptive potential of these differences in a common state and in the many regions in which peoples from these two worlds are intermingled is symbolized for the two most numerous nations by a common Yugoslav saying born of post-1918 experience: "The very way of life of a Serb and a Croat is a deliberate provocation by each to the other."

United at last in 1918, the Yugoslavs remained disunited by nationality, religion, and diverse foreign imperial influences on urban forms, rural settlement and landholding patterns, legal systems, levels of economic and social development, and ways of viewing the world. Their state was a multinational anachronism in an age charac-

terized by the triumph of the ideology of the nation-state, although that ideology had led to its creation. Its official name until 1929, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, bore understated witness to that fact.

No single nationality comprised (or comprises) a majority of the population, then about 14 and today about 23 million. Serbs were and are most numerous, today with about 39 percent of the total, followed by Croats with about 22 percent, Serbo-Croatian-speaking Slav Muslims, living primarily in Bosnia-Herzegovina and now counted as a separate nation, with about 9 percent and Slovenes with about 8 percent. Something over a million Macedonians and half as many Montenegrins bring the share of South Slavs in the total population of the South Slav state to about 83 percent.<sup>4</sup> The rest consists of nearly two dozen "nationalities," the term officially used to distinguish those like Albanians, Hungarians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Slovaks, and Italians whose "national home" is outside Yugoslavia (along with Gypsies, Vlachs, and others without a "national home") from the six South Slav "nations" whose "national homes" are in Yugoslavia. That Yugoslavia's Albanians are actually more numerous than the Montenegrins and Macedonians and almost as numerous as the Slovenes, all of whom have "republics" as "national homes," is today an important political and psychological ingredient in the problem of Kosovo, where Albanians constituted 77.5 percent of the population in the April 1981 census, with 350,000 more in adjacent districts of Montenegro and western Macedonia, but are being told that a separate Kosovo Republic cannot be.

The situation in old Yugoslavia was further complicated by an acute maldistribution of both economic and political power and their respective polarization in ethnically different parts of the country. While economic power was concentrated in Slovenia and Croatia, the more developed ex-Hapsburg north, political power came to be held almost exclusively by ruling groups in Serbian Belgrade, who succeeded in imposing themselves and a highly centralized political system on other nationalities whose leaders usually, and especially in Croatia, would have preferred a federation. Thus the non-Serb majority of the population found themselves living in what was really a Greater Serbia, with a Serbian king, a Serbian capital, Serbian prime ministers, and Serb domination of the officer corps of the army and bureaucracy.

In such a situation all significant political parties were ethnic parties except an initially pan-Yugoslav Communist Party, which was driven into illegality and impotence after 1921. The political system founded on such parties fluctuated between instability and deadlock until, in frustration, a Serbian royal dictatorship was imposed in January 1929. One of its first acts was to change the name of the state of Yugoslavia and to redefine Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (the first category already subsuming Montenegrins, Macedonians, and Bosnian Muslims) as "tribes" of one "Yugoslav nation," which seemed to be indistinguishable from the Serb nation in most of its salient characteristics. The dictatorship and perceptions of progressive Serbianization in turn spawned or spurred militant and sometimes fascist separatist movements, especially among Croats and Macedonians, whose fascist Ustasa and terrorist IMRO combined their talents to assassinate King Aleksandar Karadjordjević in Marseilles in October 1934.

The fragile vessel of such a Yugoslavia, with many of its crew already in a mutinous frame of mind, broke apart on the rocks of World War II. The Axis invasion of April 1941 led not merely to military defeat, which was in any case inevitable, but to a disintegration so total that it seemed doubtful that a unified Yugoslav state could ever be recreated, whatever the outcome of the wider war. To compound the mischief, the Axis conquerors divided the country into a patchwork of puppet states and annexed or occupied districts, all fashioned and governed in such a way as further to incite civil war among the nationalities, which duly came to pass. Kosovo and western Macedonia, to take an example of particular salience today, were annexed to a "Greater Albania" ruled as an Italian and later German puppet state from Tirana, a temporary precursor of the situation that Stalinist Tirana, anticommunist Albanian emigrés in the West, and Albanian irredentists in Kosovo are now being accused of trying to restore. Of the 1.7 million Yugoslavs killed during the war years (11% of the population then), more were victims of intra-Yugoslav fratricide—either interethnic or between those who would restore the Serb-dominated old order and those who aspired to a new one—than were killed by the country's foreign occupiers.

