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# Yugoslav-Soviet Split

Bert Chapman

*Purdue University*, [chapmanb@purdue.edu](mailto:chapmanb@purdue.edu)

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## **Yugoslav-Soviet Split**

The 1948 rupture between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union stemmed, in large measure, from personal and geopolitical conflict between Stalin and Tito.

Following World War II, Yugoslavia, under the leadership of Partisan resistance hero Josip Broz Tito, was the Soviet Union's most ardent ally in Eastern Europe.

The Yugoslavs even became embroiled in disputes with the Americans over the disposition of Trieste and Yugoslav attacks on American aircraft. Both Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union held similar attitudes toward Albanian developments. The Yugoslavs initially decided to subordinate their foreign policy objectives to Moscow by seeking Soviet approval and support for Belgrade's expansionist objectives toward Albania. Stalin indicated that Yugoslavia might "swallow" Albania. Moscow's interests, though, transcended bilateral Soviet-Yugoslav relations and stressed combatting what they saw as a permanent U.S. commitment to Western Europe demonstrated by the Marshall Plan.

Stalin sought to reinforce Soviet dominance of the communist bloc by demanding subservience of all Eastern Europe Communist regimes. He became suspicious of Tito's efforts to establish a Balkan Federation including Albania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia. The Yugoslavs, however, resented Soviet efforts to dominate their economy and military. In particular they, having won, their war

against Nazi Germany, disliked receiving the same treatment from the Soviets accorded to former Nazi allies Bulgaria and Romania. Tito and the Yugoslavs refused to submit to the Soviet definition of Socialist Internationalism.

On June 28, 1948, the date recalling the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 and the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand (1863-1914) in 1914, the Yugoslav Communist Party was expelled from the Cominform, the international Communist organization. As a result, Albania, a Yugoslav satellite since 1945, broke away from Belgrade's control and sought support from Moscow. Also, the Yugoslavs discontinued their support for the Greek Communist rebels. The Greek Civil War ended the next year. Finally, Tito's government adopted a policy of nonalignment in international relations. Yugoslavia joined neither NATO and the European Common Market, nor COMECON and the Warsaw Pact. It did briefly enter into a Balkan Pact with Greece and Turkey in 1954, but this agreement proved to be ephemeral. It also formulated an economic model of worker's self-management, permitted the emigration of labor to Western European countries, and encouraged foreign tourism.

After Stalin's death, bilateral relations were restored between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, the Yugoslavs maintained their distance. This ideological split to some degree precluded further Communist advancement in

Eastern Europe. Even though Stalin threatened that he would lift his little finger and destroy Tito, Yugoslav national interests were able to survive until its national disintegration in the early 1990s. This was in part because Stalin did not wish to expend the military effort to subdue Tito and his successors when he had other global interests to attend to.

Bert Chapman

*See also:* Balkan Pact, 1954; Hoxha, Enver (1908-1985); NATO in the Balkans; Tito, Josip Broz (1892-1980); Truman Doctrine, Yugoslav Overflight Incidents, 1946

### **Further Reading**

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