

# Tito

by Sam Russell

**The partisans:  
the break with Stalin:  
unifying a country . . .  
his achievements were manifold**

Communist revolutionary worker, soldier and statesman, Yugoslav patriot and indefatigable internationalist, Josip Broz Tito will go down in history as the Communist leader who withstood Stalin's threats and survived to tell the tale.

It was he who established the right of Yugoslavia's Communists to work out their own way to Socialism and to implement it without interference, at a time when the Soviet model was being applied without question elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

How significant that stand was, not only for Yugoslav Communists but for the entire international communist movement, has become increasingly clear over the past 30 years. It is difficult to appreciate today the extent of the savage propaganda campaign launched by all Communist Parties at the time, following the Soviet lead, against the Yugoslav Communist Party and particularly against Tito personally, who was labelled as a 'Trotskyist', 'fascist' and 'agent of US imperialism'.

But this was not only a war of words, for at the same time a vicious economic blockade was imposed on Yugoslavia by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and the attempt to starve the people of Yugoslavia into submission had to be met by measures which shaped the country's future development and continue to do so today.

If today, most Communist Parties have recognised the justice and revolutionary rectitude of the Yugoslav stand, this has not been because of Tito's blue eyes but because life itself has shown that there can be no other way forward for the communist movement.

In the socialist development of Yugoslavia in the 35 years since its partisan army under Communist leadership liberated the country from Nazi fascism, Tito and the party initiated many aspects of creative Marxism, most notably in the introduction of workers' self management internally and in the foundation of the non-aligned movement in international relations. But none of this would have been possible without the prior establishment of the principle of the independence of Communist Parties, of their right to determine their



own roads to socialism and to have that right respected by other parties however powerful, as well as the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of brother parties.

While such principles appear so self-evident today as to be almost a truism and are religiously recorded in almost every communique issued after meetings of Communist Parties, they were far from self-evident in 1948. And if they are accepted today it is in large measure due to the single-handed struggle waged by Tito backed by the Yugoslav Communist Party and people against what seemed at the time impossible odds.

## **The background**

To understand how this came about one has to go back into the early history of the Yugoslav Communist Party and the relations of its leadership with the Communist International. After 1930 a large part of that leadership was living in Moscow and subsequently suffered horribly from Stalin's purges when several hundred Yugoslav Communists were 'liquidated' which means murdered, although posthumously 'rehabilitated' in 1957 after the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party.

Recalling those events at the ninth congress of the Yugoslav League of Communists in 1969, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the party, Tito said: 'Their tragedy was all the greater for having been tortured under the false accusation that they were spies and traitors, for having been sent to their death, monstrously accused of crimes they never committed.'

Under Tito's leadership the Yugoslav party's central committee adopted an increasingly independent stand in regard to various political developments, including the signing of the Hitler-Stalin pact in August 1939.

Explaining his views on relations with the Soviet Union, Tito said in 1969: 'Naturally, after the victory of the October Socialist Revolution, all genuine revolutionary movements, including ours, considered it



Above: a police picture from Zagreb, 1928, when he was imprisoned /or political activities.

Right: Josip Broz (arrowed) as an apprentice mechanic in Slovenia, 1912.

Below: at the Non-aligned Countries Summit in Havana last year.



their international obligation to extend unconditional support to the Soviet Union, the first land of socialism. However, the policy of subordination to the temporary state interests and tactics of Soviet foreign policy did tremendous damage to various Communist Parties even before the war and later, as well as after it.'

#### The Resistance

The role of the Yugoslav Communists and of Tito personally in the leadership of the armed uprising which held down 40 German nazi divisions during the war, thus creating a new front where the German high command expected a walkover, is well known. It was on April 15, 1941 that the CPY issued a declaration in which it announced that an armed struggle would be waged against the fascist invaders and that from this struggle a new world would be born. On July 4 came the historic decision to launch the armed liberation struggle and in that first year about 80,000 Yugoslav fighting men pinned down over 500,000 enemy troops and liberated over 40 towns.

While Tito has always stressed the role of the Soviet army which he said 'bore the brunt of the struggle', he has also stated that particularly during the war the CPY 'objected to subordinating its policy to the interests of Stalin's global strategy'. It did not accept the thesis of the 'two stages of the revolution', with the second stage to be left until after victory over fascism. As Tito said, it 'boldly paved the way for the victorious socialist revolution in the national liberation war, in accordance with our conditions and the aspirations of our working class and people.'

From the very beginning of the armed uprising in 1941, until final victory, Yugoslavia's national liberation movement was exceptionally well organised under the leadership of the Communist Party and working class, and was imbued with a revolutionary character.

