

# The Expulsion of Yugoslavia

*To observers in 1947 and 1948 the Cominform appeared to be a platform from which Stalin's most loyal ally, Yugoslavia, could point the way to proletarian internationalism for the other parties. The Yugoslavs were given the task of making the most extreme speeches against coalition politics at Szklarska Poręba, and the Cominform's newspaper was published in Belgrade. In retrospect, however, it seems likely that Stalin gave them the leading role in the Cominform only to set them against the other parties for the purpose of eventually bringing them down. For when the Cominform convened in June 1948 in Bucharest for its second meeting, the world was astonished to hear that Yugoslavia had been excluded from the fraternal brotherhood of socialist states—excommunicated.*

*The controversy that led to this totally unexpected result reached its climax in an exchange of letters between Stalin and the Yugoslav party in the spring of 1948. The Yugoslavs, under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito, had conducted their own successful communist revolution as an outgrowth of their resistance to Nazi occupation in World War II, and they were justifiably proud of that accomplishment. Loyal Stalinists, they were nonetheless frustrated by heavy-handed Soviet attempts to exploit them economically and to spy on them militarily, and what is more, they said so in a series of letters to Stalin beginning early in 1948. "No matter how much each of us loves the land of Socialism, the U.S.S.R.," the Yugoslavs said, "he can, in no case, love his own country less." This is precisely the position that Stalin refused to accept.*

*The following excerpts begin with the Soviet reaction to the first Yugoslav letter and continue with the Yugoslav answer, the Soviet response, and the final Yugoslav statement. In the last extract the Cominform calls on the "healthy elements" in Yugoslavia to overthrow Tito and his colleagues.*

# The Tito–Stalin Correspondence

March–June 1948

## I

### SOVIET PARTY TO TITO (MARCH 27, 1948)

In your letter you express the desire to be informed of the other facts which led to Soviet dissatisfaction and to the straining of relations between the U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia.<sup>1</sup> Such facts actually exist, although they are not connected with the withdrawal of the civilian and military advisers. We consider it necessary to inform you of them.

(a) We know that there are anti-Soviet rumors circulating among the leading comrades in Yugoslavia, for instance that “the CPSU is degenerate,” “great-power chauvinism is rampant in the U.S.S.R.,” “the U.S.S.R. is trying to dominate Yugoslavia economically,” and “the Cominform is a means for control of the other parties by the CPSU,” etc. These anti-Soviet allegations are usually camouflaged by left phrases, such as “socialism in the Soviet Union has ceased to be revolutionary” and that Yugoslavia alone is the exponent of “revolutionary Socialism.” It was naturally laughable to hear such statements about the CPSU from such questionable Marxists as Djilas, Vukmanovic, Kidric, Rankovic, and others.<sup>2</sup> However, the fact remains that such rumors have been circulating for a long time among many high-ranking Yugoslav officials, that they are still circulating, and that they are naturally creating an anti-Soviet atmosphere which is endangering relations between the CPSU and the CPY.

We readily admit that every Communist party, among them the Yugoslav, has

<sup>1</sup>On March 18, 1948, the Soviets informed the Yugoslavs that they were withdrawing their military advisers because they were “surrounded by hostility.” On March 20 Tito wrote Molotov expressing amazement at this move and denying that the Yugoslavs had shown any “lack of hospitality and lack of confidence” toward the Soviet experts.

<sup>2</sup>At this time Milovan Djilas was chief party propagandist; Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, a less important figure than the other three, was head of political affairs for the Yugoslav National Army; Boris Kidrić was Tito’s main economic adviser; and Aleksandar Ranković headed the state security apparatus. Surprisingly, Edward Kardelj, later the main party theorist of self-administration, is mentioned only later.

the right to criticize the CPSU, even as the CPSU has the right to criticize any other Communist party. But Marxism demands that criticism be aboveboard and not underhanded and slanderous, thus depriving those criticized of the opportunity to reply to the criticism. However, criticism by the Yugoslav officials is neither open nor honest; it is both underhanded and dishonest and of a hypocritical nature, because, while discrediting the CPSU behind its back, publicly they pharisaically praise it to the skies. Thus criticism is transformed into slander, into an attempt to discredit the CPSU and to blacken the Soviet system.

We do not doubt that the Yugoslav party masses would disown this anti-Soviet criticism as alien and hostile if they knew about it. We think this is the reason why the Yugoslav officials make these criticisms in secret, behind the backs of the masses.

Again, one might recall that when he decided to declare war on the CPSU, Trotsky also started with accusations that the CPSU was degenerate, was suffering from the limitations inherent in the narrow nationalism of great powers. Naturally he camouflaged all this with left slogans about world revolution. It is well known, however, that Trotsky himself became degenerate and, when he was exposed, crossed over into the camp of the sworn enemies of the CPSU and the Soviet Union. We think that the political career of Trotsky is quite instructive.

(b) We are disturbed by the present condition of the CPY. We are amazed by the fact that the CPY, which is the leading party, is still not completely legalized and still has a semilegal status. Decisions of the party organs are never published in the press, neither are the reports of party assemblies.

Democracy is not evident within the CPY itself. The Central Committee, in its majority, was not elected but coopted. Criticism and self-criticism within the party does not exist or only barely exists. It is characteristic that the personnel secretary of the party is also the minister of state security. In other words, the party cadres are under the supervision of the minister of state security. According to the theory of Marxism, the party should control all the state organs in the country, including the ministry of state security, while in Yugoslavia we have just the opposite: the ministry of state security actually controlling the party. This probably explains the fact that initiative among the party masses in Yugoslavia is not on an adequate level.

