

A. Ross Johnson, *The Transformation of Communist Ideology. The Yugoslav Case, 1945-1953*, Cambridge, Mass., The M. I. T. Press, 1972, pp. 269, \$ 15.00.

A. Ross Johnson's *Transformation of Communist Ideology* is in many ways similar to Deborah Milenkovich's *Plan and Market in Yugoslav Economic Thought*. Both are concerned not so much with the history of events (although in this respect, too, both are informative) as with the development of ideas. However, Ms. Milenkovich, an economist, restricts herself to the study of the evolution of a single concept, the synthesis of economic planning and the market mechanism; Mr. Johnson, a political scientist, studies a broader range of ideas.

The author demonstrates very considerable insight into Yugoslav political processes, as well as an ability to present plausible, and in most cases persuasive, explanations of why Yugoslav ideology developed as it did. The Yugoslav modifications of some of Trotsky's ideas is an example. Both Djilas and Trotsky were concerned about the dangers inherent in the growth of a caste of bureaucrats who are in a position to run a socialist society in their own interests. But whereas Trotsky attributed Soviet bureaucratization to the failure of the 1917 revolution to spread to advanced capitalist countries and to the underdeveloped state of the Soviet economy, Yugoslav theoreticians emphasized the possibility of «socialism in one country» and minimized the importance of a high level of production. Both these ideological differences were clearly dictated by the specific circumstances of Yugoslavia at the time.

Johnson makes an interesting assertion (with some evidence) that the Yugoslav government's movement away from totalitarian repression was in part an effort to win popular support from the Yugoslav masses at a time when external (i.e. Soviet) support had disappeared. The same explanation applies to the Yugoslav emphasis on «the withering away of the state», not in the distant future as Stalin argued, but in the present. The author does a particularly good job of distinguishing between «withering away of the state» and «anarchy». The essence of his explanation is that there would continue to be organized decisionmaking bodies, but they would be part of society rather than organs of the state. In conformity with this principle, the size of the federal bureaucracy was in fact reduced by nearly 100,000 persons in 1950, when considerable authority was delegated to local and republic governments and to economic enterprises.

An important part of the book deals with the role of the party in Yugoslav society. Before the break with Stalin and until two years afterwards the Communist Party of Yugoslavia adhered to the Leninist-Stalinist concept of the party as not only leader of and guiding force in proletarian rule, but in fact as absolute dictator. «Democratic centralism» meant complete control and absolute unity without dissention. During the second half of the period Johnson describes, the Party gradually separated itself from the state, and took on the role of a leader which guides but which does not decide minor everyday details. The Party came to see its job as mobilizing the masses to involve themselves in managing the economy so that the state could wither away. The formal announcement in 1951 that ideology grows through the struggle of ideas marked the end of the ban on intra-party dissention. Johnson ends his discussion of the role of the Party by arguing that its role as guide and «persuader» (as opposed to dictator) has never been adequately formulated. It is «continually affirmed, but . . . not defined» (p. 218).

One of the most interesting parts of the book concerns the various political organizations in Yugoslavia. Johnson does a good job of explaining the relationship between

governmental bodies, the Communist Party (since 1952 called the League of Communists), and the People's Front (since 1953 called the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Yugoslavia). For example, in connection with its changing selfimage the Party required that its members be politically active *outside* of the Party. This remained true even after the practice of assigning members to specific non-Party organizations was discontinued following the Sixth Congress of the League of Communists.

*The Transformation of Communist Ideology* is of interest to economists as well as to political scientists. Especially from the point of view of comparative economic systems, the book raises an interesting question: to what extent does the evolution of ideology determine a country's economic system? Radical economists would find interesting (and debatable) Johnson's analysis of the Yugoslav view that advanced capitalism (or state capitalism) is an «antechamber» to socialism. This view, he argues, was necessary to justify Yugoslavia's rapprochement with the west.

Perhaps the greatest weakness of the book relates to the discussion of worker self-management. Johnson tells us that Kardelj provided (with inspiration from Lenin) the ideological spark which developed into this keystone of the Yugoslav economic system. Unfortunately, he then says that «the exact process by which Kardelj's injunction came to be adopted as Communist Party policy remains a matter of speculation» (p. 161). This is a serious flaw in a book which deals exclusively with the evolution of ideology. Indeed, Johnson admits that workers' councils are the single most important distinction between Yugoslav and Soviet societies. With workers' councils replacing the state bureaucracy there is no longer a class which appropriates social surplus and hence no longer exploitation of labor. He further argues that the concept of self-management was a fundamental aspect of Yugoslav ideology all along, as opposed to other aspects which were «reactive and synthetic», i.e. which were consequences of the split with Stalin.

Simultaneously with its development of workers' councils, Yugoslavia began experimentation with a socialist market mechanism. Johnson does a good job of presenting the conflict which this created between the narrow interests of the workers of a factory and the broader interests of the working class as a whole.

At the very outset Johnson defines rigorously what he means by «ideology» and argues (quite persuasively) that in Yugoslavia during the period 1945-1953 there was a coherent and institutionalized set of ideas which satisfy the definition and which did in fact directly and substantially affect the course of events in the country. Further, he shows that during this period there was a fundamental change in the ideology of the country (due primarily to the clash between Stalin and Tito); hence the title of the book. It is because the focus of the book is on a transformation which was essentially complete by 1953 that Johnson does not deal with developments after that year. This reviewer finds this limitation regrettable because Johnson's insight into recent events in Yugoslavia would certainly be valuable. The events of the mid sixties and early seventies, however, would require a very different sort of explanation. By 1966 (and possibly as early as 1953) there was no longer, Johnson argues, a Yugoslav ideology in the sense of a coherent body of ideas which determines events. Yugoslav thought, he claims, had become not only less doctrinaire, but so imprecisely formulated that it did not indicate a specific course of action.

*University of Connecticut*

STEPHEN R. SACKS