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DIRECTORATE OF
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WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

Yugoslavia: The Politics of Succession

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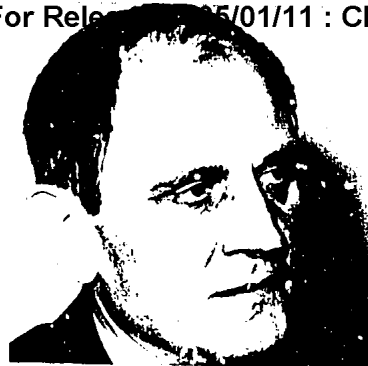
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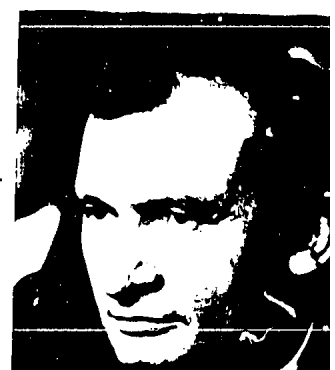
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Yugoslavia:
The Politics of
Succession



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The succession in Yugoslavia will not be easy. The problems of a developing nation balanced between East and West and plagued with ethnic hatreds will compound the difficulties when President Tito passes from the scene. With an eye toward helping his countrymen surmount these obstacles, Tito has created a system of collective leadership in both the party and state. A hybrid mixture of Western liberalism and Communism, this system is anathema to the Soviets, an enigma to the West, and not really understood by all the Yugoslavs.

In fleshing out Tito's blueprint for governing, Yugoslavia has suffered challenges and setbacks, notably the bout with Croatian nationalism last year. With each challenge to date the system seems to have matured and gained resilience. In the background stands the military officer corps, which considers itself the guardian of the unity of Yugoslavia. The armed forces have repeatedly expressed a willingness to step in should the federation's existence be endangered and will be ready to do so in the succession period.

As a result of years of carefully planned personnel shifts, a large number of well-trained leaders with broad experience are available when Tito leaves. In spite of personality conflicts, animosities, and disagreements, most of them recognize that their home republics and provinces have no future outside the federation. On balance, they probably can be expected, even after Tito's steadying hand is removed, to pull together and prove that Yugoslavia is not just the impossible dream of an aging dictator.

Tito and His System

Tito has sought to build a nation-state where only a facade existed before and to ensure that the Yugoslavia he has built continues after him. The postwar record of accomplishments is impressive. Tito, in addition to defying Stalin, parlayed ambiguous terms such as "self-management" and "nonalignment" into political concepts that worked, for a while at least.

A crafty and gregarious self-made man, Tito possesses rare political talents and skills. He is dogmatic and can be arrogant, but Tito has keen instinct for sensing danger, knows when self-control is needed and, no less important, how to neutralize his opposition. Most significant for Yugoslavia's future, however, is his masterful ability to employ the skills of those around him.

Critics of the aging leader and his system argue that Yugoslavia is just a castle in the air that will be there only so long as he is around. Recognizing the problems that lie ahead, Tito has conscientiously sought to lay a solid foundation for his nation's future. He has created collective executive bodies in both the party and government in which genuine debate and give-and-take have become part of the decision-making process. Aware that collective governing bodies are only as good as the men who occupy them, Tito has instituted a system of rotating all major party and government assignments at two- to three-year intervals. This accomplishes two things: it prevents a potential political rival from emerging to challenge Tito's power and authority, and it brings the nation's most talented leaders to Belgrade from the republics and provinces for the benefit of the federation.

The net result is that Yugoslavia has a reservoir of well-trained men prepared to take over and operate the system Tito passes to them. Most of these men are equally adroit in handling party and state affairs. Many have held diplomatic posts in the East and West.