It is understandable that we cannot consider such a Communist party organization to be Marxist-Leninist, Bolshevik.

The spirit of the policy of class struggle is not felt in the CPY. An increase in the capitalist elements in villages and cities is in full swing, and the leadership of the party is taking no measures to check these capitalist elements. The CPY is being hoodwinked by the degenerate and opportunist theory of peaceful absorption of capitalist elements by a socialist system, borrowed from Bernstein, Vollmar, and Bukharin.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Stalin considered these men counterrevolutionary renegades. Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932), a German radical who was a close friend of Friedrich Engels, invoked the wrath of his Social Democratic colleagues at the turn of the century when he abandoned the idea that capitalism was at the point of imminent collapse and the view that the proletariat should seize power by force. As a young man, Georg von Vollmar (1850-1922) was a radical. After 1890, however, as the leader of the Bavarian Social

According to the theory of Marxism–Leninism, the party is the leading force in the country, has its specific program and cannot merge with the nonparty masses. In Yugoslavia, on the contrary, the People's Front is considered the chief leading force, and there was an attempt to get the party submerged within the front.<sup>4</sup> In his speech at the Second Congress of the People's Front, Comrade Tito said: "Does the CPY have any other program but that of the People's Front? No, the CPY has no other program. The program of the People's Front is its program."

It thus appears that in Yugoslavia this amazing theory of party organization is considered a new theory. Actually, it is far from new. In Russia forty years ago a part of the Mensheviks proposed that the Marxist party be dissolved into a nonparty workers' mass organization and that the second should supplant the first; the other part of the Mensheviks proposed that the Marxist party be dissolved into a nonparty mass organization of workers and peasants, with the latter again supplanting the former. As is known, Lenin described these Mensheviks as malicious opportunists and liquidators of the party.

## II

### YUGOSLAV RESPONSE (APRIL 13, 1948)

In answering your letter of March 27, 1948, we must first of all emphasize that we were terribly surprised by its tone and contents. We feel that the reason for its contents, that is, for the accusations and attitudes on individual questions, is insufficient knowledge of the situation here. We cannot explain your conclusions otherwise than by the fact that the government of the U.S.S.R. is obtaining inaccurate and tendentious information from its representatives, who, because of lack of knowledge, must obtain such information from various people, either from known antiparty elements or from various dissatisfied persons. . . . We cannot understand why the representatives of the U.S.S.R. have not insisted on confirming such information with responsible people in our country, that is, on verifying such information with the CC of the CPY or the government. We regard the issuing of such information as antiparty work and antistate because it spoils the relations between our two countries.

No matter how much each of us loves the land of socialism, the U.S.S.R., he can, in no case, love his own country less, which also is developing socialism—in this concrete case the FPRY—for which so many thousands of its most progressive people fell.<sup>5</sup> We know very well that this is similarly understood in the Soviet Union.

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Democrats, he pursued a policy of cooperation with other parties seeking reform and became one of Bavaria's most popular political figures. Nikolai Bukharin (1888–1938) was at the same time one of the most important intellectual forces of Bolshevism and the most famous victim of Stalin's purges of 1936–38.

<sup>4</sup>The People's Front was a mass organization of some seven million people in 1948. In contrast with the practice in other communist states, all of whom had similar mass organizations, in Yugoslavia the party's policies were advanced in the name of the People's Front rather than directly by the party. In 1953 the front became the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia.

<sup>5</sup>The initials stand for the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia.



Your letter of March 27 states that we are making anti-Soviet criticisms and criticisms of the CPSU. It states that this criticism is being made among the leaders of the CPY. It further states that this criticism is being carried on behind the backs of the mass of the party members; that this criticism is dishonorable, underhanded, hypocritical, etc. The names of Djilas, Vukmanovic, Kidric, and Rankovic are mentioned, and it is said that there are some others. Thus, the letter mentions the names of some of the best-known and most popular leaders of New Yugoslavia, who have proved themselves in many difficult situations faced by our party.

It is very difficult for us to understand how such serious accusations can be advanced without mentioning their source. It is even more amazing to compare statements by our leaders with the one-time statements of Trotsky. The letter quotes parts of alleged statements, for example, "the CPSU is degenerate," "the U.S.S.R. is trying to dominate Yugoslavia economically," "great-power chauvinism is rampant in the U.S.S.R.," "the Cominform is a means for control of the other parties by the CPSU." Further "these anti-Soviet allegations are usually camouflaged by left phrases, such as 'socialism in the U.S.S.R. has ceased to be revolutionary,' that only Yugoslavia is the true exponent of 'revolutionary socialism.'"

