

*Yugoslavia's  
future in world  
closely tied  
to post-Tito  
stability*

### Post-Tito era

It would appear that Tito was finally acknowledging his mortality as he began a round of visits in 1977-78 to major countries to try to insure Yugoslavia's continued viability after he left the political scene. The question remains, will Yugoslavia be able to cope successfully with the changing world situation when Tito departs, or will the world situation, and Yugoslavia's own internal problems, prove overwhelming? More precisely, is Yugoslavia's return to the Soviet bloc, in an ideological — or any other — sense, imminent, despite its own predilection for nonalignment? The answers to these questions depend, of course, on what Soviet intentions are towards Yugoslavia in the post-Tito era.

The question of Yugoslavia's future in world affairs is closely tied to the degree of internal stability Yugoslavia can maintain after Tito — the major unifying force in the country — departs. The Soviet Union, which most Yugoslavs consider to be the real threat to an independent Yugoslavia, might welcome a reawakening of nationality problems in the post-Tito era. Such a situation could allow it influence over Yugoslavia's development. Conservative forces in Yugoslavia itself might welcome this if they believed that the U.S.S.R. was the only country that could protect Yugoslavia's Communist regime against a liberalizing trend and its federal system against too rapid a movement towards confederation (trends of the 1960s that could again rise should over-enthusiastic reformers and nationalists gain sufficient power).

It seems more likely, however, that the long-term Soviet interest would not be in a break-up of Yugoslavia (though the Soviet Union has been accused of intriguing with Croatian nationalists, Bulgarians over Macedonia, and pro-Soviet groups within Yugoslavia itself). The Soviet Union would probably prefer a weak but unified Yugoslavia. Such a potentially-pliable Yugoslavia would allow the Soviet Union to manoeuvre for a larger influence in Yugoslav policy planning as well as for naval and air facilities on the Adriatic with access to the Mediterranean. If, however, nationality problems arose within Yugoslavia, the Kremlin could justifiably worry about the stability of the historically conflict-ridden Balkans and the effect on Eastern-bloc countries. Furthermore, a civil war in Yugoslavia might invite super-power intervention, which would endanger peace in the rest of Europe.

If these nationality problems in-

creased in Yugoslavia to the point where there was a succession struggle, peace in the Balkans and prospective *détente* in Europe could be threatened. For instance, if a Croat opposition to Yugoslav leadership asked for United Nations protection for an independent existence (a proposal made by some Croats in 1971), the Soviet Union would probably see this as a danger to its vital interests and become involved. The United States, too, would almost certainly be interested in the consequences of such a development. Another possibility that could call forth Soviet assistance would be nationality problems that had become so severe as to portend an anti-socialist revolt in Yugoslavia.

In a *détente* situation, the situation could read a little differently. *Détente* and a resulting lessening of tensions could also make the achievement of security more difficult for Yugoslavia. As a country becoming increasingly important in the eyes of the super-powers because of its geo-strategic location, especially in regard to the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean areas, Yugoslavia promises to be a subject of much superpower discussion.

### Non-intervention

Early indications of the *détente* process suggested that the super-powers were quite capable of negotiating with each other to insure their own interests and return for non-intervention in the interests of the other. If Yugoslavia were claimed by the Soviet Union as a vital interest, the United States might be tempted to ask for concessions in another area important to it in return for "hands-off" or "look the other way" policy in regard to Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia's future might thus be taken out of its own hands, as its importance as a great-power pawn increased. Or a *détente* agreement between the super-powers could conceivably — though not very probably — result in an eventual military withdrawal of the American presence from Europe. Yugoslavia, as part of its nonalignment posture, is anti-bloc and should therefore be unrestrictedly pleased at the possibility of disengagement in Europe; nevertheless such a move by the United States would leave the Soviet Union in a better position to re-absorb Yugoslavia into the socialist bloc, if it so desired, should the countervailing force of American troops be absent.

A possible alternative scenario would be little more pleasing to Yugoslavia: Soviet disengagement from Europe through a devolution of power from the Kremlin to the East European regimes could cause