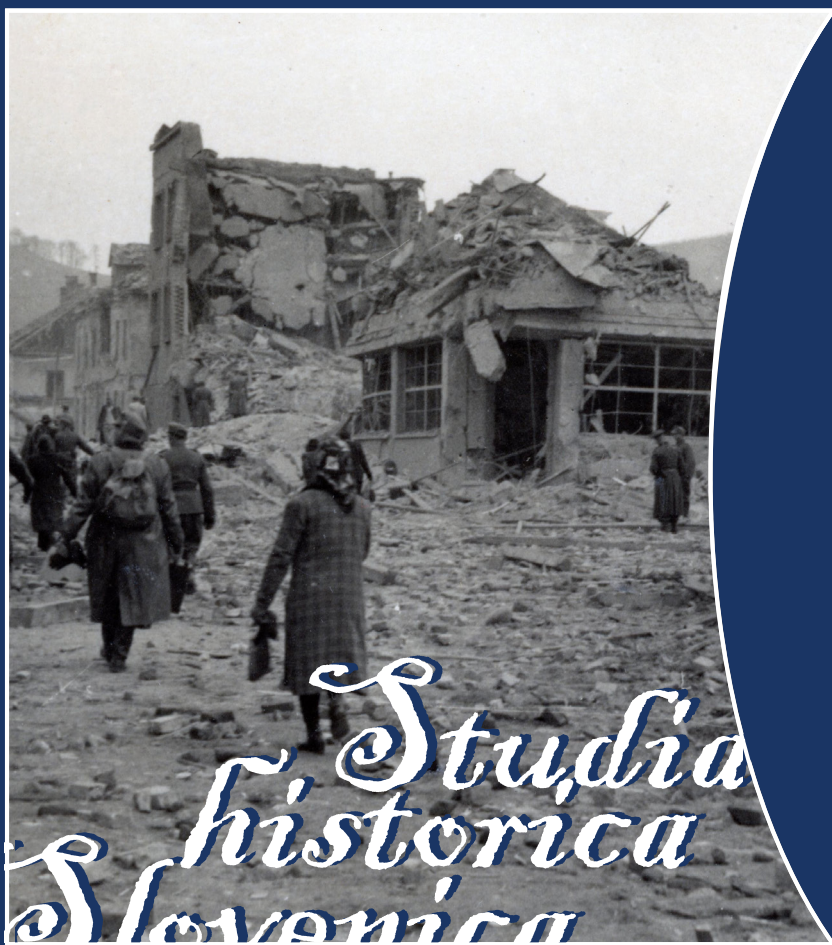


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# ***Yugoslav Commercial Diplomacy in Developing Countries between State's (Economic) Interests and (Ideological) Solidarity***

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## *Abstract:*

The article deals with the functioning of Yugoslav commercial diplomacy towards the developing countries that were members of the Non-Aligned Movement. With the help of literature, archival sources, and eyewitness accounts, three findings are presented. Firstly, ideology hardly played a role in Yugoslavia's economic relations with the less developed countries. Secondly, Yugoslav socialist realism towards the Non-Aligned countries was a combination of several parallel processes: altruism, egoism and political pragmatism, which meant that the Yugoslav authorities played several games on several levels to combine prestige politics and economic benefits.

## *Keywords:*

commercial diplomacy, Yugoslavia, politics of prestige, non-aligned movement, developing countries

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Maribor, 25 (2025), No. 3, pp. 739–764, 53 notes, 4 pictures, 1 figure

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## Introduction and outline of the research problem<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, we have witnessed many new studies,<sup>2</sup> which examine the relationship of socialist countries and their ideologies to the so-called Third World, countries that, after the end of World War II, broke free from colonial rule and began to shape their own new path of development. This raises one of the key unresolved questions of the relationship between the economic and political interests of developing countries and socialist countries, or perhaps better said, the dilemma of the balance between the spread of socialist ideology on the one hand and the pursuit of (capitalist-defined) economic interests on the other. Of course, this was not a black-and-white relationship, but a constant shifting between the two extremes. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that previous research has often painted a black-and-white picture, either because of the methodological (and ideological) limitations of the researchers' approaches, who rarely attempt to analyze phenomena in "their time and space," but more often reflect them through the time and space in which they themselves live, or because they were based on case studies and drew key conclusions based on their own case studies.

Of course, history, especially political history, can be read in shades. The situation in the era in which individuals live is much more complex and, above all, constantly changing. In the words of Zvone Dragan, an important witness to Yugoslavia's activities in developing countries, particularly in Iraq in the

<sup>1</sup> The article is a result of the research done as part of the research project No. J6-50187: *Being European and Decolonial: Utopian Realism of the Yugoslav Nonaligned Internationalism*, and the research programme No. P5-0177: *Slovenia and its actors in international relations and European integration*, both financed by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS).

<sup>2</sup> Among the most important studies in this field are those of Anne Calori et al. (eds.), *Between East and South: Spaces of Interaction in the Globalizing Economy of the Cold War* (Berlin, 2020); Max Trecker, *Red Money for the Global South: The Economic Side of the Cold War in the Third World* (London, 2020); James Mark et al. (eds.), *Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World* (Bloomington, 2020); Alessandro Iandolo, *Arrested Development. The Soviet Union in Ghana, Guinea, and Mali 1955–1968* (London, 2022) (hereinafter: Iandolo, *Arrested Development. The Soviet Union in Ghana, Guinea, and Mali 1955–1968*); David C. Engerman, *The Price of Aid. The Economic Cold-War in India* (Cambridge, 2018) (hereinafter: Engerman, *The Price of Aid. The Economic Cold-War in India*); Paul Stubbs (ed.), *Socialist Yugoslavia and the Non-Aligned Movement. Social, Cultural, Political, and Economic Imaginaries* (Quebec, 2023); Jure Ramšak, "Socialistična" gospodarska diplomacija: dejavnost Socialistične republike Slovenije na področju mednarodnih ekonomskih odnosov 1974–1980", *Annales – Series historia et sociologia* 24, No. 4 (2014), pp. 733–748; Jure Ramšak, "Poskus drugačne globalizacije: slovensko gospodarstvo in dežele v razvoju 1970–1990", *Acta Histriae* 23, No. 4, pp. 765–782; Jure Ramšak, "Jugoslavija i ambivalentnost ekonomske saradnje Jug-Jug u sedamdesetim i osamdesetim godinama", *Tokovi istorije* 1 (2024), pp. 203–224 (hereinafter: Ramšak, "Jugoslavija i ambivalentnost ekonomske saradnje Jug-Jug u sedamdesetim i osamdesetim godinama"); Jure Ramšak, "Yugoslavia and the unlikely success of the new international financial order", *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju* 31, No. 1 (2024), pp. 39–53; Boštjan Udovič, "We told the truth about Yugoslavia ...": Slovenian (para)diplomats in 1990–1992", *Annales – Series Historia et Sociologia* 27, No. 4 (2017), pp. 713–730; Boštjan Udovič and Danijela Jačimović Vojinović, "Osamosvojitve držav in 'pozaba' zgodovinskih dosežkov: primer ne-nadaljevanja gospodarske diplomacije Jugoslavije v Sloveniji in Črni gori po njuni osamosvojitvi", *Annales – Series historia et sociologia* 29, No. 1, pp. 55–68.

