

Fall 1957

National Communism and Soviet Strategy, by Dinko A. Tomasic

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Recommended Citation

Cicak, Fedor I. (1957) "National Communism and Soviet Strategy, by Dinko A. Tomasic," *Indiana Law Journal*: Vol. 33 : Iss. 1 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/ilj/vol33/iss1/8>

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NATIONAL COMMUNISM AND SOVIET STRATEGY. By Dinko A. Tomasic. Washington, D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1957. Pp. viii, 222. \$4.50.

Europeans residing in this country frequently express their bewilderment at American political life. Understanding the differences between the two political parties is particularly difficult for them. Their European experiences and concepts just do not fit in, and the pattern present in the European dilemma between conservative and liberal, right and left, Christian and Socialist, democratic and authoritarian offers little help. The nature of political disagreement, or the essence of political conflict between the two parties in America, eludes a foreigner's understanding. Persons in this country experience similar problems in understanding the political culture and conflicts that inhere in political systems differing from their own, particularly those of the Communist society. These difficulties are accelerated when a political conflict arises within the Communist society—such as the one between the Communist power-center in Moscow and the Communist regional power-center in

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the Balkans. The need to understand this conflict becomes something more than academic curiosity when one considers that American taxpayers have contributed one and one half billion dollars to Yugoslavia in economic and military aid.¹

Professor Tomasic's book most adequately meets the need for an understanding of political conflict in the Communist society. His analysis centers around the conflict within the Communist movement brought to the fore by the split between the Yugoslav Communist Party and Moscow. This conflict, however, is treated in a broad context of its causes and impact such as the structure of the Communist parties and states; the dependence of these parties and states on Moscow; the role of Communist strategy and tactics; the application of this strategy in Yugoslavia; the physiognomy of the Yugoslav Party and its ethnical and psychological factors.

The case of the Yugoslav Communist Party is not an isolated phenomenon of political conflict within the Communist orbit. Tensions provoked by the pressing power-center in Moscow have caused rebellions early in the history of the Communist state life. For example, Tomasic cites the rebellions in 1924 and 1932 in Outer Mongolia and the silent conflict between Stalin and Mao Tse Tung. The only outstanding characteristic of these rebellions is that they were neither spectacular nor successful. These and similar challenging internal forces have been silenced by Moscow through suppression and concealment. Thus, these revolts did not jeopardize the monolithic unity of international Communism or the indisputable leadership of Moscow.

In contrast to these previous power conflicts in the Communist orbit, the Yugoslav case is different for this conflict has been both spectacular and successful, ending with defeat of the central authority of the Communist Party in Moscow.² Here, Stalin and the leadership of Moscow were in a position where neither open force nor concealment could be expediently applied. The political struggle between the two Communist parties has been performed on a lighted stage before the world audience. The audience included, besides the cadres of both Parties, the Parties of other iron curtain countries, as well as the socialist parties,

1. An estimate covering the years 1948-55. *Time*, June 6, 1955, p. 30.

2. This conflict may be segregated into two general periods: (1) The first period of the conflict was introduced with expulsion of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia from the Cominform in June, 1948—this period could be regarded as closed with Stalin's death. (2) In the second period, normalization of relations between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia was sought. Soon after Stalin's death in 1953 and during 1954, border incidents, mutual recrimination and adverse propaganda ceased. In May, 1955 Nikita S. Krushchev visited Belgrad in an attempt to mend the rift. As a result of negotiations during this latter period, present relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union are characterized by a renewed spirit of close cooperation.

neutrals and opponents of Communism. All these have been given a general impression of a definite breakdown in the leadership of Moscow on the one hand and the decomposition of the Communist world, on the other.

Professor Tomasic recognizes that this impression is fairly understandable in the first period of the conflict. However, in view of the circumstances arising later, this popular impression has proved erroneous, thus the need arises for a wholly new appraisal of the situation. These circumstances are: (1) the change of leadership in Moscow after Stalin's death and (2) the persistency of the Yugoslav Communist Party in its adherence to Marxism-Leninism. These two factors have rendered possible a new type of unity in the Communist world. This unity has been achieved through the revision of the inter-party relations which has made possible the development of new concepts of strategy and tactics. According to Tomasic, the Communist world has come out of this Yugoslav conflict more flexible in its strategy for the world conquest but with no less determination and preparation. Let us now examine the details of Professor Tomasic's analysis of this conflict.

