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AN AMERICAN VIEW OF U.S.—YUGOSLAV RELATIONS

The continued close and friendly relationship between Yugoslavia and the United States is, in a sense, one of the wonders of contemporary international politics. It has survived the „Trieste crisis,” Belgrade’s 1955 rapprochement with Moscow, Washington’s worries about „neutralism” and non-alignment and the congenital American anti-Communism.

Several factors explain this unusual development. Like all foreign policy matters, it basically reflects perceived national interests. This is all the more remarkable because in the early post-war period American relations with Yugoslavia were worse than with any other Eastern European country.

What changed matters, of course, was the 1948 split between Belgrade and Moscow. For the United States, support for Yugoslavia was initially a ploy in the burgeoning cold war with the Soviet Union. For Yugoslavia, American assistance was important to bulwark its military security and overcome its economic difficulties.

But the relationship was a reluctant one for both sides, entered into with hesitation, mutual doubts and suspicions. Many Americans felt the Soviet-Yugoslav split was a „Communist trick,” and even after they discovered otherwise worried about whether „Tito would go back to the Cominform.” And many Yugoslavs feared that American military and economic aid, along with the new presence of a considerably increased number of official Americans in the country, was aimed at interfering in their internal affairs.

The original motivation for the American-Yugoslav relationship remains, but as the doubts and suspicions gave way to understanding and cooperation they came to be supplemented by more positive considerations extending beyond cold war issues. Gradually the United States came to

perceive the resoluteness of the Yugoslav will to independence and to appreciate the important changes in Yugoslav foreign and domestic policies—non-alignment, democratization and constitutionalism. For their part, the Yugoslavs came to appreciate that American aid and cooperation were extended without strings or pressures aimed at compromising their socialist system. As a consequence, there developed a genuine spirit of mutual respect and friendship going beyond governments and embracing people generally. This was never better expressed than in the prompt American response to the devastating earthquakes in Macedonia and in Montenegro. Many ordinary American citizens, who were usually unconcerned with affairs beyond their own country, volunteered their help with enthusiasm.

The building of the American-Yugoslav relationship has reflected intelligent statesmanship on both sides. It has been immeasurably aided by an exceptionally high level of diplomatic representatives, who not only promoted mutual understanding but also developed a real affection for the respective countries to which they were accredited. On the American side one thinks, for example, of Ambassadors George Allen, James Riddleburger, George Kennan, Lawrence Eagleburger and, currently, David Anderson. On the Yugoslav side there were Ambassadors Leo Mates, Marko Nikezić, Veljko Mićunović, Bogdan Crnobrnja and currently, Budimir Lončar.

In addition to more narrow national interest considerations, cultural relations have played an important role in the Yugoslav-American relationship. Such relations seldom if ever have significant effect on a conflictual relationship between states. But when political relations are „normal” or improving, they can accelerate the process of understanding necessary for real cooperation. This is what happened in the American-Yugoslav case.

Cultural relations between the two countries evolved slowly. In 1950, for example, there was no member of the American embassy staff in Belgrade concentrating full-time on cultural matters. In 1954, I was the sole American scholar resident in Yugoslavia. The following year saw one Yugoslav student in the United States, and it was like pulling teeth to get both the Belgrade and Washington authorities to agree to his coming.

Only very gradually did an awareness penetrate the American scholarly community that there were new and exciting developments taking place in Yugoslavia. M.S. Handler's exceptional reportage in the *New York Times* in the early 1950s helped, as, perhaps, slightly later did my own efforts lecturing and writing, partly under the auspices of the American Universities Field Staff, with its membership of 11 leading American educational institutions. There were several first-rate American scholarly books on Yugoslavia written right after World War II, but until after mid-decade none dealt with the new concepts and institutions being worked out in the country. All that, of course, has long since changed. American academic interest in Yugoslav developments is widespread, and the new Yugoslav system is dealt with by American authors in a steady flow of excellent works.

One cannot discuss the beginnings of American-Yugoslav intellectual exchange without mentioning the enormous contribution of Prof. Jožan Djordjević. His articles, and those of other Yugoslav scholars—especially

those published in English in the journal *New Yugoslav Law*—explaining what the new Yugoslavia was about, ideologically and institutionally, were invaluable. I myself owe a great debt to Professor Đorđević both for his patient explanations of Yugoslav developments and for helping me meet other Yugoslav academic and official experts. Professor Đorđević was uniquely well positioned to do this since so many of the new Yugoslav social scientists, in and out of the government, were his former students and/or associates. I recall one instance in particular, among many. I was trying to understand the details of how the new Yugoslav economic system operated. Official descriptions, in both Serbo-Croatian and English, were complex to the point of confusion. I found myself bogged down especially in comprehending the concept of „basic proportions”, which, in the 1950s, at least, were supposed to guide the economy. Nobody seemed able to explain it satisfactorily. Finally Professor Đorđević said the man I should see was Kiro Gligorov, who was soon to become chief of the Federal Executive Council secretariat for economic affairs, and he arranged an appointment for me. Kiro, who became one of my closest friends, promptly cleared away the confusion on this matter, as he has done on other Yugoslav economic issues in the intervening years. Professor Đorđević subsequently extended invaluable assistance to many other American scholars and through them helped greatly to explain to the United States, and to the Western world, what was going on in his country.