In the midst of this destruction and collapse of the civil order, Tito and his Communist Party began their Partisan war of resistance under the double slogan of national liberation and the

"brotherhood and unity" of the Yugoslav peoples. Together these marked the rebirth of the "Yugoslav idea" in a new form: as a federation of equal nations, now numbering five (and later six) as the Macedonians, the Montenegrins, and after 1968 the Serbo-Croatian-speaking Slav Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina (heretofore claimed by both Serbs and Croats) were officially recognized as separate nations alongside the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Each of the first five was to have a republic of its own, while the sixth republic, Bosnia-Herzegovina, an historic rather than a national unit, was to be the condominium of its Serb, Muslim Slav, and Croat peoples. The most numerous non-Slavic minorities, Albanians and Magyars, were to receive special recognition in Autonomous Regions, Kosovo and the Vojvodina, within the Serbian Republic. Other minorities were to enjoy "cultural autonomy."

That this rebirth of the Yugoslav idea was not merely widely accepted but a powerful recruiting slogan for the Partisan armies is explained by the course of the war itself. The disintegration of the old Yugoslavia because of the national question had brought foreign domination and the hideous fratricide of civil war. To paraphrase a slogan from the eighteenth century American Revolution, the lesson seemed to be that if the Yugoslav peoples did not hang together they would end by hanging each other in a paroxysm of mutual genocide. The force of this lesson generated a widespread propensity to try again with a new formula. This in turn was an important reason why the Communist-led Partisans, the apostles of the new formula, won out over others, both fellow-resisters and Axis collaborators, whose aims were either the perpetuation of partition or the restoration of a unitary and Serb-dominated Yugoslavia.

By themselves, however, the propensity to try again and the formality of federalism were only the prerequisites of a solution to the national question. Cultural differences, conflicting economic and social interests and priorities, and suspicion and bitterness born of prewar and wartime experiences remained potentially disintegrative forces, leaving each of the Yugoslav peoples hypersensitive to any sign that their own national interest or identity was again threatened or being treated unequally.

#### **The Titoist Solution's Four Phases**

During Tito's reign the "Titoist" solution to the national question, subjected to repeated strains arising from its own weaknesses as well as

from the complexity and intransigence of the question, passed through four phases.

The first, like other aspects of the early postwar system in Yugoslavia, was a virtual carbon copy of the Soviet "solution." Formal constitutional federalism and a considerable degree of genuine cultural autonomy and recognition of cultural differences (for example in folklore and language) were counterbalanced by a highly centralized but carefully multinational one-party dictatorship and police apparatus and a centralized planned economy. The combination was not without virtues, for a time. The modest reality and psychological impact of even the formal creation of the republics and of all-Yugoslav rather than Serb ruling apparatuses, added to popular revulsion against ethnic nationalism after the horrors of civil war, acted to pacify ethnic tensions at least temporarily. Where this was not enough the centralized regime and its police ruthlessly suppressed any display of what it chose to define as "nationalist" rather than acceptable "national" sentiment. At the same time the behavior of the regime in its early years—generalized and therefore in most cases ethnically nondiscriminatory harassment, arrests, nationalization, forced labor, compulsory deliveries by peasants, and other oppressive acts by a multinational Communist dictatorship—gave those who suffered them a set of basically non-national grievances which for the moment took precedence over national ones in their consciousness. For a time it was possible to imagine that the national question really had been solved.

The second phase began when less harshness and early and modest steps toward a more genuine political and economic decentralization, the first fruits of Yugoslavia's break with Stalin in 1948 and with Stalinism after 1950, reopened the question in a new form. This time, as though to prove the correctness of Marxist theory, the basic reasons really were economic: competition among regions and localities, and therefore among the country's nationalities, over the means of economic development.

With the reforms of the 1950s the power to take economic initiatives like the building or expansion of factories and incentives to do so, including tax powers and more reason to develop and cater to local clientele, devolved to the republics and local communities and their "self-managed" enterprises. At the same time, however, most investment funds, fiscal instruments, foreign currency and trade remained centralized

at the federal level. In this contradictory situation interregional competition over the allocation of scarce, important, and centrally allocated resources, although argued in terms of Marxist or market economic principles, inevitably came to be regarded as competition among the nationalities. Questions like priority for basic or processing industries (concentrated in different regions), or which resource, seaport, railroad, or highway should be developed first, were again clearly and gradually, even publicly interpreted as national questions by those involved and by the public at large. In these circumstances political leaders defending local and economic interests were regarded (and increasingly saw themselves) as national leaders defending vital national interests.

