

The Conversion from Stalinism to 'Titoism': Its Impact on the Yugoslav Communist Militants*

by

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In the Communist party, as in religion, if there is a difference of opinion between two men they sever all relationships.

M. Djilas

Stalin lost the battle not on the day he died but much earlier. Sometime in the autumn of 1949 I had firmly come to the conclusion: God has disappeared and I have no more gods.

V. Dedijer

Introduction

The Soviet-Yugoslav dispute of 1948-1955 remains synonymous with the worst political and ideological crisis experienced by the Yugoslav Communists since their seizure of power. While the real causes of the conflicts may still be a matter of controversy or mystery, its outbreak, course and consequences are already in the realm of incontrovertibly established historical record.¹ It is well known that the Soviet and Cominform allegations undermined the ideological basis of "legitimacy" of the revolutionary regime in Yugoslavia. These charges impelled the Yugoslav Communist leadership into both improvising an ideological self-defense and reappraising all their policies. As a result, a wholesale reorientation of Yugoslavia's foreign policy and a redirection of domestic policies were witnessed. Such radical policy changes were, of necessity, accompanied and buttressed by appropriate political rationalizations and ideological justifications. Gradually and cumulatively these Marxist-Leninist 'apologetics' amounted to a comprehensive qualitative transformation of the official Yugoslav Communist ideology. Thus dynamic ideological changes spelled both an eclipse of Stalinism and the rise of what became known in the West as "Titoism" or "national Communism."²

The ideological issues that were at stake in this unprecedented dispute were exhaustively explored and analyzed from a great variety of viewpoints in the East, West and also in Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, this torrential academic, publicist and journalistic output notwithstanding, little attention was paid to the traumatic impact that this ideological crisis had on the Yugoslav Communists. Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to fill this gap by attempting to reconstruct the collective experience of the Yugoslav Communist believers caught in that ideological storm.

*This is an abbreviated version of the paper presented at the XIIth World Congress of the International Political Science Association, Rio de Janeiro August 12, 1982.

Monitoring intimate, complex, divided or fluctuating loyalties is at any time a formidable task. In this particular case, any attempt was, until recently, absolutely impossible because of the protracted paucity and inaccessibility of any reliable or verifiable data. Namely, apart from the terse and laconic official Yugoslav statements and the revelations volunteered by the Yugoslav Communist leaders, very little was known either of the spontaneous or forced conversions of most of the party cadres. Furthermore, for decades, almost nothing was publicly said about the treatment meted out to real or suspected Stalinists as the collective predicament of the 'Cominformists' was a taboo in Titoist Yugoslavia.³

In view of the proliferation of crises of the established Communist ideologies in the contemporary polycentric Marxist-Leninist world, even this fragmentary account of the Yugoslav precedent might, at least partially, advance the understanding of the Titoist case and aid the comprehension of the impact that such generically similar crisis had on Albanian, Chinese and Cambodian Communist militants.

Historical Setting

To fathom the impact of the crisis, it is necessary to recall that in 1948 Yugoslav Communists were widely recognized for their Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy and mimetic ideological rectitude typical of the monolithic Stalinist era. Yugoslav Communists were considered Stalin's best disciples and Yugoslavia was viewed as the enthusiastic and militant "Satellite Number One of the Soviet Union."⁴ This voluntary self-identification with the USSR and Stalin was a natural by-product of the fact that the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) had been during its entire prerevolutionary history, and especially so under Tito, emotionally, ideologically, organizationally and financially totally dependent on the Comintern, CPSU(b), USSR and Stalin. These Soviet institutions and Stalin were the final arbiters in all CPY matters.⁵

For a summary illustration of the Stalinist record of future Titoists, a few samples of their ideologically induced mentality must suffice. As the "bolshévisation" of the "national" sections of the Comintern was measured by fidelity to the USSR, the CPY gradually developed an unquestioning allegiance to this alien authority.⁶ The resulting constant primacy of the "internationalist" obligations of the party was regularly coupled with a sacrifice of Yugoslav national interests. In a land whose long history is identified with a passion for independence, this fact alone was sufficient to qualify the CPY as an alien movement. Even as internationally recognized rulers of a sovereign state, the CPY leaders not only obeyed Soviet instructions, but also requested Soviet advice "which would direct the internal and foreign policy of Yugoslavia along the right path."⁷ In 1945 Kardelj, then Tito's heir-presumptive, asked the Soviet ambassador not to regard him as a "representative of another country, capable of solving questions independently" but as the representative of one of the future Soviet republics.⁸ Such attitudes of leading Titoists attest that the

principal task of instilling and fostering love for the USSR had been accomplished. Thus a fanatical loyalty to the 'land of socialism' and faith in the Soviet Union and its leadership was developed. The gravitational pull on this supra-national allegiance apparently was irresistible.⁹ All matters were judged by a Soviet yardstick and both party members and leaders were unable to emerge from the emotional orbit in which the CPY rotated. The palpable consequences of this belief were such that eventually even very prominent members of the Central Committee came to the conclusion that Yugoslav Communists had been 'automatons' conditioned to become 'blind tools' of the USSR.¹⁰

Love for the USSR was always the main test of leadership with the CPY. The most ardent, fullest love was institutionally linked to the leader of the party. In the struggle for party power, all contestants vied with each other to prove that theirs was the greatest love of the USSR. In 1948, when openly criticized by the leader of the more obsequious pro-Soviet fraction of the CPY, Tito repudiated his rival's arguments by labelling them intolerable encroachments upon the Secretary General's monopoly of matchless love for the USSR: "You have usurped the right to love the Soviet Union more than I do."¹¹