Tomasic sees the essence of the conflict as occurring in the divergency of views concerning the strategy and tactics of Communist movements between Moscow and the Yugoslav party leaders.

Lenin, in planning the universal victory of Communism, directed his attention toward a careful elaboration of adequate tools for the accomplishment of this aim. Lenin assumed that the universal victory cannot be achieved without revolutionary, *i.e.* military, strife. Consequently, he established a new type of party, equipped and trained for such conquest. As an inevitable strategical device of the Party, Lenin established a central place of command, a general staff whose function was to coordinate all available forces that could be mustered against the enemy on a global scale. The important question then was: who would be in command of the international Communist movement, and where would the central command be located. This was decided by the history of the Communist Party itself.

The success of the Russian October Revolution firmly entrenched Russia and Moscow as the world revolutionary center. On the basis of this event, the Communists of Russia contended that the Soviet Union was the "Fatherland of Socialism"—the lawful general headquarters of the coming world revolution. Thus the economic as well as military resources of the wide, former Czarist empire, were mobilized to support the international revolutionary movement and to direct the Communist Parties and auxiliary organizations throughout the world. Moscow be-

came the mainspring of Communist moral fortitude and revolutionary fervor. It inspired a faithful and almost religious awe from the usually weak and meaningless parties, often persecuted and underground. Because of this particular character of the Communist Party, the rule of the general headquarters was not confined to its strictly military and political directives, but also took in hand the interpretation of Marxist theory and philosophy. Consequently, the supreme authority in Moscow was obeyed not only in its decisions concerning global or local strategy and tactics, but its pronouncements on all ideological questions were considered infallible.

This attachment to Moscow was, on the other hand, rooted in the very nature of the allegiance to the Communist Party as it was conceived by Lenin. Allegiance to the Party called for a complete break with the former religion, philosophy and nationality of its members. Particularly in the sphere of political and national allegiance of its members, the Party demanded replacement of the old, bourgeois, national principle of territorial authority with the new, universal and unifying principle of personal, hierarchiacal authority of the Party order. Thus by Lenin's concept of the Party's unity, the relations between the Party power-center in Moscow and the Party units throughout the world were regulated. In this structure there was no place for doubts about supremacy and subordination. With this ordering of the Party, the monolithic unity was upheld and total control over the different national units was successfully exercised until World War II.

Before World War II the whole weight of the Soviet Union, which was then the only Communist power of significance, stood behind this Leninist concept of party unity. But after World War II this objective power situation changed. The orbit of Communist states spread over one third of the earth's surface encompassing 900 million people. Collectively, non-Russian Communist states have surpassed the human, economic and military potential of the USSR. The process of Communist absorption of different areas varied. This absorption did not always take the form of a simple conquest, as was the case in the three small Baltic states, or in the case of Hungary and Rumania. There were different degrees of contribution among the native Communist Parties. In accordance with that, the revolutionary merits, *i.e.*, credit for the conquest, became a new factor. This was particularly true in such countries as China and Yugoslavia. In both cases, the national Party leaders, Mao and Tito, could claim with good right that the victory and the correlative acquisition of power was not the result of blind obedience to the Party power-center in Moscow, but oftentimes, the result of clear and per-

sistent opposition to it.