Serving to aggravate the suspicions of other nationalities, Serbs and their close relatives the Montenegrins (widely considered merely taller, fiercer Serbs) were in proportion to their share in total population overrepresented in the federal Party and state apparatuses, including the army and the state security service, where the competition for resources and other ultimate powers rested. This was primarily because mountain districts largely populated by these nations happened to send more of their sons into these apparatuses, because the Partisan war and therefore Partisan and postwar elite recruitment were concentrated there, and later because the economic backwardness of these regions made Party and public employment particularly attractive to people who had few alternative opportunities. Whatever its reasons, however, such overrepresentation could easily seem deliberate and created a potential for the restoration, in reality or in appearance, of "Greater Serbian" domination.

If the Croats were (and are) for historic reasons most sensitive to any sign of "Serbian hegemonism," another and specific gap between theory and practice was ticking like a time bomb. Until the 1960s none of the non-Yugoslav minorities (later renamed "nationalities" as noted) enjoyed the proportionate representation in the political system that was accorded to the Yugoslav "nations" in theory and to a significant degree also in practice, but one of them was subject as well to systematic and constant repression, and cultural and economic discrimination. This was the Albanian nationality, and those in charge of their repression and discrimination were the Serb-dominated security service (UDBa) and political apparatuses of Kosovo and Serbia.<sup>5</sup>

The first reaction to new evidence that divisive and potentially disintegrative nationalisms were alive and incarnate in Communist officials as well as "reactionaries" was a short-lived campaign for "Yugoslavism," in which a "Yugoslav" patriotism, culture, and economy should provide a supposedly supranational and unifying umbrella over the country's diverse national identities, cultures, and economies. The campaign coincided with efforts on the part of conservative elements in the Party and police to halt or reverse a new wave of economic liberalization and political decentralization which was drawing its principal support from economically more developed regions like Slovenia and most of Croatia. For a number of reasons only partly connected with national prejudices and preferences, the most visible protagonists of this conservative and recentralizing course, including Tito's Vice-President and then heir-presumptive, Aleksandar Ranković, happened to be Serbs.

Linked in the perceptions of most non-Serbs, "Yugoslavism" and the centralizers were seen as an ominous attempt to repeat King Alexander's efforts to decree a "Yugoslav nation" that turned out to be the self-image of the Serb nation ruling over and seeking to assimilate the rest. In the face of these reactions the campaign for "Yugoslavism" was abandoned. Then the combined opposition of non-Serb Party leaders (on national grounds expressed in terms of economic arguments) and of liberal Party leaders (on ideological and economic grounds), who finally enlisted Tito's vital support, brought the downfall of the centralizers. A purge of their leaders and of the security service in 1966, on Tito's initiative, ended the second phase.

If nationalism and national disputes were not to be suppressed by a centralized and ultimately Serb-dominated dictatorship, killing divisive nationalisms with kindness might provide an alternative solution. The third phase brought, in effect, such an effort. It was done in the name of "self-management" and by the political coalition forged in the struggle against centralism by ideological and economic liberals<sup>6</sup> and regional Party barons whose motivations were sometimes liberal, sometimes localist and nationalist, and sometimes all of these. The beneficiaries of the resulting expansion of political participation, liberty, and autonomy in general included individuals and other kinds of social groups as well as nationalities. It is the importance of regional barons in the power equation that made these

changes possible, and of regional and therefore national interests in their reasons for playing this role, that justifies the contention that the principal driving force behind at least this stage in the expansion of individual and group autonomy and liberty is to be found in Yugoslavia's national question and efforts to answer it, which were more powerful factors than the ideals and interests represented in the theory and institutions of "self-management."

A major "de-étatization" of the economy after 1965 broadened the role of market forces and largely eliminated central planning and control over investment funds. In principle designed to enhance the power of the country's "self-managed" enterprises (and hence, in theory, that of the working class) through the "withering away of the state" at all levels, the virtual liquidation of federal economic powers through these reforms also enhanced local and republican (and therefore national) autonomy. This was particularly true for wealthier and more developed regions like Slovenia and Croatia, which had previously contributed more to centrally administered funds than they had received from them, and whose leaders were therefore understandably the principal authors and advocates of the reforms. But the national rather than purely economic aspect of the issue was even clearer in the support given them by leaders from an underdeveloped republic like Macedonia, which apparently decided that it feared the loss of federal funding less than the threat to national autonomy from the centralist power inherent in such funding.