This armed struggle was so effective that the Italian invaders who had 20 divisions in Yugoslavia, were never able to release a single division from the Yugoslav theatre for the eastern front, while the

German commanders also stressed that the front in Yugoslavia was 'equal in importance' to the other fronts where the axis powers were engaged.

Major military and political victories were also achieved in 1942 which saw the holding of the first session of the Anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia and the formation of a nation-wide political representative body. By this time too, a national liberation army of 150,000 had been created divided into corps, divisions, brigades and partisan detachments which liberated an area of 50,000 square kilometres, forcing the invaders to commit 30 divisions to the country, while the Italians were forced to keep more troops there than on the African front.

In the first half of 1943, when the Germans and Italians had more troops in Yugoslavia than at the battle of Alamein, they failed to destroy the main liberation forces at the famous battles of Neretva and

### It is difficult to appreciate today the extent of the savage propaganda campaign launched by all Communist Parties at the time

Sutjeska when the enemy had forces six times superior to the liberation army. Even the nazi General Lutters had to admit: The course of the fighting has shown that the forces under Tito's command are excellently organised, skilfully led and possess an astonishing fighting morale . . . The Communists are an opponent to be taken seriously.'

A remarkable achievement

When Italy capitulated, the liberation army disarmed ten Italian divisions, capturing large quantities of arms and equipment. By the end of October 1943 the liberation army numbered 300,000 fighting

## thus creating a new front where the German High Command expected a walkover

men and although, up until then it had not received any material assistance from anyone, it continued to contribute powerfully to the allied cause and to the development of the liberation movement in Albania and Greece and to the resistance movement in Italy.

By the middle of 1944 a large part of Yugoslavia had been liberated and in September when most of Serbia had been liberated, the German commander Field Marshal von Weichs reported: These are operationally and tactically well-led forces who are enviably equipped with heavy armament, who possess a dynamism that must not be under-rated and whose number is growing steadily.'

It was then that Tito went to Moscow where agreement was reached for the Soviet army to pass through part of Yugoslavia on its way to Hungary and for the co-ordination of operations between the Soviet army and Yugoslavia's liberation army.

In the spring of 1945, four of Tito's armies undertook a final offensive, liberating the western part of the country and dealt the enemy such a blow that the Germans alone lost 98,000 dead, while 285,000 Germans, quislings and other collaborators were captured. Total losses of the liberation army during the war amounted to 305,000 dead and 425,000 wounded, while the enemy dead totalled 450,000. Yugoslavia's total losses amounted to 1,700,000 and there can be no doubt about the decisive contribution they made to the historic victory over fascism.

One of the most difficult problems that the CPY had to contend with in the final stages of the war was the question of the international recognition of the new Yugoslavia and its future, 'especially,' as Tito reported, 'in view of the agreement between Churchill and Stalin on setting up spheres of influence in Yugoslavia.' In the event, however, the spheres of influence plan suffered a complete fiasco as did Stalin's attempt to establish control over Yugoslavia.

This was the situation when the infamous Cominform resolution attacking the Yugoslav Communists was issued. It has to be noted that while the Comintern was wound up in 1943, soon after the war, on Stalin's initiative, a small number of European Communist Parties set up the so-called 'Communist Information Bureau' which became called the Cominform. Although the British Communist Party was not part of this select group, it was fully mobilised to back the anti-Tito campaign which went on for several years.

Even after Stalin died in 1953 it took two years before the Soviet Communist Party sent a delegation to Belgrade in 1955 composed of its first secretary N S Khrushchov and Premier Nikolay Bulganin to apologise and Mr K to declare: 'We have thoroughly investigated the materials upon which the grave accusations against and insults to the leaders of Yugoslavia were based at the time. Facts indicate that those materials were fabricated by the enemies of the people, the contemptible agents of imperialism who had fraudulently wormed their way into the ranks of our party.'

The meaning of **the** conflict

Tito saw Stalin's attack as 'the first open conflict between the bureaucratic concept of a socialist state and the roads of socialist

## forced the country's Communist leadership to go cap in hand to the hostile western powers

development in the world, evolved in the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership (which cannot be treated at all as merely some sort of 'personality cult'), and the anti-dogmatic approach, the democratic, humane concept of socialist society which found expression even earlier and especially after the war, in the activity of the CPY.'

The repercussions of that confrontation are still with us today despite the attempts of certain people to brush it under the carpet, nor can the Soviet action in crushing the attempt of the Czechoslovak Communist Party under the leadership of Alexander Dubcek to establish 'Socialism with a human face' in its country, prevent the basic issues which arose out of the 1948 events from facing Communist Parties in and out of power today too.

That confrontation raised basic questions concerning the theory and practice of socialism, the question of state ownership and ownership under socialism in general, the dictatorship of the proletariat as a transitional period, the process of the withering away of the state, socialist relations, relations between socialist states and Communist Parties, international relations and the forms of struggle to ensure peace, as well as many other questions.