On the basis of this and similar information, gathered over a long period from various suspicious sources, tendentiously attributed to the leading men of the new Yugoslavia as if it were theirs, and thus presented to the leaders of the U.S.S.R., it is without doubt possible to draw wrong conclusions and describe them as anti-Soviet statements. However, we feel that on the basis of unidentified persons and suspicious information, it is incorrect to draw conclusions and make accusations like those brought in the letter against men who have performed invaluable services in popularizing the U.S.S.R. in Yugoslavia and won priceless renown in the war of liberation. Is it possible to believe that people who spent six, eight, ten, and more years in prison—among other things because of their work in popularizing the U.S.S.R.—can be such as shown in your letter of March 27? No. But these are the majority of the present high-ranking leaders of the new Yugoslavia, who on March 27, 1941, led the masses through the streets against the antipopular regime of Cvetkovic-Macek, which signed the anti-Comintern pact and desired to harness Yugoslavia to the Fascist Axis wagon.<sup>6</sup> They are the same people who in 1941 organized the uprising against the Fascist invader, deeply believing in the Soviet Union. They are the same people who, at the head of the insurgent Yugoslav people, with gun in hand, fought under the most difficult conditions on the side of the Soviet Union as the only true ally, believing in the victory of the U.S.S.R. in the darkest days, just because they believed and believe today in the Soviet system, in Socialism.

<sup>6</sup>In August 1939, after tortuous negotiations, Dragiša Cvetković, a rightist Serb who was prime minister of Yugoslavia, and Vladko Maček, leader of the Croatian Peasant party, signed an agreement granting many of Croatia's long-term demands for autonomy within Yugoslavia. At the same time, the two men formed a joint government. On March 25, 1941, Cvetković signed the Tripartite Pact, aligning Yugoslavia with Germany. Almost immediately a military coup overthrew the government, and crowds jubilantly celebrated in Belgrade's streets. Communists participated in this popular outburst but in no sense organized or inspired it. Even though the new government assured Hitler it would continue its adherence to the Tripartite Pact, the angry Führer attacked on April 6, and Yugoslavia collapsed within two weeks.

Such people cannot work "to blacken the Soviet system" because that would mean betraying their convictions, their past. We feel that these people should not be judged on the basis of dubious information but on the basis of their long revolutionary activity.

### III

#### SOVIET ANSWER (MAY 4, 1948)

We feel that behind the attempts of the Yugoslav leaders to clear themselves of the responsibility for straining Soviet-Yugoslav relations lies a lack of desire by these comrades to admit their mistakes and their intention to continue an unfriendly policy toward the U.S.S.R.

Lenin says:

The attitude of a political party toward its mistakes is one of the most important and most significant criteria of the seriousness of the party and the fulfillment of its obligations toward its class and toward the working masses. To admit errors frankly, to discover their cause, to analyze the situation which has been created by these errors, to discuss measures for correcting them—that is the sign of a serious party, that is the fulfillment of its obligations, that is the education of the class and the masses.

Unfortunately, we must state that the leaders of the CPY, who will not admit and correct their errors, are crudely destroying this principal directive of Lenin.

Tito and Kardelj, in their letter, speak of the merits and successes of the CPY, saying that the CC of the CPSU earlier acknowledged these services and successes but is now supposedly silent about them.<sup>7</sup> This, naturally, is not true. No one can deny the services and successes of the CPY. There is no doubt about this. However, we must also say that the services of the Communist parties of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania are not less than those of the CPY. However, the leaders of these parties behave modestly and do not boast about their successes, as do the Yugoslav leaders, who have pierced every one's ears with their unlimited self-praise. It is also necessary to emphasize that the services of the French and Italian CPs to the revolution were not less but greater than those of Yugoslavia. Even though the French and Italian CPs have so far achieved less success than the CPY, this is not due to any special qualities of the CPY, but mainly because after the destruction of the Yugoslav partisan headquarters by German paratroopers, at a moment when the people's liberation movement in Yugoslavia was passing through a serious crisis, the Soviet army came to the aid of the Yugoslav people, crushed the German invader, liberated Belgrade, and in this way created the conditions which were necessary for the CPY to achieve power.<sup>8</sup> Unfor-

<sup>7</sup>Edvard Kardelj (1910–79) was the organizer of the partisan uprising in Slovenia in 1941 and one of the three or four leading Yugoslav communists for thirty years after the war. He was the party's main theorist of self-management.

<sup>8</sup>One of Stalin's worst mistakes in his dealings with the Yugoslavs was to denigrate their war effort. Whereas much of the leadership of the other East European parties spent the war in the Soviet Union, the

unately the Soviet army did not and could not render such assistance to the French and Italian CPS. If Comrade Tito and Comrade Kardelj bore this fact in mind they would be less boastful about their merits and successes and would behave with greater propriety and modesty.

The conceit of the Yugoslav leaders goes so far that they even attribute to themselves such merits as can in no way be justified. Take, for example, the question of military science. The Yugoslav leaders claim that they have improved on the Marxist science of war with a new theory according to which war is regarded as a combined operation by regular troops, partisan units, and popular insurrections. However, this so-called theory is as old as the world and is not new to Marxism. As is known, the Bolsheviks applied combined action of regular troops, partisan units, and popular insurrections for the entire period of the civil war in Russia (1918–21), and applied it on a much wider scale than was done in Yugoslavia. However, the Bolsheviks did not say that by applying this method of military activity, they produced anything new in the science of war, because the same method was successfully applied long before the Bolsheviks by Field Marshal Kutuzov in the war against Napoleon's troops in Russia in 1812.

However, even Field Marshal Kutuzov did not claim to be the innovator in applying this method because the Spaniards in 1808 applied it in the war against Napoleon's troops. It thus appears that this science of war is actually 140 years old, and what they claim as their own contribution is actually the contribution of the Spaniards.

Besides this, we should bear in mind that the services of any leader in the past do not exclude the possibility of his committing serious errors later.<sup>9</sup> We must not close our eyes to present errors because of past services. In his time Trotsky also rendered revolutionary services, but this does not mean that the CPSU could close its eyes to his crude opportunist mistakes which followed later, making him an enemy of the Soviet Union.

