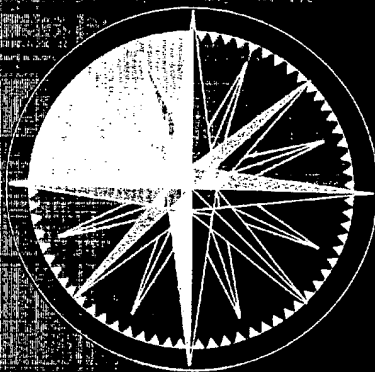


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SPECIAL REPORT

YUGOSLAV INTELLECTUALS CHALLENGE THE REGIME

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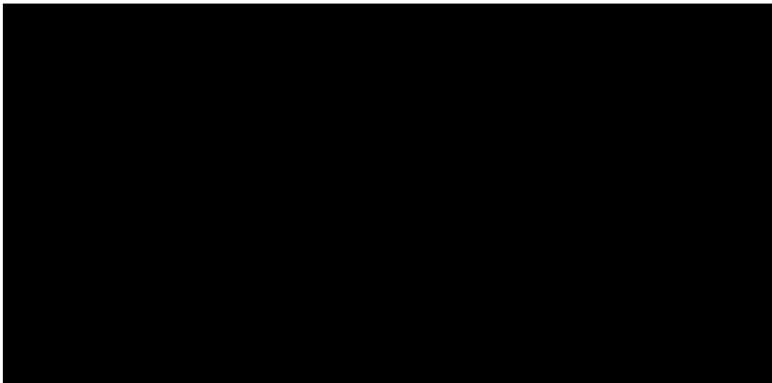
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YUGOSLAV INTELLECTUALS CHALLENGE THE REGIME

An important segment of Yugoslavia's intelligentsia is apparently determined to establish its right to question the most sacred tenets of the Tito regime's socialist system. The regime, although it now advocates public debate of many of its policies, is attempting to keep the intellectuals within what it considers acceptable limits of criticism. The dissident intellectuals show no signs of flagging, however, and the regime is hampered in its efforts to deal with them by the very system which the intellectuals wish to see further liberalized. Tito has renounced, for example, the more odious features of the police state as part of his effort to create a more open society in which the Yugoslav public increasingly participates in the affairs of its government. Rather than reverse its program, the regime is likely to give in gradually to the intellectuals' demands--at least for as long as Tito remains in command.

Background

The regime has publicly branded the current activities of Yugoslavia's restive intellectuals as a resurgence of "Djilasism." This term derives from Belgrade's most celebrated modern-day heretic, Milovan Djilas, who first criticized inequities in the Yugoslav system, next questioned its basic tenets, and finally defected intellectually from Yugoslav Communism to social democracy. When he began this process, he was second only to Tito in the party; he now is Yugoslavia's star prisoner.

Djilas had no direct impact on Yugoslav political life at the time of his disgrace in 1954. His political demise was not mourned by the party or public, among whom he enjoyed little understanding or following.

In fact, however, many of the radical changes Djilas pro-

posed in the early days of his opposition are today orthodox policies of the Tito regime. Perhaps in part because of his unproclaimed but privately recognized success, there are in Yugoslavia today a number of intellectuals who are traveling the same road of intellectual defection from Communism that Djilas pioneered.

This time, however, the regime is finding it much more difficult to cope with the movement. Critics of the regime appear to enjoy an important measure of public support. Many of them are not party members and therefore are not subject to the party discipline which could be an effective nonjuridical weapon. They are also operating in a political environment considerably different from that in which Djilas found himself.

The regime, in its new constitution, has committed itself,

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for example, to economic and political mechanisms which permit broad popular participation in and criticism of policymaking. It is thus only a short and logical step in the minds of the intellectuals to pass from criticizing pending policies to questioning basic tenets of the regime.

As part of its effort to create a conducive climate even for acceptable criticism, the regime has generally refrained from such practices as direct censorship and night arrests. Rather than alter its own policies in order to cope with the dissident intellectuals, it has first tried persuasion and then, in what it has regarded as acute challenges, turned to the judicial mechanism. In such cases the intellectuals, however, have been able to use their trials to gain publicity and to expose certain aspects of the Yugoslav system to ridicule.

The Beginning of the Conflict

The first incident in the regime's new encounter with "Djilasism" occurred in 1962, when Tito attempted to impose his own personal tastes on artists and particularly journalists. Concerned about the quantity and easy salability of nonpolitical, sensationalist publications, he scathingly denounced the contemporary cultural scene in Yugoslavia and charged that the markets were being flooded with "trashy literature" and "degenerate art." Although very little action followed this blast, the

intelligentsia took strong objection to its broader implications, and Tito felt compelled to reassure them that there would be no campaign to obtain uniformity in cultural affairs.

