

EDVARD KARDELJ, 69, DIES IN YUGOSLAVIA

Tito Ideologist Pioneered Theories for Worker Self-Management and Nonalignment Policy

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BELGRADE, Yugoslavia, Feb. 10 — Edvard Kardelj, who fought at the side of Marshal Tito in the political underground and on the battlefield to bring Marxism to Yugoslavia, died today of cancer in Ljubljana. He was 69 years old.

A Slovenian, Mr. Kardelj was generally regarded as the chief ideological theoretician of Yugoslav Marxism, or Titoism as it became known. He pioneered the concepts of worker self-management and the foreign policy of nonalignment between the Soviet and Western blocs.

Mr. Kardelj suffered for years from intestinal and lung cancer. He was admitted to a hospital on Thursday and lapsed into a coma early yesterday, the official announcement of his death said.

President Tito received word in Syria of his comrade's death. It was not immediately known whether the President would interrupt a four-nation Middle East tour to return for the funeral.

Questions About Tito Succession

Mr. Kardelj's death raised anew questions about the succession to President Tito, who is 86.

Eight years ago, Marshal Tito and Mr. Kardelj originated the idea of a Collective Presidency, now a nine-member body, to rule after the death of the President, rotating positions among representatives of Yugoslavia's six republics and two autonomous provinces.

Mr. Kardelj, before he fell ill, had been expected to be the most influential members of the succession.

Tonight, members of the Presidency appeared on television for emotional and often tearful expressions of tribute and farewell.

The official announcement of Mr. Kardelj's death was read by Stane Dolanc, secretary of the party.

Mr. Dolanc, also a Slovene, has been considered a possible successor to Mr. Kardelj's position.

Over his many years with Marshal Tito, Mr. Kardelj survived ideological twists that brought down two of his early associates, Milovan Djilas and Aleksandar Rankovic.

Mr. Kardelj was born Jan. 27, 1910, in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, in the northwest corner of Yugoslavia bordering on Austria and Italy.

In Communist Movement at 16

At the age of 16, according to his official biography, he was already a member of the then illegal Communist Youth League, and at the early age of 18 he became a full member of the Communist Party.

Those were difficult times for Communists in Yugoslavia, a new nation created at the end of World War I from largely South Slav remnants of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The secret police of King Aleksandar, the nation's first ruler, were pursuing Communists throughout the country. The small membership cells of the Communists were divided. Communication between them was nearly impossible.

It was not until September 1934 that Mr. Kardelj became acquainted with Josip Broz, who was to take the underground name Tito. They met at a country house near Ljubljana that belonged to the local Roman Catholic bishop, the site of the first Slovenian party conference.

Mr. Kardelj was 17 years younger but he quickly became a close friend of the future leader of the country.

Marshal Tito later said this was because Mr. Kardelj was "an honest revolutionary, not corrupted by factionalism."

Mr. Kardelj's loyalty to Marshal Tito was to be a mark of their professional and personal relationship for four decades.

Their lives as revolutionaries followed



The New York Times/George James

Edvard Kardelj

parallel paths. Both were imprisoned before World War II. Both spent several years in Moscow, managing to survive Stalin's purges of the Comintern. Later, they organized the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia at exile headquarters in Paris.

By 1938, the two, along with Mr. Djilas and Mr. Rankovic, were back in Yugoslavia, organizing the underground network that was to form the framework of the Communists' Partisan resistance movement against German, Italian and other Axis invaders during World War II.

After the formation of the Tito Government at the end of the war, Mr. Kardelj held the posts of Vice President, Foreign Minister and many other leading positions.

Yugoslavia split with the Soviet Union in 1948, when Stalin concluded in anger that Marshal Tito was not going to subordinate himself or his country to the will of Moscow. It was a largely a personal and party clash at the time. Later, Mr. Kardelj was called upon to provide an ideological framework to set Yugoslavia apart from Soviet totalitarianism.

A phrase coined by Mr. Kardelj, socialist self-management, became the slogan of Yugoslav Marxism and it later attracted other countries and Communist parties reluctant to accept the rigid central controls of Soviet Communism.

The Yugoslav theory was for decentralization of power, allowing each factory and Communist cell control over its own operations. In practice, this never really worked as intended. Few in Yugoslavia ever pretended to understand the system fully. Mr. Kardelj spent much of the rest of his life trying to explain it, modifying theories to fit changing circumstances.

As a member of the leadership of the League of Communists, as the Yugoslavs renamed their party after the split with Moscow, and as Marshal Tito's closest associate and adviser, he continued to influence the nation's major foreign policy and domestic initiatives.

It was Mr. Kardelj who, in the early 1950's, urged Marshal Tito to join with President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, President Sukarno of Indonesia and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India to organize what was to be called the nonaligned movement.

Despite his battle against cancer, Mr. Kardelj remained active in the highest councils of the party and continued to the end as a member of the Collective Presidency.