Since 1948 it has been demonstrated time and again and notably in Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Poland in 1970 that the problems that faced Yugoslavia then in the development of socialism, face many other parties and socialist countries. Of course the conclusions of the 20th congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956 that each country had to find its own road to socialism and that there could be various forms of building socialism, were a positive development.

But before that happened, the series of phoney trials in the early 1950s in Eastern Europe, which resulted in the execution of many leading Communists including Lazslo Rajk in Hungary, Traicho Rostov in Bulgaria and Rudolf Slansky in Czechoslovakia to name but a few, showed what would have happened to the Yugoslav Communists if Tito had not replied with a resounding 'no' to Stalin's attempts to subjugate that party and people.

It was in the situation created by Stalin's economic blockade of Yugoslavia which forced the country's Communist leadership to go cap in hand to the hostile western powers for aid and loans which eventually were doled out at extortionate rates of interest, that that leadership had to decide the way forward for a backward Balkan country.

### Workers' self-management

The historic answer of Yugoslavia's Communists at that time was to put forward the slogan 'Factories to the workers' and to take the first steps in establishing the system of socialist self-management when Tito placed before the People's Assembly on June 28, 1950 the draft of the basic law on the transfer of the management of state economic enterprises and major economic organisations to working collectives. He argued: 'Some may consider this law premature, thinking that the workers will not be able to master the complicated technique of management of factories and other enterprises. Whoever thinks so is mistaken and such an attitude would mean distrusting our workers, the inability to see what enormous creative power our workers will develop precisely through this management . . . There were people who thought and still think that the management of the means of production can be solved by placing the best workers as managers or directors. That was, however, only the most urgent measure after the state had taken over the means of production.'

Confronting the Assembly clearly with the difficulties that stood in the way of building Socialism in such a backward country, Tito asked: 'But what shall we do? Shall we wait for all workers to become equally educated and able to manage the enterprises? Of course not, it is precisely through the process of management that all workers will



Utin Krushchev and Bulganin, 1955.

acquire the necessary experience and get acquainted not only with the process of work but also with all the problems of their enterprise . . . From now in state ownership of the means of production, factories, mines, railways will be gradually evolving into a higher form of socialist ownership. State ownership is the lowest form of social ownership and not the highest as the leaders of the USSR would have it.'

A bold and some may have thought a foolhardy challenge 30 years later, Tito said: 'As we look back over the road we have covered we can state that we have not always found a true measure in trying to reduce the state's economic functions to an indispensable minimum. There were several reasons for this. Even in the League of Communists we have not always been unanimous as regards the role of the state in the economy. The centralisation of state functions had been very extensive, particularly of the resources for financing expanded reproduction in the federation, which did not allow the republics and provinces to bear a direct responsibility for their own as well as for the common development. This was mainly due to the fact that the centre did not always pay sufficient attention to the economic equality of the republics and provinces, to the specific circumstances in them and to their different interests.'

Admitting that 'we have suffered from setbacks in developing our system of self-management since 1950', Tito said that it 'is more and more asserting itself as an economic system' and cited the country's rates of economic development with a 6.2% average annual growth rate between 1947 and 1978 and with industry increasing by 9% a year over the same period. This means that industrial production is 15 times higher than in 1947, while personal consumption has quadrupled in the last 25 years.

As the new production relations developed so there was a



1972, in Yugoslavia.

continuous process of changes in the political system, with decision-making in public services, hitherto within the competence of the state administration, being taken over increasingly by working people and citizens.

How far the system of workers' self-management and the promulgation of the Law on Associated Labour has truly made the working class the effective ruling economic and political force in Yugoslav society is still a subject of discussion. Certainly at one stage in the development, Tito himself drew attention to the danger of the technocrats taking over and the delegate principle of decision-making at all levels was supposed to deal with that danger. How far it has done so is still a moot point. Certainly the administrative, centralised system of running the economy, which had been indispensable immediately after the war, soon showed its shortcomings and

weaknesses and had to be changed.

'There were some individuals and small groups,' Tito recalled on one occasion, 'who thought that the process of decentralisation and democratisation, a market economy, creation of a number of centres of social power and decision-making at all levels, was the road to anarchy and chaos.'

#### The Yugoslav economy

How basically healthy the Yugoslav economy is today, is shown by the latest OECD report (8/6/80) which reported: 'Despite the marked slowdown in the average growth of GDP in the OECD area and of world trade since 1974, the Yugoslav economy has maintained almost the same high rate of growth as before the 1973 oil crisis (more than

**'it is precisely through the process of  
management that all workers will  
acquire the necessary experience'**

6% per annum) with a particularly rapid expansion of investment. The growth target for 1980 has been set at 5%, a rate distinctly below the performance of recent years, but still quite appreciable in the context of slower expansion in the Eastern European countries, which absorb 40% of Yugoslav commodity exports, and in the OECD area.'