1980s, "something that was valid in the 1960s was already abandoned in the 1970s, and in the 1980s the patterns were largely different."<sup>3</sup> This also applies to the present analysis, which attempts to determine what Yugoslavia's<sup>4</sup> relationship with developing countries was like, or how we could, if we were to weigh up "weigh" this relationship, with a particular emphasis on the relationship between Yugoslavia's (and its political elite's) prestige policy and concrete (Yugoslav) economic interests. In other words, we are interested in Yugoslavia's relationship with the developing countries between what we call *ideological solidarity*, i.e., cooperation with developing countries with the aim of their political empowerment, and the pursuit of its own concrete economic benefits and interests, which today would be labelled as *commercial diplomacy*.<sup>5</sup>

The complexity (and through it its problematique) between altruism and own politics of prestige of Yugoslavia towards the global South was illustrated in mid-1960s by Janez Stanovnik, who in 1966 questioned the definition of the "concept of cooperation" or, as he himself put it: "We must answer the question of what cooperation is, but not cooperation in the sense of a pleasant attitude, but cooperation in the sense of a decisive, I would say, revolutionary alternative in the world economy."<sup>6</sup> And it is precisely in this line of thinking that in our opinion lies the oxymoron of the unresolved Yugoslav approach to non-aligned and developing countries, which constantly questions whether the Yugoslav approach should take the path of revolutionary change in the world economic order, which was supposed to be the essence of the then existing Yugoslav state ideology, or whether it should rather continue with *business as*

<sup>3</sup> Zvone Dragan, *Interview* and conversation (Celje, April and August 2025).

<sup>4</sup> We use this term to avoid potential statutory legal issues due to the multiple transformations and renaming of the country. It refers to a state formation that included present-day Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, North Macedonia, Kosovo, and Montenegro. This 'simplified' naming of several legally different state formations does not affect the content of the article.

<sup>5</sup> More on the characteristics of the Yugoslav diplomacy, see Dragan Božetič, "Jugoslavija i nesvrstanost: prilog prevazilaženju predrasuda i stereotipa", *Annales – Series historia et sociologia* 24, No. 4 (2014), pp. 615–624; Jovan Čavoški, "Od Alpa do Himalaja: ambasador Dušan Kveder i razvoj jugoslovensko-indijskih odnosa", *Annales – Series historia et sociologia* 24, No. 4 (2014), pp. 637–648; Dušan Nečak, "Slovenski diplomati v nemško-jugoslovanskih odnosih 1949–1973", *Annales – Series historia et sociologia* 24, No. 4 (2014), pp. 703–712; Vladimir Petrovič, "Josip Broz Tito's Summit Diplomacy in the International Relations of Socialist Yugoslavia 1944–1961", *Annales – Series historia et sociologia* 24, No. 4 (2014), pp. 577–592; Mateja Režek, "'Izraelska zveza': tajni stiki med Jugoslavijo in Izraelom v osemdesetih letih", *Annales – Series historia et sociologia* 27, No. 4 (2017), pp. 671–686; Slobodan Selinič, "Jugoslovenska diplomatija 1945–1950: stvaranje partijske diplomatije", *Annales – Series historia et sociologia* 24, No. 4 (2014), pp. 553–562; Aleksandar Životić, "Insistiranje na principima? Jugoslavija i počeci rata u Koreji (1950–1951)", *Annales – Series historia et sociologia* 24, No. 4 (2014), pp. 593–600.

<sup>6</sup> Arhiv Jugoslavije (AJ), AJ 507, fond Savez komunista Jugoslavije, Komisija CK SKJ za pitanja međunarodnih odnosa i međunarodnog radničkog pokreta, IX, S/a-219, Osnovne tendencije u razvoju svetske privrede i međunarodnih ekonomskih odnosa – redigovane stenografske beleške, 10. 11. 1967, p. 57.

*usual*, justifying its economic development with Marxist liberation of man, while at the same time oxymoronically remaining within the capitalist international liberal order.

In this context, another important question arises, namely about Yugoslavia's activities in the developing countries and its relationship with these countries. The picture usually assumed is simplified and implies that, as in the political sphere, we also had a bipolar system in international economic relations. The two poles were the capitalist West and the communist East, while Yugoslavia was supposed to represent a third way, the path of market socialism. But things were by far more complicated.

Firstly, the countries of the communist bloc were often not at all altruistic towards the developing countries when it came to their economic interests.<sup>7</sup> One such case is described in a dispatch from the Yugoslav Federal Secretariat for Foreign Policy No. 426439 (dated 3 May 1978) from Addis Ababa, in which the author refers to the Soviet cotton production project in Ethiopia, which was managed by Soviet experts without the cooperation of the locals and was intended for export to the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia.<sup>8</sup> The same author also draws attention to similar non-altruistic practices in dispatch no. 418317 (dated 17 August 1978), when, in describing the activities of East Germany and the Soviet Union in Ethiopia, he concludes that "the Germans and the Russians are already presenting bills that they [the Ethiopians, author's note] will be paying for a long time to come."<sup>9</sup>

Secondly, Western countries, too, in their capitalist approach to shaping their own economies, sought softer approaches that were not necessarily the same as those we were accustomed to the 19th-century capitalism and then until the end of World War II. As Hermele notes, Sweden increasingly based its development aid to third world countries on untied aid in the form of donations.<sup>10</sup> However, despite this altruistic approach, Sweden never wanted to introduce a different economic system in these countries than the one it knew itself. So, while its aid was indeed intended for the development of the developing countries, despite its untied nature, it was still based on capitalist models.

Thirdly, from the outset, Yugoslavia declared that it would be different, that its search for a third way between the two systems would not only hold up a mirror to both, to the West and to the Soviet Union, but would also influ-

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<sup>7</sup> For a different perspective, see: Iandolo, *Arrested Development. The Soviet Union in Ghana, Guinea, and Mali 1955–1968*, and Engerman, *The Price of Aid. The Economic Cold-War in India*.

<sup>8</sup> Diplomatski arhiv Ministarstva spoljnih poslova Republike Srbije, Beograd (DAMSP), Politička arhiva (PA), 1978, Ethiopia, F 33, dispatch 426439, 3 May 1978.

<sup>9</sup> DAMSP, PA, 1978, Ethiopia, F 33, dispatch 418317, 17 August 1978.

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Hermele, "Sweden and the third world: development aid and capital involvement", *Review of African Political Economy* 23, No. 9 (1982), pp. 85–100.

ence the international system of development. In doing so, the Yugoslav leadership did not rely solely on the support of like-minded countries in Europe (e.g., Austria, the Nordic countries, etc.), but also on the support of those to whom Yugoslavia would set an example of how to move away from the (bad) practices of Western and Eastern countries and seek a new path based on "bottom-up" development instead of "top-down" development. Ramšak boldly describes this Yugoslav economic imaginary as a combination of an integral approach and economic inclusivism, with which Yugoslavia would replace the adjective "socialist" with the adjective "developing".<sup>11</sup> This *rebranding* would have two parallel effects: firstly, because Yugoslavia would no longer be primarily *socialist*, but increasingly a developing country, the decolonized countries would more quickly *feel* it, meaning that they would feel Yugoslavia as being one of them, perhaps among the most developed, but still one of them, and would thus voluntarily cede to it the primacy in shaping their development; the second process that would have taken place, as described by Ramšak, is the *enlightened self-interest*.<sup>12</sup> This would have distanced Yugoslavia from pursuing only its own interests in the developing countries and, in parallel with its own political and economic interests, and above all with its policy of prestige, it would have pursued (also) the interests of the developing countries. At times, it was more inclined toward altruism, while at other times it was more inclined toward selfishness or its own national and political interests.