#### IV

#### FINAL YUGOSLAV POSITION (MAY 17, 1948)

We received your letter of May 4, 1948. It would be superfluous to write of the discouraging impression created on us by this letter. It has convinced us of the fact that all our explanations, though supported by facts showing that all the accusations against us were the result of wrong information, are in vain.

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Yugoslav leaders fought and suffered with their resistance movement in the mountains of Yugoslavia. The Red Army did cut across the northeast corner of the country, and tens of thousands of Yugoslavs died in the last months of the war under Red Army command. But the Yugoslav leaders could call on a strong memory of sacrifice and sense of purpose born of implacable and successful resistance to Nazism in a way no other East European leaders could.

<sup>9</sup>Stalin believed that "no enemy is so evil and dangerous, so important to expose and so deserving of harsh treatment, as one who has worn the mask of a friend." As Robert C. Tucker puts it, "The word 'mask' . . . came readily to his lips" (Tucker, *Stalin as Revolutionary*, p. 453). Compare Rudolf Slánský's comments of December 1949 in Document 11, as well as the blameless careers of both Slánský and Rajk prior to their being purged.



We do not flee from criticism about questions of principle, but in this matter we feel at such a disadvantage that it is impossible for us to agree to have this matter decided now by the Cominform. Even before we were informed, the nine parties received your first letter and took their stand in resolutions. The contents of your letter did not remain an internal matter for individual parties but were carried outside the permissible circle, and the results are that today, in some countries such as Czechoslovakia and Hungary, not only our party but our country as a whole is being insulted, as was the case with our parliamentary delegation in Prague.

The results of all this have been very serious for our country.

We desire that the matter be liquidated in such manner that we prove, by deeds, that the accusations against us are unjust. That is, we will resolutely construct socialism and remain loyal to the Soviet Union; remain loyal to the doctrine of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. The future will show, as did the past, that we will realize all that we promise you.

## V

### EXPULSION FROM THE COMINFORM (JUNE 28, 1948)

The Information Bureau considers that the basis of these mistakes made by the leadership of the Communist party of Yugoslavia lies in the undoubted fact that nationalist elements, which previously existed in a disguised form, managed in the course of the past five or six months to reach a dominant position in the leadership of the Communist party of Yugoslavia, and that consequently the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist party has broken with the internationalist traditions of the Communist party of Yugoslavia and has taken the road to nationalism.

Considerably overestimating the internal, national forces within Yugoslavia and their influence, the Yugoslav leaders think that they can maintain Yugoslavia's independence and build socialism without the support of the people's democracies, without the support of the Soviet Union. They think that the new Yugoslavia can do without the help of these revolutionary forces.

Showing their poor understanding of the international situation and their intimidation by the blackmailing threats of the imperialists, the Yugoslav leaders think that by making concessions they can curry favor with the imperialist states. They think they will be able to bargain with them for Yugoslavia's independence and, gradually, get the people of Yugoslavia oriented toward these states, that is, toward capitalism. In this they proceed tacitly from the well-known bourgeois-nationalist thesis that "capitalist states are a lesser danger to the independence of Yugoslavia than the Soviet Union."

The Yugoslav leaders evidently do not understand or, probably, pretend they do not understand, that such a nationalist line can only lead to Yugoslavia's degeneration into an ordinary bourgeois republic, to the loss of its independence and to its transformation into a colony of the imperialist countries.

The Information Bureau does not doubt that inside the Communist party of Yugoslavia there are enough healthy elements, loyal to Marxism-Leninism, and to



the international traditions of the Yugoslav Communist party and to the united socialist front.<sup>10</sup>

Their task is to compel their present leaders to recognize their mistakes openly and honestly and to rectify them; to break with nationalism, return to internationalism; and in every way to consolidate the united front against imperialism.

Should the present leaders of the Yugoslav Communist party prove incapable of doing this, their job is to replace them and to advance a new internationalist leadership of the party.

The Information Bureau does not doubt that the Communist party of Yugoslavia will be able to fulfill this honorable task.

<sup>10</sup>There were in fact a significant number of supporters of the Cominform resolution in Yugoslavia, but Tito suppressed them. The most important of them passed through a concentration camp as horrible as anything Stalin constructed, Goli otok (Naked island). One of the reasons that the controversy escalated in the spring of 1948 was that after the initial exchange of letters Tito had arrested two former members of the Central Committee who supported Stalin. Sreten Žujović was suspected of passing information to the Russians, and Andrija Hebrang opposed the strongly worded answers to Stalin's letters.

# Self-Management

*The first communist regime to seek out a non-Stalinist path to socialism, and for many years the most successful, was the Yugoslav. Stung by Stalin's expulsion in 1948, Tito and his colleagues, who had matured in the 1930s adoring Stalin, tried at first to show themselves even more orthodox than the master by beginning a ruthless (and unsuccessful) collectivization of agriculture. Fairly quickly, however, they realized they had an opportunity to create a new kind of socialism, and in the early 1950s they began to experiment with workers' self-management. In the first reading, Milovan Djilas describes, perhaps in a self-serving way, how he and his colleagues first introduced the idea.*