The CPY's vital pre-revolutionary task was also to make the USSR popular in Yugoslavia. Thus, pro-Soviet agitation and propaganda was the 'bulk' of party activity, commanding most of the CPY funds. The Party also resolutely counteracted the activity of all elements customarily accused by the Communists of slandering the Soviet Union. It was largely this campaign of deception and fraud that earned the Yugoslav Stalinist the disrepute of both mercenaries and ideologically motivated fifth columnists.¹²

From 1919 onward the CPY had the 'internationalist' duty of defending and rendering every possible assistance to the USSR. The international fortress and the 'homeland' of all proletarians was to be defended from capitalist attacks by all means at the disposal of the CPY. Thus Yugoslav Partisans began to resist, more than two months after the Axis invasion and occupation of Yugoslavia, only upon the receipt of Comintern directives requesting the organization of a movement for the protection of the USSR.¹³

This sampling of the Stalinist outlook of Yugoslav Communists would remain totally unrepresentative unless at least one example of the CPY's adoration of Josif Vissarionovich Stalin is cited. Excerpts from an article faithfully convey the official image of the supra-national party deity:

Without Stalin the sun would not shine so brightly . . . Stalin is the bitterest opponent of everything inhuman . . . Stalin is the most wise and the most careful cultivator of everything that is most noble and refined in man. Man is for him the most precious of treasures . . .

Stalin is the only statesman that has a clear conscience and an unselfish heart . . .

Stalin knows and sees everything, nothing human is unknown to him . . .

He is the greatest strategist of all times . . . Through their love for Stalin, the little and the humble become great, eternal, part of immortal Stalin . . . Our love for the Soviet Union is inextinguishable, as it has become through blood and fire, our life, our soul, our future, our survival, our daily bread! This love of ours is immortal as it is inspired by the spirit of the great Stalin . . . Is there any greater honour and happiness than the feeling that your closest and dearest comrade is Stalin? . . .

Stalin is the most beloved face in our villages and cities . . . With his name on their lips our heroes are dying . . . In Stalin lives everything that is great, noble and freedom loving in mankind . . . Stalin is the incarnated Marxism-Leninism . . . Stalin can see future events in centuries to come . . . there are no puzzles for Stalin in this world . . . Stalin represents a whole epoch, the most decisive one in the whole history . . . Stalin is Lenin of today. It is our pride to live in Stalin's era, to fight under his leadership and thus become part of an entity that is immortal. The future human, no matter at what he may look, will see Lenin and Stalin in everything in this world . . .¹⁴

From 1937 to 1945 the CPY had instilled in its Stalinist cadres an indomitable lust for power, a ruthless clarity of revolutionary purpose and an extremist quasi-terrorist determination to implement it. This process advanced concurrently with self-identification and infatuation with the USSR and Stalin. Yugoslav Communist *esprit de corps* of the period was so extraordinary that party enemies called it "fanatical." This fanaticism of the party militants was widely recognized. Aware of their reputation and their faith in the USSR and himself, Stalin referred to them as "honest fools."¹⁵

The Communist party of Yugoslavia was not inspired by a native revolutionary doctrine, nor motivated solely by a national political program. Instead, its ideological foundations were provided by the supra-national Marxist-Leninist theory as interpreted by the Comintern and Stalin.¹⁶ Stalin exercised this ideological authority in a way reminiscent of pontifical *ex cathedra* pronouncements 'Rome has spoken, the case is settled.'

The Crisis

Under the circumstances, no imagination and little empathy were required to anticipate and fathom the mood and reaction of the Yugoslav Stalinists once they had been informed of the Cominform's position and the masterly indictment of the CPY leadership. It took months before the stunning news filtered from the apex of the party pyramid downwards through all the intermediate levels of the structure and hit the cells at the base. A gamut of emotions was witnessed. After scanning Stalin's severely critical opening lines, Tito felt as if a thunderbolt had struck him.¹⁷ So did thousands of his followers. Hav-

ing lived for so many years in a “special psychological state—more than mere faith, closely approaching exaltation,” this unexpected breakdown in Soviet-Yugoslav Communist relations created an unprecedented situation. “Thus far [1969] no pen had yet described the inner turmoil and strain,” the shock, astonishment, terror, dismay, panic, bewilderment, bitterness, anxiety and uncertainty that gripped the minds of the Communist militants. What they experienced in those days resembled the ‘elements of Greek tragedies.’¹⁸

The resolution of the Information Bureau concerning the situation in the Communist party of Yugoslavia declared *urbi et orbi* that the Central Committee of the CPY “has placed itself and the Yugoslav party outside the family of the fraternal Communist parties, outside the united Communist front and consequently outside the ranks of the Information Bureau.”¹⁹ The IB, furthermore, revealed its conviction that inside the CPY there were “sufficient healthy elements” still loyal to Marxism-Leninism. These “healthy elements” were publicly assigned the task “to compel their present leaders to recognize their mistakes openly and honestly and to rectify them.”²⁰ Should the leaders prove themselves incapable of doing this, ‘the job’ of the healthy elements was “to replace them and to advance a new internationalist leadership of the party.”²¹

To this challenge Tito and his closest associates responded resolutely as it was easy to choose when no other choice was left to them. Tito, a compulsive party power-seeker showed almost instantly that he was also a compulsive party power-holder. He and his closest entourage knew that they had gone beyond the point of no return and acted as dead men on furlough who had nothing to lose and a whole world to gain. For the leading Titoists the year 1948 meant, “to be, or not to be.” The issue for them was “us or them,” a faithful replica of Lenin’s “who whom.”²² Well imbued with Stalin’s dictum that “cadres decide everything,” the top priority Titoist secret response was to undertake everything necessary, at any cost, to neutralize and prevent any initiative of the “healthy elements.”²³