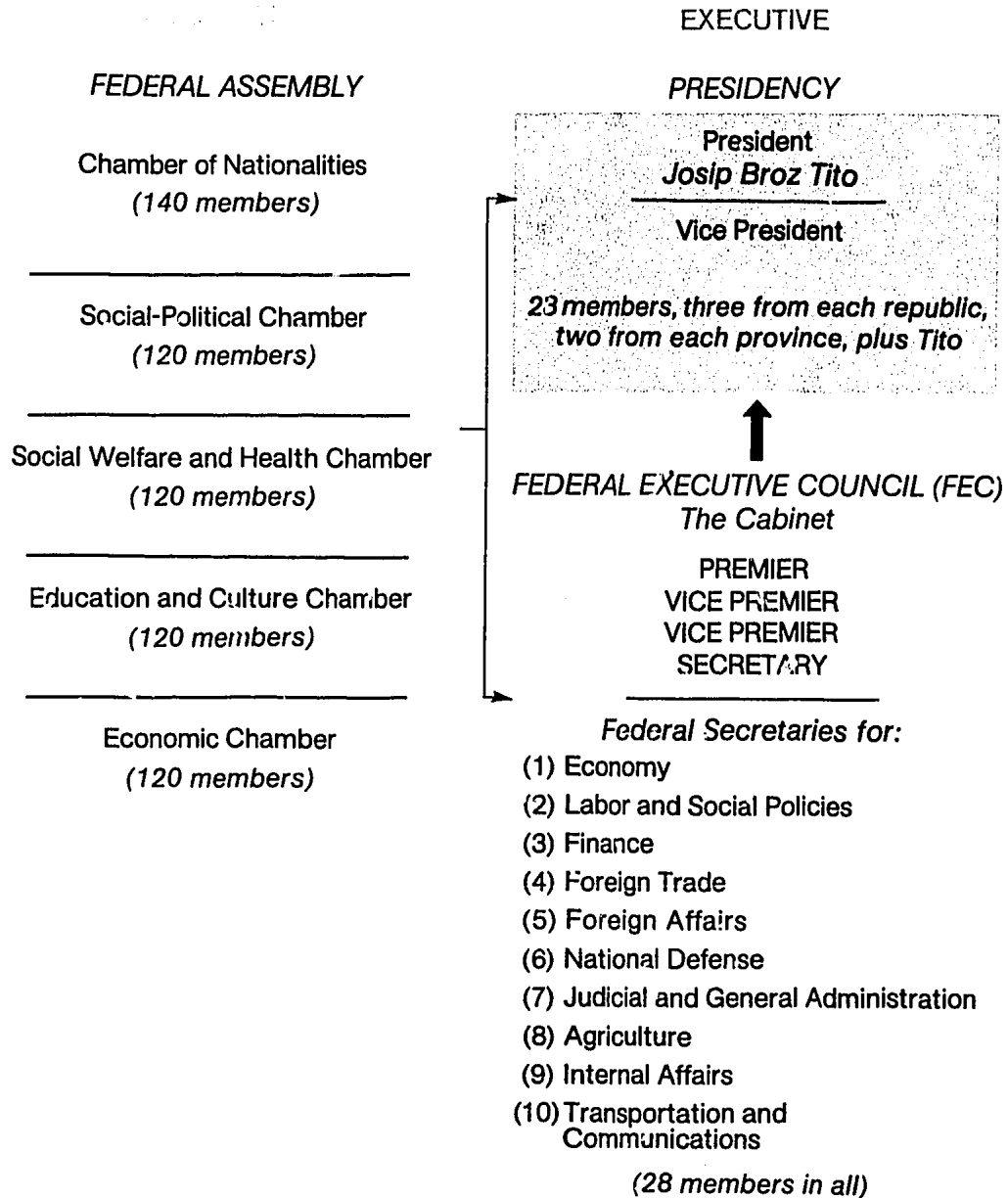
The Party

The real crunch in the succession period will, of course, come in the party. It is the party that will determine how power is divided up and exercised after Tito. In 1969, Tito created a party executive bureau, designed to bring together in Belgrade the best talent available from the center and from each republic and province. It was also designed to give an equal voice to Yugoslavia's various ethnic groups at the highest decision-making level.

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Executive and Legislative Branches of Yugoslavia



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In three turbulent years, the executive bureau has undergone extensive reorganization. Today, it is the collective body responsible for taking much of the party work off Tito's shoulders; eventually, it is expected to provide the Yugoslav leadership in the succession period.