Meanwhile, in the political sector per se, a series of constitutional amendments and then a new constitution were turning Yugoslavia into a de facto confederation. The powers of the federal center were reduced to foreign policy, defense, and a minimum number of economic instruments, with decision-making even in these spheres to be the product of consensus among representatives of the federal units. The number of these units was also effectively enlarged from six to eight as the Vojvodina and Kosovo, although still formally Autonomous Provinces within the Serbian Republic, acquired most of the attributes of separate republics. In Kosovo, with the Serb-dominated security service humbled and a Yugoslav equivalent of an "affirmative action" policy in force as an attempt to right past wrongs, genuine rather than token control of political and police apparatuses, and of the economy, shifted to the Albanian majority. It now appears that



neither of these developments registered on a large part of the Albanian community, but they registered on Kosovo's Serbs and Montenegrins, who began to leave the province as described in an earlier *AUFS Report*.<sup>7</sup>

Of equal or greater importance in the real world of politics, appointment to federal administrative as well as elective bodies, including Party ones, genuinely passed into the hands of republic and provincial Party and state bodies as a revocable delegation—whereas earlier, as in the Soviet Union, regional officials had in reality been made and unmade by federal Party authorities. Rigid application of the so-called “republican and ethnic keys” in apportioning and rotating jobs (for example, ambassadorships) in all federal departments, frequently on the basis of equal numbers from each republic regardless of population, provided the smaller republics and nations with further guarantees, although it has also complicated staffing and often had a negative effect on the quality of federal personnel. Meanwhile, the most important consequences of this “federalization” of cadre selection was that those with political ambitions, knowing that their careers are dependent on the approval of the republican/provincial apparatuses who send them to Belgrade and to whose ranks they must return, were often reluctant to accept a federal post and always responsive to their home constituencies when they did. This further increased the power (and attractiveness) of local offices while it reduced the power (and quality) of central ones.

While these arrangements were evolving in the later 1960s and early 1970s they were subjected to a severe test that produced the most serious political crisis of the Tito era. The growing autonomy of the republics and debates about how much further the process should go generated a surge of nationalist feeling almost everywhere, including Kosovo, where a series of nationalist demonstrations in the late 1960s were a mild foretaste of those of 1981. It was most marked among the Croats, whose numbers (4.5 million, second only to 8 million Serbs among the Yugoslav nations), rich resource base, strongly developed national consciousness, and long tradition of struggling for their “historic state rights” against pre-1918 Magyar and post-1918 Serb domination make them the most fervently autonomist—and sometimes separatist—of the Yugoslav peoples. In Croatia a young, popular, and self-confident Party leadership, although themselves generally more liberal than nationalist, accepted the

political help and growing influence of non-Communist and nationalist elements to push demands for even fuller autonomy, with symbols of sovereignty. Federal lawmaking and administration were virtually paralyzed by the mutual vetoes that constitutional amendments had made possible and that were now invoked with increasing frequency. National tensions escalated sharply on all sides, and some members of the large Serb minority in Croatia, with memories of the massacres of 1941-1945, were reportedly arming themselves.

By autumn 1971 these trends alarmed Tito into drastic action. Threatening to use the army if necessary, he summarily brought about the removal of the Croatian leaders, denounced any “federalization” of the Party, and moved to reassert central Party discipline and authority. In 1972 regional Party leaderships who opposed this partial restoration of centralized Party dictatorship in other republics, including Serbia, were also toppled, usually accused of excessive liberalism rather than “nationalism.” The Yugoslav national question, which had been a major factor in the process of general political and economic liberalization in the 1960s, had now become the major factor in a retreat from political liberalism, proving that multinationalism in Yugoslavia was still a double-edged sword.

