YUGOSLAV PARTY CONGRESS: A BASIC IDEOLOGICAL ASPECT

The speech delivered by Veljko Vlahovic, the Chairman of the Party's Ideological Commission, at the Eighth Party Congress in Belgrade on December 8, has served only to underline the "fundamental dilemma" which has arisen in Yugoslavia as a result of Tito's "creative extension" of Marxism-Leninism to embrace the system of workers' self-management. The solution offered by the chief official ideologist of the Yugoslav Party for existing problems -- and for those to come -- is a simple one: the consistent implementation of the system of workers' self-management.

This, however, does not tell us very much, for in Yugoslavia there have been a number of different interpretations of the nature and desired future of this system. Still, none of these interpretations has negated the system as such, which means that further changes in and "creative extensions" of the "classical" fundamental maxims of Marxism-Leninism can be expected. Many of the new theories developed in Yugoslavia were actually a reflection of pragmatic experience. They were introduced at a time when Stalinist theories were being rejected and a Yugoslav theoretical framework had yet to be constructed.

Even after such a theoretical framework had been established, it could not keep up with the experiences of everyday life. This was due not only to the multitude of new problems faced in Yugoslavia when it was forced to go

1) See the news backgrounder of 8 December 1964 -- "Yugoslav Party Congress: A Fundamental Dilemma," by s.s.
its own way, but also to the transformations which took place within the Soviet bloc after Stalin's death. Though recognized as deities, so to speak, Marx, Engels and Lenin no longer sufficed to explain developments in a changing world. In Vlahovic's words:

In the course of the last few years, processes developed which could not be explained by the concrete ideas of the classics of Marxism and Leninism alone. This is why it is necessary to approach the task of developing Marxist theory in a more courageous fashion.

The Yugoslav ideologist was clearly aware that fulfillment of his demand would be tantamount to letting the jinmi out of the bottle -- irrevocably. For he immediately added that the "development of Marxist ideas" had made it possible for individuals "to construct their own theories on social relationships," and to present them as the view of the collective. In this way, Vlahovic added, some people had come to the conclusion "that there is a more profound disharmony between theory and practice" in Yugoslavia, than has actually been the case. Still worse, "in the name of Marx, the essence of his teachings has been negated," according to the Yugoslav ideologist.

Culture, Education, Social Sciences

To a far greater extent than in the economy, liberalization has progressed in cultural life, education, arts, social sciences and philosophy. For if it has been possible to exert a more-or-less successful control over the economy, other fields of life have enjoyed so large a degree of freedom that, as Vlahovic put it, "some people think there is too much freedom in Yugoslavia."

Should this situation now be changed? Even if the Yugoslav leaders were to indulge in an intensive campaign to restrict the freedom of writers, philosophers, scientists
and artists, they would not be able to achieve their aim without destroying the main pillar of their own system: workers' self-management. It is very difficult to insist on ever greater rights for workers' councils and workers in general, and, at the same time, attempt to impose any serious restriction on the rights of intellectuals. The latter are the chief standard-bearers of criticism of the regime -- criticism which Vlahovic called "anarcho-liberal." In Yugoslavia, Vlahovic admitted, it has been claimed that the intellectuals were bearers of "petty-bourgeois liberalistic and anarchist concepts," while "politicians and economic functionaries" were the bearers of bureaucracy.

Vlahovic sharply rejected the view that "politicians" and scientists should together form the backbone of society, for this is an idea which the Party simply cannot accept. What is the answer? A possible one has been indicated by the Belgrade Professor Dr. Najdan Pasic, who made the following remarks in one of his recent articles:

This contradiction cannot be solved unless, in the process of socialist transformation, politics lose the character of a coercive direction of society by the State, unless politics are put on an equal footing with the mechanism of workers' self-management; however, science also has to be freed from all institutionalized forms of a professional monopoly and must become an independent, self-managing social activity... Today it is possible to observe in the relationship between science and politics -- albeit in a new historical garb -- the elements of the old rivalry between the "spiritual" and "secular" authorities, between the institutionalized ideological monopoly and the monopoly of political power.\(^2\)

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\(^2\) Politika, Belgrade, the issue for 29 and 30 November and 1 December 1964.
It can be seen from the speeches of Rankovic and Vlahovic that the "secular," Party authorities are not ready to accept any "rotten compromise" with "spiritual" forces in society. But it is also evident from these speeches that the Party is not strong enough to eliminate in a radical manner its intellectual rivals. Vlahovic solemnly pledged that in the future, as up to now, no administrative measures would be taken against cultural workers who transgress ideological unity. In the present circumstances it appears that the Party is totally incapable of imposing its own views on "spiritual principles" of a Communist society in which "the radical criticism of everything that exists" has proudly been accepted as a special contribution of the Yugoslav road to socialism.

3) Ibid.