*In 1958 the League of Communists of Yugoslavia formally adopted self-management as the underlying principle of its program. In the decades that followed, the party introduced the principle into the constitution and into every aspect of public life, decentralizing economic functions to the extent that after Tito's death in 1980 the central government lost control of the levers of economic policy. Beginning in the 1960s, the Yugoslavs opened their borders and made a serious effort to introduce market elements into their system, making it for about twenty years a positive and hopeful model for reform Marxists throughout the world.*

*The flaw in the Yugoslav system was that the party, having made self-management its underlying philosophy, did not intend thereby to relinquish its leading political role. Previewing the problems that Mikhail Gorbachev faced in the late 1980s, the Yugoslav communists hoped to maintain political control while encouraging initiative and democracy. The following excerpts from the party program of 1958, which give party members torturous advice on how to be both authoritative and democratic, hint at the paradoxical (and ultimately unsuccessful) nature of this policy.*

# The Origins of Self-Management in Yugoslavia

*Milovan Djilas*

Events of Spring 1950

Just what is Yugoslavia's program of "self-management"? What are the prospects of its finding a solution to the social and nationality troubles now besetting Yugoslavia?

The idea of self-management was conceived by Kardelj and me, with some help from our comrade Kidrič. Soon after the outbreak of the quarrel with Stalin, in 1949, as far as I remember, I began to reread Marx's *Capital*, this time with much greater care, to see if I could find the answer to the riddle of why, to put it in simplistic terms, Stalinism was bad and Yugoslavia was good. I discovered many new ideas and, most interesting of all, ideas about a future society in which the immediate producers, through free association, would themselves make the decisions regarding production and distribution—would, in effect, run their own lives and their own future.

The country was in the stranglehold of the bureaucracy, and the party leaders were in the grip of rage and horror over the incorrigibly arbitrary nature of the party machine they had set up and that kept them in power. One day—it must have been in the spring of 1950—it occurred to me that we Yugoslav communists were now in a position to start creating Marx's free association of producers. The factories would be left in their hands, with the sole proviso that they should pay a tax for military and other state needs "still remaining essential." With all this, I felt a twinge of reservation: Is not this a way for us communists, I asked myself, to shift the responsibility for failures and difficulties in the economy onto the shoulders of the working class, or to compel the working class to take a share of such responsibilities from us? I soon explained my idea to Kardelj and Kidrič while we sat in a car parked in front of the villa where I lived. They felt no such reservation, and I was able all too easily to convince them of the indisputable harmony between my ideas and Marx's teaching. Without leaving the car, we thrashed it out for little more than half an hour. Kardelj thought it was a good idea, but one that should not be put into effect for another five or six years, and Kidrič agreed with him. A couple of days later, however, Kidrič telephoned me to say that we were ready to go ahead at once with the first steps. In his impulsive way he began to elaborate and expound on the whole

Excerpt from *The Unperfect Society: Beyond the New Class*, pp. 220–23, by Milovan Djilas, copyright © 1969 by Harcourt Brace & Company, reprinted by permission of the publisher.



conception. A little later, a meeting was held in Kardelj's cabinet office with the trade union leaders, and they proposed the abolition of the workers' councils, which up to that time had functioned only as consultative bodies for the management. Kardelj suggested that my proposals for management should be associated with the workers' councils, first of all in a way that would give them more rights and greater responsibilities. Shortly there began the debates on the issues of principle and on the statutory aspects, preparations that went on for some four or five months. Tito, busy with other duties and absent from Belgrade, took no part in this and knew nothing of the proposal soon to introduce a workers' council bill in the parliament until he was informed by Kardelj and me in the government lobby room during a session of the National Assembly. His first reaction was: Our workers are not ready for that yet! But Kardelj and I, convinced that this was an important step, pressed him hard, and he began to unbend as he paid more attention to our explanations. The most important part of our case was that this would be the beginning of democracy, something that socialism had not yet achieved; further, it could be plainly seen by the world and the international workers' movement as a radical departure from Stalinism. Tito paced up and down, as though completely wrapped in his own thoughts. Suddenly he stopped and exclaimed: "Factories belonging to the workers—something that has never yet been achieved!" With these words, the theories worked out by Kardelj and myself seemed to shed their complications and seemed, too, to find better prospects of being workable. A few months later, Tito explained the Workers' Self-Management Bill to the National Assembly.

## The Challenge of Self-Management

1958

Assigning an indispensable and important role to the state in the first stages of socialist construction, and also aware of state-ist deformation which this role may cause in the development of socialist relations, the Yugoslav communists believe that the state, that is, its administrative apparatus and measures, is not at all the main instrument of socialist construction and solution of the inner contradictions of socialist development. The state apparatus cannot be the decisive, permanent and all-embracing factor in the development of new social relations. The Yugoslav communists must not, nor do they wish to, become a power through the use of the state apparatus instead of through the working class and working people. Only the social and economic interest of the working class, of the working people who produce with the social means of production, and socialist consciousness based on that interest can be the basic, permanent motive power of social progress.

The communists do not renounce their leading social role. Social consciousness plays the decisive part in the solution of the contradictions of socialist development. But the leading socialist forces can be victorious only if they act in accordance with the objective laws of development and with the needs of society in general; and in particular, if they act in accordance with the social and economic interests of the working class, that is, the working people who produce with the social means of production.

In the struggle for further strengthening of socialism, the communists must constantly verify their political line through their increasing responsibility to the broad masses of the working people. Taught by practice and by contradictions which appear in socialist development, they must educate the working masses so that these may be able increasingly, more and more directly and independently, to manage society, think like socialists and act in practice like socialists, until each individual citizen learns how to manage the affairs of the social community.

