

RAD Background Report/76  
(Yugoslavia)  
12 February 1980

JUAN GOSENJAK -- TITO'S GENERAL -- DIES

By Slobodan Stanovic

**S**ummary: General of the Army Ivan Goenjak, 71, one of Tito's closest comrades, died recently in Belgrade. He and Tito were in Moscow together before the last war. Goenjak was then sent to Spain to fight in the International Brigades. After the victory of General Franco, Goenjak returned to Yugoslavia (via Germany) and immediately joined Tito's partisan units. Tito appointed him the commander-in-chief of the Croatian partisan units. After the war he first became Tito's deputy as defense minister and later (between 1953 and 1967) served as minister of defense. Goenjak retired in 1974.

\* \* \*

Late on the night of February 8 General of the Army (one of the three four-star generals of the Yugoslav Army) Ivan Goenjak died in Belgrade "after a short and serious illness." (1) Next June 10 he would have been 71, 17 years younger than Marshal Tito, whose close friend and adviser Goenjak was for more than 40 years, i.e., since they were both in Moscow at the same time.

Ivan Goenjak was a carpenter by profession and joined the CP of Yugoslavia in 1933, when he was 24. Two years later, in 1935, Goenjak was sent to Moscow and was enrolled for one year at the Lenin School where he also attended lectures by a certain Comrade Walter, who during World War II became world-famous as Josip Broz Tito. In 1936 Goenjak was sent to a military barracks in Ryazan (300 kilometers from Moscow) where he was given the designation "Number 3," instead of his real name (as was the case with all others there) and was given military instruction before being sent as a "volunteer" to the Spanish Civil War in January 1937. A great admirer of Stalin -- as were all other Communists -- Goenjak was appointed a captain in the International Brigades. After the defeat of the republican forces in Spain, Goenjak was detained in France in February 1939. Only after the capitulation of France in 1940 did Goenjak succeed in escaping from

(1) Vjesnik (Sarajevo), 10 February 1980.

the camp, going in 1941 to Germany as a worker. In Germany he used a faked passport, and in July 1942 (one year after Tito began his uprising in Yugoslavia) returned to his native Croatia and immediately joined Tito's partisan units.

As a Spanish Civil War veteran, Gosnjak was immediately appointed deputy commander-in-chief of the Croatian partisan army and soon afterward its commander-in-chief, a post which he held until the end of the war.

In 1946, Tito wanted to send him to complete his military studies at the Soviet Voroshilov Military Academy, but Gosnjak asked him for permission to stay in Belgrade and work in the Central Committee. Tito agreed, but later appointed him Deputy Defense Minister (1946-1951). I.G., as his deputy, because Tito was the country's premier and defense minister between 1946 and 1953. In 1953, Gosnjak became the defense minister himself, a post which he held until 1961 when he was replaced by the present defense minister, General of the Army Mihailo Djordjevic. At the Fifth Yugoslav CP Congress in July 1948 (the anti-Stalin congress), Gosnjak was elected a member of the Politburo and later was made a member of the Executive Committee (the new name for the Politburo), elected at the sixth (1952), seventh (1958), and eighth (1964) party congresses.

Stalin could never forgive Gosnjak for taking, as a former student of the Lenin School in Moscow, Tito's side in the conflict between Moscow and Belgrade. At the Rajk trial in Budapest (1949) General Gosnjak was accused "of having been a Gestapo agent from 1941 onward," although, as Vladimir Dedijer said in his biography of Tito, Gosnjak and his comrade, General Kosta Nagy (who was also accused of having been a Gestapo agent), "were from 1941 to 1945 commanders of strategic units of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia, and toward the end of the war commanded corps that dealt the Germans heavy blows." (2)

Gosnjak retired from active military service in 1974 and since then has been a member of the Council of Federation, an advisory body to President Tito.

(2) Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito Speaks*, Weltbundfeld and Nicolson, London, 1953, p. 407.