The Response

Openly and publicly, the leading Titoists were also at the height of the desperate situation and performed masterfully under unprecedented stress. They knew only too well that Yugoslav Communists were creatures of the Stalinist world which dictated their thoughts and behaviour in accordance with the degree of their ‘stalinisation.’ As all these militants were “infected by the bacillus of dogmatism” or even “obsessed by dogma,” and as they lived in ‘a kind of mental climate’ where it was ‘difficult to pass rational judgments,’ special shock absorbers were improvised.²⁴ Accordingly, the defenestration and excommunication were at first treated lightly as an incomprehensible misunderstanding between the Soviet and Yugoslav Communist leaders. In order to secure a semblance of domestic ‘legitimacy’ of the Titoist regime, a party congress, the first in twenty years, was hastily summoned. It was ‘packed’ as selected delegates were all certified

Titoist 'yes men.' Adulation of the USSR and adoration of Stalin were tolerated in the customary form. Thus monolithic unity was outwardly preserved and a reshuffled Titoist leadership 'elected' almost unanimously. The twin allegiance to Stalin and Tito were still deliberately stressed to be compatible in order to facilitate the planned conversion to Titoism. It was not by accident that Tito himself concluded the Congress with "Long live Comrade Stalin."²⁵ Asked "about the gradual way" in which the party militants and the people were told about the causes and issues involved in the dispute, Tito explained:

It had to be that way. It was not a case of genuflecting before authority, but because of our (party) masses. We had to move very cautiously, because of Stalin's uncontested authority. If we had been too sudden about it, we would have cut ourselves from the masses. If we had been too slow, the Soviets would have crushed us. We could not afford bitterness. We had to let time and Soviet behaviour work for us until the masses would themselves say: Down with Stalin!

As the Soviet Communists always tell the truth whenever it is in their interest to do so, they destroyed by a diabolically effective blend of facts, sarcasm, cynicism and invective, some of the most cherished and sacro-sanct Yugoslav Partisan myths. Thus the anathema and the excommunication eventually led to a wholesale emotional 're-evaluation of all values' through agonizing reappraisals of all the points of the internationalized indictment. This 'soul-searching' also spelled the end of the Stalinist monolithic unity of thought and action within the CPY. Many Yugoslav Communists, who were led to believe uncritically their own agitprop's fantasies, felt deeply hurt. Humiliated and insulted, they began to reciprocate, often out of genuine indignation which steadily grew in proportion to the magnitude of the real or imaginary Soviet provocation.

Convinced that the first shock had been withstood and sensing this scattered, spontaneous anti-Stalinist reaction of some militants, the official assessment of the Soviet action was radically changed. Instead of feigning injured innocence and mere repudiation of 'slanders' or explanations of the conflict in terms of mistaken decisions made without Stalin's concurrence, the Titoist leadership placed before every Yugoslav Communist the unavoidable dilemma of loyalty and commitment. The dilemma of with whom to side was later depicted as "the conflict between two concepts of duty: one to Moscow, capital of the first successful socialist revolution, and the other to one's own socialist revolution."²⁷

The Internal Struggle

In the meantime, the pro-Soviet elements had rallied and intensified their undermining activities. Yugoslav Stalinists, in their capacity as Soviet agents, had infiltrated key positions in the Yugoslav army, security forces, party and major ministries. "Atmosphere was tense and poisoned by conspiratorial moods," Stalinists were found every-

where while the "threatening pro-Soviet propaganda addled the brains of many."²⁸ Despite the fact that the outspoken and most militant Stalinists had been arrested, the Cominformists seemed to be multiplying, especially in party committees and among the army officers.²⁹ At this point, a showdown was staged by the Titoists and all protestations of loyalty to the Soviet Union and vows of fidelity to Stalin were once and for all prohibited. Instead, mandatory loyalty tests were introduced.

Tito and his leading acolytes possessed an insatiable 'will to power' and an unconquerable wish to survive as leaders of the party and rulers of Yugoslavia. Nonetheless, they were painfully aware that their authority over the militants was based on Soviet fiat and Stalin's continued approval. Excommunicated by Stalin, they had no doubt that a thorough 'destalinization' of the party cadres was a *condition sine qua non* for their survival. Taught by their Stalinist experience, they also knew that to achieve their common purpose they had to keep the cadres under strict physical and 'thought' control until sincere or forced conversion to 'Titoism' or 'national Communism' became possible. To engineer this realignment and transfer of allegiance from Stalin and the USSR to Tito and Yugoslavia, an elaborate plan was effected.

The first phase of this project required a comprehensive loyalty re-examination of the CPY's followers. As ideological X-rays and Orwellian 'telescreens' were non-existent, the Titoists used greatly improved and modernized conventional methods. The CPY kept comprehensive confidential files on its followers and a thorough reassessment and almost daily updating of these records was ordered. The key item in each file was the summary, called 'karakteristika,' the official secret rating of political reliability and personal conduct. Maintaining these fidelity charts involved all party members as potential suspects, informers and investigators.

The burden of proof of the fidelity was placed on the individual but one's standing depended on consolidated reports, corroborated by observations of several independent informers. These informers exerted utmost vigilance in their constant supervision of comrades under scrutiny. For 'unmasking' Stalinists, knowledge of personal background, character, virtues, weaknesses, habits, vices, trespassings, and inclinations of each member was required. Thus a host of fervent private detectives and secret policemen began to work feverishly for the Titoist prosecutors. A veritable pandemonium reigned supreme in the CPY.

Short of direct Soviet military intervention and invasion, all party members were totally at the mercy of the Titoist authority. To gain time and avoid prosecution, many militants did all they could to conceal their obdurate Stalinist allegiance. Even those already flirting with Titoism had to make sustained efforts to avoid suspicion of being Stalinists. Both Stalinists and Titoists in the offing thus did all they could to embellish their 'karakteristika' and enhance their safety and

career. This non-stop witch-hunt prompted a multitude of pathetic declarations of fidelity and loyalty oaths, genuine and hypocritical.³⁰ Proving one's innocence became a full-time occupation and often a *probatio diabolica*.