Tito's coups of 1971-72 ushered in a fourth phase in the “Titoist” solution to the Yugoslav national question. It did not change as much as many were fearing or hoping at the end of 1972. The de facto confederal structure of the state was maintained and indeed reconfirmed by a new Constitution adopted in 1974: the only significant changes were in providing additional and more efficient modalities for reaching agreement on disputed issues. The autonomy of enterprises and of similar “de-étatized” social services like education and health was also maintained and even somewhat enhanced by further “de-étatization” through a mammoth and complex “Law on Associated Labor” adopted in 1976. Because most enterprises, economic associations, and cultural institutions limit their activities to the territory of one republic (creating, in a critical official phrase, “closed Republican economies and cultures”), this too tends to strengthen regional and therefore national autonomy and separation. Edvard Kardelj's description of Yugoslavia as a “pluralism of self-management interests” describes and seeks to legitimize a reality, and the “pluralism” is national as well as functional.

On the other hand, the Party in Tito's last years was again—if in lesser measure than Tito had apparently intended—a more centralized, disciplined, and authoritarian agency than in the third phase, before the Croatian crisis and Tito's reaction. Regional Party leaders, although in the Yugoslav historical and contemporary context as potentially localist and therefore nationalist as their deposed predecessors, currently lack the personal stature, the right moment, and usually the local political base and following to assert or expose themselves in this way. And it is the Party, whether centralized or "federalized," that still matters most.

#### After Tito...

Eight years of relative quiet on the national front after the crisis of 1971-72—marred portentously, in retrospect, by small-scale demonstrations and waves of arrests in Kosovo in the mid-1970s—must have seemed to Tito, at the end of his reign, a vindication of his action. But the embers of national and nationalist fires were not extinguished and could still be fueled by at least some of the same issues and historic suspicions that have caused them to burst into flame at other moments in postwar as well as prewar Yugoslav history. Only Tito could have dealt with the crisis of 1971 as he did, and Tito is no longer there.

The omens have been mixed as the post-Tito era begins.

On the one hand a number of factors tend to undermine the appeal of divisive nationalisms and to suppress the expression of what is left. Most of the "nationalist" demands that gave expression to legitimate Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian, and other national grievances in the late 1960s have been met, even while those who made these demands were being purged from public life. The individual republics now have nearly as much control over their economic fortunes and cultural identities as the sovereign states in the European Economic Community (which means that their control is not unlimited or free of intra-Yugoslav and wider interdependence!). Their local political leaderships, while actually less freely and competitively elected than in the late 1960s, are at least their own, internally imposed by co-nationals rather than externally imposed; and those who represent the republics in federal institutions are genuinely delegated by and responsible to these local and native leaderships.

As for grievances that remain, whether real or imaginary, awareness that the outside world—and the Soviet Union in particular—is watching

for signs of divisiveness that could be exploited dampens eagerness to express these too openly or aggressively. The "external threat" has always, or almost always, tended to unite the Yugoslavs. Determination to make "collective leadership" work, including collective and paritetic federal, state, and Party leadership, has been one of the hallmarks of the first post-Tito year.

On the other hand, a major challenge to stability on the national and other fronts and to the determination to make federalism and collective leadership into durable solutions comes again, as it did in the 1950s and 1960s, from the economy.

Differences in regional economic interests and an historic propensity to interpret these as national questions are as real as ever and are certain to be aggravated if present serious economic problems are not solved and especially if they become worse. This last, moreover, is not an unlikely prospect, both for domestic reasons and in the light of current international economic trends over which the Yugoslavs have no control.

Yugoslavia's present economic problems are in varying degrees of intensity common to all southern European countries today. (This suggests that Yugoslav problems and prospects will be better understood if examined in a Mediterranean rather than an East European regional context.) They include high inflation and unemployment rates, high balance of trade and payments deficits and foreign indebtedness, rapidly rising energy costs, and the consequences of all of these for recently rapid but unfinished and dangerously unbalanced economic development. Like the other southern European countries, Yugoslavia suffers from an uncomfortably high degree of dependence on the maintenance of economic prosperity in northern and western Europe, where recessions promptly cut imports from and tourism to the Mediterranean countries and send *Gastarbeiter* home, further increasing domestic unemployment and eliminating remittances of great importance to the balance of payments.

