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## The Trend of Soviet-Yugoslav Relations

18 November 1948

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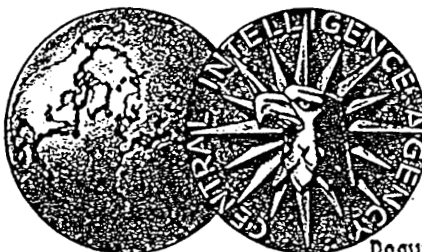
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# THE TREND OF SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS

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## THE TREND OF SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS

### SUMMARY

Tito's defiance of the Cominform has precipitated the first major rift in the USSR's satellite empire and has struck at the very core of the Stalinist concept of Soviet expansion through world Communism; for, if the Kremlin should decide as a result of the Tito affair that local Communist parties cannot be relied upon as effective instruments for maintaining Soviet control over its Satellites, the Soviet leaders must then re-examine their present techniques. The primary results of such a re-examination will probably be (1) to purge thoroughly all Communist Party leadership of unreliable elements and (2) to take strong measures aimed at neutralizing the widespread anti-Soviet antagonism of the Eastern European peoples.

Early reconciliation between Tito and the Cominform is unlikely. Tito will be wary of a reconciliation because the present Soviet regime will never forgive his kind of heresy and will, despite any temporary rapprochement, inexorably seek his overthrow. Moreover, the Kremlin cannot afford the loss of face and denial of its infallibility which would result from admitting that Tito had been even partially right. Meanwhile, the Kremlin appears to be presently unable to institute effective disciplinary measures against Tito short of armed invasion, and Tito will seek to avoid any steps which might provoke the USSR into taking such action. Consequently, neither Stalin nor Tito will risk an immediate complete break between the two countries in the hope that developments will eventually produce some satisfactory solution of the present impasse. An accommodation between the two countries, however, will become increasingly difficult. As each state takes steps to consolidate its position, the differences between them will assume greater ideological as well as practical intensity.

Despite this gradual widening of the breach between Yugoslavia and the USSR, a Kremlin decision to use its potential to overthrow Tito by force would be motivated less by Yugoslav actions than by international developments. The possibility of direct Soviet action might increase if international tension increases the possibility of war, or the USSR deliberately launches World War III.

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Note: The information herein is as of 5 November 1948.  
The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and the Air Force have concurred in this report.

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## THE TREND OF SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS

### 1. POSSIBLE THREAT TO WORLD COMMUNISM.

Tito's defiance of the Cominform has precipitated the first major rift in the USSR's satellite empire. Complete defection of Yugoslavia from the Soviet orbit would not be of major economic importance either to the USSR or to the Western Powers; of greater significance, however, would be the effect of successful revolt by Tito upon Soviet plans for the advancement of world Communism. Tito, by defying the supreme authority of the Kremlin, has struck at the very core of the Stalinist concept of Soviet expansion through world Communism. Failure of the Kremlin to bring Tito back into the fold has once again forced upon the Soviet Politburo the realization that, unless backed by Soviet armed force, Communist Party discipline (1) may not always guarantee the complete submission to Kremlin authority demanded by the Soviet system; or (2) may not be sufficiently strong to induce Communist parties to sacrifice "national" self-interest in order to advance the cause of "international" Communism.

The development of Soviet-Yugoslav relations, therefore, has two aspects. One concerns the immediate effect of Yugoslavia's defection upon those matters in which Yugoslav and Soviet policy appear to coincide: namely Trieste, Austria, and Greece. The other aspect, and the dominating one, concerns the Kremlin's ultimate success in forcing Tito's submission. For, if the Kremlin should decide, as a result of Tito's defection, that local Communist parties cannot be relied upon as effective instruments for maintaining Soviet control over its Satellites, the Kremlin must re-examine its present techniques. The principal result thus far of such a re-examination has been a drive to purge all satellite elements considered unreliable to the Kremlin. Furthermore, the Kremlin may be expected to take strong repressive measures in an attempt to bring about the neutralization of the widespread anti-Soviet antagonism of the Eastern Europe peoples.