In these probes of loyalty, the Titoists were concerned only with power-politics. They wished to know where individual members stood in the raging struggle for power. This was, under the circumstances, easier said than done. The head of the secret police conceded this, with great distress, "The worst thing is that you don't know who your enemy is! Yesterday's friend becomes today's enemy—the enemy is in one's own house."³¹ Accordingly, the Titoists sought to identify and isolate militants who were inveterate Stalinists. Among these, individuals or factions that had had the temerity to oppose Tito's rise to power became primary targets of the secret police. The potentially 'convertible' Stalinists and the conformist Titoists in the offing were welcomed. The most reliable 'declared' Titoists took control of the party replacing the proscribed and suspect incumbents.

However, this intended "process of liberation from Stalin as a god did not proceed evenly, equally and simultaneously for all."³² Different initial motivations, experiences, personalities and characters resulted in a wide range of differentiation.

As Marxism-Leninism had universal appeal and represented all things to those who embraced it, the Yugoslav congregation of this secular creed included a variety of personality types. The CPY attracted impatient radicals, naive romantics, idealists and others having a hostile view of the pre-revolutionary status quo. To many, the CPY offered the inspiration usually furnished by fanatical religious sects. Others joined for reasons best understood by psychiatrists. Still others were prompted by the hope, or belief, that they were joining the party of the future. All of them joined in a search for gratification and fulfillment they could not obtain under the established social order. Nevertheless, the desire for power, and the passion to exercise authority, appears to have been the basic motivation for affiliation.³³

Battered by relentless ideological sermons and excoriations, this Communist body politic was now goaded into predictably different but typical responses. The ranks of professional revolutionaries were saturated with ideologically indifferent careerists and opportunists. Few among them expected Tito to survive the fall from Stalin's grace and acted accordingly, but surreptitiously. Militants sincerely animated by Marxism-Leninism differed in their reactions. The most exuberant, young and pure in heart who followed their beliefs, because they did not have time to learn better, often failed to conceal their true sentiments and refused to abjure Stalin. Others sided firmly with Stalin, paid lip service to Tito and remained in the party as political and ideological saboteurs. Some, already dissatisfied for a variety of reasons even before the anathema, were now willing to side with Stalin.³⁴ Many were paralyzed in the abulic pose of Buridan's Ass.³⁵

Numerous 'realists' recognized the uncertainty of their situation and believed that opting for Stalin, the likely victor, would be politic but temporized hoping to toe the Titoist party line until the situation had crystalized. These members eventually were to join the band wagon in the *viva chi vince* fashion. Ultimately, they formed the majority in the Titoist faction. Thousands of ideologically indifferent and phlegmatic peasants who were sucked into the party as revolutionary flotsam and jetsam remained obedient to anyone in authority. Nevertheless, many sincere Stalinists, disenchanted with the post-revolutionary socialist reality in Yugoslavia hoped to find, in Titoism, what they could not find in Stalinism. They wished for a reborn, fortified and purified party and hoped for an ideological and ethical revival through Titoism. Others, in personal political predicaments, docilely bowed before the Titoist absolute power. Still others managed to change sides repeatedly. Some began to doubt both the Stalinist and the Titoist causes. At the same time, "many honest fools . . . were coming to their senses" by becoming enthusiastic Titoists.³⁶

Stalinists Strike Back

In the meantime the 'healthy elements' began rallying. "Stalin was still counting on his fifth column in Yugoslavia and on the Yugoslav Communist 'honest fools' mentality."³⁷ If the year 1948 was bad, 1949 seemed infinitely worse. Everything in the country seemed to be at boiling point. "The longer the battle with Stalin lasted and more excited and emotional both sides became. This pure 'emotionalism' recalled the atmosphere of religious conflicts from the Reformation period."³⁸ "A terrible nightmare oppressed all of us (Titoists): was it possible to fight Stalinism, not with Stalinist, but with other means?"³⁹ Apparently it was not. Despite his earlier assertion that the Yugoslav revolution was not devouring its children, Tito embarked on the most ruthless wholesale 'destalinization' of the same cadres that he himself had stalinized. The conversions to Titoism were carried out from above, by a variety of manipulative Stalinist methods including 'administrative' persuasion, intimidation, expulsions, purges, incarceration, concentration camps and torture. As a result, it will never be reliably established to what extent the conversions to Titoism represented a genuine change of sentiment. Was it for the majority of converts a conformist expediency to avoid the fate of the Stalinists? Therefore, many of the seemingly orthodox Titoists must, in fact, be the Communist replicas of the Moriscos and Marranos coerced by the Spanish inquisition.

The Tactics of De-Stalinization

A notoriously unscrupulous and ruthless Stalinist professional revolutionary, Tito, was compelled to become an anti-Stalinist crusader. Faced with disunity and growing disloyalty in the party, Tito felt that his anti-Stalinist cause could be salvaged solely in a Stalinist fashion. As the mass support he needed was not forthcoming, he decided to cut through his Gordian knot by reducing the strength of

the Stalinist opposition in the party and by increasing the number of his followers. A veteran archpurger, Tito embarked upon a cleansing and 'packing' operation of unmatched magnitude. According to Cominformist data, between 1948 and 1952, Tito expelled from the party some 200,000 Communists of whom 30,000 were imprisoned with lengthy prison sentences and several thousand were killed. Among the imprisoned there were 5,000 officers cumulatively sentenced to more than 50,000 years imprisonment.⁴⁰

The expellees represented 50% of the total strength of the CPY and 75% of the leading cadres.⁴¹ Thus, the Cominformists allege, the true Marxist-Leninist CPY was liquidated. From its remnants the so-called Communist League of Yugoslavia was formed. Its principal aim was to secure personal power for Tito and his clique by means of ruthless counter-revolutionary terror and suppression of Yugoslav Communists with an internationalist outlook. As in Yugoslavia "the expulsion from the party was the equivalent of the death penalty in a military organization,"⁴² little need be said about the lasting impact that this ideological reorientation of Tito's leadership had on the life of so many tens of thousand of Communist militants.