Today, the bureau is made up of eight men, one from each of the six republics and one from each of the two autonomous provinces. The average age of its members is 50.6 years; four of them are lawyers or economists, one is a teacher, one a veterinarian, one a philosopher and one has a background in political science. They bring together a wide range of experience and expertise. Fadil Hodza, for example, is a specialist in Albanian affairs. He is trusted and well liked by the vast majority of Yugoslavia's nearly one million Albanians. Kiro Gligorov is the official spokesman for the nation's complicated economic reform.

On present form the person most likely to take up Tito's party mantle is the young and energetic Stane Dolanc. A Slovenian, Dolanc has both organizational and ideological competence. He is one of the original executive bureau members and has gained Tito's confidence not only through hard work and devotion to the party, but also through his ability to tailor party action quickly to Tito's wishes. On numerous occasions Dolanc has spoken for Tito. Last December, for example, Dolanc went on nationwide TV to explain the actions taken against the Croatian leadership. He remained in the forefront throughout the turbulence of December and January, translating Tito's words into action. Dolanc's critics call him a hatchet man. Friends respond that he genuinely believes in the need for a strong party capable of holding Yugoslavia together. He does not, as some critics imply, advocate a return to Soviet-style centralist rule. Like many of his fellow Slovenes, Dolanc is greatly concerned that the centrifugal forces of regionalism endanger the federation.

Edvard Kardelj, the party's intellectual is not likely to succeed Tito, but will wield considerable influence on the next party chief. He is the last of Tito's close, wartime colleagues to remain in prominence. Kardelj is the father of the nation's

peculiar form of socialism, the guiding light behind Belgrade's nonaligned posture, and the chief architect of Yugoslavia's current decentralizing constitutional reforms.

The Government

Two years ago Tito astonished the faithful in Zagreb with a call for a collective presidency. Speaking with candor, Tito said the time was ripe to prepare for the succession.

"There should be a collective president in Yugoslavia which bears full responsibility for what is happening," he said. "This is the only solution to preserve our unity."

PRESIDENT OF THE LCY



Presidium
52 Members

Executive Bureau
8 Members



Party Congress

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Under Tito's new scheme, others should begin to lift the burden of leadership from him, teamwork and cooperation would be the rule, Yugoslavia's diverse nationalities would be equal, no one group would dominate another. In this manner Tito set in motion a radical reform designed to give all the republics and provinces a

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sense of equal participation in the highest levels of government.

Tito's collective presidency is modeled after the Swiss. Twenty-three men make up the collective presidency—himself, three representatives from each of the country's six republics, and two from each of the two autonomous provinces. Each member of the presidency is charged with representing his local interests and, in addition, helps run the government.

With the creation of the collective presidency, the position of vice president was established. The post is significant because the incumbent automatically becomes caretaker president

Rotation of the Vice Presidency

1971-72 Krste Crvenkovski, a Macedonian
 1972-73 Rato Dugonjic, a Serb from Bosnia-Hercegovina
 1973-74 A Slovene
 1974-75 A Serb
 1975-76 A Croat
 1976-77 A Montenegrin
 1977-78 A Vojvodinian

The rotation will start over in 1978 and an Albanian will not hold down the post until 1985. Presumably, once Tito is gone the titular post of president will rotate in a similar fashion.

when Tito departs. The vice presidency rotates annually among the presidency's members according to a predetermined pattern. First to be vice president was a Macedonian, Krste Crvenkovski, who served from August 1971 to August 1972. He is well educated, aggressive, and intelligent, and, during his tour as vice president, clearly established himself as one who will play a key role in the succession period. Were Tito to die this year, the caretaker president would be the current vice president, Rato Dugonjic, a Serb from Bosnia-Hercegovina. Dugonjic has experience in internal and foreign affairs as well as in youth work, an area of prime concern for the regime.

Another feature of Tito's new system of governance, Yugoslav leaders are expected to substitute persuasion for coercion and to be practical instead of pedantic. They must be articulate, playing to their audiences and maintaining a good public image. Ideology must not stand in the way of getting the job done. They must be politicians more akin to those in the West than in the East.

Foreign Minister Mirko Tepavac, Finance Minister Janko Smole and Vice Premier Anton Vratsusa are examples of the new breed. They will play important roles in running Yugoslavia after Tito. The first two are exceptions to the rotation policy and are serving their second consecutive terms in office. They have gained respect both at home and abroad.