The relationship between the communists and the working masses, accordingly, cannot be either that prevailing between a governing party and the governed or that between the teacher and the pupil. This relationship must appear more and more as a relationship between equals. Therefore the individual best qualified and most capable in the realization of common interests earns the highest confidence. In the struggle for the progress of socialism in all fields of social life, the communists and

Reprinted from Stoyan Prebichevich, trans., *Yugoslavia's Way: The Program of the League of the Communists of Yugoslavia* (New York: All Nation's Press, 1958), pp. 120–22, 173–74.

the leading socialist forces generally must develop their own action primarily through the life, work, and social action of the working people themselves.

In other words, they must strive to fight for the advance of socialism and in this struggle to establish their leadership less and less through their own power and more and more through the direct power of the working people—producers with the social means of production—in all the varied organs of social self-management. In doing so, the communists must struggle for all factors of socialist development to be active, for this activity to be socialistic, educating and training ever broader masses for socialist management. Through such activity the communists and the leading socialist forces protect themselves against bureaucratization and at the same time steadily raise the social consciousness of the working people, striving all along toward gradual reduction and abolition of the antagonism between the government and the governed, between the leaders and the followers, between the state and the citizens.

Simultaneously, the communists will continue the struggle for keeping key positions of state authority in firm revolutionary hands—positions on which depend further development of socialist society and defense of that society against the various internal and foreign antisocialist forces. The great socialist, democratic, humane, and peaceful goals that the Yugoslav socialist society has set itself can be achieved most quickly and least painfully if the enemies of socialism are allowed no opportunity to bring obstacles and disturbances into our internal social life.

The communists will pay particular attention to the development of workers' councils. Workers' councils are democratic economic-political organs of social self-management through which direct producers independently manage enterprises and take a decisive part in the development of the forces of production—within a single coordinated social economic plan and in accordance with the general interests of the community, expressed in a single coordinated economic system. The motive power of the activity of the direct producers in workers' councils, aimed at more productive labor and faster development of the forces of production, is their desire continuously to improve their living conditions and the general material standard of the social community through better individual work, better operation of the enterprise, and faster general economic progress of the social community; and to develop freely their individual creative abilities and inclinations, in harmony with the general interests of the working people.

Workers' councils are neither representatives of the owner nor the collective owner of the means of production. They manage the means of production on behalf of the social community and in their work are stimulated by their own material and moral-political aspirations. Just for this reason, they are the most suitable social-economic instrument of struggle against both bureaucratism and selfish individualism.

Workers' self-management is the expression and confirmation of the social character of ownership of the means of production. It is also the basic form of the direct participation of the working people in managing the economy. On this foundation, social production is most directly connected with the actual needs of the people, and products of human labor become objects of both social acquisition and



personal acquisition by the worker. Social relations in production and distribution, and gradually in all basic spheres of society, receive an increasingly developed socialist substance.

Managing the social means of production from which he was separated in the class society, the producer now takes his active place in society. He becomes more and more aware that the realization of his individual economic and social interest directly depends on a higher productivity of his own work, on an increase of production of the working collective, and on a further development of the productive forces in the commune and in the whole country. Therefore workers' councils give and will continue to give ever-new incentives to the production and economy, which will make possible accelerated development of the forces of production. In these circumstances, the producer himself, and the working man generally, gradually determines the further process of liberation of man and humanization of social relations.

# The New Class

*Milovan Djilas's early life was a heroic communist success story. Born to poverty in Montenegro, he participated in the sectarian struggles of the 1930s and emerged from the National Liberation Struggle, as the Yugoslavs called it, as one of the three or four most powerful men in Yugoslavia, perhaps even second in line after Tito himself. But elevation to high political office did not blunt Djilas's sense of injustice. In 1954, when he began to criticize the extravagant life-styles of the new leadership and even to call for the introduction of opposition politics, Tito expelled him from the party and sent him into disgrace. Unbowed, Djilas responded with a study entitled *The New Class*, which argued that Stalinism had not destroyed class domination but simply substituted the state and its party bureaucracy for the bourgeoisie. Tito sent him to jail for the book, but from that point, in and out of jail, Djilas continued to write as his quixotic conscience dictated, until eventually he repudiated communism entirely.*

## The New Class

*Milovan Djilas*

1955–56

Everything happened differently in the U.S.S.R. and other communist countries from what the leaders—even such prominent ones as Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, and Bukharin—anticipated. They expected that the state would rapidly wither away, that democracy would be strengthened. The reverse happened. They expected a rapid improvement in the standard of living—there has been scarcely any change in this respect, and in the subjugated East European countries, the standard has even declined. In every instance, the standard of living has failed to rise in proportion to the rate of industrialization, which was much more rapid. It was believed that the differences between cities and villages, between intellectual and physical labor, would slowly disappear; instead these differences have increased. Communist anticipations in other areas—including their expectations for developments in the non-communist world—have also failed to materialize.

The greatest illusion was that industrialization and collectivization in the U.S.S.R., and destruction of capitalist ownership, would result in a classless society. In 1936, when the new [Soviet] constitution was promulgated, Stalin announced that the “exploiting class” had ceased to exist. The capitalist and other classes of ancient origin had in fact been destroyed, but a new class, previously unknown to history, had been formed.