To keep in check the Stalinists that had, or might have, remained in the party despite the purge, Tito opened wide its gates to replenish the vacuum created by the expulsions. According to Cominformists, this replacement contingent consisted of motley bourgeois, kulak, de-classe bureaucratic and lumpenproletarian elements. Many of these had incontrovertible records of reactionary, anti-Communist and counter-revolutionary activity. These 'unprincipled careerists' joined the privileged Communist 'new class' with alacrity and immediately began self-seekingly to work on the improvement of their collective and individual lots. Abjectly docile, these instant Titoists, in gratitude for their miraculously improved new status, were only too willing to sing Tito's praises. Supported by this packed and rigged congregation, Tito remained, in power for life, outside all control and effective criticism by the party 'masses.'⁴³ By purging the bulk of the CPY's 'heroic' revolutionary generation, Tito radically altered the socio-economic, socio-political and ideological profile of the party. The effect of this transformation was felt for decades by all Yugoslav Communists.

The Victims

However, by far the most traumatic effect that the crisis inflicted on the party followers was caused by the absolutely unprecedented victimization reserved for the arrested and imprisoned Communist opposition. The issue is now eponymically associated with the location in which most of the worst excesses occurred: the concentration camps on the Naked Island. A miniature replica of Stalin's Siberian camps, Tito's Gulag was euphemistically known as a correction centre for 'socially beneficial work.'⁴⁴ It was established at the end of 1948 when Tito decided to "house" Cominformists on an island precluding es-

capas. The camp was run by secret policemen trained in the USSR immediately after the war. The worst Stalinist sinners were shipped off first, in great haste and without any technical and engineering preparations, to build the camp themselves and to welcome its steadily growing population.⁴⁵

Evil and shame—evil beyond compare, unending shame—is what lay in store for the prisoners in the camp. Never mind the foul food, the mindless and exhausting labour in the quarry, the prisoners were subjected to torture, the cruelty of which was matched by its perversity. The security officers were given the task of reeducating the prisoners . . . The secret police recruited teams from the ranks of the penitent and organized them into ‘self-managing units’—that is exactly what they were called. These units then took over the task of reeducation, through violence.⁴⁶

The quality of the Yugoslav Communist violence and the standards of Titoist terror have always commanded the kind of negative respect usually reserved for the perpetrators of ‘perfect crimes.’ The concentration camps were *hors catégorie, sui generis* establishments. Their administrative apparatus of coercion and record of bestiality defy normal imagination. Even the head of the UDBA rated the methods of the Titoist secret police worse than Stalin’s. Other prominent Titoists also paid similar compliments: as to the treatment of heretics “one might contend that Stalin was less cruel. He just shot them. Our system slowly deprives them of life. It is like Orwell’s *1984*, but worse.”⁴⁷ Accordingly, corrective methods devised and applied by the Titoist UDBA were “possibly the most diabolical in history.”⁴⁸ The impact of the compulsory ideological reeducation and enforced conversions was unmistakable: “very few, if any, returned from the Naked Island unscathed. Not so much physically, perhaps, as psychologically and intellectually. Many were bitter, depressed, shattered. Even wise and well-intended ideological reeducation—let alone the forced methods of Goli Otok—leads inevitably to aberration and tragedy . . .”⁴⁹

Monitoring the impact that the crisis of established Stalinism had on the Yugoslav militants, one would expect the issues at stake in the accompanying ideological disputation to overpower the observer with an irresistible force. However, both paradoxically and understandably, this was not the case in the conversion to Titoism. The low ideological standards of the ‘heroic’ generation of Yugoslav Communists were often likened to the Achilles’ heel of the CPY. This deficiency was directly traceable to the appointment of Tito as the leader of the party as his appointment was the consummation of a crass anti-intellectual course inaugurated by the Comintern. Both Tito and his closest associates were incapable of intellectual domination of the CPY’s intelligentsia. The new atmosphere he created within the party was more than simply anti-intellectual: it was termed ‘barbarian’!⁵⁰ Antagonized by Tito from the outset, the party intelligentsia felt his leadership would cause a ‘return to the pre-literate age in CPY history.’ From the ensuing clash of *illiterati versus illuminati* Tito emerged victorious

only after he had purged, expelled or liquidated most of the Communist intelligentsia.

As a result, the Yugoslav cadres never developed their ideological muscles and only a smattering of Marxist-Leninist theory was hammered into the heads of the militants by oversimplification and repetition. The overwhelming majority lacked even an elementary grasp of the popularly exposed theoretical concepts. In this matter the CPY appears to have closely resembled the two million Bolsheviks, who were said in 1923 to babble in the Marxist phraseology with the understanding of parrots emulating human speech. The ideological impact of the Soviet-Yugoslav dispute was restricted to the small high priesthood of the party. The laity was concerned solely with pedestrian issues of practical politics. Ordinary militants were not interested in, nor capable of 'Homoousian' hairsplitting.⁵¹

Titoism gave a new lease on ideological life to many of its Communist supporters. A fanatically militant minority of these still hoped to change the world and create heaven on earth, at least in Yugoslavia. But even the genuine Titoist enthusiasts and ideological cheer-leaderettes became disillusioned as they became aware of the growing discrepancy between their ideological dreams and the Yugoslav Titoist reality.