The purpose of this article is to determine the relationship between altruism and self-interest within Yugoslavia's activities in developing countries. We will be particularly interested in how important the ideological (socialist and non-aligned) element was in Yugoslavia's commercial diplomacy with the developing countries and how this element was manifested.

We sought answers to the research questions using a combination of different research methods. An analysis of primary sources and secondary literature determined the research framework for Yugoslavia's relations with developing countries. This served as the starting point for conducting three semi-structured interviews with interlocutors who were active in Yugoslavia's commercial diplomacy in the 1970s and 1980s or who had contacts in developing countries through it. The interviews were conducted with three people: Zvone

<sup>11</sup> Ramšak, "Jugoslavija i ambivalentnost ekonomske saradnje Jug-Jug u sedamdesetim i osamdesetim godinama", p. 207.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Dragan<sup>13</sup>, Dr. Bojan Pretnar<sup>14</sup>, and Dejan Pretnar<sup>15</sup>. They were conducted in person and lasted about an hour. The questions in the interviews mainly related to the relationship between the economic and ideological components in the operation of Yugoslav companies in selected developing countries.

The article consists of three interrelated parts. The introduction is followed by a historical and theoretical framework for the discussion, in which the starting points of Yugoslav commercial diplomacy towards developing countries are outlined. This part provides the research framework for conducting empirical research, the results of which will be presented in the empirical part, where we will focus on key findings that will help us answer the research questions based on data obtained from primary sources and interviews. This is followed by the last part of the article, the discussion and conclusion, in which we will highlight key findings and shed light on possible areas of research that would be worth exploring in the future.

### **Yugoslav commercial diplomacy: a historical background**

The end of World War II brought to power in Yugoslavia a communist elite that wanted to establish a state comparable to the Soviet Union, based on central command and expropriation of private property.<sup>16</sup> At first, the political elite thought that it would be able to build a state in a sort of autarky, but it soon became clear that without international cooperation, the state would not survive. International economic cooperation of the state was therefore introduced in state-led policies due to necessity, and as a consequence, foreign economic activities were also centralized under state control.<sup>17</sup> The *Cominform* crisis in 1948 and the economic and political blockade of Yugoslavia by its "allies" revealed the harsh reality of the Yugoslav economy. At that point, the Yugoslav leadership pragmatically turned from the East to the West, especially in economic matters, hoping that "keeping him [Tito] afloat" would help Yugoslavia to survive economically and politically. The economic shift from the East to the West also heralded some

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<sup>13</sup> Politician and diplomat, Vice-President of the Federal Executive Council 1979–1984, Ambassador to China, the Czech Republic, and Poland. The interview was conducted in April 2025 and supplemented in August 2025.

<sup>14</sup> Professor, permanent representative of Slovenia to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the Council for TRIPs at the World Trade Organization (WTO), representative of Ljubljanska banka in Kenya (1978–1982). The interview was conducted in July 2025.

<sup>15</sup> Director of Pretnar Consulting. The interview was conducted in July 2025.

<sup>16</sup> Rudolf Bičanić, *Economic Policy in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 23 (hereinafter: Bičanić, *Economic Policy in Socialist Yugoslavia*).

<sup>17</sup> This was set in Article 14 of the *Constitution of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia* (1946).

changes in the Yugoslav economy, which diverted from the state economy to a sort of self-management,<sup>18</sup> as it was later proved, a sort of point of no return.

The evolution of economic pragmatism in a country did not stop after the mid-1950s when Yugoslavia with *the Belgrade* (1954) and *Moscow* (1956) *declarations* politically warmed its relations with the Soviet Bloc. It seems from the analysis of Udovič that Yugoslavia in the mid-1950s already realized that *floating* between the blocs would not bring a stable and productive future and therefore something new should be invented to reposition Yugoslavia in the international community.<sup>19,20</sup> This "something" was the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), formed in a sort of blueprint at the 1955 Bandung conference. Although Yugoslavia was not there, the political elite in Yugoslavia quickly realized that the connection with the newly-decolonized African and Asian countries presented a window of opportunity for becoming an international player. What did the Yugoslav political elite do to become the role-player in the NAM? As Udovič alludes, Yugoslavia took the Bandung idea, de-regionalized it, and spread it worldwide.<sup>21</sup> It was a sort of freeriding and a sort of politics of prestige, which was quite close to the Yugoslav authorities, firstly internationally already proved by the non-permanent membership in the Security Council in 1950.<sup>22</sup>

Yugoslavia co-opting the NAM movement and positioning itself as the leader of NAM was not just a question of prestige politics within NAM, but also towards the two main blocs, which were realizing that Yugoslavia no longer wanted to be just "one country", but together with the other two "the country", each of which had a series of supporters in the international community. Nevertheless, the politics of prestige did not develop by itself, but Yugoslavia had to invest a lot of political, financial, and societal capital to increase its relevance in NAM (the *inward factor*) and to reflect its relevance outside NAM (the *outward factor*). Regarding the *outward factor*, Yugoslavia proved to be quite active in sig-

<sup>18</sup> Different investigators have different views on why this shift occurred. For more cf. Bičanić, *Economic Policy in Socialist Yugoslavia*, p. 73; Dragutin V. Marsenić, *Privredni sistem Jugoslavije. Peto izdanje* (Beograd, 1981), pp. 29–32; Johanna Bockman, *Markets in the name of socialism: The Left-Wing Origins of Neoliberalism* (Stanford, 2011), p. 78.

<sup>19</sup> Boštjan Udovič, "Going international: the (non-)importance of non-aligned countries' markets in the foreign economic relations of Yugoslavia", *Zeitgeschichte* 49, No. 1, pp. 11–32 (hereinafter: "Going international: the (non-)importance of non-aligned countries' markets in the foreign economic relations of Yugoslavia").

<sup>20</sup> Yugoslavia participated for the first time in the session of the COMECON (*Council of Mutual Economic Assistance*) in 1956 in East Berlin; a year later, it also participated in the sessions of the COMECON in Warsaw, but after 1958, it no longer participated in COMECON activities. More in Andrzej Korbonski, *COMECON* (International Conciliation, No. 549) (New York, 1964), pp. 16–17, 55 (hereinafter: Korbonski, *COMECON*).

<sup>21</sup> Korbonski, *COMECON*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>22</sup> For more on this topic, see Boštjan Udovič, "Vodili smo bitko za uresničenje našega načrta ---: prispevek slovenskih stalnih predstavnikov k Organizaciji združenih narodov", *Teorija in praksa* 53, No. 3 (2016), pp. 761–776.



naling to the other two blocs that it wanted NAM to become its backyard and as such Yugoslavia would be competitive with the USA and the Soviet Union. Parallel to small gestures, such an approach was symbolically proven by Yugoslavia's role in the adoption of the *Declaration on Non-Alignment and Economic Progress* (NAC.CONF 3/RES14),<sup>23</sup> justifying for the first time *de jure* the idea of South-South cooperation, and (henceafter) Yugoslavia's support for the adoption of the *Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order*.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to the outward struggle for prestige, Yugoslavia invested a lot in its political *grandeur* in the NAM countries. This *grandeur* was accompanied by political actions carried out at the economic and societal levels. The societal level was mostly seen in the scholarship system that Yugoslavia organized for students from NAM countries. The numbers were not large, but even if only symbolically, Yugoslavia left a footprint in NAM countries as a friendly and socially responsible partner. Secondly, Yugoslavia's economic investments increased during the 1960s,<sup>25</sup> but in the early 1970s, they already began to stagnate. Yugoslav enterprises that were investing in NAM countries frequently complained about the cooperation between them and the selected NAM country, but unsuccessfully. One such case was the investment of the Slovenian enterprise Slovenijales in the Central African Republic (a branch known as Slovenia-Bois). In a conversation between Edvard Kardelj and the director of Slovenijales, in which the latter complained about the characteristics of the Central African market, Kardelj made it clear that "the companies of socialist Yugoslavia do not operate in Africa like the companies from capitalist countries, with prior financial calculations of making a profit,"<sup>26</sup> meaning that the search for profit was not the main cause of Yugoslav investments in NAM. Kardelj strongly advised Slovenian companies to prepare their projects in such a way that they "contain a serious and fair attitude towards the needs of developing countries for their own development."<sup>27</sup> In his speech,

<sup>23</sup> The declaration was adopted at the NAM meeting between 8 and 10 September 1970 in Lusaka.