Of the three, the most ambitious is Vratsusa. An outspoken supporter of Yugoslavia's self-managing socialism and nonaligned foreign policy, the sheer force of his personality assures him a role in the post-Tito politicking. Smole, a former deputy director of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, is well known and liked in international financial circles. His arrogance in dealing with fellow Yugoslavs, however, could prove his undoing in the politics of succession. Tepavac is probably the most liberal of the three. His sometimes unorthodox ideas are reinforced at home by his actress wife Renata. She is a far cry from the Mrs. Khrushchev stereotype of a Communist leader's wife. This beauty is a theater buff and has lent her name and talents to Belgrade's avant garde theater, Atelje 212. Her poise and charm have been a major asset to Tepavac on his way up.

Although not in the limelight at present, Mijalko Todorovic promises to figure prominently in the succession period. He has been shuffled off to the unpromising job of president, but as a long-time confidant of Tito's, will very likely be back. He captured headlines four years ago with his virulent criticism of the Soviets for occupying Czechoslovakia.

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Yugoslavia's leaders may range from liberal to conservative, but they are united in a belief that the nation's future depends on federation. Nowhere is the federalist feeling stronger than in the military. The armed forces have long been faithful supporters of Tito and his policies. The officer corps has come to view itself as holding a privileged position in the power structure. They were confirmed in this belief last December when Tito sought and obtained

[redacted] endorsement for his move to put down Croatian separatism.

[redacted] No military leader has been more outspoken in opposition to localism and support of federalism than Colonel General Viktor Bubanj, who is clearly going piaces in the armed forces. He is well versed in political and economic affairs, and an aggressive, natural leader. He has been chief of staff since January 1970. In this capacity he frequently sees Western diplomats. He has used these encounters to put out feelers for increased contacts with the West and for possible purchases of Western arms.

Defense Minister Nikola Ljubicic is another military figure who will have a voice in what happens after Tito. He is articulate, and Tito has used him more than once, both at home and abroad, to propagate and defend national policies. Ljubicic is intensely loyal to the federation and would support the politician he felt best able to hold Yugoslavia together. A third military figure whose voice will be heard in the succession period is Colonel General Ivan Miskovic. He has Tito's ear, indeed, he was made special adviser to the President on questions of security in the wake of the Croatian political upheavals. Miskovic's position is strengthened by the fact that his brother Milan is a member of the state presidency. Ivan Miskovic was an intelligence officer back in 1955. Some who have met Miskovic describe him as pro-Soviet. A better description would be that he is politically conservative and harbors strong reservations about the value of, and need for, decentralizing power. His views on running a Communist state are closer to Moscow's than are those of his colleagues, but this should not be over-emphasized.

Problems That Will Live After Tito

Economic rivalries, ethnic animosities and foreign meddling plague Yugoslavia now and will continue to do so in the succession period.

The path of Yugoslavia's recent history is paved with economic problems. The widening gulf between a relatively affluent urban society on the one hand and an agricultural population on the other is a constant irritant. The gap between the relatively well-developed north and west and the depressed south and east, is another critical problem. This regional disparity is a major source of rivalry, distrust and envy. It feeds the nation's ancient and bitter ethnic animosities.

Belgrade has worked hard on overcoming this problem, but it is still there. The government now admits its program of channeling investment funds to backward areas will require a considerable gestation period before it produces results. Regional squabbling will afflict Yugoslavia as long as these economic disparities exist. The problem will not be solved in Tito's lifetime and will be a major concern to those who follow him.

No nation in Europe is more plagued with deep-rooted ethnic hatreds than is Yugoslavia. Tito's leadership and the sheer force of his prestige and personality kept the problem at bay throughout most of the postwar period. Although designed in part to ameliorate these animosities, the freer political climate accompanying Tito's efforts to build for the future has permitted them to be expressed more openly and vigorously. As a result, frictions have increased instead of declined. The latest and most serious example was the political upheaval in Croatia. It showed that, after 27 years in power, Tito had not managed to build a federation in which constituent ethnic groups put aside regional differences in the interest of the nation as a whole.

The magnitude of the move against the Croatian leaders last December left many Yugoslavs bewildered and stunned. More than 600 Croats lost their jobs at that time, and many feared Tito's new system had been endangered by Tito's own actions. Confusion within party ranks was heightened by Tito's vacillating and then by

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his highhanded circumvention of the system he had built, as well as his failure to lay out clear-cut party directives.