To this list must be added a further problem that is of major importance elsewhere in the Mediterranean world but is especially threatening to Yugoslavia because it directly raises the sensitive national question. This is an intolerably large and still growing difference in regional levels of prosperity and economic development that coincides dangerously with differences in nationality and with the great cultural dividing line that separates the predominantly Catholic, Central European, and ex-Hapsburg north from the

Orthodox and Muslim ex-Ottoman south. The failure to close this gap or even to stop its widening in years of high growth rates for all has been a major social problem and source of ethnic suspicions and disputes ever since Yugoslavia was re-established as a federal state. In times of economic troubles, with growth rates and improvements in living standards becoming smaller or even negative, an inequitable distribution of deprivations, whether real or imagined, seems bound to lead to far more serious disputes than were formerly engendered by purported inequities in the distribution of the fruits of a rapidly growing economy.

Meanwhile, a serious flaw in the concept of federalism as the basic solution for Yugoslavia's national question can affect future relationships in either of two ways, helping to reconcile the nations to life together or seriously complicate their relations. The republics (except for officially trinational Bosnia-Herzegovina) are in theory the national states of their respective nations, bound together in a federation. However and with the exception of Slovenia and "narrow" Serbia without its autonomous provinces, all of them contain large and numerous national minorities and are in actuality multinational states, a series of Yugoslavias writ small. And even Slovenia, which is adding a growing army of Yugoslav *Gastarbeiter* from other, less developed republics to its existing Italian and Magyar minorities, is becoming multinational.

The potential for trouble arising from this flaw in a theory that mistook historical for ethnic frontiers—not out of ignorance but because ethnic state frontiers cannot be drawn in an ethnic patchwork—is most obvious in three cases. The first is Croatia with its many minorities and in particular its large Serb community (15% of the population), whose reaction in 1970-71 to the implications of a nationalist-led Croatian nation-state, within or without the Yugoslav federation, has already been mentioned. The second is trinational Bosnia-Herzegovina, with an only recently recognized but already increasingly assertive Slav Muslim "nation" as its largest national community (40%, followed by Serbs with 37%, and Croats with 20.5%). A significant number of members of this community, from both Muslim "clericalist" circles and secular groups whom the regime labels "bourgeois nationalist," have lately been suggesting that the "logic" of Yugoslav federalism should make Bosnia-Herzegovina "their" national homeland, even as Serbia and Croatia are the national homelands of the Serbs and Croats. What would then be the status

of the Serbs and Croats who live there, and how would they and their kinsmen in Serbia and Croatia react? The "Bosnian question," which detonated a World War in 1914 and which Tito sought to answer forever by "affirming" a Muslim nation as a buffer and balance to end Serbo-Croatian rivalry over the region, threatens to reappear on Yugoslavia's and the world's agenda of problems. The third case is Kosovo itself and adjacent Albanian-inhabited parts of Macedonia and Montenegro, where the old confrontation between "legitimate" Albanian national claims and aspirations and equally "legitimate" Serbian and other historic claims and passionate attachments has again assumed an acute and urgent form with international as well as domestic dimensions.

Paradoxically, however, the multinationality of the republics and provinces can also be a force promoting at least a reluctant *faute de mieux* reconciliation. Again to cite an obvious and important case, concern for the fate of fellow-Serbs living as minorities in Croatia and also in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, and elsewhere can and often does make the Serbs the most genuinely "Yugoslav" of Yugoslavs. They might prefer a Yugoslavia dominated by Serbs as its most numerous nationality, as in former times, but if this is not possible, then Yugoslavia as it now exists is clearly preferable to a disintegration that would deliver up so many of their kinsmen to alien and potentially unfriendly rule. The ethnic map reveals many other cases of this kind.

The conclusion is that a Yugoslavia dissolved into small and only supposedly national sovereign states would be condemned to a plethora of ill-treated minorities and a plague of mutual irredentisms, increasing their susceptibility to external domination and exploitation as well as the certainty of permanent strife and risk of war among them. This is as true today as it was in 1915, when Professor R. W. Seton-Watson, the great Scottish patron of Slav and Romanian national aspirations in Central Europe, wrote to Serbian Crown Prince Alexander, later King of Yugoslavia, to beg him not to deviate from the goal of a Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, toward the lesser one of a Greater Serbia as an Allied War aim:

*"... For it would certainly be unnecessary to point out to your Royal Highness that if Croatia became an independent state alongside Serbia, the situation of the latter would be still less favorable than before the war; for in that case the two sister*