<sup>24</sup> The declaration was adopted as United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3201 (S-VI) (UN Doc A/RES/3201(S-VI)).

<sup>25</sup> For more see Marjan Svetličič, *Ekonomski odnosi Jugoslavije sa zemljama u razvoju u 1976. Godini* (Ljubljana, 1977); Ivo Fabinc, *Ekonomska saradnja Jugoslavije sa zemljama u razvoju 1972. i 1973. godine – ocena rezultata i osvrt na naše mogućnosti u narednom periodu (1976–1980)* (Ljubljana, 1975); Leonora Dugonjic-Rodwin and Ivica Mladenović, "Transnational Educational Strategies during the Cold War: Students from the Global South in Socialist Yugoslavia, 1961–91", in: *Socialist Yugoslavia and the Non-Aligned Movement. Social, Cultural, Political, and Economic Imaginaries*, ed. Paul Stubbs (Quebec, 2023), pp. 331–359.

<sup>26</sup> Arhiv Republike Slovenije (AS), SI AS 1277-12-2170, fond Edvard Kardelj – Krištof, Edvard Kardelj, *Zapis razgovora tovariša Edvarda Kardelja s predstavnikami podjetij Slovenijales /.../ v zvezi z njihovimi poslovnimi nastopi na afriškem trgu, zlasti v Centralni afriški republiki*. Ljubljana, 17. februar 1970, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> AS, SI AS 1277-12-2170, fond Edvard Kardelj – Krištof, Edvard Kardelj, *Zapis razgovora tovariša Edvarda Kardelja s predstavnikami podjetij Slovenijales /.../ v zvezi z njihovimi poslovnimi nastopi na afriškem trgu, zlasti v Centralni afriški republiki*. Ljubljana, 17. februar 1970. This was not part of the original transcript, and was added in the final version by hand.



Francijo danes dovolj ~~ugoden~~ <sup>zanimen</sup> za skupno sodelovanje na afriškem tržišču.

[illegible]

V pogovoru je tovariš Kardelj izrazil predvsnen naslednje misli: Po njegovem mnenju bi bilo treba nastop slovenskih podjetij na afriškem trgu oziroma kot je bilo rečeno najprej v Centralno-afriški republiki pripraviti zelo solidno in se na vsak način izogniti vtisu, da žele podjetja socialistične Jugoslavije nastopati na afriškem trgu kot podjetja kapitalističnih dežel, se pravi z eksaktno finančno računsko uplasten pridruženje To seveda ne pomeni, da naj gredo v sodelovanje kot, da bi poslovala z izgubo, marveč je moči z vrsto ukrepov, kot je npr. čim večja angažiranost potencialov, s katerimi razpolagajo te dežele, kot npr. delovna sila in podobno, mogoče že iz samega začetka ustvariti ugoden vtis za tako sodelovanje. Pri tem se seveda postavlja še posebno vprašanje glede skupnega nastopa s Francozi, kar v denarnih vprašanjih, kajti prav mišljete je zato treba pripraviti tudi take, da bi imeli svojo odgovornost ljudem svojih držav, da vsebinsko tudi obenem, da se pri potek njihovega lastnega razvoja ni odvisno

Excerpt from Kardelj's discussion with Slovenian entrepreneurs (AS, SI AS 1277-12-2170, fond Edvard Kardelj – Krištof, Edvard Kardelj, *Zapis razgovora tovariša Edvarda Kardelja s predstavniki podjetij Slovenijales /.../ v zvezi z njihovimi poslovnimi nastopi na afriškem trgu, zlasti v Centralni afriški republiki*. Ljubljana, 17. februar 1970. This was not part of the original transcript, and was added in the final version by hand)

Kardelj also alluded to the importance of investing in NAM regardless of whether it brings economic/business benefits or not, since "political conditions for our companies in developing countries are very favorable, as these states are trying to pursue an independent foreign policy – from the East and West."<sup>28</sup> At the end of the conversation, Kardelj also highlighted the low absorption capacity of NAM countries, which had not managed to spend the loans received from Yugoslavia,

<sup>28</sup> AS, SI AS 1277-12-2170, fond Edvard Kardelj – Kristof, Edvard Kardelj, *Zapis razgovora tovariša Edvarda Kardelja s predstavniki podjetij Slovenijales /.../ v zvezi z njihovimi poslovnimi nastopi na afriškem trgu, zlasti v Centralni afriški republiki*. Ljubljana, 17. februar 1970, p. 5.

and gave the instruction that Yugoslav companies should create the conditions under which they would be able to benefit from these loans.

This Kardelj intervention clearly presents the relevance of investments in NAM countries not for economic/business purposes, but mostly for gaining the political prestige of Yugoslavia. The fact that most activities in Yugoslavia had been subordinated to building the political *grandeur* is also shown by the fact that the CEO of Slovenijales, already from the initial stage of its investment in the Central African Republic, claimed that they would need more (state) money and if they did not receive it, they would terminate their activities in the Central African Republic. Ljubljanska banka, the major Slovenian bank, initially did not want to credit the operation of the Slovenian-Bois joint operation the Central African Republic, but they yielded to pressure from the political elite and disbursed a credit of USD 6.6 million to Slovenijales for the period 1971–1973.<sup>29</sup>

Taking into consideration the impact of Yugoslavia in NAM countries, we must also mention the role of credits that Yugoslavia disbursed to NAM countries. As the document *Economic relations of Yugoslavia with NAM countries*<sup>30</sup> reveals, Yugoslavia lent USD 627 million to NAM countries from 1959 to 1970; only 40% were repaid. The largest amount of more than USD 350 million was directed to Asian NAM countries, while USD 150 million was disbursed to African countries. The largest individual recipient of Yugoslav credits was Indonesia with almost 30% of the total credits disbursed.<sup>31</sup> Discussing credits Yugoslavia gave to NAM countries, we have to draw attention to Jožef Kunič's statement about the real intention of Yugoslavia crediting NAM countries, who explains the following:

Credits given [to NAM countries] by the state [Yugoslavia] also had a hidden purpose, being a tacit subsidy of some companies. These were mainly companies that had a lot of workers and usually had no prospects on Western markets, but also only few possibilities on the Yugoslav market. So, they had almost no chance of surviving. In such cases, a credit deal was made between Yugoslavia and a [NAM] country whether it was already prior to the approval of the credit clear that this country would never pay back the whole credit. But by crediting the country ... the company from Yugoslavia got a deal there. /.../ We basically credited the country that later bought the products from the Yugoslav company.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> AS, SI AS 1277-12-2170, fond Edvard Kardelj – Krištof, Niko Kavčič, *Informacija o angažiranju podjetja Slovenijales v Centralno afriški republiki*. Ljubljana, 26. oktober 1971, p. 2 and 13.