### 2. IMPROBABILITY OF EARLY TITO-STALIN RECONCILIATION.

Early reconciliation between Tito and the Cominform is highly unlikely. Moreover, the longer the conflict continues, the more difficult it will become for the protagonists to reach agreement. The Kremlin, on its part, because of the exigencies of a totalitarian Communist system, cannot afford the loss of face and denial of its infallibility which would result from admitting that Tito had been right; while Tito cannot capitulate knowing that the present Soviet regime will never forgive his kind of heresy and will, despite the possibility of any temporary rapprochement, inexorably seek his overthrow.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin seems to be unable to institute effective disciplinary measures against Tito. Armed intervention would be firmly resisted and would involve open conflict between Yugoslavia and the Soviet bloc. Economic sanctions by the USSR and the Satellites would not readily bring Tito to terms especially if he were

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able to increase Yugoslav economic ties with the West. Such sanctions might result in unfavorable economic repercussions in the Satellites. Tito's control over the Yugoslav Communist Party, the army, and the police appears to be sufficient to prevent a Soviet-inspired *coup* from within for the immediate future. Assassination of Tito might be accomplished, but even his death would not necessarily prevent the continuation of his regime by such men as Rankovic, Djilas, and Kardelj. Moreover, it is unlikely that Tito will permit himself to be provoked by the Kremlin into a position which would furnish the USSR with a semi-legal pretext for overt action.

Despite its failure thus far to oust Tito, the USSR cannot afford to permit Yugoslavia's defection to remain unpunished indefinitely. The Soviet leaders cannot admit that they are unable to control Communist parties throughout the world, since such an admission would undermine the foundation of their plan for world domination. Moreover, for both economic and strategic reasons, the USSR is unwilling to adopt any measures which might drive Tito to align himself with the Western Powers. Thus, as far as Yugoslavia is concerned, the USSR seems to be following a restrained policy in dealing with Tito while it concentrates on more immediate aspects of its struggle with the Western Powers.

Tito, as well, cannot be desirous of precipitating a showdown, and will, in all probability, likewise continue a restrained course of action. Although confident of being able to resist all indirect Soviet pressure, Tito will be slow to adopt any measures which would give the USSR a pretext for armed intervention. During the present phase of the East-West struggle at least, Tito cannot close the door to the remote possibility of accommodation with Stalin. Although Yugoslavia would benefit economically from a complete break with the USSR if trade with the West were substituted, such a step would be politically dangerous. Tito's best chance for survival, therefore, lies in his ability to avoid outright clashes with the USSR in the slim hope of an ultimate compromise solution for the re-admission of Yugoslavia into the Soviet orbit.

### 3. PROBABILITY OF TEMPORARY YUGOSLAV SUPPORT OF SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY.

So long as the outcome of Soviet-Yugoslav relations remains in doubt Yugoslavia will, on the surface at least, generally support the USSR's foreign policy; and as long as Tito heads a Communist state, he will probably be forced to continue official attacks on Western "imperialism." Moreover, in addition to wishing to keep the door ajar for an eventual accommodation with the Kremlin, Tito will be motivated not only by the fear of provoking the USSR to extreme measures, but by the realization that the Western Powers are already committed to positions which conflict with Yugoslavia's principal foreign policy aims.

Yugoslav ambitions in Trieste, for example, blocked by Western support of Italy, have thus far had the support of the USSR. Yugoslavia can be expected to back Soviet opposition to the Western proposal for the return of the Free Territory of Trieste to Italy in the hope that, in the final disposition of the Territory, Yugoslavia will achieve territorial gains. The USSR, however, might alter its position on this issue in view of its reluctance to strengthen the Tito regime and its primary desire to effect an evacuation of US troops by a Trieste settlement.

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Tito also need expect no change in Western opposition to Yugoslavia's claims to the Slovene Carinthian area in Austria. He therefore will continue to act in the hope that the Soviet Union may still prefer to grant this area to a doubtful Yugoslavia rather than to a definitely "Western" Austria. Yugoslavia's recent actions, however, increase the likelihood that, when Austrian peace treaty discussions materialize, the USSR will abandon its previous stand on Slovene Carinthia in an effort to gain Western concessions on other issues.

In the case of Greece, Yugoslavia's position vis-à-vis the USSR is far more delicate. The struggle in Greece is being carried on primarily through international Communist channels, possibly including the Military Secretariat of the Cominform. Consequently, Tito is now playing a less important role in the conduct of the Greek Communists' campaign. However, active Yugoslav opposition to the Communist cause in Greece which might invite direct Soviet-Satellite retaliation, is unlikely.