It was through Professor Đorđević, also, that there began, in the 1950s, the first discussions about Yugoslav-American university exchanges. At my request, he called a meeting of representatives of all Yugoslav universities. The idea was so new that we didn't get very far, but the Yugoslavs present expressed much interest. This I reported to the U.S. State Department, with a recommendation that an American-Yugoslav Fulbright program should be considered. Although such a program did not formally materialize until 1964, its beginnings were in that initial meeting in Professor Đorđević's office at the University of Belgrade Law School.

The Yugoslav emphasis on constitutional law has been an important factor in cementing links between Yugoslavia and the United States. Professor Đorđević, of course, was its leading formulator, interpreter and practitioner. Although Yugoslav constitutionalism primarily reflects Yugoslav political realities, it has also adapted certain American concepts. Again, Professor Đorđević played the key role. I remember, on his first post-war visit to the United States, helping him arrange a meeting with justices of the U.S. Supreme Court to discuss his concept of the constitutional court, which in 1962 became an integral part of the Yugoslav constitution.

Such contacts were then very rare. Now they are commonplace, between members of the American and Yugoslav governments at all levels, including, in 1978, White House meeting of the two presidents, Carter and Tito.

Additionally, prominent Americans and Yugoslavs now visit each other's countries regularly under an official exchange program arranged by the U.S. Information Agency. More than 30 such Americans annually address Yugoslav audiences under this program, while 35 to 40 Yugoslav officials and leading scholars make 30-day visits to the United States each year. Private American educational foundations also have played an important role

in enabling American and Yugoslav scholars to visit and do research in each other's countries.

An even greater contrast to the situation in the 1950s is the high level of academic exchanges. Every year now between 50 and 60 Yugoslavs travel to the United States for graduate study, research or teaching under the Fulbright program, with an equal number of American scholars coming to Yugoslavia. The bi-national Yugoslav-American Fulbright Commission in Belgrade, which presides over these exchanges, is one of the most active in the entire Fulbright program. One of its additional operations is the annual Yugoslav-American seminar in Yugoslavia, bringing together a variety of American and Yugoslav scholars to discuss topics of mutual interest. In the United States, similar academic conferences are held at various places each year.

Many academic exchanges simply bypass official channels and are arranged on a university-to-university basis. The rectors of Yugoslav universities have visited the United States to discuss academic cooperation with American universities. And there are 15 academic exchange programs in existence between individual Yugoslav and American universities. Such arrangements reflect the decentralized Yugoslav system and would be possible in no other Eastern European country.

American-Yugoslav cultural relations have by no means been confined to academic exchanges. Exhibitions of American art, photography and graphics are regularly displayed in Yugoslavia, while exhibitions of Yugoslav paintings have been arranged in the United States. (When the first Yugoslav exhibition came to the United States, in the latter 1950s, American art critics, who had expected to be bored by more „socialist realism,” ended up calling the Yugoslav paintings too abstract and experimental!) Theatre groups and orchestras have exchanged performances. Yugoslav folk dancers regularly thrill American audiences, while American modern dance companies periodically come to Yugoslavia.

This panoply of cultural exchanges — the most vigorous East-West exchange relationship now existing — has without doubt contributed importantly to understanding between Yugoslavia and the United States. It has, also, without doubt, helped the American-Yugoslav relationship not only survive but prosper despite the vicissitudes of international affairs and the back and forth shifts of American domestic politics.

It is only natural that differences in American and Yugoslav foreign policy outlooks have occasionally strained the relationship. For one thing, it is inevitably affected by American-Soviet relations. Both Moscow and Washington persist in trying to bring Yugoslavia closer to their own positions. Fortunately, the Soviet Union appears to have accepted the idea of a genuinely independent socialist Yugoslavia outside the bloc, while the United States accepts the idea that Yugoslavia's independent non-alignment is not jeopardized when Belgrade takes stands, usually in regard to Third World country problems, at odds with Washington's. Several years ago an American ambassador, Laurence Silberman, complained that because of these foreign policy differences Yugoslavia was in fact acting as an „adversary”. But he failed to convince the State Department. Sometimes, indeed, the Yugoslavs' propensity for proclaiming positions on issues quite peripheral to national interest is annoying even to their most ardent American supporters. Such was the case, for example, with the Yugoslav stand in the

United Nations on the „decolonization” of Puerto Rico. At the same time, however, the Americans were quick to recognize the pivotal role Tito played at the Havana conference of non-aligned nations in keeping that group truly non-aligned.