A year later, however, the government did ban a film, Grad, and a novel, Canga, the former for depreciating Yugoslavia's revolution and the latter for disparaging the party's youth. These actions aroused a general uproar among intellectual groups. One writer even bitterly challenged the right of the courts to pass judgment on literary efforts. The regime showed its concern over the heat of the controversy by trotting out two politburo members to rebut the intellectuals.

In 1964, the intellectuals took direct aim at the regime itself. The Slovenian literary magazine, Perspektive, became the first publication to criticize the regime openly on such sensitive issues as agricultural policy, the one-party system, the effectiveness of self-management of enterprises, the conformity of the press, the affluence of the party hierarchy, and other "failures" of the Yugoslav system.

The leadership again brought out its top officials in an effort to persuade Perspektive to alter its editorial policies. The journal's editorial board would not relent, however, and amid much disagreement among regime leaders on how to handle the affair, the magazine was suppressed in May of last year.

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This suppression failed to quiet the controversy. Many of the contributors to the magazine continued to fling vindictive charges at Belgrade. There was considerable public support for resuming publication of the magazine not only in Slovenia, but from surrounding republics as well. When two contributing writers were finally arrested for continuing to defy court orders, a strong protest against the state's action was signed by many of Slovenia's most prominent intellectuals. The Perspektive contributors' final effort consisted of embodying their criticisms in a play, Hotbed, which the government banned after one performance.

The Mihajlov Affair

The most widely publicized incident in this mounting conflict came early this year when the regime called to task Mihajlo Mihajlov, a 31-year-old assistant lecturer of Zagreb University's staff in Zadar. In recounting a summer trip to Moscow, Mihajlov incurred the wrath of both the Yugoslav and the Soviet hierarchies by stating in published articles that the first concentration camps to practice genocide were not Hitler's but Stalin's. His cynical allusions to Lenin and charges that rehabilitation of many of Stalin's victims had not been carried out occasioned unofficial Soviet protests in Belgrade.

Probably the feature most objectionable to Moscow and Belgrade, however, was Mihajlov's forecast of a new wave of popu-

EXCERPT FROM PERSPEKTIVE'S "DUMA 1964"

I was walking over our country and got an ulcer in the stomach
country of simpered and their pimpled admirers
country of myth servers and pedagogy
o robust Slovenians, the subject of history with a
cold in its head.

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lar revolution in the USSR, led by certain members of the intellectual elite. The implication was clear that the present Soviet leadership would be bypassed.

Mihajlov's articles would hardly have caused a stir in Yugoslavia had they been written prior to the present Moscow-Belgrade rapprochement. Tito and other Yugoslav leaders dealt just as harshly with Stalinism after Yugoslavia's expulsion from the bloc in 1948. In 1965, however, Belgrade was obliged to take action against Mihajlov--if only to live up to a tacit

MIHAJLOV ON STALINISM

In the Soviet Union there exists an ambiguous attitude toward both Stalinism and the fighters against Stalinism. On the one hand, Stalinism is being condemned and proclaimed as unpatriotic and criminal, while, on the other hand, the anti-Stalinists are being condemned in the same way. Sooner or later this abnormal situation must be resolved, and since the anti-Stalinist forces are today engaging in a strong offensive, this problem will soon be placed on the agenda.

TITO ON STALINISM (1962)

Millions of Soviet citizens languish in death and forced-labor camps. Millions of people belonging to the non-Russian nations are deprived of their rights, are being resettled in the Siberian taigas and there annihilated.

Things practiced by the Russian nation have brought about horrible consequences for the non-Russian nations. Some of them today are completely erased from the surface of the earth in a most cruel way, a way which would be envied even by Hitler himself.

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Moscow-Belgrade agreement to desist from direct public criticisms of one another.

More important, Mihajlov's articles were by implication an attack on all variants of Communism--Yugoslavia's included. He wrote, for example, that there has been no move in Yugoslavia to rehabilitate Milan Gorkic, Tito's predecessor as party chief who was purged by Stalin in 1937. He also noted that there has been no restitution for the many political killings and jailings that took place in Yugoslavia in the name of the revolution during and immediately following World War II.

Tito recognized these implications and personally committed his prestige in the Mihajlov affair. At a conference of Yugoslavia's state prosecutors, Tito gave his own views on the affair, directly associating the young author with the emergence of "new forms of Djilasism," and suggesting that he should be arrested and tried for slander. This led directly to Mihajlov's arrest.