'The continued application of development-oriented policies,' the OECD report continues, 'has raised average living standards (although considerable differences persist between regions) and brought about important socio-economic transformations. Agricultural employment is about one-third of the total compared with more than two-thirds in the early post-war period. The volume and range of industrial production have increased very substantially. Education, health and social services have been expanded significantly. And with higher personal living standards, new types of labour-intensive service activities have acquired macro-economic importance in recent years.'

Employment trends improved considerably in the 1970s compared with the 1960s and although unemployment has been continually rising since the early 1950s, in 1979 registered job seekers increased by less than 4%, which was the lowest rate of increase since 1972. Out of 765,000 job seekers in 1979 about one-third were already employed but registered in order to change jobs. The number of Yugoslavs working abroad has declined from the peak of 1,100,000 in 1973 to less than 800,000 today.

'Despite the temporary difficulties and particular problems that have emerged,' said the OECD report, 'the medium-term overall performance of the Yugoslav economy has been in many ways remarkable.' And it is doubtful, to say the least, whether continuation of the Soviet-style economy would have produced similar results, while in any case the Soviet-imposed economic blockade in 1948 left no alternative but to seek another way.

#### Non-alignment

Socialist self-management in internal affairs is regarded by Yugoslavia's leaders as part and parcel of the policy of non-alignment in international affairs and a reflection on the world scene of the relations that exist between the six equal nations that make up the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its 22 million people.

The idea of non-alignment was originally looked on with suspicion by the members and allies of the two military blocs, NATO and the Warsaw Pact. At his first meeting with India's Premier Jawarhalal Nehru in 1954, Tito said 'We do not wish to establish a third bloc, but rather to increase the number of states which put the preservation of peace and active co-existence above all', and these ideas were

embodied in their joint statement which made it clear that they rejected neutrality.

Tito later met Egypt's President Nasser and out of that arose the meeting in autumn 1960 of five great statesmen from three continents, Tito, Nehru and Nasser, together with Indonesia's President Sukarno and Ghana's President Nkrumah, who met during the 15th session of the UN Assembly in New York at the Yugoslav embassy.

The first non-aligned conference met in Belgrade in 1961 with 25 nations attending. There were 45 in Cairo in 1964, 54 in Lusaka in 1970, 75 in Algiers in 1972, 86 in Colombo in 1976 and 96 in Havana in 1979, testifying to the growing strength and influence of the non-alignment idea, now the voice of two-thirds of humankind. It is also a voice that has to be reckoned with by the great powers.

'The true revolutionary tenor of the non-aligned policy,' Tito explained on one occasion, 'is to oppose all kinds of political and economic domination, to fight all, not just old but also new forms of subordination in relations among states and nations. The interests of non-alignment cannot be identified with any narrow interests, certainly not with bloc interests. The non-aligned countries are against any such identification and they resist all attempts at being in one way or another aligned with the blocs.'

Although this definition seemed to be coming apart at the edges at the last conference in Havana, the presence of Tito and his active intervention prevented any attempt to disrupt the non-aligned idea and all participants paid a special tribute to Tito's work for the movement and his work in resisting the increasing pressures to which the non-aligned movement is being subjected.

#### Tito's approach

Tito was already 45 when, in 1937, after spending 27 years in the struggle of the workers' revolutionary movement, he took on the most responsible duties of his life as leader of the Yugoslav Communist Party in the critical days before World War II. Throughout his life as a revolutionary, this outstanding Communist and warm human being championed the right of other peoples to be free as he had fought for the freedom of the peoples of Yugoslavia.

Up to his last moments, when faced with the deteriorating international situation he called attention to the need to halt the slide to increasing tension. This was on a par with his determination to defend the development of relations of equality in the international working class movement.

**'to fight all, not just old but also new  
forms of subordination in relations  
among states'**

'We the Communists of Yugoslavia,' Tito said on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the party in 1969, 'do not think that we have found the answers to all contemporary dilemmas of socialism and we are aware of the problems, difficulties and shortcomings in the implementation of our own policy.'

'Let the results achieved in the development of new social relationships, the degree of humanisation and the freedom of our society, the attainments in improving the living conditions of the working people and satisfying their material and spiritual needs, be the yardstick of the correctness and success of our policies and practices.'

'Let the basic yardstick of true internationalism and the revolutionary character of our League, as of every other revolutionary workers' party, be its creative contribution to international practice and socialist thought, to the real struggle against imperialism and for the peace and independence of peoples, for the genuine emancipation of labour.'