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Jovan Cavoski. "Overstepping the Balkan boundaries: The lesser known history of Yugoslavia's early relations with Asian countries (new evidence from Yugoslav/Serbian archives)." *Cold War History* 11:4 (November 2011): 557-577. DOI: 10.1080/14682741003704223. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14682741003704223>

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Review by **Niu Jun**, Peking University

Jovan Cavoski's paper is very significant for the study of both Yugoslavia's foreign policy and Chinese foreign relations in the mid of 1940s. As the author mentions in the article, using recently declassified archives from Yugoslavia side, together with some Chinese archives from Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives and some published Soviet documents, had "introduced a completely different history, largely unknown to many of us."¹ Indeed, based on some archives found in the major Yugoslav/Serbian archival institutions, Jovan's article describes a new Chinese-Yugoslavian relationship at a very early stage of the Cold War, and contains some new arguments.

Firstly, Cavoski points out that from the the Yugoslav point of view, Yugoslavia demonstrated its Third World ambitions much earlier than anyone expected, though more in a revolutionary than a nonaligned capacity (extending clandestine recognition to the Republic of China, and establishing contacts with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and with South and Southeast Asian Communist Parties, etc.). On the other hand, these countries also showed their own initiative towards Tito, whose ambitions went further than Europe.

After the Russian Revolution, Yugoslavia was the only country that had an authentic revolutionary and liberation movement in Eastern Europe. Against this background, Cavoski also shows that Tito, like many top communist leaders coming from the

¹ Jovan Cavoski, "Overstepping the Balkan boundaries: The lesser known history of Yugoslavia's early relations with Asian countries (new evidence from Yugoslav/Serbian archives)," *Cold War History* 11:4 (November 2011), p. 558.

revolutionary movements, did not limit his efforts to only the Balkans region (Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, question of Trieste, border with Austria etc.). The article clearly demonstrates that from a very early point Yugoslavia's ambitions went outside Europe and Yugoslavia had started to project its revolutionary experience even on distant areas of the world, i.e China, India, and Southeast Asia. Tito believed in the great popularity of the Yugoslav revolutionary experience for Asian revolutionaries, offering them guidance that might prove valuable for revolutionary movements in their region.. At same time, the CCP also wanted to have diplomatic relations with Tito and establish in Belgrade a propaganda center for the whole of Europe. Cavoski proves , based on declassified archival material, that CCP leaders sent Liu Ningyi as an envoy to Yugoslavia in Summer 1947 and that he had an important talk with Tito.² This detail will be very helpful to understanding why Mao Zedong, at the meeting of CCP Central Committee held in December 1947, he made the final decision to overthrow the ROC, recognized and highly praised the experience of Yugoslavia's revolution and Tito's tough stance toward the U.S.

As for China, it is important to recall that, other than the Soviet Union, the Republic of China (GMD) also extended diplomatic recognition to Yugoslavia, and to no other country in Eastern Europe. Also, the CCP was well aware of this and made its own overtures. This article offers a chronological summary of China's relations with European countries and sheds new light on those relations.

However, one of most important points of the paper refers to Soviet-Yugoslav coordination with regards to China and Asia. Moscow encouraged Yugoslavia to recognize Chiang Kai-shek's government and establish ties with the CCP. There was also Soviet influence on the travel of Yugoslav representatives to Asia, since Yugoslavia was the only Soviet ally that was able to do so. No other socialist country was allowed to make ties with GMD or CCP without Moscow's permission. This is so significant a point that it requires further discussion.

The ROC-Yugoslav relationship received little attention before October, 1949, and the author's work on this period is encouraging. Since rich Chinese sources are available, including declassified ROC foreign ministry documents in the Nanjing and Taipei archives, as well as dairies and private papers of the principle decision makers such as Chiang Kai-shek, Song Ziwen and Wang Shijie, it is possible to offer further analysis of the ROC's foreign policy. Along with the Yugoslav initiative, the response of the GMD was also critical to the special bilateral relations. For example, what motivated the GMD: concern about the CCP, or the GMD's particular understanding of Yugoslavia? Since the author is currently researching his Ph.D. in Beijing, one can expect new documents from Chinese archives as well.

² Cavoski, pp, 563-564.

The political background of the Chinese Civil War and its relationship with the great powers is an important factor in understanding the Yugoslavia-CCP/GMD interactions. From the Chinese point of view, since most of the historiography concentrates on China's relations with the great powers during the Civil War, this article demonstrates that besides the great powers, Yugoslavia also had its share of influence during those complicated years of the Chinese Civil War. Both Nationalists and Communists in China sought connections with other centers inside the communist world, i.e. Yugoslavia, which was considered as number two after Moscow; Jiang Jieshi obviously wanted to observe the socialist camp from within, but outside Moscow, while the CCP sought support from a country that had its own authentic revolutionary and guerilla movement, like China. The article supplies new details about the history of international ties of the CCP and GMD with nations other than the great powers during the Chinese Civil War.

As the article indicates, one of the key issues is the question as to why Joseph Stalin allowed Yugoslavia to develop relations with the GMD and CCP simultaneously. Reviewing the USSR-China relationship at that time may contribute to a further understanding of this question. We now know that the CCP was the victor in the Chinese Civil War by 1949. However, in 1947, many outside observers, including Stalin, probably spotted the weakness and the vulnerability of the GMD, but failed to envisage an overall CCP victory and a general GMD collapse in two years. Moreover, Stalin benefited very much from the Sino-Soviet treaty signed with the GMD government in 1945. Hence one would doubt that in 1947, China was a priority of Stalin's foreign policy agenda, or that he orchestrated the Yugoslavia-China connection. The author also indicates that the USSR took measures to block the CPY-CCP exchange because of the deterioration in Yugoslav-Soviet relations rather than the changes in Soviet-CCP relations. The Yugoslavian sources alone do not fully support the argument that the Soviets, or Stalin himself, paid particular attention to, or carefully arranged, Yugoslav-Chinese connections.

Cavoski's account indicates that Yugoslavia's influence reached Asian countries including China, India, and Burma. As the author argues, Yugoslavia's position was different from other Eastern European countries in the Soviet bloc; this might be an important source of its soft power outside Europe. However, dependence on Yugoslavian documents runs the potential risk of overestimating the impact of Yugoslavia in these countries. It is better to be cautious with respect to this argument. Although visits of these countries' delegations and other diplomatic exchanges with Yugoslavia reflected these countries' interests in Yugoslavia, one should be cautious about arguing that these countries took Yugoslavia seriously before understanding their foreign policy agendas. Like the Yugoslavians, Chinese and the Indian leaders were ambitious in the international arena; they were not prepared to simply follow either the U.S. or the USSR as junior partners. They wanted to accumulate their own prestige in international affairs, thus they did not hesitate to approach countries like Yugoslavia which showed its independence toward the superpowers. Meanwhile, the Asian countries were preoccupied with other issues in their foreign policy than relations with Yugoslavia. For example, both the GMD and CCP in the

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late 1940s were preoccupied with the Civil War. In foreign policy, they tried hard to win over the support and cooperation of the superpowers.

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