#### 4. PROBABLE WIDENING OF SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RIFT.

It will become increasingly unlikely that there can be an accommodation between the USSR and Yugoslavia as long as Tito and his followers retain control of the Yugoslav Government. A contributing factor to a continuing deterioration of Soviet-Yugoslav relations will be the Kremlin's increased efforts to eliminate those conditions in the Satellites which originally caused Yugoslavia's defection. In other words, as the Communist parties of the Satellites are ruthlessly purged of all "nationalist" Communist elements, the gap separating Yugoslavia from the Soviet system may become progressively wider; in fact, it has already been impossible to restrict the dispute to the Communist Party level. Meanwhile, Tito's efforts to buttress his position may also widen the gap. Tito's preoccupation with his own self-preservation may lead him to take internal measures varying somewhat from those being applied under Soviet orders in the Satellites. Having taken them, Tito would feel called upon for their justification in terms of Marxist-Leninist rather than Stalinist ideology.

Since the Cominform's denunciation of Tito, the USSR has instituted a vigorous campaign to weed out all "nationalist" Communists in the Satellites. In Poland, this purging process reached the highest level of the Communist Party, while in other countries, dissident elements have quietly but effectively been silenced before they had a chance to become politically embarrassing. Coincident with this tightening of the Party ranks, there has been an intensification of anti-Tito propaganda, both directly and indirectly, in the form of increased emphasis on the "international", i.e., Moscow-controlled aspects of Communism. This "cleansing" process and the propaganda have gradually affected Yugoslav-Satellite relations and in some instances have facilitated disputes and the curtailment of relations on the governmental level. As the dispute continues, relations between the Satellites and Yugoslavia will become increasingly strained, possibly culminating in the cancellation of mutual assistance pacts.

Concurrently with the purge in the Satellites, Tito has strengthened his own party by eliminating all those suspected of the slightest tendency to place their loyalty to the Kremlin first and to Tito second. A majority of Yugoslav Communists, there-

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fore, probably now subscribe to a "nationalist" brand of Communism which the USSR is trying to liquidate in the other Satellites.

As long as the Tito Communists remain in power, Yugoslavia's political development in the Soviet sphere may differ from that of the other Satellites, which the Kremlin will be preparing for closer union with the USSR or even, perhaps, for eventual incorporation into the Soviet Union. Yugoslav economic planning too may veer somewhat from the approved satellite pattern. In the matter of collectivization of agriculture, Tito's regime need no longer follow the Soviet timetable. Rather, Tito will be motivated to a greater degree by such considerations as maintaining his political position, stockpiling to meet future needs, or exchanging agricultural products for vital materials from the West. Such divergencies may become manifest in some economic fields, since the Tito regime will feel it urgently necessary to become economically strong in order to withstand the increasing political pressure from the USSR and the Satellites. Thus, Yugoslavia can perhaps be expected progressively to lessen its hostility to the European recovery program, and to make more determined efforts to trade with the West.

5. SOVIET POTENTIAL FOR LIQUIDATING TITO.

Barring any major change in the international situation, the trend of Yugoslav-Soviet relations will be toward continued and perhaps a gradual widening of the breach caused by Tito's defiance of the Cominform. The USSR, however, has the power at any time to liquidate Tito by the use of armed force, subject, of course, to the dangers that such a step might entail. As long as international tension does not increase, the USSR can afford to refrain from overt action against the Tito regime. As long as the USSR hopes to expand its influence by political means, the Kremlin is unlikely to order drastic steps against Yugoslavia which would inevitably weaken the political strength of the Communists in other countries. The possibility of direct Soviet action against Yugoslavia may increase, however, if international tension increases the possibility of war, or the USSR deliberately launches World War III.

Underlying all these considerations, however, remains the influence of the Tito affair upon the Kremlin's attempts at maintenance of discipline over Communist parties throughout the world, as evidenced by the purges of "unreliable" elements. As the gap between Tito and the Cominform widens, the Kremlin will be concerned lest other Satellites attempt to emulate Tito's independent stand. The Kremlin may thus feel constrained to take further repressive measures against the Satellites, such as increased military occupation or even annexation.

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