<sup>30</sup> AS, SI AS 1165-881, fond Gospodarska zbornica Slovenije, *Ekonomski odnosi Jugoslavije sa zemljama u razvoju*, 17 Br. Str. Pov. 178, z dne 13. 12. 1971.

<sup>31</sup> AS, SI AS 1165-881, fond Gospodarska zbornica Slovenije, *Ekonomski odnosi Jugoslavije sa zemljama u razvoju*, 17 Br. Str. Pov. 178, z dne 13. 12. 1971, pp. 4, 20.

<sup>32</sup> Jožef Kunič, *Interview* (Ljubljana, February 24, 2017).

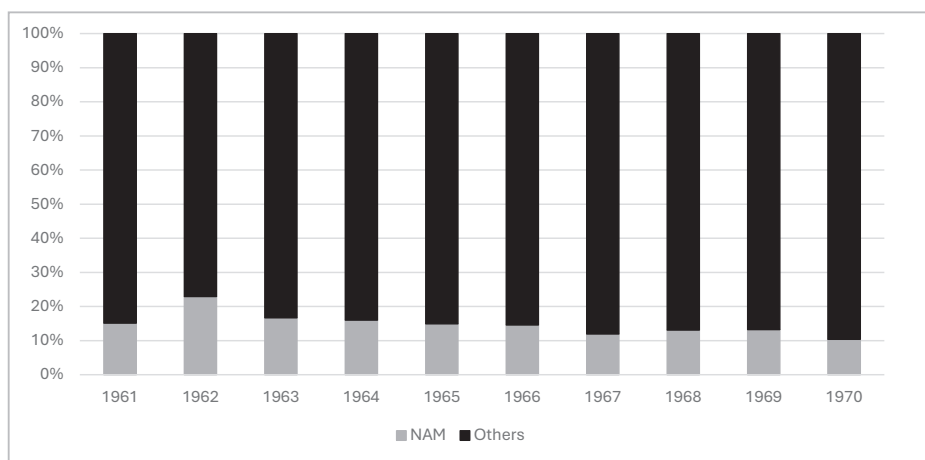


Figure 1: Yugoslav exports to NAM and other countries (*Economic relations of Yugoslavia with NAM countries*)<sup>33</sup>

The excerpts shown highlight the notion that NAM was for Yugoslavia a sort of *laboratory* for its political prestige. But to obtain it, Yugoslavia had to promote itself not only as a peer-to-peer country with the same interests, but also as a country where its interests are less relevant than the development and interests of the other country. As such, Yugoslavia instrumentalized societal and economic instruments to build its political grandeur. But what about ideology? Was it relevant or not, and if yes/no, how was this reflected in the everyday practice of Yugoslav enterprises?

### Yugoslav commercial diplomacy between (official) ideology and (market) pragmatism

The dilemma of how Yugoslav commercial diplomacy behaved towards developing countries was partially presented in Udovič's article, in which the author concludes that there was a large gap between what the official authorities advocated and what actually happened on the ground.<sup>34</sup> A similar picture of the gap between lofty words on the one hand and the harsh pragmatism of the economy on the other is also shown by available archival sources, which point

<sup>33</sup> The official name of the document is *Ekonomski odnosi Jugoslavije sa zemljama u razvoju*, 17 Br. Str. Pov. 178, z dne 13. 12. 1971, p. 17 (AS, SI AS 1165-881, fond Gospodarska zbornica Slovenije).

<sup>34</sup> Udovič, "Going international": the (non-)importance of non-aligned countries' markets in the foreign economic relations of Yugoslavia", pp. 11–32.

to specific problems in the operation of Yugoslav companies in the developing countries. One such source is a dispatch received on 20 May 1983, by Marko Bulc,<sup>35</sup> in his capacity as President of the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce, from the Yugoslav ambassador to Kenya, which reads:

I am writing to you again regarding the candidacy of M. Stokin for the position of director of the Joint Economic Representation in Nairobi and the staffing situation at Aprimax. /.../ The representative of the chamber here is not an official or coordinator /.../ We do not need a director or a mechanical engineer, but a salesperson who will help sell our goods. /.../ The situation is similar with Aprimax. Now that the best opportunities for entering this market have arrived, Jugotekstil, under pressure from Emona, intends to remove Kramar (who is a professional salesman) /.../ Emona will retain Stepančič, who has sold 34,000 worth of goods since 1982, but nothing this year. His personal income is, of course, much higher than our total turnover.<sup>36</sup>

The record sounds quite dramatic and shows that the then Yugoslav ambassador to Kenya had different expectations from those of companies and the Chamber of Commerce in Ljubljana. The record shows *the frustration* of the then Yugoslav ambassador to Kenya over *the lack of understanding* among Slovenian political and economic actors about the importance of the non-aligned markets for the Yugoslav economy. The same ambassador repeatedly emphasized the opportunities that the Slovenian and Yugoslav economies would have there, using Kenya as an example, saying: "We are [currently] reconsidering what else we should do here and what we would suggest to you in order to further accelerate the pace of intensifying trade with this part of the world."<sup>37</sup> In the continuation of his notes, he criticizes Slovenian economists who are skeptical about the increased intensity of Slovenian economic cooperation in Kenya with the following emphasis:

According to the minutes (on page 6), Comrade Stepančič from Aprimex once again shone with his traditional pessimism, which is simply a reflection of his

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<sup>35</sup> Zoran Žagar, ambassador to Kenya between 1982 and 1986, was an economist and diplomat. Among other things, he was deputy executive director of the World Bank in Washington (1965–1969), Executive Vice President of the International Finance Corporation in London (1969–1974), and delegate of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia National Assembly in the Assembly of Republics and Provinces of the SFRY and Chairman of the Committee for the Credit and Monetary System (1974–1984). More in France Adamič, "Žagar, Zoran (1924–2008)", *Slovenian Biography*, available at: <http://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi891738/#slovenski-biografski-leksikon>, accessed: 22. 8. 2025).

<sup>36</sup> AS, SI AS 1134, fond Republiški komite za mednarodno sodelovanje SRS, t. e. 418, depeša 11631, 20. 5. 1983.

