YUGOSLAV PARTY CONGRESS: A FUNDAMENTAL DILEMMA

One dilemma in particular runs like a thread through the speeches delivered at the Eighth Party Congress in Belgrade by Tito, Edvard Kardelj and Aleksandar Rankovic.

This dilemma arises because of the addition by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia of its own axiom — that of workers' self-management — to the "classical" fundamental maxims of the political-economic theory underlying all "Marxist-Leninist" systems, namely: 1) Democratic centralism; 2) The leading and central role of the Party; 3) Nationalization of the means of production; and 4) Central planning in the economy.

When the principle of workers' self-management was first introduced in very embryonic form, the basic inconsistency between this new ingredient and the classical maxims was not immediately apparent. It has been the current attempt to expand the application of the new principle to every sector of life in Yugoslavia which has presented the Party with the dilemma of having to make a choice. It now suspects that as its own child — workers' self-management — grows, it will be faced with the necessity of sacrificing an ever larger part of each of

1) This paper was completed before Veljko Vlahovic started his speech on ideological issues at the December 8 session.
the classical ideological maxims. In a way, the principle of workers' self-management, with all of its indirect methods of economic control and new economic levers, has become the nucleus of Yugoslav political-economic theory, around which the diluted classical axioms are allowed to revolve.

The Yugoslavs are not the only ones interested in this dilemma. Their counterparts in other Communist countries have also watched very carefully what has been going on in Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav Communists have been ideologically at least five years ahead of their colleagues, and therefore are the first to have experienced the implications of revisionism. The workers' self-management system, which implies the abandonment of direct controls in favor of indirect methods of regulating the economy, most likely will follow a similar, though modified pattern throughout the bloc, fashioned by the peculiarities of each particular country.

He Who Calls The Tune...

One day before the Yugoslav Party Congress started in Belgrade, a Zagreb daily published an interview with the Chairman of the Ideological Commission of the Slovenian Central Committee, Stane Kavcic, who effectively explained the essence of this general dilemma faced by all Communists aspiring to "greater democratization":

We have called the tune, but now when the time has come to pay the piper, we start looking around and asking what it's all about.\(^2\)

Kavcic said that people see only two alternatives: Some "see the solution in marching backwards, while others see the solution in marching forward."\(^3\) But Tito, Kardelj and Rankovic have accepted neither course. Theoretically they would like to find a solution somewhere in the middle. This is why they criticized both the "bureaucratic-centralistic" and "liberal-anarchistic" tendencies in the Party. Still,

\(^2\) Vjesnik, 6 December 1964.

\(^3\) Ibid.
especially in the case of Kardelj and Rankovic, one can readily see where their hearts really lie: Kardelj's is on the side of more substantive liberalization; Rankovic's on that of changes in the methods of Party rule.

Marxist Axioms Paid Lip Service

One cannot understand properly the dilemma faced by the Communists of Yugoslavia without bearing in mind the existing contradictions in Yugoslav society. Professor Mihailo Markovic of Belgrade recently stated that the prevailing economic system in Yugoslavia, which encouraged individuals to satisfy all their personal needs in consumer goods, without taking care of collective interests, had created a climate in which serious dangers had come to the surface. According to Markovic, the individual can get everything he can pay for. As a result, "a rapid change in the character of individual motivation has taken place, as well as a mass reorientation from general social and collective aims to personal, family and micro-group aims."

What has been the result of this situation? Since no socialist system, "the Yugoslav included," can stop propagating collective socialist aims, a conflict between individual and collective interests has arisen. Professor Markovic elaborated the Yugoslav dilemma as follows:

An extremely unusual contradictory state of affairs exists in our society: on the one hand, individuals have been encouraged by all possible factors -- by the mechanism of the market economy, by the so-called 'payment according to work done, by production and large-scale imports of consumer goods, by advertising, etc. -- to make even greater efforts to increase their own personal income and satisfy their uncontrolled personal whims; in this process society has progressively renounced any kind

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4) Telegram, a Zagreb weekly, 13 November 1964.

5) Ibid.
of conscious guiding of the development of individual needs... On the other hand, the League of Communists, social organizations, the press and other media of mass communication, continue to insist on socialist consciousness and criticize "negative" phenomena of individuals which are not in violation of the law of economic regulations..."6

This elaboration by Professor Markovic throws light on all the speeches made thus far at the Yugoslav Party Congress, where the Yugoslav leaders are attempting to find a middle way and bring completely opposing elements into harmony. For Professor Markovic is correct in claiming that in such an atmosphere "a special form of hypocrisy" is widespread: "On official platforms and occasions, lip service is paid to the primacy of general socialist aims; on all other occasions in everyday life, one has to 'adjust oneself'. He who can adjust himself more completely -- will be able to satisfy more fully his own personal needs."

In considering problems touched upon at the Yugoslav Party Congress, this serious dilemma of the Yugoslav Communist Party must always be kept in mind, for it is one of the keys to their understanding.

Slobodan Stankovic

6) Ibid.