To these factors one more must be added; one which has particular significance in the case of Yugoslavia. That is the sphere of international power configuration.³ Between World War I and II, the whole of Eastern Europe, including Yugoslavia, belonged to the Anglo-French sphere of political influence. Britain attempted to maintain this influence during the war. After Hitler's assault on Yugoslavia, a government in exile was founded with its seat in London. From the remnants of the Yugoslav army and with the semi-private Serbian military organization of the Chetniks, an armed resistance was organized and supported by London. The Communist Party, on the other hand, and its general staff in Moscow, had interests of their own in Eastern Europe. One of the instruments of these interests was the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia organized its own guerrillas after June 1941. This complicated the situation in the sense that military conflict between the two competing guerilla movements was unavoidable but the two protecting Allies, Russia and Great Britain, had a mutual interest in avoiding, at least for the time being, any reciprocal conflict. The Soviets under Stalin's leadership were particularly anxious not to provoke the British. The second or third front in Europe was pending, and its location was of considerable importance to the Soviets. The consequence of this situation was that the Soviets pretended non-interference in the internal situation of Yugoslavia and insisted on the independence of Tito's actions. This situation was highly advantageous to Tito. He succeeded in preventing the British from landing on the Balkan peninsula and at the same time avoided Soviet military occupation of Yugoslavia. The result was the strengthening of his own position.

The following factors suggested the need for a change in inter-Communist relations: (1) the change in the proportion of human and material potential between Russians and non-Russians; (2) the variety of ways utilized to spread Communism; (3) the differences in strength and position of the native Parties; (4) strategic mistakes of Moscow leadership and the revolutionary success of local leaders; (5) the given international power configuration. Yet these objective components are not sufficient to explain satisfactorily the dramatic events of the Yugoslav conflict with Moscow, its phases and perspectives. To make this conflict as transparent as possible, Tomasic undertakes a detailed developmental analysis of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. He presents the development of the CPY with a great insight into the Party's

3. Professor Tomasic analyzes this factor in c. V, *British-Russian Rivalry in Eastern Europe*.

structural, operational, and developmental problems. He does this with a rare and detailed knowledge of Party personalities and events, bringing out, in addition, a great amount of documentary material of primary importance. One of the most original aspects of his book is the interpretation of the development of the CPY and its leaders, as well as the conflict with Moscow, in the light of this theory of personality and culture.

The basic tenet of the theory is that in conjunction with the local geographic conditions and techniques of economic production depending on them, two divergent cultures have come into existence in the Balkans. One is that of the migratory herdsmen of the Dinaric mountains. Their habitat is the mountainous area of central Yugoslavia that runs parallel with the Adriatic Sea. The second is that of the sedentary tillers of the soil in the lowland of the northwest. These contrasting cultures determine two different types of human characteristics. Thus the herdsmen's social unit, "Kuca," contains autocratic and individualistic traits. Conversely, the tillers' basic social unit, "Zadruga," discloses democratic and collectivistic traits. These different cultures result in two types of personalities with distinct psychological characteristics. The dominant psychological traits found in the Dinaric area, particularly in the regions of Lika, Krajina, Kordun, Western Bosnia, Herzegovina and in the major parts of Montenegro consist of a strongly developed sense of honor and reputation, desire to do heroic deeds and readiness for self-sacrifice. The demand for social justice and individual freedom is very strong. At the same time, however, inclination toward vindictiveness and violence is also present. In the personalities of this type, emotional instability prevails and sense of proportion is lacking.

The peasant farmers from the northwest plain, like their mountain brethren, are renowned for their fighting spirit in behalf of justice and against injustice, but have vastly different emotional reactions. The peasant farmers rely on collective rather than individual action in matters of common interest. They are apt to adopt mass passive resistance that could be prolonged indefinitely. Although well-known for their stubbornness and slyness, they are disinclined to go to extremes in their behavior if the adversary is willing to meet them halfway.

Professor Tomasic contends that the first psychological type is dominant among the majority of the Party members. The predominance of this type of personality is due to the guerilla movement. During the guerilla movement, many Dinaric mountaineers joined Party units. But before the guerilla involvement, there were young students from the Dinaric area (Montenegro and Bosnia) who provided the national universities in Zagreb and Beograd with a hard core of Party leaders and

activists. In short, the Communist Party with its militant spirit found the most favorable response in this aggressive type of personality. Later on, when the conflict with Moscow broke out, it was this same group that contributed most vigorously to its dramatic development.

