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CONTINUING SATELLITE AID TO THE GREEK GUERRILLAS

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CONTINUING SATELLITE AID TO THE GREEK GUERRILLAS

SUMMARY

In view of recent reports indicating that Soviet-satellite * aid to the Greek guerrillas is continuing, it appears that the Soviet intention of ultimately bringing Greece under Communist domination still obtains. For the following reasons the Kremlin may be expected to continue to supply and use the guerrillas as one instrument of policy in pursuit of this objective:

- a. The guerrillas are more immediately available than any political weapon of comparable effectiveness in Greece.
- b. The guerrillas are militarily effective.
- c. The guerrillas are useful in the Soviet war of economic attrition against the US.
- d. Guerrilla operations are cheap, requiring neither a large number of men nor large expenditures in heavy equipment.

Despite continued Soviet-satellite aid, the guerrillas cannot now effect a military domination of Greece. Hit-and-run tactics, however, will still be feasible so long as supplies reach the guerrillas. Such activity, even on a progressively reduced scale, will continue seriously to hamper Greek rehabilitation and economic recovery. Moreover, any relaxation of vigilance on the part of the Greeks and their Western supporters would provide the satellites with an opportunity for re-equipping and reinforcing the guerrillas to such an extent as to render them capable of seizing the initiative once again.

* In this paper, the term *satellite* refers only to Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria.

Note: The information is as of 15 September 1948.

The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and the Air Force have concurred in this report.

CONTINUING SATELLITE AID TO THE GREEK GUERRILLAS

The failure of the Greek guerrillas to launch expected large-scale attacks in the spring of 1948 gave rise to a belief that the Soviet bloc was severely curtailing its aid to Markos. It was believed that the Kremlin (hence also Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria) was unwilling to risk further world censure by furnishing aid to the guerrillas in the amount necessary to enable them to disrupt the Greek nation sufficiently to bring about an early overthrow of the regime, and that Markos would accordingly be allowed "to wither on the vine." This belief was strengthened by the failure of a single Communist-dominated country officially to recognize the Markos government, the failure of rumored international brigades to participate in the fighting, and the recurrence of peace feelers from the Markos camp, especially during the Grammos campaign.

In view, however, of recent field reports which indicate that Soviet-satellite aid to the guerrillas in the form of both refuge and matériel is continuing, it appears that the Soviet intention of ultimately bringing Greece under Communist domination still obtains. The questions consequently become: (1) Will the Kremlin, in the face of such factors as US-UK support of the Athens government, UN censure of satellite aid to the guerrillas, and the slow defeat of the Markos forces, continue to use the guerrillas as one instrument of policy in pursuit of this objective? (2) If so, what will be the effect of continuing guerrilla activity in Greece?

1. With respect to the first question, it appears for the following reasons that the Kremlin will continue to supply and use the guerrillas:

a. The guerrillas are more immediately available than any political weapon of comparable effectiveness in Greece. The Communist Party members in the towns have been a disappointment to the military leaders; their morale is reported as lower than that of the guerrillas, and their organization has been severely disrupted by government measures. The Communist Party is outlawed in Greece. Even were it to be legalized upon termination of the guerrilla war, popular anti-Communist sentiment would continue so strong as to make overt Communist participation in Greece politics almost impossible, although eventually the guerrillas themselves (adequately reinforced) might prove to be an effective bargaining weapon in forcing the Greek government to accede to Communist participation in politics. Meanwhile, the guerrilla war continues to provide an excuse for violent Soviet political attacks on the Athens government.

b. The guerrillas are militarily effective. For the better part of three years they have seriously disrupted the economic, political, and social life of the country. The cost of guerrilla operations to the Greek Government has been staggering not only in terms of military expenditures but also in the non-productivity of 600,000 refugees, the destruction of lines of communication and transport equipment, and the burning of villages. Although the continued success of the Greek Army will enable the government slowly to reduce the size of the army, return the refugees to their homes, and supply

greater security to the population, the guerrillas must be all but completely eliminated before their cost to the government will become negligible.

c. The guerrillas are useful in the Soviet war of economic attrition against the US. Their activity can assure the Kremlin of a continued drain of US dollars for unproductive military expenditures, as well as for rehabilitation.

d. Guerrilla operations are cheap, requiring neither a large number of men nor large expenditures in heavy equipment. So far the guerrillas have subsisted largely on food collected on forage raids and have been armed, to a considerable extent through satellite effort, with British equipment obtained during World War II or with captured German and Italian equipment; there is no reason to believe that the guerrillas cannot continue to be supplied and armed in much the same manner.

There is no evidence that the Kremlin feels that, because of the strong US interest in Greece and current US assistance to the Greeks in the form of money, matériel, and advisers, it would be wise to defer further guerrilla action until US interest had waned. It is probable, moreover, that any such consideration would be outweighed by the realization that a prolonged period of inactivity could well destroy guerrilla enthusiasm for the struggle and irreparably damage the present guerrilla organization. It also seems unlikely that the Soviets would be deterred from supporting the guerrillas by any fear of UN action to seal Greece's northern borders. The USSR has been able to block any decisive UN action and probably feels confident that, as in the case of Palestine, no UN member (especially the US) would be willing to send troops to Greece.

It is true that Tito's defection raises practical difficulties in the matter of aiding the guerrillas. Of the three northern neighbors, Yugoslavia had been the principal source of supply and probably of military advice for the guerrillas. Currently, Yugoslav border guards are still passively cooperating with the rebels, and the "free" Greek radio continues to operate from Yugoslav soil. It is possible, however, that Yugoslavia will cease giving active aid to Markos because: (1) the Tito-Cominform split is keeping Yugoslavia preoccupied with its own affairs and probably has not encouraged any desire to assist the Kremlin in its foreign-policy aims; and (2) it might be convenient eventually to effect a reconciliation with the Athens government, thereby eliminating an enemy on the south and keeping the door to the western world open. Tito still has an active interest in Greek Macedonia, and a number of guerrillas are probably ready to serve those interests, but they will undoubtedly be restrained until a more propitious time. Nevertheless, even with the defection of Yugoslavia, the Kremlin can still supply the guerrillas through Albania and Bulgaria at only slightly increased effort and expense.

2. With respect to the second question, it is apparent that the guerrillas, despite continued Soviet-satellite aid, cannot now effect a military domination of Greece. Guerrillas capabilities are slowly being reduced under steady pressure from the army; guerrilla movements are being somewhat restricted, their supply problems (especially in areas distant from the Albanian and Bulgarian borders) are increasing, and the local defenses of the government-held villages are improving. Hit-and-run tactics, however, will still be feasible so long as supplies reach the guerrillas. Such activity, even on

a progressively reduced scale, will continue seriously to hamper Greek rehabilitation and economic recovery. Moreover, any relaxation of vigilance on the part of the Greeks and their Western supporters would provide the satellites with an opportunity for re-equipping and reinforcing the guerrillas to such an extent as to render them capable of seizing the initiative once again.

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