Having lost their hope-sustaining illusions, they managed to liberate themselves from their ideological fixed ideas:

The Revolution has lost its glitter. It promised too much. It gave the peasants the impression that every little village would have its university and the cows would have gold teeth. Now there is no more enthusiasm. And Tito, poor Tito, he leads the life of old John D. Rockefeller, friendless, lonely surrounded by toadies . . .

Poor Yugoslavia, it has suffered so much. Now after the Revolution that engulfed us all, it is resuming its traditional role—just another little Balkan police state that nobody really cares about.⁵²

Too many militants have gone through raptures, doubts and disenchantments of both Stalinism and Titoism. In the process, some have been totally transformed as the ideology has no more effect on their personal and political conduct. Many grew less fanatical, others are ideologically 'lobotomized'. This process of gradual sobering and maturing continues hand-in-hand with the withering away of the ideological myth.

Marxism-Leninism, in its Titoist version, might still be the opium of a diminishing number of Yugoslav Communists. However, the lasting impact that the conversion had on the Yugoslav Communist militants might have been best described by the words of the Communist Manifesto itself, written a century before the outbreak of the ideological crisis. "Ultimately, when stubborn historical facts had dis-

persed all the intoxicating effects of self-deception, this form of Socialism ended in a miserable fit of the blues.”

The transformation of the established Yugoslav Stalinist ideology into a Titoist official creed has affected an entire generation of Yugoslav Communists. The crisis left indelible mental scars on both the victors and the vanquished. As often in past religious wars, the conflict ended, or an armistice was reached, in the *cujus regio, ejus religio* fashion.

International Implications

The crisis caused by the dispute between the Cominform and the Titoists has subsided. But the crisis of the established Marxist-Leninist ideology in Yugoslavia continues as always and remains a permanent crisis. A quarrel between correligionists who still officially profess to share a common world outlook has not extirpated the coexisting Titoist and Stalinist loyalties. It has only brought about an end to the Communist unity of will and action thus weakening the New Class and its minority rule.⁵³ But the most important factor in this permanent crisis is the protracted inability of Yugoslav Communists, both Stalinists and Titoists to persuade the enormous majority of their compatriots to share their Marxist-Leninist cosmic views and freely endorse Titoist policies. This fundamental ideological and political split would be a formidable challenge to any democratic government, let alone a minority one that was democratic only in name.

The conversion was the first major Marxist-Leninist ideological crisis caused by a dispute between two states sharing the same official ideology. As such, it spelled the end of the ideologically prophesized hopes of international relations of a ‘new type.’ In the process of conversion, Titoist Communist inhumanity of man to man, destroyed all hopes of a reconstruction of human nature in accordance with the Marxist-Leninist ideological ideal. By making virtue out of necessity, the Titoists managed to extricate themselves from the voluntary servitude to the USSR, a subservience into which they themselves had forced Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia became the first state to be expelled from the Soviet bloc and become ‘non-aligned.’ The Titoists were the first Marxist-Leninists to establish and institutionalize their right to an independent interpretation of the ideological scriptures. A milestone in the history of the Communist movement, the conversion was the first crack in the wall of faith and still threatens the future of Yugoslavia and the Titoists.

Footnotes

1. At the outset, the dispute was between the CPSU and CPY. Later the conflict formally widened into a confrontation between the “Cominform” and the CPY. In Yugoslavia, the Cominform was labeled by the acronym IB (informbureau). Speculations about the real cause of the dispute are legion as no conclusive documentary evidence is yet available. Nevertheless, these speculations have played a significant role in the subsequent realignments of ideological allegiances. Mounting circumstantial evidence points to the plausibility of the interpretation which main-

tains that defectors from the apex of British 'intelligence establishment had informed the Soviets about the Yugoslav Communist leaders' secret collaboration both with the Nazi and British 'imperialists.' Dedijer's recent post-mortem biography of Marshal Broz adds to, rather than detracts from, these persistent allegations. (Top secret German documents dealing with the CPY have disappeared. British documents relating to 1943-1944 'military' negotiations with Tito are to remain secret until 2018. These documents are still kept at the British Prime Minister's office. Tito's Soviet dossier (No. F17, Op. 1, D.503, L.49 Ob.) is now kept in the Central Party Archives, Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow. It is still inaccessible—even to Yugoslav Communists.)

