BAKARIC BOASTS HIS LIBERAL LINE ADOPTED IN YUGOSLAVIA

On the eve of the 19th anniversary of the Yugoslav Day of the Republic, celebrated on November 29, Radio Zagreb broadcast a talk by Vladimir Bakaric, Croatia's Communist boss and member of the Yugoslav Politburo, which had been given on November 12 before journalists of the Zagreb daily Vjesnik.

Bakaric, who along with Edvard Kardelj is considered the leader of the so-called "liberal" group within the Yugoslav Party, demonstrated his full confidence that the liberal trend in the Yugoslav Party is prevailing. Broadcast only a few days before the Eighth Party Congress, scheduled to start on December 7, Bakaric's talk can only be understood as a proclamation in advance of victory over the dogmatic elements in the Party.1 Bakaric said:

It is considered in Yugoslavia that the line we have advocated is now adopted. This means that we have taken responsibility upon ourselves. This means that we should become people who are contributing in the most constructive way to what we consider should be constructed.2

1) For Bakaric's ideas on the struggle against the retrogressive forces in the Party and State, see Background Information Yugoslavia, 1 October 1964 by s.s. - "Pre-Congress Struggle Over Economic Reform."

2) The somewhat shortened text of Bakaric's talk was broadcast by Radio Zagreb on November 28.
For Differing Opinions But Against Any Factionalism

In a speech on September 17 at a meeting of the City Party Committee, Bakarić presented himself as the leader of a kind of "courageous opposition." He sharply attacked the current economic system in Yugoslavia and told his listeners that this system "is today decaying to such an extent that actually nobody can tolerate it any longer. His talk on November 12 was not only devoted to criticism of "old ideas" and the "old economic system" but also to many other aspects of Yugoslavia's life.

This talk can be taken as Bakarić's programmatic proclamation. He discussed in it the problems of the Party's leading role, the new role of the Parliament, differing opinions within the Party, the formation of factions in the Party, people who have advocated a multi-party system as opposed to the one-Party system, democratic centralism, rotation, the problem of generations, people's dissatisfaction with price increases, centralism vs. decentralization, the socialist market economy, the self-management system, problems of culture and the problem of the developed and underdeveloped regions of the country.

All the topics discussed by Bakarić are more or less known from his previous speeches. He is definitely a man of decentralization and liberalization. The deteriorating economic situation in Yugoslavia has given his ideas impetus, especially since Nikita Khrushchev's ouster in Moscow. The "dogmatic" elements in Yugoslavia considered Nikita Khrushchev as a guarantee that economic decentralization would not be extended beyond fixed limits. Yugoslavia's associate membership in Comecon and the Seven-Year Plan being prepared were also envisaged as counter-balances to an even greater influence of the forces of liberalization.

Three Chief Objectives Seen

Bakarić's talk on November 12 -- i.e. after Khrushchev's ouster -- does not reveal anything new in his views. Its

3) Vjesnik, Zagreb, 21 September 1964.
importance seems to lie more in the possibility that the changes in Moscow have brought about a new shift in the balance between the Yugoslav "liberals" and "dogmatists" in favor of the former. Consequently, Bakaric behaved in his talk like a man who believes he has succeeded in imposing his line over the line of his opponents. At the same time it is clear that a real victory can be claimed only if the proclaimed ideas are implemented. In this respect Bakaric can be seen to have three chief objectives: 1) the Eighth Party Congress should definitely adopt the liberal ideas, not only in the economy, but also in the Party; 2) the dogmatic elements should be compelled to collaborate in the implementation of the liberal ideas; 3) the liberal elements should be prevented from going beyond set limits, for any overstepping of these limits might lead to Dijlasism.

This is why Bakaric stressed in his talk that "we have taken responsibility upon ourselves." In other words, it is one thing to criticize and unmask the "old system" of semi-centralization, and quite another to implement the new system of a more thorough decentralization. For the former, one needs freedom of criticism and the relaxation of Party discipline; for the latter one needs a united Party and the principle of democratic centralism respected by all the Party members. For these reasons, Bakaric, although advocating more freedom in all walks of life, is neither for too much freedom within the Party, nor for too much democratization -- especially not a democratization which would equate the system of workers' self-management with a kind of self-management within the Party. "This means," said Bakaric, "that we have not been an organization in which one million members could decide that we should stick to the present state of affairs. This is totally impossible. Therefore, we cannot develop such an unprogrammatic democracy. This is not only impractical, but is also practically impossible. This would mean the liquidation of the League of Communists."

Criticism Allowed If Not "Too Dangerous"

Bakaric admitted that "today we are not so firmly united in our opinions as we once were... What is most important for us is that we are united at the most decisive moments... For us it is important that we are marching in the same direction... We shall implement our way, but we shall not
reproach other people who have not agreed with us because they have different opinions....This is not important. This is why we have been liberal. However, we are not liberal and cannot be liberal if the question is posed whether a thing is in line with socialism or not...."

In other words, as long as criticism "is not socially dangerous, it is all right." However, "if it becomes socially dangerous, we shall then use all the arguments applicable to it." In this warning to the opponents of his ideas, Bakaric puts limits on the liberal views which obviously he will defend at the next Party Congress. Bakaric's caution is quite understandable. The pre-Congress discussion in Yugoslavia has indicated that the character of the Eighth Party Congress will come very close to that of the Sixth Party Congress, held in November 1952. As is known, at the Sixth Party Congress it was Milovan Djilas who justified the changing of the name of the Party to League of Communists. In similar fashion to Djilas in 1952 and 1953, Bakaric has now expressed the opinion that the League "has been freer than a Party could be," and this is why "we would like to get away from the idea of a Party."

On the other hand, as already indicated, Bakaric is afraid of things getting completely out of hand, i.e. that too much liberalization might ultimately lead to Djilasism. He stated: "If discussions are conducted on practical problems, then there can always be different opinions. However, if they are created around a definite attitude, then this is the beginning of factionalism, and we have not been for a faction within the League of Communists, nor shall we ever be." This should not be understood only as Bakaric's defense against the charges that he and his followers created their own faction within the Party at the time when his "dogmatic" opponents were in command, but also as a warning that as his ideas gain the upper hand, he will not tolerate any factionalism.

It remains to be seen how the delegates at the Party Congress will understand his ideas and whether the dogmatic forces will attempt once again to prevent Bakaric's ideas from being implemented.

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