

# Soviets might take Yugoslavia if Tito leaves office

**Associated Press**  
BELGRADE, Yugoslavia — Josip Broz Tito has forged a single nation from eight nationalities and six language groups. As president he has held it together under communism for 30 years. The question now is what happens after he is gone.

At 84 and despite health problems, the Yugoslav leader still is the man to whom ultimate decisions are referred. But there are reports he may retire to test how the transition process works.

Some fear Tito's death may unleash disrupting forces that have been dormant during his three decades of rule. There also is widespread fear that the Soviet Union

may use transition problems to pull Yugoslavia back into the Soviet fold from which it broke away 28 years ago.

Experts agree that political stability would be the best guarantee against any Soviet threat to this country.

The first Yugoslav state broke up during World War II when Germany and Italy partitioned it and installed puppet regimes. Tito led his partisan troops to victory over both occupying armies and laid the foundations of the new state.

There seems to be no single man influential enough to inherit Tito's unchallenged role and popularity. However, he has devised an intricate

machinery in an attempt to get around this while accommodating the interests of the various national groups.

Since 1972 Yugoslavia's top executive body is represented by a collective "Presidency" including a member for each of the six republics and two autonomous provinces. The Presidency is led by Tito, who has been named president for life or until he decides to retire.

Once Tito has left, the Presidency will elect annually a president for a one-year term, as provided for by the 1974 constitution.

Members of the Presidency are elected by the legislatures of the re-

publics and autonomous provinces, for a five-year term.

The governments of the six republics and two provinces enjoy broad autonomy in internal matters.

But a separatist trend has persisted among the Croats, the second largest national group after the Serbians. Tito has been hitting hard against it, however, and a drastic purge ousted nationalists from the Croatian Communist party cadres in 1971.

"The idea of a separatist state lingers on in the mind of Croatian intellectuals," says Milovan Djilas, Tito's wartime comrade who was later sent to prison, "but any organized nationalist movement can be easily broken up. They are isolated from the liberals in Croatia and from other Yugoslav nations."

The most popular among the members of the Presidency are Edvard Kardelj of Slovenia and Croatia's Vladimir Bakaric who both fought alongside Tito in the 1943-1944 partisan war.

Bakaric is reported to be ailing while Kardelj has recovered from surgery for an undisclosed ailment. Kardelj might be Tito's choice to succeed him as party president.

Kardelj was the No. 2 man after

Tito in the Yugoslav delegation during the three-day visit of Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev in mid-November.

During his talks with Tito, Brezhnev renewed a pledge that the Soviet Union will not interfere in Yugoslavia's internal affairs, and accused the West of spreading tales to spoil Yugoslav-Soviet relations.

When Jimmy Carter said before the U.S. presidential election that he would not send troops into Yugoslavia in the event of a Soviet invasion, he raised an issue that Yugoslavs have been trying to play down for years.

Officials in the Yugoslav government and Communist party never state publicly they think the Soviet Union may send tanks into this Balkan nation as in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in neighboring Hungary in 1956.

Military invasion is one of the possibilities being discussed, but most analysts agree this is very unlikely.

The Soviet Union could be discouraged from taking such an extreme step by Yugoslavia's social and economic system that has developed in a way vastly different from that of all other European Communist countries.



MARSHAL TITO

our sovereignty and independence. We know that strategic interests of the United States are interested in Yugoslavia remaining free from any bloc. But I would not say that we have the same interest.

An intellectual in Zagreb summed up his views as follows: "Yugoslavia will remain also after Tito. But it is not clear whether it will continue on its path or whether it will tilt to the Soviet side."

"There are those who think the party would be stronger with help. Once Tito's charisma is no longer here, who can guarantee the party can maintain its unity? Many Communists believe Communist government is better than freedom for the people. This view is discounted as being pessimistic by Milovan Djilas who spent nine years in a Soviet prison for breaking with Tito.

"Transition problems are solved inside the party in agreement with the armed forces that are closely controlled by the party. 65-year-old Djilas said in his grade home where he lives in pension.

"I don't believe much in an invasion. It exists potentially not in the foreseeable future, think it is in the Soviet mind."

Djilas says he believes the Tito's Yugoslavia has pursued a so-called "nonalignment" policy that has put Belgrade between East and West.

But a ranking Yugoslav official says, "We know we need a direct dialogue with the United States and its recognition of the importance of

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