2. In Yugoslavia, both labels are ideologically inadmissible misnomers. According to Tito, "Titoism as a separate ideological line does not exist. To put it as an ideology would be stupid. I do not say that out of modesty. It is simply that we have added nothing to Marxist-Leninist doctrine. We have only applied that doctrine in consonance with our situation." V. Dedijer, *Tito* (New York, 1953) pp. 431-432.
3. The first comprehensive account of the collective destiny of Yugoslav Stalinists was written by a former inmate of a Titoist "Gulag" on Goli Otok (Naked Island) in the Adriatic. These 'reminiscences' were widely circulated in a 'samizdat' mimeographed edition. The first book on the subject was published in Albania in 1958 by the anti-Titoist Yugoslav Colonel V. Dapcevic.
4. V. Dedijer, *The Battle Stalin Lost* (New York, 1971), p. 149.
5. The degree of 'bolshhevization' and 'stalinization' accomplished by Tito made the CPY "more akin to the Bolshevik party than any other, past or contemporary." *The Fifth Congress* (V Kongres KPJ, Beograd, 1948), p. 408. The hierarchical subordination of the CPT was absolute. Tito himself had dispelled all possible doubts in this matter. Dedijer, *Tito*, p. 90. "And above all was Stalin, the Leader, the Teacher." *Ibid.*, p. 399.
6. Djilas described the supra-national allegiance of the CPY in terms of sunflower gyrations. "Since Communism is also an international movement it turns like a sunflower to the sun, to the movement which is strongest—until now primarily in the USSR." M. Djilas, *The New Class* (New York, 1957), p. 152.
7. *The Soviet-Yugoslav Dispute* (London, 1948), p. 38.
8. *ibid.* The authenticity of the Soviet account of Kardelj's opinions is confirmed by M. Djilas, *Tito* (New York, 1980), p. 122. Yugoslav Communists always hoped that Yugoslavia would become a constituent part of the USSR and the CPY part of the CPSU (b). During the revolution several Partisan-held territories were proclaimed Soviet republics and declared parts of the USSR. Only in 1948 did incorporation into the Soviet Union cease to be a 'stimulant' of Yugoslav Communism. Dedijer, *Tito*, p. 342.
9. "Love for the USSR did not come of itself. It was stubbornly inculcated into the masses of the Party and the people in general by the present leaders of the new Yugoslavia." *The Soviet-Yugoslav Dispute* (London, 1948), p. 23. Not only the credulous, politically inexperienced professed to have been genuinely overpowered by this extra-territorial devotion. Even the members of the Central Committee maintain that the sentiment had "enslaved their intellect and their soul through a 'manacle-like grip' on their habits of thought." *Borba*, November 25, 1950.
10. Dedijer, *Tito*, p. 399.
11. Dedijer, *J.B. Tito* (Beograd, 1953) p. 483. Perhaps in order to enhance the study of national communism, in foreign editions of Tito's biography this revealing reproach reads: "You have assumed the right to love the Soviet Union more than your own country." Dedijer, *Tito*, p. 342.
12. The CPY leaders considered themselves with pride as "men who have performed invaluable services in popularizing the USSR in Yugoslavia." *The Soviet-Yugoslav Dispute* (London, 1948), p. 22; Dedijer, *Tito*, p. 118; M. Djilas, Report of the CC of the CPY (Beograd, 1948), p. 15; and, The leaders of the CPY boasted of having "long before the war, sparing neither efforts nor sacrifices, persistently revealed to the masses the truth about the Soviet Union and planted among the masses of Yugoslavia love for the land of Socialism." *The Dispute*, p. 23.

13. Dedijer, *J.B. Tito*, pp. 274-276.
14. Written in 1942 and reprinted in 1947 among M. Djilas, *Clanci (Articles)* (Beograd, 1947), pp. 31-34.
15. V. Vinterhalter, *Zivotnom Stazom J. Broza* (Beograd, 1968, p. 261; and, Dedijer, *Tito*, p. 290.
16. "Relying on the omnipotent teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, our party has led the Yugoslav peoples out of capitalist slavery; . . . The teachings of the classics of Marxism-Leninism are and remain the ideological basis of our party." *Komunist*, no. 1, 1949, p. 13.
17. Dedijer, *Tito*, p. 332.
18. V. Dedijer, *The Battle Stalin Lost* (New York, 1971), p. 93.
Ibid., Serbo-Croat edition (Sarajevo, 1969), p. 152. The best and most detailed autobiographical account of the personal catharsis caused by the severance from Stalinism and later from Titoism was penned by Djilas.
V. Dedijer, *The Battle Stalin Lost* (New York, 1971), p. 109.
19. *The Soviet-Yugoslav Dispute* (London, 1948), pp. 69-70.
20. *ibid.*
21. *ibid.*
22. *NIN* (Belgrade Sunday Weekly), May 2, 1982.
23. Dedijer, *The Battle Stalin Lost*, Serbo-Croat edition, p. 450.
24. Dedijer, *The Battle Stalin Lost* (New York, 1971), p. 148-9. The fact that Stalin had signed accusatory epistles was deliberately concealed from the militants to prevent violent overreactions.
L. Sofkli and M. Javer, *Dans les prisons et les camps de concentration de la Yougoslavie* (Tirana, 1960), p. 44.
25. Tito received 2,318 votes as only five delegates voted against him. Dedijer, *Tito*, p. 370. Cheers were drowned by a song invented on the spur of the moment: "Comrade Tito we pledge from our heart, that we shall not from your road depart." While the party Congress was in session a telegram was sent to Stalin with warm greetings to him and the entire Soviet Union.
Tito ended his speech with: "Long live the Soviet Union, long live Stalin!" Dedijer, *Tito*, p. 371.
26. Dedijer, *The Battle Stalin Lost*, Serbo-Croat edition, pp. 204-205.
27. Dedijer, *The Battle Stalin Lost* (New York, 1971), p. 109.
28. *op. cit.*, p. 302.
Djilas, *Tito*, p. 82.
29. *op. cit.*, p. 83.
30. Between 1948 and 1952, 11,128 'administrative' punishments and 2,572 judicial sentences were meted out. Sixth Congress [VI Kongres KPG] (Beograd, 1952), p. 125. Most *auto da fe* exercises were staged internally, although several terse ones were public.
31. Djilas, *Tito*, p. 82.
32. Dedijer, *The Battle Stalin Lost*, p. 328.
33. Djilas compared the 'intoxicating effects' of Communism to the fervour of religious conversions. M. Djilas, *The New Class*, (New York, 1957), p. 10. This was often true of conversions to Titoism.
A noticeably higher number of the leading CPY professionals were psychopaths. With pathological hatred, their primary purposes were revenge and destruction. E.g. A people's hero of Yugoslavia, when interviewed about his life, said: "All I ever did was destroy, destroy, and destroy. I have always been on the look out for something to destroy." *NIN*, May 6, 1952.
Djilas believes that "the true Communist is a mixture of a fanatic and an untrained power-holder. Only this type makes a true Communist. The others are idealists or careerists." M. Djilas, *The New Class*, p. 82.