It is understandable that this class, like those before it, should believe that the establishment of its power would result in happiness and freedom for all men. The only difference between this and other classes was that it treated the delay in the realization of its illusions more crudely. It thus affirmed that its power was more complete than the power of any other class before in history, and its class illusions and prejudices were proportionally greater.

This new class, the bureaucracy, or more accurately the political bureaucracy, has all the characteristics of earlier ones as well as some new characteristics of its own. Its origin had its special characteristics also, even though in essence it was similar to the beginnings of other classes.

Other classes, too, obtained their strength and power by the revolutionary path, destroying the political, social, and other orders they met in their way. However,

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almost without exception, these classes attained power *after* new economic patterns had taken shape in the old society. The case was the reverse with new classes in the communist systems. It did not come to power to *complete* a new economic order but to *establish* its own and, in so doing, to establish its power over society.

In earlier epochs the coming to power of some class, some part of a class, or of some party, was the final event resulting from its formation and its development. The reverse was true in the U.S.S.R. There the new class was definitely formed after it attained power. Its consciousness had to develop before its economic and physical powers, because the class had not taken root in the life of the nation. This class viewed its role in relation to the world from an idealistic point of view. Its practical possibilities were not diminished by this. In spite of its illusions, it represented an objective tendency toward industrialization. Its practical bent emanated from this tendency. The promise of an ideal world increased the faith in the ranks of the new class and sowed illusions among the masses. At the same time it inspired gigantic physical undertakings.

Because this new class had not been formed as a part of the economic and social life before it came to power, it could only be created in an organization of a special type, distinguished by a special discipline based on identical philosophic and ideological views of its members. A unity of belief and iron discipline was necessary to overcome its weaknesses.

The roots of the new class were implanted in a special party, of the Bolshevik type. Lenin was right in his view that his party was an exception in the history of human society, although he did not suspect that it would be the beginning of a new class.

To be more precise, the initiators of the new class are not found in the party of the Bolshevik type as a whole but in that stratum of professional revolutionaries who made up its core even before it attained power. It was not by accident that Lenin asserted after the failure of the 1905 revolution that only professional revolutionaries—men whose sole profession was revolutionary work—could build a new party of the Bolshevik type. It was still less accidental that even Stalin, the future creator of a new class, was the most outstanding example of such a professional revolutionary. The new ruling class has been gradually developing from this very narrow stratum of revolutionaries. These revolutionaries composed its core for a long period. Trotsky noted that in prerevolutionary professional revolutionaries was the origin of the future Stalinist bureaucrat. What he did not detect was the beginning of a new class of owners and exploiters.

This is not to say that the new party and the new class are identical. The party, however, is the core of that class, and its base. It is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to define the limits of the new class and to identify its members. The new class may be said to be made up of those who have special privileges and economic preference because of the administrative monopoly they hold.

As in other owning classes, the proof that it is a special class lies in its ownership and its special relations to other classes. In the same way, the class to which a member belongs is indicated by the material and other privileges which ownership brings to him.

As defined by Roman law, property constitutes the use, enjoyment, and disposi-

tion of material goods. The communist political bureaucracy uses, enjoys, and disposes of nationalized property.

If we assume that membership in this bureaucracy or new owning class is predicated on the use of privileges inherent in ownership—in this instance nationalized material goods—then membership in the new party class, or political bureaucracy, is reflected in a larger income in material goods and privileges than society should normally grant for such functions. In practice, the ownership privilege of the new class manifests itself as an exclusive right, as a party monopoly, for the political bureaucracy to distribute the national income, to set wages, direct economic development, and dispose of nationalized and other property. This is the way it appears to the ordinary man who considers the communist functionary as being very rich and as a man who does not have to work.

The ownership of private property has, for many reasons, proved to be unfavorable for the establishment of the new class's authority. Besides, the destruction of private ownership was necessary for the economic transformation of nations. The new class obtains its power, privileges, ideology, and its customs from one specific form of ownership—collective ownership—which the class administers and distributes in the name of the nation and society.

The new class maintains that ownership derives from a designated social relationship. This is the relationship between the monopolists of administration, who constitute a narrow and closed stratum, and the mass of producers (farmers, workers, and intelligentsia) who have no rights. But that is not all, since the communist bureaucracy also has complete monopolistic control over material assets.

Every substantive change in the social relationship between those who monopolize administration and those who work is inevitably reflected in the ownership relationship. Social and political relations and ownership—the totalitarianism of government and the monopoly of ownership—are being more fully brought into accord in communism than in any other political system.

To divest communists of their ownership rights would be to abolish them as a class. To compel them to relinquish their other social powers, so that workers may participate in sharing the profits of their work—which capitalists have had to permit as a result of strikes and parliamentary action—would mean that communists were being deprived of their monopoly over property, ideology, and government. This would be the beginning of democracy and freedom in communism, the end of communist monopolism and totalitarianism. Until this happens, there can be no indication that important, fundamental changes are taking place in communist systems, at least not in the eyes of men who think seriously about social progress.

The ownership privileges of the new class and membership in that class are the privileges of *administration*. This privilege extends from state administration and the administration of economic enterprises to that of sports and humanitarian organizations. Political, party, or so-called general leadership is executed by the core. This position of leadership carries privileges with it. In his *Stalin au pouvoir*, published in Paris in 1951, Orlov states that the average pay of a worker in the U.S.S.R. in 1935 was 1,800 rubles annually, while the pay and allowances of the secretary of a rayon committee amounted to 45,000 rubles annually. The situation has changed since then for both workers and party functionaries, but the essence

remains the same. Other authors have arrived at the same conclusions. Discrepancies between the pay of workers and party functionaries are extreme; this could not be hidden from persons visiting the U.S.S.R. or other communist countries in the past few years.

