
BACKGROUND BOOKS

YUGOSLAVIA

In 1937 British novelist and journalist Rebecca West, with her banker husband, spent an Easter holiday in Yugoslavia. The vitality of its people and the primitive countryside captured her imagination. She went on to immerse herself in the research for **BLACK LAMB AND GREY FALCON: A Journey Through Yugoslavia** (Viking, 1941). Her 1,180-page book remained in print for 33 years and is still available in most libraries. It may be the best book ever written about Yugoslavia.

Dame Rebecca's rich, old-fashioned mixture of travelogue, cultural history, and political reportage builds slowly but once begun is hard to put down. She combines an encyclopedic knowledge of political theory and the past with a gift for conveying ideas through the reality of people, places, and events.

A willful, charming trio of Yugoslavs meets the travelers on the railway station platform as they arrive in Zagreb and provides a kind of chorus for her narrative. They are Constantine, a Serbian Jew of Polish descent who sees Yugoslavia as a political necessity; Valetta, who believes in an autonomous Croatia and "might suddenly stop smiling and clench his long hands and offer himself up to martyrdom for an idea"; and Gregorievitch, the oldest, also a Croat and veteran of the struggle against Austro-Hungarian domination. To Gregorievitch, Yugoslavia is "the Kingdom of Heaven on earth" and Valetta is a traitor, while Constantine "seems impious in the way he takes the nation for granted."

Their Yugoslavia—a nation-state that emerged from World War I after centuries of alien rule—is not Tito's Yugoslavia, any more than Rebecca West's Europe of wagon-lits and leisure is today's Europe

of autobahns, 747s, and hurry-up. But her chronicle of quarrels among compatriots in a period of relative freedom from outside pressures between the wars links the present to the historic past.

A good, brief survey of the country's divided East-West background is provided in **A SHORT HISTORY OF YUGOSLAVIA: From Early Times to 1966**, edited by Stephen Clissold (Cambridge, 1966, cloth; 1968, paper). Five noted British historians and observers of the Balkans offer lucid studies of the individual states and regions that were patched together to make Yugoslavia in 1918; these are followed by analyses of political, economic, and military developments to the mid-'60s.

What happened in the mountains and fertile valleys of Yugoslavia before its first incarnation as a unified, predominantly peasant state is too complex for successful compression, even in the 282 pages of the Cambridge *Short History*. But the essayists clarify the importance of the resistance offered by the Yugoslav peasantry to the invading armies that from time immemorial have marched into southeastern Europe. Much of the energy of these disparate rural groups was devoted to attempts to absorb, dominate, or unite with one another against a common enemy.

The Turkish victory at Kosovo in 1389 led to the destruction of the medieval Serbian state, the conversion to Islam of most of Bosnia and Hercegovina, and the dependence of Croatia and Dalmatia on the Catholic powers (Hungary, Austria, Venice). Not until the plight of Macedonian Christians, recoiling before further "Ottomanization," precipitated the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 was Turkey finished in Europe. The imprint of the eastern

(Ottoman) empire remained—just as the influence of the western (Austro-Hungarian) empire survived Woodrow Wilson's insistence on Yugoslavia's independence following World War I.

That this political amalgam of antagonistic rural peoples lasted through the inter-war years is remarkable. That the imposed and inherited differences among them erupted in civil war even as they fought against the Axis occupiers is no surprise. That their union was reaffirmed by the Partisans and then was formally re-established "under the stern guidance of Marshal Tito's Communist regime" is, as Clissold remarks, "a notable achievement."

U.S. diplomat Walter R. Roberts, in **TITO, MIHAILOVIĆ, AND THE ALIENS, 1941-45** (Rutgers, 1973), gives a well-documented account of the World War II Resistance and the civil war in which Tito triumphed over Droža Mihailović's Chetniks. Tito emerged as "a foreign Party leader who did not owe his existence to the Soviet Union" and who therefore could not be "a true and reliable Communist in Stalin's eyes." Roberts concludes that only an Allied landing in Yugoslavia might have altered the outcome of the internal struggle.

Dissident Yugoslav writer Milovan Djilas has published 12 books in the West. **THE NEW CLASS** (Praeger, 1957, cloth; 1974, paper), which followed his 1954 break with Party leaders, was a devastating portrayal of Communist bureaucrats and bigwigs. His latest, **WARTIME** (Harcourt, 1977), is an old Partisan's account of the brutal 1941-45 struggles that Roberts covers as an outsider.

A variety of analyses of Yugoslavia's special hybrid brand of socialism have appeared in the 1960s and '70s. Today's Yugoslavia is a political scientist's dream and an irresistible challenge to sociologists and economists.

YUGOSLAVIA AND THE NEW COMMUNISM, by George W. Hoffman

and Fred Warner Neal (Twentieth Century Fund, 1962) is the enduring granddaddy of these books. The authors voice the scholarly consensus: After Tito (his death or "retirement" was a bone already being chewed 16 years ago), Titoism—neither totalitarian nor democratic—will endure.