*nations would be enemies; in place of the idea of the national unity of all the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in a single state, we would have an acute conflict between two opposing Slav programs; and in view of the impossibility of drawing any territorial line of separation between Serbs and Croats, each of the two states—the new Serbia as well as the new Croatia—would be torn apart from one end to the other by two rival irredentisms—the Catholics and Muslims of enlarged Serbia looking to Zagreb, and the Orthodox of Dalmatia and Croatia to Belgrade. I do not need to emphasize the extreme danger of such a situation, from a political, economic, military and above all dynamic point of view.”<sup>8</sup>*

The same argument applies, *ceteris paribus* and in varying degrees of intensity, to all the nationalities of today's Federation under Tito's institutionalized Communist dynasty. In this sense the impossibility of drawing ethnic frontiers in the Balkan ethnic patchwork, a primary reason for the invention of the original “Yugoslav idea” as historic competitor to Greater Serbian, Greater Croatian, and other unitary or separatist concepts, continues to be a compelling reason for a Yugoslavia of “brotherhood and unity.”

Such *faute de mieux* reasons for a widespread propensity to preserve the unity of Yugoslavia and keep ethnic rivalries and disputes within bounds and subject to the rules of consensus politics have analogues in other sectors of the overall after-Tito question. The strongest force working for Yugoslav unity, despite national and cultural differences, competing (but also complementary) national interests, and the stresses that must arise from these, is that any likely alternative would demonstrably be worse for most Yugoslavs. The same force works in the same way to preserve—in *grosso modo* but not necessarily in detail—the peculiar institutions of “self-management” and a “socialist market economy,” nonalignment as the fundamental principle of foreign policy, and a

pluralism of institutionalized corporate and functional interests in place of a pluralism of political parties and ideologies. Each of these has many drawbacks, much room for improvement, numerous critics, and few who are unqualifiedly enthusiastic supporters. In each case, however, it is hard to think of a possible and radically different alternative arrangement that would not with great certainty bring greater inconveniences, less freedom, and even downright disaster for almost all Yugoslavs.

There is considerable evidence, both impressionistic and from survey research, that most Yugoslavs are aware that this is so and draw the appropriate conclusion. This is in turn the best evidence that the fundamental principles of what the world calls “Titoism”—federalism and its concomitants as an answer to the national question, nonalignment as the best guarantor of sovereign independence on the East-West frontier, and “self-management socialism” managed by a “pluralism of... interests” under the guidance of a single and still semiautocratic Party—are likely to prove more stable in the post-Tito era than many in the outside world expect. On the other hand, each has thresholds of tolerance for stability, like the ones examined for the national question in these pages. These will vary in height over time and can be breached by crisis or overrun by gradual accumulations of distrust and disillusion, at a certain point without regard for the “viability” or the desirability of the likely alternatives. In the first year after Tito's death these thresholds, buttressed by the undesirability of all currently visible alternatives, have for the most part seemed high and strong enough to withstand considerable strain. Recent developments in Kosovo are reminders, however, that the kind of rationality on which they are based is easily undermined and swept away by passion, especially when it derives from “the national factor.”

(August 1981)

## NOTES

1. An unidentified member of the 23-member Yugoslav Party Presidency quoted in connection with the recent Kosovo disturbances by Paul Lendvai, "An Stelle einer Bilanz stehen Fragezeichen," in *Die Presse* (Vienna), May 2-3, 1981.
2. See Dennison I. Rusinow, "The Other Albania: Kosovo 1979," Parts I and II [DIR-1,2-'80], *AUFS Reports*, Nos. 5 and 6, 1980, in which the conditions which led to the disturbances of 1981 are described in detail. Several other officials interviewed for and quoted in those *Reports*, including Provincial government Vice-President Pajazit Nusi and Secretary for Education Imer Jaka, were also among the first to resign.
3. See preceding note.
4. Precise current figures will not be known until the results by nationality from the census taken in April 1981 are published. This has so far been done only for the Autonomous Provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina. Other percentages given here are extrapolations from the 1971 census.
5. Except for the Albanian communities in Western Macedonia and Montenegro, who were similarly treated by Macedonians and Montenegrins.
6. That word itself, although accurate in its original denotative meaning, was an anathema because of its bourgeois and therefore negative connotations in Marxist usage.
7. Cited in Note 2 above.
8. Hugh Seton-Watson, Ljubo Boban, et al., eds., *R.W. Seton-Watson and the Yugoslavs—Correspondence 1906-1941* (London and Zagreb, 1976), I, 238 (letter to Prince Regent Alexander of September 17, 1915, in French).