

Issue Date: **May 09, 1980**

Yugoslav President Tito Dies

- [Succumbs to Four-Month Illness](#)
- [Carter's Funeral Absence Faulted](#)
- [Facts on Tito](#)

Succumbs to Four-Month Illness

Josip Broz Tito, president of Yugoslavia and leader of the League of Communists, its ruling party, died May 4 after being hospitalized since January. The last of World War II's major figures died three days before his 88th birthday. [See 1980 [Other World News: Yugoslav President Tito Loses Leg](#)]

Stevan Doronjski replaced Tito as League of Communists chairman. Vice President Lazar Kolisevski was named interim president of the State Presidency, an eight-member collective presidency made up of representatives from Yugoslavia's six republics and two autonomous provinces. Kolisevski would be replaced later in May by Cvijetin Mijatovic, who would serve a one-year rotating term.

Tito's prolonged illness had given the Yugoslav government time to organize in preparation for his death. It was his strong personality that had helped unite the different and often antagonistic ethnic minorities in Yugoslavia. Filling the post-Tito vacancy was complicated by the absence of any officially recognized heir.

Tributes to Tito poured into Yugoslavia from around the world. U.S. President Carter called him "a towering figure on the world stage.... President Tito's position in the history of his era is assured for all times." The President added that "America will continue its longstanding policy of support for Yugoslavia and do what it must to provide that support."

The U.S.S.R., which had expelled Tito from the international communist movement in 1948, praised the Yugoslav leader as "the outstanding leader of the communists and workers of Yugoslavia and a leading figure of the international communist and workers' movement. The Soviet people deeply mourn" his death. Moscow did not mention the stormy course of Soviet-Yugoslav relations since 1948.

The Yugoslav government May 4 proclaimed seven days of official mourning. Tito's body was placed aboard his presidential train May 5 for the trip from Ljubljana, where he had been hospitalized, to Belgrade, the capital. Thousands of Yugoslavs turned out to meet the train as it progressed through the country.

Tito's coffin was placed in the parliament building in Belgrade. Hundreds of thousands of people stood in line to pay their respects. Members of his family, including his estranged wife, Jovanka, placed wreaths on the coffin. Her appearance contradicted reports that Tito had divorced her in 1978. [See 1979 [People in the News](#)]

Carter's Funeral Absence Faulted

From all over the world, heads of state and government leaders arrived in Belgrade for Tito's funeral May 8. The absence of President Carter from the U.S. delegation was criticized by many commentators.

Carter named Vice President Walter Mondale to lead the U.S. delegation which included Treasury Secretary G. William Miller, former New York Gov. W. Averell Harriman and Lillian Carter, the President's mother.

Lawrence Eagleburger, U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia, denied May 7 that Carter's absence had irritated the Yugoslavs. "No Yugoslav, either official or unofficial, has indicated the least unhappiness to me or my staff with the presence of the vice president rather than President Carter," he told reporters. (According to press reports, there was substantial disagreement within the Administration over Carter's decision not to go.)

The White House said Carter's decision not to attend Tito's funeral did not mean a lack of U.S. support for Yugoslav independence. The President was still unwilling to travel a great deal because of the Iranian crisis.

Other notable absences were French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing and Cuban President Fidel Castro. Tito and Castro had clashed over the aims of the nonaligned nations movement at its 1979 summit. Tito had been the last surviving founder of the movement. [See 1979 [Nonaligned Nations: Pro-Moscow Drift Emerges at Summit](#)]



Keystone/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Josip Broz Tito

Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev attended Tito's funeral, as did British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Premiers Raymond Barre of France, Francesco Cossiga of Italy, Adolfo Suarez of Spain, Masayoshi Ohira of Japan and Hua Kuofeng of China.

The kings of Belgium, Norway and Sweden attended. Also there were the presidents of Finland, Guinea, North Korea, Pakistan, Rumania, Tanzania, Tunisia and Zambia.

West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and East German Socialist Unity Party leader Erich Honecker were there. Georges Marchais, French Communist Party leader, and Enrico Berlinguer, Italian Communist Party leader, attended. Tito's funeral became a focal point for a series of informal talks among various world leaders.

Facts on Tito

Josip Broz was born May 7, 1892 in the village of Kumrovec in Croatia. He left home at age 15 to work in Vienna and enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian army when World War I broke out. Wounded and captured by the Russians, he joined the Communists when the October Revolution erupted in 1917.

Broz left Russia in 1920 to work for the Yugoslav Communist Party, which had been organized the year before. He took the alias Tito after the party was outlawed in 1921. Tito rose rapidly in the ranks, but he was arrested in 1927 and again in 1929.

Released in 1934, Tito worked underground inside Yugoslavia and abroad. He was named Communist Party leader in 1937 by the Comintern, the international communist organization, after the death of former leader Milan Gorkic, who was purged by Stalin.

In 1938, Tito returned to Yugoslavia. When World War II started, he organized his League of Communists into the Partisan guerrilla army. They soon became the strongest anti-Nazi fighters in Yugoslavia and were given some Allied support.

A coalition between Tito and the Yugoslav government in exile collapsed soon after the war, and the League of Communists emerged as the sole power in Yugoslavia. Tito consolidated his control by brutally suppressing his opponents, including Gen. Draja Mihailovic, who was executed, and Aloysius Cardinal Stepinac, who was imprisoned until 1951. [See 1951 [Europe: Stepinac Freed, Challenges Tito; Other Developments](#); 1946 [War Trials: Belgrade; Other Developments](#)]

Although Tito was a dedicated follower of Stalin, he quarreled with the Soviets in 1948 over Soviet economic assistance. Moscow demanded that Yugoslavia concentrate on raw materials and light industry. Tito wanted to develop the country's heavy industry sector. The conflict escalated into a question of whether a communist country must follow Moscow's orders or whether it should place its own interests first.

Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform, the organization that replaced the Comintern after World War II. Relations with the U.S.S.R. varied from hostile to cordial after Stalin's death, but Yugoslavia never rejoined the Soviet bloc.

Instead, Tito sought to steer a foreign policy course that was distant from both the Soviets and the West. His nonaligned policy took concrete shape in 1961 at the first conference of nonaligned nations in Belgrade.

Domestically, Tito's policies progressed from extreme repression to increasing openness. Major economic reforms began in 1965 and turned Yugoslavia into a mixed economy, with elements of private enterprise combined with central control. Among the principal features were factory management by workers' councils, less media censorship and fewer limits on travel abroad than in most other communist countries.

Yugoslavia's strategic position in the Mediterranean area and its defiance of Moscow were the topics that fueled the most speculation on the country's future. Western analysts wondered whether the post-Tito era would see more Soviet pressure on Yugoslavia or whether the country could remain united in its independent course.

© 2011 Facts On File News Services

[Modern Language Association \(MLA\)](#)

Citation:

"Yugoslav President Tito Dies; Succumbs to Four-Month Illness." *Facts On File World News Digest*. n. pag. *World News Digest*. Facts On File News Services, 9 May 1980. Web. 19 Jan. 2011. <<http://www.2facts.com/article/1980017010>>.

For further information see [Citing Sources in MLA Style](#).

Facts On File News Services' automatically generated MLA citations have been updated according to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th edition.

[American Psychological Association \(APA\)](#)

Citation format:

The title of the article. (Year, Month Day). *Facts On File World News Digest*. Retrieved Month Day, Year, from World News Digest

database.

See the [American Psychological Association \(APA\) Style Citations](#) for more information on citing in APA style.