Tensions notwithstanding, Yugoslav institutions are still as likely to succeed as they are to fail in realizing "their own proclaimed principles of self-managing socialist democracy," according to Denison Rusinow in **THE YUGOSLAV EXPERIMENT, 1948-1974** (Univ. of Calif., 1977). Rusinow, who has worked in Yugoslavia and in Austria with the American Universities Field Staff since 1963, provides a good introduction to domestic politics.

No comparable single study dealing with Yugoslav foreign policy exists. However, John C. Campbell's **TITO'S SEPARATE ROAD: America and Yugoslavia in World Politics** (Harper, 1967) traces Belgrade's changing ties not only with Washington but also with the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and the Third World from Tito's 1948 split with Stalin. "Yugoslavia needs both the East and the West in its trade and other economic relations," Campbell wrote 10 years ago. Most U.S. diplomats today share his opinion that the West "has the opportunity . . . to strengthen the country's independence." A. Ross Johnson's **YUGOSLAVIA: In the Twilight of Tito** (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1974) covers recent twists and turns in Yugoslav nonalignment policy and military strategy. His prognosis: "For all its internal controversies, Yugoslavia will at worst muddle through."

In **AN ESSAY ON YUGOSLAV SOCIETY** (White Plains, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, International Arts and Sciences Press, 1969) and **THE YUGOSLAV ECONOMIC SYSTEM: The First Labor-Managed Economy in the Making** (Sharpe, 1976),

Branko Horvat, a provocative Belgrade economist, criticizes foibles and weaknesses that he knows first hand. He writes that Yugoslav socialism will stand or fall on its success at the factory level, and that "there is still a long way to go to the realization of genuine self-management."

Barnard professor Deborah D. Milenkovitch, in **PLAN AND MARKET IN YUGOSLAV ECONOMIC THOUGHT** (Yale, 1971), questions whether a socialist state can decentralize and remain socialist. It can, she concludes, but she believes that centrally planned production and investment decisions in Yugoslavia became impossible for strictly political reasons. The interests of the six republics differed so sharply that "no consensus about . . . objectives . . . [or] development strategy was possible."

An interesting new addition to the literature on Tito's Yugoslavia is **PRAXIS: Marxist Criticism and Dissent in Socialist Yugoslavia** (Indiana Univ., 1977), edited by Gerson S. Sher. The *Praxis* group, named after the bimonthly journal published in Belgrade from 1965 until its suppression by the authorities in 1975, were Marxist dissidents. The magazine was perhaps the most freewheeling publication in the Communist world and an ornament of Yugoslavia's unique road to socialism. Notable in Sher's volume is a reprint from the final issue of an article by novelist Dobrica Ćosić (himself a lifelong Communist and until 1968 a member of the Serbia Party's central committee). "We have been deceived, but we are also swindlers," says Ćosić. "Deprivation of freedom is, socially, the worst crime."

In January of this year, Ćosić's new novel, **A TIME OF DEATH** (Harcourt,

1978), appeared in English translation. Set in 1914, it is an epic of the period when the peasant army of Serbia fought starving Austrian troops, while Serbia's Prime Minister was trying to secure Russian aid, and Serbia and Bulgaria also warred over a helpless Macedonia. The confusion of nations and interests against which personal dramas are played out reflects the great themes of Yugoslav historical fiction.

The classic among such novels is Ivo Andrić's **THE BRIDGE ON THE DRINA** (Allen & Unwin, 1959; Univ. of Chicago, 1977, paper). Dr. Andrić, a Yugoslav diplomat, wrote in the Serbo-Croatian language. *Bridge*, first published in Belgrade in 1945, won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1961. It is a deeply moving story about passing generations—Moslem and Christian—in the Bosnian town of Visegrad. Their lives are dominated by a stone bridge of remarkable grace and strength built in the 16th century at the order of an enlightened grand vizier. Yet another Yugoslav symbol (with Rebecca West's black lamb and grey falcon), the bridge survives winter ice, spring floods, wars, and local feuds until it is blown up in the fighting between Serbian and Austrian troops in the Balkan Wars. As the bridge crumbles under shellfire, the town's eccentric old Moslem *hodja* dies, thinking, as his heart gives out: "Anything might happen. But one thing could not happen; it could not be that great and wise men of exalted soul who would raise lasting buildings for the love of God, so that the world should be more beautiful and man live in it better and more easily, should everywhere and for all time vanish from this earth . . . That could not be."

EDITOR'S NOTE. *Advice and comments on a number of books were supplied by Laura D'Andrea Tyson, assistant professor of economics, the University of California at Berkeley, and a participant in a conference on Yugoslavia held by the Kennan Institute of the Wilson Center in October 1977. Ruzica Popovitch, Yugoslav area specialist at the Library of Congress, also made valuable suggestions.*