Other systems, too, have their professional politicians. One can think well or ill of them, but they must exist. Society cannot live without a state or a government, and therefore it cannot live without those who fight for it.

However, there are fundamental differences between professional politicians in other systems and in the communist system. In extreme cases, politicians in other systems use the government to secure privileges for themselves and their cohorts, or to favor the economic interests of one social stratum or another. The situation is different with the communist system where the power and the government are identical with the use, enjoyment, and disposition of almost all the nation's goods. He who grabs power grabs privileges and indirectly grabs property. Consequently, in communism, power or politics as a profession is the ideal of those who have the desire or the prospect of living as parasites at the expense of others.

Membership in the Communist party before the revolution meant sacrifice. Being a professional revolutionary was one of the highest honors. Now that the party has consolidated its power, party membership means that one belongs to a privileged class. And at the core of the party are the all-powerful exploiters and masters.

For a long time the communist revolution and the communist system have been concealing their real nature. The emergence of the new class has been concealed under socialist phraseology and, more important, under the new collective forms of property ownership. The so-called socialist ownership is a disguise for the real ownership by the political bureaucracy. And in the beginning this bureaucracy was in a hurry to complete industrialization, and hid its class composition under that guise.

No class is established by deliberate design, even though its ascent is accompanied by an organized and conscious struggle. This holds true for the new class in communism, but it also embodies some special characteristics. Since the hold of the new class on economic life and on the social structure was fairly precarious, and since it was fated to arise within a specific party, it required the highest possible degree of organization, as well as a consistent effort to present a united, balanced, class-conscious front. This is why the new class is better organized and more highly class conscious than any class in recorded history.

This proposition is true only if it is taken relatively; consciousness and organizational structure being taken in relation to the outside world and to other classes, powers, and social forces. No other class in history has been as cohesive and singleminded in defending itself and in controlling that which it holds—collective and monopolistic ownership and totalitarian authority.

On the other hand, the new class is also the most deluded and least conscious of itself. Every private capitalist or feudal lord was conscious of the fact that he belonged to a special discernible social category. He usually believed that this category was destined to make the human race happy and that without this category chaos and general ruin would ensue. A communist member of the new class also believes that without his party, society would regress and founder. But he is not



conscious of the fact that he belongs to a new ownership class, for he does not consider himself an owner and does not take into account the special privileges he enjoys. He thinks that he belongs to a group with prescribed ideas, aims, attitudes, and roles. That is all he sees. He cannot see that at the same time he belongs to a special social category: the *ownership* class.

The new class instinctively feels that national goods are, in fact, its property, and that even the terms *socialist*, *social*, and *state* property denote a general legal fiction. The new class also thinks that any breach of its totalitarian authority might imperil its ownership. Consequently, the new class opposes *any* type of freedom, ostensibly for the purpose of preserving "socialist" ownership. Criticism of the new class's monopolistic administration of property generates the fear of a possible loss of power. The new class is sensitive to these criticisms and demands depending on the extent to which they expose the manner in which it rules and holds power.

This is an important contradiction. Property is legally considered social and national property. But, in actuality, a single group manages it in its own interest. The discrepancy between legal and actual conditions continuously results in obscure and abnormal social and economic relationships. It also means that the words of the leading group do not correspond to its actions and that all actions result in strengthening its property holdings and its political position.

This contradiction cannot be resolved without jeopardizing the class's position. Other ruling, property-owning classes could not resolve this contradiction either, unless forcefully deprived of monopoly of power and ownership. Wherever there has been a higher degree of freedom for society as a whole, the ruling classes have been forced, in one way or another, to renounce monopoly of ownership. The reverse is true also: Wherever monopoly of ownership has been impossible, freedom, to some degree, has become inevitable.

In defending its authority, the ruling class must execute reforms every time it becomes obvious to the people that the class is treating national property as its own. Such reforms are not proclaimed as being what they really are but, rather, as part of the "further development of socialism" and "socialist democracy." The groundwork for reforms is laid when the discrepancy mentioned above becomes public. From the historical point of view the new class is forced to fortify its authority and ownership constantly, even though it is running away from the truth. It must constantly demonstrate how it is successfully creating a society of happy people, all of whom enjoy equal rights and have been freed of every type of exploitation. The new class cannot avoid falling continuously into profound internal contradictions; for in spite of its historical origin it is not able to make its ownership lawful, and it cannot renounce ownership without undermining itself. Consequently, it is forced to try to justify its increasing authority, invoking abstract and unreal purposes.

This is a class whose power over men is the most complete known to history. For this reason it is a class with very limited views, views which are shaky because they are based on falsehoods. Closely knit, isolated, and in complete authority, the new class must unrealistically evaluate its own role and that of the people around it.

Having achieved industrialization, the new class can now do nothing more than strengthen its brute force and pillage the people. It ceases to create. Its spiritual heritage is overtaken by darkness.

While the revolution can be considered an epochal accomplishment of the new



class, its methods of rule fill some of the most shameful pages in history. Men will marvel at the grandiose ventures it accomplished and will be ashamed of the means it used.

When the new class leaves the historical scene—and this must happen—there will be less sorrow over its passing than there was for any other class before it. Smothering everything except what suited its ego, it has condemned itself to failure and shameful ruin.