Yugoslavia recognizes the advantages in the „cold war” aspect of its relationship with the United States even while worrying about it. When the beginnings of an American-Soviet detente were worked out by President Nixon and Secretary of State Kissinger, Belgrade feared — quite unnecessarily — it might mean superpower collusion against Yugoslavia’s interests. When State Department Counsellor Helmut Sonnenfeldt later spoke of the desirability of an „organic relationship” between the USSR and Eastern Europe, he was referring to that part of Eastern Europe in the Soviet bloc and not to Yugoslavia; and, moreover, his aim was to promote more independence for the countries involved. Nevertheless, the sharp Yugoslav reaction revealed some doubts about the depth of Washington’s commitment to Yugoslav independence. Although the Democratic Party’s 1976 platform specified that continued independence of Yugoslavia was of great importance to the United States, Yugoslav doubts about American constancy were again stimulated by Jimmy Carter’s subsequent campaign remarks implying that American security was not concerned with threats to Yugoslavia. The Carter comment reflected an innocence about foreign affairs and not much else; and, in any event, Belgrade came to be reassured that the then improving American-Soviet relationship posed no worries for Yugoslavia. („The less tension between the United States and the Soviet Union,, Tito told me in 1979, „the better it is for Yugoslavia.”)

The old doubts about „Yugoslav reliability” still can be heard in the United States, although they are not widespread. Some analysts worry about Yugoslav economic ties with the Soviet Union and about the extent to which the Yugoslav army is dependent on Soviet supplies. And there was widespread concern that „after Tito” Yugoslav unity might not be preserved. These doubts do not seriously afflict those Americans actually concerned with foreign policy, however.

The advent of the Reagan Administration, with its ideological crusade against „communism,” provoked doubts of a different kind in Belgrade. „What will happen,” a Yugoslav official asked me, facetiously, in 1982, „if Reagan discovers Yugoslavia is a Communist country?”

The Reagan Administration ideologues, no doubt, tend to see the American-Yugoslav relationship more in its cold war setting than was previously the case. And, in part, just for this reason the fears expressed in Belgrade have proved to be without foundation. If any proof was needed, it came in the American government initiatives during the past two years resulting in the 1983 agreement between Yugoslavia and Western banks for a restructuring of Yugoslavia’s foreign debts. Although the guiding force behind this effort was former Ambassador Eagleburger, now Under Secretary of State for political affairs, it ultimately had the support of almost the whole American foreign policy establishment.

It is a Yugoslav theoretical position that differences in ideologies do not require a conflictual state-to-state relationship. The course of American-Yugoslav relations obviously bears this out. Even so, considering the differences in cultures and ideologies between the two countries, to say

nothing of sometimes widely divergent stands on international political issues, the persistence and extent of friendly cooperation in the relationship is surprising. It is also, of course, gratifying to all those on both sides who have played a part in it.

The Yugoslav-American relationship is presently on a firm basis. It is always hazardous to predict the future, especially in the realm of international politics, but if Yugoslavia maintains its unity and its independence, there is no reason to believe that this will not continue to be the case.

РЕЗИМЕ

ЈЕДАН АМЕРИЧКИ ПОГЛЕД НА АМЕРИЧКО—ЈУГОСЛОВЕНСКЕ ОДНОСЕ

Америчко-југословенски културни односи су се непрестано развијали после рата. Њиховом развоју су много допринели спретни државници и дипломати, али и универзитетски професори, међу којима писац ставља проф. Јована Борђевића у први ред.

Америчко-југословенски културни односи се нису ограничили на размену универзитетских наставника и сарадњу универзитета, него су обухватили и размену уметника, организовање изложби, сарадњу позоришта итд.

Америчка дипломатија подржава независну и несврстану Југославију, те писац објашњава да и онда када је у доба Никсонове администрације заступала мисао о пожељности органског повезивања СССР са земљама источне Европе, америчка дипломатија није при томе подразумевала Југославију.

Писац је мишљења да су америчко-југословенски односи постављени на чврсте основе, те да ће се и у будућности развијати утолико више уколико Југославија буде чувала своје јединство и независност.

RÉSUMÉ

UN APERÇU AMÉRICAIN SUR LES RAPPORTS ENTRE LES ETATS-UNIS ET LA YUGOSLAVIE

Les rapports culturels entre les Etats-Unis de l'Amérique et la Yougoslavie se sont continuellement développés après la guerre. A leur progrès ont beaucoup contribué les hommes d'État et les diplomates capables, mais aussi les professeurs de l'université, parmi lesquels l'auteur place au premier plan le Professeur Jovan Đorđević.

Les rapports culturels américano-yougoslaves ne se sont pas limités à l'échange universitaire et à la collaboration des universités, mais ont englobé aussi l'échange des artistes, l'organisation des expositions, la coopération des théâtres etc.

La diplomatie américaine soutient une Yougoslavie indépendante et non-alignée, de sorte que l'auteur fait comprendre que, même au temps de l'administration Nixon, lorsque la diplomatie américaine cherissait l'idée d'un enchaînement organique de l'URSS avec les pays de l'Est de l'Europe, la Yougoslavie n'y était pas sous-entendu.

L'autour est d'avis que les relations entre les Etats-Unis et la Yougoslavie sont établies sur des fonds solides, en sorte que ces relations feront progrès aussi bien dans l'avenir d'autant plus que la Yougoslavie saura conserver son unité et son indépendance.