After World War II, the Party's power-center in Moscow endeavored to establish inter-Party relations according to Lenin's concepts. This attempt met definite obstacles in Yugoslavia. Along with the changes in the objective power situation, the psychological factors appeared as a major obstacle in the realization of the usual concepts of inter-Party relations. The great majority of the Yugoslav Party members and leaders considered themselves as having achieved the victory in war without Russian help and in spite of her obstructions. There was a strong tendency to overestimate themselves and underestimate others. In the course of this self-glorification and self-dramatization, they developed a provocative and arrogant behavior not only toward the other Communist Parties in Eastern Europe but also toward the Russian military and technical advisers. Instead of awe and deference due the representatives of the Party power-center in Moscow, they repeatedly expressed their feelings of superiority. Mentally captured by their own grandeur and self-conceit, they were not hesitant to assert openly that through their contribution to the success of the *coup* of Belgrad in March 28, 1941,⁴ they had forced Hitler to postpone his invasion of Russia and thus prevented the Germans from occupying Moscow, and so on. When Moscow's endeavor to establish "adequate" inter-Party relations failed, *i.e.* when the Communist Party of Yugoslavia prevented direct control of Party, state and army machinery, the conflict broke out into the open. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform. However, after Stalin's death, Moscow began to reconsider the possibility of a new concept of Party inter-relation and the two conflicting Parties again approached each other. The determining factor in Yugoslavia's action was the predominant role which Tito's personality played.

Unlike the majority of his followers, Joseph Broz Tito comes from lowland peasant stock in northwestern Croatia. He thus has the psychological traits of balance, endurance, sense of compromise and slyness. These characteristics have made Tito indispensable to the otherwise unruly and uncompromising members who form the core of the Party. These same qualities, along with the expediency of the situation, have

4. On March 27-28, a group of air force officers, under the command of General Dushan Simovich, overthrew the government, dismissed the Regency, forced Prince Paul into exile and proclaimed King Peter Karadjordjevic of age.

given Tito authority and significance in the Party and have aided him in meeting the new compromise advanced by Moscow after Stalin's death.

Political literature dealing with the different aspects of Eastern Europe do not always abound in outstanding contributions. The explanation for this is fairly easy. Eastern Europe is a relatively small area with many twisted problems. These problems have their origin in the diversity of nations, languages and religions which are the result of disquiet centuries of political conflict between ascendance and fall of dominant imperial powers. The difficulty in writing an objective and balanced book on this part of the world is as immense as the difficulty in establishing peace and order in this area. Tomasic's book almost approaches the ideal, at least insofar as Yugoslavia and her present situation is concerned. Under his skillful hand, a number of ramifications of the Eastern Europe situation are lifted and analyzed for the first time, *e.g.*, the Party's strategic plans and their application in the area, human materials and their cultural background and the psychology of personalities involved.⁵

It may be said, however, that Professor Tomasic has not given one important point full consideration. In his explanation of the conflict, he has confined his analysis to the psychological determinants of the personalities and has overlooked their rationality. Yet, the significance of this factor seems very important. The rationality of Marxist-Leninist doctrine is an undeniable fact. As such it gives by itself the appeal of Communism. It may be conceded that the Marxist-Leninist doctrine was of little or no importance to the bulk of "warlike but illiterate and semi-literate"⁶ mountaineers who entered into the partisan guerilla movement and subsequently into the Communist Party. Yet, the importance of the rational acceptance of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy on the part of the Party leaders is well illustrated in a recent book by Milovan Djilas.⁷

Djilas belonged to the generation of students caught in the turmoil of Yugoslav national universities in the '30's. The various other political parties utilized radical and extremist methods similar to those of the Communist Party. These other parties, equally as well as the Communist Party, should have appealed to students with Djilas' cultural background. Yet, they chose Marxism. The motive for their choice must have been something other than the psychological congeniality of the Communist Party. Djilas' motive is clearly pointed out in his recent book. In

5. See c. II, *The National and Social Base of Communism of Yugoslavia*; c. III, *Communist World Conspiracy and Rise of Tito*; c. IV, *Cultural Background of Yugoslavia's Civil War*.