34. The Comintern and the NKVD had no illusions about the mentality and quality of their salaried professionals. These outwardly die-hard elite cadres were often suspected of disloyalty. The NKVD experiences with them raised the question: "Who knows what these men really have at heart and deep in their souls? The human mind has sinister proclivities: the professed faith of these leaders is volatile." Dedijer, *J.B. Tito*, p. 229.
Dedijer, *The Battle*, p. 138 and S. Vukmanovic, *Memoari* (Beograd, 1971), pp. 78-81.
35. Buridan's Ass symbolized impotence of will when motivated by two equally powerful motives. See also Vukmanovic, p. 80.
36. op. cit., p. 81.
E.g. Dedijer, *J.B. Tito*.
Dedijer, *The Battle*, pp. 324-5.
37. op. cit., p. 208.
38. Dedijer, *The Battle*, Serbo-Croat edition, p. 434.
39. V. Dedijer, *The Battle Stalin Lost* (New York, 1971), p. 328.
40. Tito purged the CPY "like a surgeon severing diseased flesh from a healthy body." In the process he excelled with a zeal and dedication matched solely by the fervour he displayed during the war and revolution against the Fascist invaders and native counter-revolutionaries. *Fifth Congress*, p. 243.
Totals of expelled and arrested as given in *Dans les prisons* . . . pp. 14, 127. Professional revolutionaries were the first target of the Titoist prosecutors. op. cit., p. 33. For the number of killed see *Program* [of the illegal, anti-Titoist Communist Party of Yugoslavia] *KPJ* (1976), p. 32.
Titoist sources reject these figures altogether. They conceded that between 1948 and 1955, 15,863 party members were arrested. *Politika*, March 28, 1956. The same sources gloss over the total expelled. Titoist sources assert that not a single death sentence was pronounced nor a single execution carried out! *NIN*, February 28, 1982.
Dans les prisons, pp. 20, 40. After 1948 only officers ready to fight even against the USSR could remain in the armed forces. Between 1948 and 1955, 12,000 officers were cashiered and replaced by more reliable ones. *ibid.* pp. 53-54.
41. *Program*, p. 10.
42. *ibid.*, p. 7.
Sixth Congress, p. 572. Even the Communists who were not expelled or imprisoned suffered. As a rule, they were demoted to insignificant posts, transferred to remote areas and localities, and kept under constant surveillance by the secret police. They remained under unrelenting pressures to renounce whatever was Stalinist and were exposed to attempts of recruitment as spies and provocateurs.
43. *The Program*, p. 12.
Between 1948 and 1952 the membership grew from 468,175 to 779,386, 66.47%
Sixth Congress, p. 119.
ibid. Tito made it clear to the cadres that their positions fully depended upon their superiors. More than ever before, the primary concern of every 'apparatchik' was to curry the benevolence of his superior. A well-guarded tongue became the main qualification for tenure of party office and often the main hope of survival. All party discipline was based on fear that criticisms may be construed as treason and entail party retaliation. In 1940, Tito confirmed that CPY leaders were afraid to state their opinions. See *Komunist*, 1947, no. 2. p. 90.
44. Dedijer, *The Battle*, p. 305 and Djilas, *Tito*, p. 85. Dedijer quotes Tito: "We had no Siberia, but if we had had one, we would have sent people there." op. cit., p. 298.
45. Djilas, *Tito*, pp. 81-82. Tito alone made the decision to establish the concentration camps. No inmates ever escaped, *Prisons*, p. 58.
Dedijer, *The Battle*, pp. 305-6. For services rendered most of these security men were subsequently transferred to diplomatic postings in the West.
Djilas, *Tito*, p. 82.

46. op. cit., p. 85.
47. Rankovic as quoted in *Komunist*, July 7, 1966.
Dedijer as quoted in C.L. Sulzberger's *The Resistentialists*, (New York, 1962) p. 128.
48. A Titoist observer of these camps as quoted by Djilas, *Tito*, p. 86.
49. op. cit., p. 87. These camps, reminiscent of Plato's sophronisterion (a place for making men wiser) made Tito boast about reeducating prisoners. The head of the UDBA, in his turn, was delighted by the welcome he received from the inmates.
op. cit., pp. 85, 86.
Ex-inmates of Nazi concentration camps found the conditions on the Naked Island, in some respects, more harsh. By comparison, the former were like sanatoria.
Program, p. 32.
50. The intellectual prodigy of the party, M. Krleza, derided in the "Discussion with Three Rams" the low I.Q. of Tito's 'ideological' experts.
Krleza's *Anti-Barbarus* was republished only in 1982 after both Tito and the author had departed from the Yugoslav Communist scene.
Even in 1954 when the Special Plenary Session of the Central Committee was convoked to deliberate on Djilas' trespassing, almost all participants were unable to discuss the theoretical issues involved. The stenographic notes teem with instances of self-confessed ignorance of the doctrinal matters discussed. *Komunist*, 1954, nos. 1-2, pp. 1-164.
51. Months before the dispute became public, Tito was warning the members of the Central Committee "not to fall into the trap of discussing dogma: Comrades, remember that this is not a matter of theoretical discussions, of errors committed by the CPY, of alleged ideological deviation. We must not permit ourselves to be dragged into a discussion of such matters . . ." Dedijer, *The Battle*, p. 148.
52. Dedijer as quoted in *The Resistentialists*, p. 127. The quotation is an excerpt from Dedijer's ideological and 'political testament.' The same work contains an entire chapter on Dedijer's account of his Titoist apostasy recorded when Dedijer had already become an ideological 'atheist.'
53. Djilas describes the Communist rule as "a form of latent civil war between the government and the people," *The New Class*, p. 87. Yugoslav Communists won every general election which were always "a race with one horse." op. cit. p. 93. In 1948, the Party members represented only 3% of the population.