<sup>37</sup> AS, SI AS 1134, fond Republiški komite za mednarodno sodelovanje SRS, t. e. 418, 14. 4. 1983.

personal and Aprimex's failure in the past year. /.../ He says "that the remaining offer, except for canned fruit, is less interesting and that Kenyan wishes and our possibilities are largely unrealistic." This is no longer just pessimism or ignorance, but rather counterproductive. /.../ The "reservations" of Comrade Valas from Krka are also completely incomprehensible to us [and we disagree with them]. I really don't know where he got all this from and why he brought in all this pessimism. The truth is quite the opposite.<sup>38</sup>

Official documents of the Federal Council also confirm Yugoslavia's economic pragmatism towards developing countries. On the first page of the document *Economic relations of Yugoslavia with NAM countries*,<sup>39</sup> it is possible to find the conclusion that "the nature of our [Yugoslav – author's note] economic relations with developing countries stems from the fact that their market enables us to sell our industrial products and make investments," with the authors of the document pointing out that this is only on condition that Yugoslav products are competitive, since "in this market we encounter products from competitive, highly developed countries." The document goes on to discuss the economic independence of these countries from their colonial powers and emphasizes the possibility of economic cooperation between Yugoslavia and these countries, which has gained a certain [positive] reputation in these countries both politically and as an economic partner. The document goes on to discuss what developing countries have to offer Yugoslavia, citing minerals and primary raw materials that Yugoslavia needs for its economic development, which is why, according to the document, it is "in our [Yugoslav – author's note] interest to establish lasting ties with these countries and thus ensure the stability of our economy" (p. 3). A reading of the document in its entirety shows that Yugoslavia's calculations in developing countries were primarily economic, but political decision-makers were aware that Yugoslavia, due to its role in the Non-Aligned Movement, had a comparative advantage that Western countries may not have had. It could be said that Yugoslavia's role and advantage in developing countries at that time was primarily that it offered them the idea or platform of possible development beyond the classic bloc system.

Developing countries were aware that decolonization, which was politically a process within the United Nations, would not bring about much change in practice. The colonizers would still want to maintain a strong influence in the "new politics," especially in the economy. Developing countries thus had two options: either to accept the influence of the former colonizers and depen-

<sup>38</sup> AS, SI AS 1134, fond Republiški komite za mednarodno sodelovanje SRS, t. e. 418, 14. 4. 1983.

<sup>39</sup> AS, SI AS 1165-881, fond Gospodarska zbornica Slovenije, *Ekonomski odnosi Jugoslavije sa zemljama u razvoju*, 17 Br. Str. Pov. 178, z dne 13. 12. 1971.

dence on them, or to reject this completely and join the Soviet camp, which would make them completely dependent on the Soviet Union. Well, Yugoslavia offered them a third option: they could enter into economic relations on a quasi-equal footing, without having to submit politically. What is more, Yugoslavia even created a kind of image of coexistence between its interests and those of developing countries, which gave developing countries the feeling that they were all equal and in the same boat, and that each country could shape its own destiny. At a time of political emancipation for developing countries, this symbolic moment was not to be dismissed. In other words, while capitalist countries or the Soviet Union expected developing countries to submit to them on the basis of their power and international position, Yugoslavia offered developing countries a form of voluntary submission in the form of soft power. This was expressed not only through the crediting and subsidizing of Yugoslav businesses and activities in developing countries, but also through the power of attraction, which was evident in activities such as the study of students from developing countries in Yugoslavia,<sup>40</sup> professional excursions of economists to Slovenia, technology transfer and other activities of Yugoslavia and its republics in developing countries, etc.

Of course, this Yugoslav pragmatism towards developing countries cannot be understood outside the context of the existence and functioning of Yugoslavia, which developed after the dispute with the Cominform, perfected in the construction of "socialism with a human face," and above all during the period of internal liberalization that gradually began in the mid-1960s. nor can it be understood outside the context of Yugoslavia's search for a third way between communism and capitalism, whereby the idea of party ideologues was largely that it was clear that capitalism could not be eradicated, but that it could be transformed, or as Vojan Rus writes: "With the appropriate relationship between class and political forces, it is possible to give phenomena that were once capitalist a more socialist content or to make capitalist components serve socialism."<sup>41</sup>

Yugoslav pragmatism would not have any meaning in itself if Yugoslavia did not reflect a certain appeal, something new and different. We have already pointed this out above, emphasizing the authors of the document *Economic relations of Yugoslavia with NAM countries*, which stresses that Yugoslavia has a reputation, and both Dejan Pretnar and Zvone Dragan agree with this. The lat-

<sup>40</sup> While 296 foreign students studied in Yugoslavia in the 1951/52 academic year, there were already 1,375 in 1964/65 and 3,241 in 1970/71, most of them at faculties. In the 1977/78 academic year, most foreign students in Yugoslavia came from Asia (68%), followed by Africa (15%). There were fewer students from Europe than from Africa. More in *Jugoslovenski pregled* 24, No. 6 (1980), pp. 247–249.

<sup>41</sup> Vojan Rus, "Socializem in 'deže v razvoju'", *Teorija in praksa* 15, No. 11–12 (1978), pp. 1274–1280.



ter emphasizes that Tito was a kind of "a magnet for penetration, for opening doors" to Yugoslav politics and economy for the leaders of developing countries.<sup>42</sup> He explains this appeal with Tito's approach of balancing between East and West, as well as with Yugoslavia's position in the Non-Aligned Movement. Dejan Pretnar, on the other hand, emphasizes not only the reputation but also the popularity of Yugoslavs, or rather the respect they enjoyed, even from Western countries, when he recalls his childhood memories: "I was a little boy and I liked being Yugoslavian because the Americans and others who were there [in Kenya – author's note] looked at us with envy."

Yugoslavia's soft power thus worked. Non-aligned countries, whether more or less active, understood Yugoslavia, and especially its leadership, through the politics of prestige. The dilemma that arose was how and to what extent to mix politics and economics. Of course, it was expected that politics would play its role in important deals,<sup>43</sup> but at the same time, the Yugoslav economy wanted to know how much freedom it had in its operations and how much politics would tie its hands (or untie them when a big deal was expected). From this perspective, the analysis in the document *Economic relations of Yugoslavia with NAM countries*<sup>44</sup> is interesting, in which it is pointed out that "while political relations played a decisive role in the first phase of our [Yugoslav] economic cooperation with the developing countries, this is no longer the case. Countries that have succeeded in developing their own economic potential are now more important for our economy" (p. 59). The document adds to this statement by emphasizing that lending to Yugoslavia by developing countries and, in many cases, the non-repayment of loans at a time when Yugoslavia itself is facing economic imbalances, is creating a "difficult financial situation" in Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, Yugoslavia must resolve this difficult situation "with a great deal of patience, taking into account our [Yugoslav] economic interests and our policy of non-alignment." The document adds that, precisely because of its non-aligned status, Yugoslavia must demand from developing countries (in economic relations)

<sup>42</sup> Dragan recalls that even during his time in Beijing, there was still a sense of Yugoslav pragmatism in the diplomatic corps. What was different, however, was the attitude towards Yugoslavia after Tito's death. As he himself points out, a foreign diplomat with whom he had a very cordial relationship once said to him: "Zvone, after Tito's death, you are less successful in maneuvering among the greats." By this, he wanted to point out the fact that after Tito's death, Yugoslavia was losing its primacy not only in the Non-Aligned Movement, but in the international community in general (Zvone Dragan, *Interview* and conversation (Celje, April and August 2025)).

<sup>43</sup> Zvone Dragan offers an interesting illustration of this when he recalls from his time serving in Beijing (China) that the head of the economic department at the embassy said at one point: "I've come this far, from here on it's up to the ambassador." More in Zvone Dragan, *Interview* (Celje, April 2, 2015).

<sup>44</sup> AS, SI AS 1134, fond Republiški komite za mednarodno sodelovanje SRS, t. e. 418, dokument 173/144, 17. 2. 1973.



Iskra Vega overhead projector (*Wikimedia Commons*)<sup>45</sup>

"better treatment than that which developing countries grant to developed countries" (p. 60).<sup>46</sup>

This points to three considerations that guided the Yugoslav authorities in their dealings with developing countries. First, the authorities in Belgrade viewed relations with developing countries as highly asymmetrical. Yugoslavia was prepared to grant these countries credit and assist them in their development, but it also expected some kind of *quid pro quo* for its actions. The second consideration related primarily to the dilemma of weighing economic benefits

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<sup>45</sup> *Wikimedia Commons*, available at: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/65/Grafoskop.JPG>, accessed: 22. 8. 2025.