6. P. 113.

7. DJILAS, *THE NEW CLASS* 214 (1957).

spite of the disappointment he met with Communist reality, Djilas still persists in his attachment to the Marxist philosophy, its interpretation of society and its humanism. He, therefore retains a basic pattern of thinking which is of dialectical materialism. In other words, the rational appeal of the Communistic philosophy is one of the main reasons for some people's adherence to the Party. Djilas' case is not an exception. It has been proved that the great majority of the Communists who rejected the Communist reality still maintain the basic tenets of the Communist philosophy.

The above-mentioned point, however, does not have a direct bearing to the main topic of Professor Tomasic's book but is significant as regards the reason for the adherence of many individuals to Communistic philosophy even after rejecting a disillusioning Communistic reality. Professor Tomasic's main topic is the clarification of the background of the recent conflict in Communist society and in this regard, his book is a real contribution and should prove most enlightening to the American reader.

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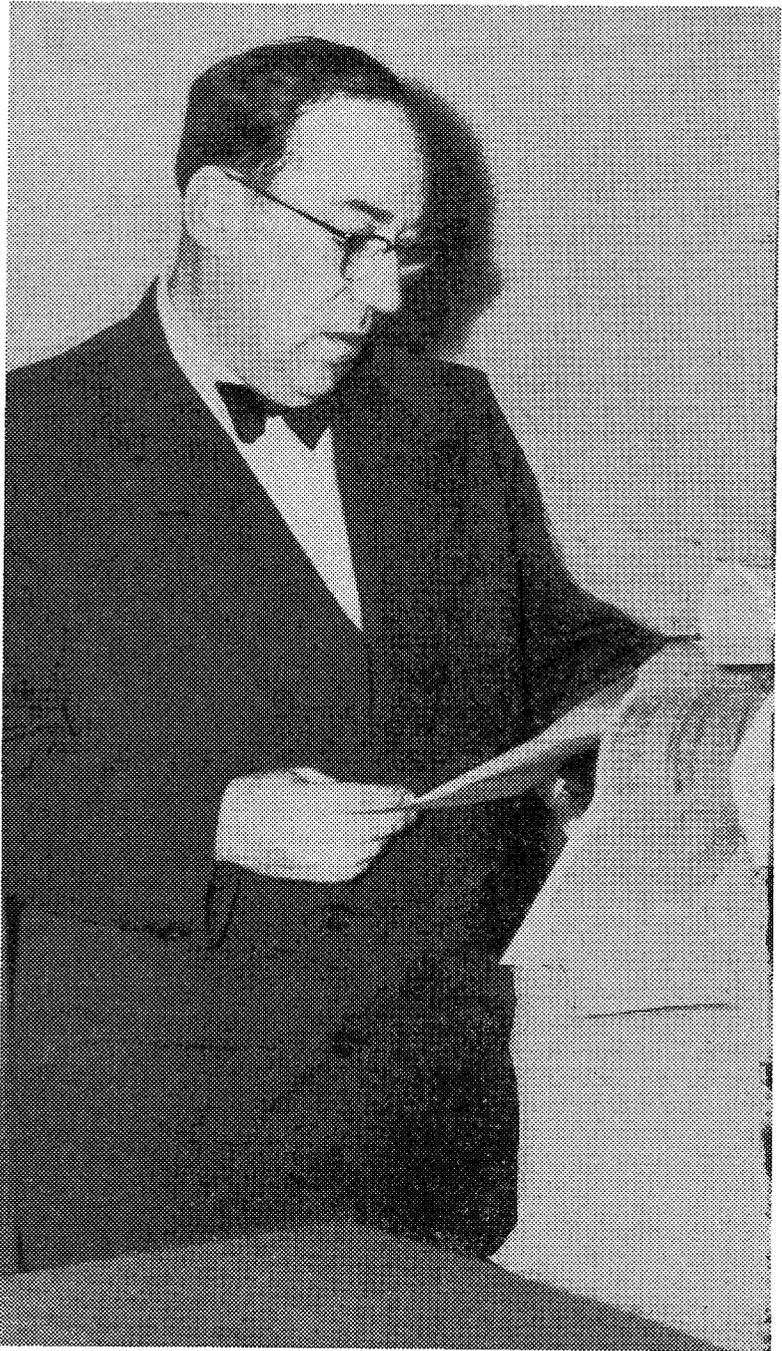
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