The Regime's Weak Case

Tito probably blundered in making an issue of the Mihajlov affair. Throughout the two-day trial, Mihajlov remained uncowed and adamant, proclaiming in the tradition of Djilas that he would continue to write as before, even in prison. His defense--that he had written only truth--won him much open support during the trial, to the surprise and chagrin of state officials. The state paid grudging respect both to the defense and the public

support by not contesting the truth of Mihajlov's arguments, ruling rather that he was guilty because the articles were critical of the Soviet Union.

The regime was also embarrassed by the coverage of the case in the Western press, which was unanimously condemnatory. Especially sharp criticism was leveled by foreign members of the international PEN club--a world organization of writers, which is scheduled to meet in Yugoslavia in July. Some Italian members have threatened to boycott the meeting in protest of the arrest of Mihajlov. A local chapter in Zagreb even had to take a vote before deciding to abide by the decision of the state to bring Mihajlov to trial.

The Yugoslav leadership attempted to counter the criticisms by holding the trial in public and by assessing a relatively light, nine-month prison term. As he had promised, the unrepentant Mihajlov promptly appealed and now is free pending a higher court's ruling.

Praxis

Official action against Perspektive and Mihajlov has failed to act as a brake on the restive intellectuals. A new journal, Praxis, which appeared soon after Perspektive's demise, has yet again aroused the ire of the leadership. Published by a group of Zagreb philosophers, Praxis professes its support for Marxism but has set itself the task of "humanizing" the creed.

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Socialism has erred, its contributors say, by emphasizing society as a whole at the expense of the individual. Their prescription for the future is the establishment of an intellectual elite, whose role it would be to criticize existing ideas and create new ones "through a frank and open dialogue" with politicians. The contributors emphasize that they want only to restore the individual's civil rights that have been lost in the practice of Marxism.

Differences among Yugoslav officials on how to deal with the journal apparently cropped up at the party's eighth congress last December. Although party secretary Veljko Vlahovic pleaded for a "much greater clash of ideas in the future," Vice President Rankovic spoke of settling accounts with "self-styled champions of freedom."

As the journal's criticism has become sharper, however, the regime has stiffened its stand. Tito's criticism of Mihajlov in February, for example, was considered to be aimed equally at Praxis. A rising star in the Croatian party, Mika Tripalo, subsequently stated that the opinions expressed in the journal are "diametrically opposed" to the party line. Kommunist, the party's weekly, has called contributors to Praxis "unscientific, un-Marxist, polemical, and unacceptable."

Far from lying low, the Praxis group has continued to push

PRAXIS ON MARXISM

Marx's dictum about the necessity for "radical and unrelenting" criticism applies to socialist as well as capitalist societies, and the goals of Communism cannot be realized if this criticism is not permitted.

The future of socialist society lies in the withering away of the party, not the establishment of a multi-party system. Nevertheless, Marxist theorists have underestimated the advantages of a choice between parties, and theoretical discussion of these advantages should not be forbidden.

By making a fetish of Materialism, Yugoslav Communism has resurrected many of the evils of capitalism. Since socialism has not been notably successful in the economic field, it should shift its emphasis from production to human relations.

It appears that socialism to date has fallen short in realizing personal civil rights—for example, the right to assembly, to expression of opinions, to social criticism.

its "humanist heresy," and the journal remains a leading candidate for eventual suppression. The May-June issue has appeared with a strong counterattack against two of the country's leading newspapers, Borba and Vjesnik. Praxis accused Borba of forging letters to the editor which were critical of Praxis--pointing out that their authors could not be found in any official directory of addresses. A Praxis writer accused Vjesnik of creating an atmosphere of distrust and intolerance around the magazine.

Conclusions

The conflict has placed the regime in a delicate position, with the intellectuals showing

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no signs of weakening. They have benefited from the regime's reluctance to use suppression except as a last resort and have exploited the leadership's indecision over ways to quell the rising tide of criticism. The Yugoslav leaders realize that any attempt to push controls would place them in the awkward position of having to renege on their own internal policies.

In the long run, the enthusiasm and vigor characteristic of the intellectual challenge to the regime, aided by the tendencies toward change in

Yugoslavia, will make the problem of control increasingly difficult.

As long as Tito remains in command, the regime most likely will gradually permit a freer atmosphere for intellectual debate, attempting at the same time to keep criticism within bounds so as not to endanger the stability of the socialist system. As the intellectuals gain popularity, the regime probably will be compelled to adopt some of their constructive ideas, which will further stimulate the process of change. [REDACTED]

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