In the wake of Croatia, Belgrade has moved against regional chauvinists throughout Yugoslavia. This summer witnessed trials not only in Croatia, but in Serbia and Macedonia as well. The party executive bureau announced in mid-September that measures to ensure discipline will henceforth include sending "teams" to local republic, provincial, and army party units.

A great deal more needs to be done. Time is needed to correct past mistakes and to heal the wounds of the Croatian crisis last year. Time is one thing Tito does not have. He is 80. There is no easy or quick solution to the complex problem of regionalism, and it is not likely to be solved within the aging leader's remaining years. Tito has brought to the fore leaders who recognize the need for a federation of equal nationalities, but the mammoth task of instilling this idea in the average Croat or Serb still remains to be done. It will take all the skill and cunning that can be mustered to guide Yugoslavia through this wilderness that Tito scarcely penetrated.

Tito's successors will be subjected to machinations from a number of foreign sources, principally the USSR. The Soviets have learned to live with, even grudgingly accept, the Yugoslav heresy. Moscow hopes that Yugoslavia's march toward orthodox Soviet-style Communism will be resumed after the heretic Tito leaves. Moscow may even anticipate that Tito's hard-pressed heirs will turn to the Soviet Union for advice and help in dealing with the serious economic difficulties and nationality rivalries. The Soviets have at least temporarily patched up their differences with Tito and are using this opening to jockey for a better position in the post-Tito Yugoslavia. In return for large development credits Moscow recently joined the West in gaining the right to bypass federal authorities and deal directly with local enterprises. Over the long run, these footholds may prove very useful in insinuating Moscow's views and positions into Yugoslavia.

Radical, anti-Communist Croatian emigres have taken heart from Yugoslavia's recent problems with nationalism and have intensified their campaign for an independent Croatia through guerrilla warfare, propaganda, and air piracy. These actions are part of a pattern of the upsurge in terrorism that began in 1971 with the murder of the Yugoslav ambassador to Sweden, Vladimir Rolovic, and terrorism will continue into the succession period. Croatian emigres are based in Austria, Sweden, Canada, West Germany, the US, and Australia. Belgrade has made it clear that failure of these host countries to clamp down on the emigres will have a negative affect on bilateral relations. The problem may become an even greater irritant in the succession period than it is today because the emigres will see Tito's passing as a green light.

Josip Broz Tito, described by some as the first and last Yugoslav.



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Outlook

Tito kicked off the politics of succession by calling for the creation of a collective presidency and for a further decentralization of power from Belgrade to the republics and provinces. One constitutional reform has been passed and a second is

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being debated. Regionalism last winter presented Tito with his most serious internal threat since the conclusion of World War II. It was a dramatic, if not traumatic, period for the Yugoslavs. From it, however, a better picture of the succession emerged.

When Tito goes, collective leadership will be accepted. Leadership of the government will pass to the vice president who will become caretaker head of state. The presidency is then supposed to rotate on an annual basis along predetermined lines. In the shakedown period it may well do so. In the party, the succession is less clear but probably will be fought out in the executive bureau. The best bet is that the bureau's secretary will be Tito's heir.

Tito is banking heavily on the common fear of foreign meddling, and on the accepted wisdom that Yugoslavia's constituent republics and provinces cannot go it alone, to draw the nation's talented leaders together for the common good. Yugoslavs often fight bitterly among themselves, but there is a genuine pride in the nation's post-

war accomplishments. Nothing unites them as quickly as the threat of foreign intervention.

Collective executive bodies, troikas and councils of state have not historically proven durable. For the short run, however, that is what appears in store for Yugoslavia. At this time no politician has the prestige or backing to fill Tito's shoes. Barring the unexpected, however, the chances are good that the federation probably will hold together after Tito's passing, difficult as that will be, and that Tito's system will function well enough to keep Belgrade's nonaligned, self-managing system afloat in the immediate succession period. The real test will come several years after Tito is gone. Then, heightened frictions among the regions or increased foreign meddling could bring about an informal alliance between conservative leaders and the military to produce a more tightly controlled, centralized Communist state. Then, more than likely, some individual will emerge to dominate the system.

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