<sup>46</sup> The document also states that between 1953 and 1973, 4,000 Yugoslav experts participated in the socio-economic development of developing countries, while 6,000 citizens of these countries were educated or trained in Yugoslavia (AS, SI AS 1134, fond Republiški komite za mednarodno sodelovanje SRS, t. e. 418, dokument 173/144, 17. 2. 1973, p. 61).



against the policy of non-alignment. We can conclude that this dilemma was largely illusory: Yugoslavia largely operated according to market principles in developing countries, but where it had specific interests, it invoked its policy of non-alignment. There was not much altruism or idealised relations here. The third finding is that, over the years, Yugoslavia increasingly abandoned its non-aligned political ideology in the developing countries, relying more often on classic Western business models, and in the 1980s, the developing countries and non-alignment became largely obsolete.

Bojan Pretnar points to one illustrative example of how doors were opening for the Slovenian/Yugoslav enterprises, based on his personal experience of working in Kenya. Pretnar knew that it was important for at the time president of Kenya Arap Moi,<sup>47</sup> who was a teacher by profession, to establish as many schools as possible in Kenya in order to strengthen the education of young Kenyans. Knowing this, he came up with the idea that Slovenia/Yugoslavia could donate an overhead projector, which was manufactured in Slovenia by Iskra, to Arap Moi's school.<sup>48</sup> The gift was accepted with open arms and "this opened the door to Moi's advisor for me." But that was only the first step. A few years later, *the gift* developed into a business partnership between Iskra and Kenya. Iskra set up a overhead projector factory in Kenya, and Bojan Pretnar gained access to the highest Kenyan authorities.

According to Bojan Pretnar, the second, much less political deal was in Uganda, where Iskra could have set up a portable telephone exchange. Between 1980 and 1986, Uganda was embroiled in a civil war between the official authorities and revolutionary rebels. The Ugandan authorities expressed interest in purchasing Iskra's portable telephone exchanges, which were built into containers. Ugandan leaders came to Slovenia, visited Iskra, inspected the exchanges, and were interested in purchasing them. At this point, the authorities in Belgrade announced that they would cover the purchase financially from the federal budget. Despite the promising agreement between Yugoslavia and Uganda,<sup>49</sup> the deal was not concluded because the Ugandan representative who visited Iskra was shot in a roadblock by rebels a few months later.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Daniel Arap Moi was a Kenyan high-ranking politician who served as president of Kenya between 1978 and 2002.

<sup>48</sup> Before serving in Nairobi, Bojan Pretnar worked at Iskra (Bojan Pretnar, *Interview* (Ljubljana, July 2025)).

<sup>49</sup> According to Pretnar's estimate, this involved several telephone exchanges, which today would be worth around €30 million (*Ibid.*).

<sup>50</sup> Despite boasting about non-alignment, there were also quite a few cases where Yugoslavia's investments in non-aligned countries were not successful, as indicated by a 1977 document from the Republican Committee for International Cooperation of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, in which Litostroj forwarded a request to the republican delegation that was to visit Tanzania at the end of July 1977, asking the delegation to find out why Litostroj had not been selected to build the Kidatu hydroelectric power plant, despite the fact that it had already completed the first phase of construction and was also the cheapest bidder. More in AS, SI AS 1134-333, fond Republiški komite za mednarodno sodelovanje SRS.



Bojan Pretnar with the Kenyan president Daniel Arap Moi – in the photo are Bojan Pretnar, a Yugoslav minister, Daniel Arap Moi, his personal secretary/advisor and the Yugoslav ambassador in Kenya and his wife (Bojan Pretnar's personal archive)

Zvone Dragan agrees with Bojan Pretnar, particularly in terms of Yugoslav economic pragmatism, emphasizing that when discussing the relationship between Yugoslavia and the developing countries, we must distinguish between cases where Yugoslav companies were able to operate according to Western/pragmatic models and cases where the recipient country had a clear national interest. Where Yugoslav companies had more freedom, there was greater competition and "economic criteria prevailed. But when it came to important state infrastructure, when the 'state' also had its interests, then political criteria were also important," Dragan points out, adding:

Ali Hassan<sup>51</sup> often told me that they had received complaints via [Western] embassies that Yugoslavia had been shortlisted in tenders for civil investments [even

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<sup>51</sup> Colonel General Ali Hassan Al Majid Al Tikriti (1941–2010), also known by the nickname "Chemical Ali," held several positions in the governments of Saddam Hussein (he was his cousin). At the time when Zvone Dragan held office in the federal government, Ali was the Iraqi government's Minister of Trade. Zvone Dragan first sat with him on the Joint Economic Commission between Yugoslavia and Iraq in October 1979. More and Zvone Dragan, *Med politiko in diplomacijo* (Ljubljana, 2018), p. 76 (hereinafter: Dragan, *Med politiko in diplomacijo*).



Zvone Dragan with Ali Al Tikriti and Saddam Hussein (Zvone Dragan's personal archive)

though it did not have the best offer]. They even complained with demarches and notes, saying that we had been selected on the basis of political considerations. That was true.<sup>52</sup>

A similar case where the support of state or parastatal authorities was crucial is Iskra's operations in China (which, admittedly, was not a non-aligned country, but still). The company made its breakthrough in 1987, when Iskra signed a deal to equip 57 of Beijing's most important intersections for two million dollars. The deal was won in fierce international competition. Dragan notes that "in addition to the excellent management of the entire project by Iskra's team (at home and in Beijing), the active support of the embassy [of Yugoslavia in Beijing – author's note] and the very friendly relations between the two countries also contributed significantly to the final Chinese decision."<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> He adds that "sometimes lofty political principles [reference to non-alignment, etc. – author's note] were subordinated to practical economic interests."

<sup>53</sup> Dragan, *Med politiko in diplomacijo*, p. 110.

## Discussion and conclusion

In this article, we wanted to determine how Yugoslavia, during its primacy in the Non-Aligned Movement, implemented its economic foreign policy towards developing countries, and we were interested in whether this was more a matter of activities in the direction of a kind of economic altruism (which could be technically referred to as official development assistance) or activities that could be more easily defined as largely pragmatic, seeking primarily benefits for Yugoslavia in developing countries. We added a research question that referred to the ideological nature of these Yugoslav activities. In other words, we were interested in how much the socialist idea and the ideology of the non-aligned movement were an end in themselves and how much they were merely a means of opening doors to the economy. Based on an analysis of sources and interviews, we present three important findings.

First, Yugoslavia's relationship with developing countries was a kind of mixed model of political prestige, ideological altruism, and concrete economic interests. This mixed model was conditioned both by time and by individual circumstances. The "temporality" could be defined in such a way that the Yugoslav approach changed over the years: at first, it was more ideological and altruistic, but later, especially in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it became increasingly pragmatic and similar to the patterns of Western countries. Kunič goes even further in this assessment, pointing out that the altruism displayed in the 1980s was largely just selfishness on the part of the Yugoslav authorities, who were solving their internal economic problems through their own foreign economic policy.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, the approach to "individuality" in Yugoslav foreign economic policy meant that the country did not have a uniform standard for all the countries with which it cooperated. With some, it was more altruistic or approached their economic challenges more benevolently, while with others, as Bojan Pretnar and Zvone Dragan point out, it sought very specific economic benefits.

