

U. S. POLICY TOWARD YUGOSLAVIA

The question is often asked: why should the U. S. provide assistance to Yugoslavia, since Yugoslavia is a Communist country which frequently disagrees with the U. S. on important international questions? To get at an answer, it is necessary to set forth U. S. policy objectives toward Yugoslavia and then to consider what successes U. S. policy has achieved.

The basic objectives of U. S. policy toward Yugoslavia are to assist the Yugoslavs in maintaining their national independence, to influence Yugoslav development in the direction of democracy and individual liberty, and to maintain Yugoslavia as an example of a state which has successfully broken away from Soviet control. These objectives have remained substantially unchanged since 1949.

The first thing to note about U. S. policy is that it has helped to prevent some very undesirable things from happening. Without U. S. support, Yugoslavia might have been forced to knuckle under to the Soviet Union, after it broke away in 1948. We might now find the Soviet army on the Adriatic and the Greek-Yugoslav border, posing a real threat to the stability of Austria, Greece, Italy and other European countries. The Soviet hold on its satellites would probably be firmer than it is today, and Albania would not be so physically isolated.

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Moreover, the U. S. received some immediate, positive benefits from the Soviet-Yugoslav break. As one example, the Yugoslavs ceased assisting the Communist-led rebel forces in the Greek civil war and closed their borders to other assistance. In addition, the Soviet Union lost control over a long stretch of the Adriatic sea coast, and in due course, Yugoslavia and Italy reached agreement on Trieste. No one who lived in that troubled period will forget how important these developments were, for they contributed to European stability and helped to blunt the forward march of Soviet imperialism.

The U. S. has continued to benefit from its policies toward Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia remains independent of Soviet control, yet has achieved a rate of economic growth higher than any member of the Soviet Bloc. In this position, Yugoslavia has been and remains a disruptive influence on the Bloc, as a continuing example of the dangers of undue dependence on the Soviet Union and of the benefits of independent development.

Since 1948, Yugoslavia has developed many ties with the West. It participates in several Western oriented international organizations, and West Germany and Italy are Yugoslavia's most important trading partners. Indeed, Yugoslavia is economically dependent on its trade with the West. There is also much interchange with the West in the cultural, educational, and scientific fields, and Yugoslavia is open to Western ideas and influence.

Internally, Yugoslavia has developed far differently from the orthodox Communist country. For example, the Yugoslavs have rejected the collectivization of agriculture and insulation from world markets. The Yugoslav economy is a species of mixed economy, in which competition and individual initiative play a role, and there has been some decentralization in the political sphere as well.

It is important to note that these developments almost certainly cannot be reversed. The changes inside Yugoslavia have been institutionalized and have developed a momentum of their own; Yugoslav relations with the West are too highly developed to be abruptly changed and its economic dependence on the West is too great. Thus, there is little chance that Yugoslavia will again become a Soviet satellite.

It remains true, of course, that Yugoslavia is a Communist country with a government and society not to our liking. Nonetheless, the U. S. has gained by having a Communist country successfully following its own path and not that of the Soviet Union. Moreover, the liberalization of Yugoslavia will probably continue, particularly after a new generation takes over. It also remains true that Yugoslavia disagrees with the U. S. on many international questions. It must be kept in mind, however, that Yugoslavia does so from her position as an uncommitted and anti-colonial nation, and that on the whole, her view of the outside world is not far different from that of some of the other neutral nations. Moreover, Yugoslavia's relations with the West probably restrain her from taking extreme positions, and to the extent that they do not, provide the U. S. with leverage for exercising its influence.

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