The second finding of the article is that there was very little ideology in Yugoslavia's economic relations with the developing countries. According to the interviewees, the state (non-aligned) ideology prevailed mainly where the state *had* to intervene, but in many cases the fact that companies came from (non-aligned) Yugoslavia was of little significance. This means that Yugoslavia's economic relations with non-aligned countries can be described as a Hamletian difference between appearance and reality: Yugoslavia liked to refer to its non-alignment, but in realpolitik terms, cooperation was based on non-ideo-

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<sup>54</sup> Jožef Kunič, *Interview* (Ljubljana, February 24, 2017).

logical patterns. Despite this observation, we must highlight another important fact here, namely the significance of Yugoslavia's politics of prestige, which was closely linked to President Tito. In addition to Zvone Dragan, this is also vividly confirmed by Dejan Pretnar, who says that while growing up in Kenya, he met quite a few children named Tito, which certainly indicated the soft power and appeal that Josip Broz Tito had in and for developing countries.

Knowing all this, a third question arises, namely whether Yugoslavia was a kind of *Sonderfall* (special case) in the context of developing countries, or whether it simply co-opted the established patterns that prevailed in the international community and in international economic relations. The answer is not clear-cut, but the present analysis suggests that in the Yugoslav context there was nothing that had not already been seen or practised by the other two blocs – led by Washington and Moscow. What was different was that Yugoslavia symbolically promised developing countries a different, third way, which these countries also wanted to take. After many years of colonization, they did not want to cooperate with their former colonizers, but on the other hand, in many cases, they were not very keen on getting closer to the Soviet bloc. Yugoslavia was relatively politically successful in these countries because it created an image that a world with a different face and content from the one from which developing countries had emerged and from the one that was being offered to them was possible. Consequently, we can conclude that Yugoslavia was not *a special case* in itself, but it was – as we would say today – savvy in its marketing. It knew how to offer what developing countries considered possible, meaningful, and even bold.

Finally, we can conclude that Yugoslav realsocialism was a combination of several parallel processes: altruism, with the desire to bring these countries into its sphere of influence and thus strengthen its policy of prestige towards them and also towards the other two blocs; self-orientation, with the aim of gaining access to the markets of these countries, especially cheap minerals and primary materials that would benefit the Yugoslav economy; and political pragmatism, which meant that the Yugoslav authorities played several games on several levels, with the aim of combining a policy of prestige and economic benefits. The least important factor in this process was the desire to spread socialist ideas and ideology; if it existed at all, it was always in the service of the prestige policy of the political authorities of the time, especially its leadership. As early as 1970, and especially after the death of Josip Broz Tito, this policy of prestige became empty, and cooperation between Yugoslavia and the non-aligned countries remained largely a hollow shell. In the mid-1980s, Yugoslavia had largely abandoned its economic and political non-alignment *via facti* and focused on Western countries, markets, and political-economic integration. And with the breakup of Yugoslavia, the idea of association with the non-aligned countries

came to an end, more than that, it became almost *a curse word* and a sign of nostalgia for the past and other times and (political) practices ... and ultimately, for the successors of the former Yugoslavia, an area and region that they are rediscovering again.

**Boštjan Udovič**

## **JUGOSLOVANSKA GOSPODARSKA DIPLOMACIJA V DRŽAVAH V RAZVOJU MED LASTNIMI (GOSPODARSKIMI) INTERESI IN (IDEOLOŠKO) SOLIDARNOSTJO**

### **IZVLEČEK**

Članek obravnava delovanje jugoslovanske gospodarske diplomacije v razmerju do držav v razvoju, ki so bile članice Gibanja neuvrščenih. Pri tem avtorja zanima predvsem vprašanje razmerja med "ideologijo" in "pragmatiko" v odnosih med Jugoslavijo in neuvrščenimi pa tudi to, v kolikem obsegu je Jugoslavija "igrala na karto" neuvrščenosti, kadar je želela za svoje izdelke pridobiti dodatne trge. Da bi to ugotovili, v članku kombiniramo različne metode: analizo primarnih arhivskih virov, pogovore s pričevalci tistega časa ter analizo sekundarnih virov, predvsem znanstvenih analiz in raziskovalnih poročil. Na podlagi izvedene analize v članku postavljamo tri teze – trditve, ki seveda niso zaključeno raziskovalno delo, ampak predstavljajo izhodišča za razmišljanje. Prva je, da je Jugoslavija v odnosih z državami v razvoju uporabljala neke vrste mešan model, ki je kombiniral jugoslovanski politični prestiž, idejni (in ideološki) altruizem ter pragmatičnost lastnih gospodarskih interesov. S takim pristopom sta jugoslovanska diplomacija in tudi gospodarstvo samo – odvisno od časovne enote – neuvrščene bodisi uporabljala za zadovoljevanje svojih (gospodarskih ali političnih) interesov bodisi sta jim želela iskreno pomagati pri njihovem razvoju. Teh nihljajev nista pogojevali le politična struktura in ideologija, temveč so bili predvsem prepuščeni arbitrarni presoji posameznikov ali celo

"zunanjim dejavnikom". Druga pomembna ugotovitev je, da v jugoslovanskem kontekstu razmerij do držav v razvoju ni bilo ničesar takega, kar že ne bi bilo videno oziroma česar ne bi prakticirala tudi druga dva velika bloka – pod vodstvom Washingtona in Moskve. Jugoslavija je pač imela v neuvrščenih državah neki položaj, ki ga je po potrebi mogla ali pa želela izkoriščati. Sicer ni bilo vselej tako: mnogo je bilo odvisno od zanesenjaštva posameznikov, to nihanje med altruizmom in solidarnostjo pa je po drugi strani vseskozi plavalo znotraj koristoljubnosti jugoslovanskega gospodarstva samega. Kaj je tu novega, drugačnega? Dejansko nič kaj, so pa ugotovitve v članku, ki nadgrajujejo sorodne analize, dokaz, da so se različni režimi in sistemi, ko jim je šlo za nohte, pogostokrat vdali klasični tržni logiki, na ideologijo pa so hitro pozabili. Iz tega tako izhaja ključna ugotovitev članka, in sicer da je bil jugoslovanski socrealizem do neuvrščenih kombinacija več vzporednih procesov – altruizma, sebičnosti ter politične pragmatičnosti, to pa je pomenilo, da so jugoslovanske oblasti – s ciljem kombinacije tako politike in gospodarskih koristi kot tudi prestiža – igrale več iger na več ravneh. Kakršno koli enodimenzionalno slikanje tega odnosa bi bilo zato ne samo metodološko izzivajoče, ampak tudi napačno.



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*Izvleček:* Članek obravnava delovanje jugoslovanske gospodarske diplomacije do držav v razvoju, ki so bile članice gibanja neuvrščenih. S pomočjo literature, arhivskih virov ter pričevanj članek podaja dve ugotovitvi. Prva je, da je bilo v gospodarskih odnosih Jugoslavije z državami v razvoju izjemno malo ideološkosti. Druga pa, da je bil jugoslovanski socrealizem do neuvrščenih kombinacija več vzporednih procesov: altruističnosti, sebičnosti, ter politične pragmatičnosti, kar je pomenilo, da so jugoslovanske oblasti igrale več iger na več nivojih, s ciljem kombinacije tako politike prestiža in gospodarskih koristi.