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Basic Policy - Department of State

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MEMORANDUM

Problem:

A British memorandum dated June 20, 1951 raised the question of the future status of Albania and of desirable action on the part of the UK and US Governments in this regard, particularly in the light of the possibility of internal collapse or of a breach of the peace in the Balkans as the result of Soviet/Cominform aggressive action.

A. United States Position on Albanian Independence

The U.S. Government continues to have as an objective that Albania should be an independent state friendly to the West. Any policy aimed at the extinction of Albanian independence, such as by partition between Yugoslavia and Greece, would not be supported. The principal reasons for this position are the following:

1. The Albanian people have a definite national character and strong feelings in favor of independent existence. Moreover, there has been an at least nominally independent Albanian state in existence since 1912.
2. The right of the Albanians to independence has been recognized and supported in various public statements of the U.S. Government, and by British statements as well.
3. If there is no independent Albania, there seems no way to reconcile the conflicting interests of Yugoslavia, Greece and Italy in this strategic area which affects the security of all three. None of these states would willingly accept either of the others establishing a special position there, and no partition arrangement would be likely to be stable or permanent.
4. The handing over of Albania to one or more neighboring states would sow the seeds of long-term minority problems which would undermine the security of the area.

The support which has been given to the National Committee for a Free Albania has been on the assumption that an independent Albania is important to United States interests. Action which more than temporarily disregarded Albania's right to independence, in addition to the moral factors involved and the difficulty of defending it before public opinion, would provide the Soviet Government and its Albanian puppets with a powerful propaganda weapon. It may, however, be necessary to accept certain measures on the part of neighboring states required by the military situation if hostilities commence in the Balkans.

The U.S. Government believes that continued diplomatic and other efforts should be made toward the end of bringing about an independent

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Albania friendly to the West, but at the same time care should be exercised to safeguard other American interests and policies such as those pertaining to the danger of provoking hostilities in the Balkans and to relations with Yugoslavia, Greece and Italy. It is believed desirable to work toward the transition from a Soviet-dominated Albania to a free Albania not dominated by neighboring states, and having general Western support. Such steps as are taken in this direction should be coordinated by the US and UK Governments, and the cooperation of other Western governments sought when it seems appropriate.

The possible eventual inclusion of Albania in a larger federal unit should be kept in mind. However, such a federation should be at least Balkan in scope and not limited to some special federal arrangement with Yugoslavia or with Greece. Certainly no federal arrangement with Yugoslavia should be encouraged until and unless that country comes under a regime more compatible with Western ideals.

B. US Views on the British Proposals

The British Government is apparently not prepared, and the United States Government is not prepared, to take military measures which might be prognosticated by them to "neutralise" Albania in the event of a Soviet/Satellite attack on Yugoslavia, although this does not preclude employment of effective unconventional means. If at the time of such an attack Albania represented a military threat to Yugoslavia and/or Greece, and unconventional capabilities are insufficient to achieve the desired results, the United States agrees that it might be necessary to acquiesce in the military occupation of at least a portion of Albania by either or both Yugoslavia and Greece, and would be desirous of exerting the strongest pressure in concert with the UK to the end that such Yugoslav and Greek forces as might be involved not come into conflict with each other, and that the intervening countries undertake the firmest commitment that the intervention would be temporary. The United States does not agree, however, that the present is an appropriate time to urge the Yugoslavs and Greeks not to enter Albania in the event of an attack, or should they insist they must do so, to try to persuade them to agree on a suitable line beyond which they would not advance. It is not clear from the British memorandum whether this latter approach is envisaged for the near future or only after Yugoslavia and Greece have in fact sent forces into Albania.

To urge either the Greeks or the Yugoslavs not to intervene in the event of an attack without being in a position to give either or both of them assurances that (a) the other party would not intervene, and (b) Albania would be restrained from being a military threat, would not be likely to achieve the intended purpose. Moreover, to discuss before the event the possible necessity of an eventual intervention by either

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Greece or Yugoslavia and to urge agreement on a line would not only tend to vitiate the effectiveness of any arguments against intervention, but might well prompt both countries to make their own plans for such intervention, and perhaps even precipitate such action.

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C. United States Suggestions

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In believing it inopportune at this time to approach either the Yugoslavs or the Greeks as regards the possibility and conditions of their eventual intervention in Albania, the United States has in mind possible action which would serve the basic objectives recognized by both the US and UK and perhaps given particularly favorable circumstances, give some hope of averting a situation in which either Yugoslavia or Greece would find it necessary from their point of view to intervene. TROCHES

As stated under A above, the US believes that continued diplomatic and other efforts should be made toward the end of bringing about an independent Albania friendly to the West. The principal difficulty, in working toward that objective and particularly in preparing to deal with the situation which would arise after the elimination of Soviet power from Albania, lies in the conflicting aims of Yugoslavia, Greece and Italy and in their fear and suspicion of each other's designs in Albania. Much might be gained if each could have assurances that neither of the others would gain a privileged position in Albania. Accordingly, it is proposed that the US and UK, at the time deemed most appropriate and most likely to enhance the chances of success, undertake through diplomatic channels to obtain from each of the three countries, for communication to the other two, a statement that it has no claims to a privileged position in Albania and recognizes the right of the Albanian people to independence and institutions of their own choosing. It would be desirable if such statements also included renunciation of all territorial claims on Albania, although it is recognized that it would be difficult to obtain such a renunciation on the part of Greece. The confirmation of the above pledges by the three neighboring countries, with the backing of the US, UK and possibly France, should prove most helpful to the efforts looking toward Albania's liberation from Soviet-Communist domination and also to future efforts to reestablish an independent Albania after the elimination of the Soviet-Communist regime.

The usefulness of unconventional means is at present limited primarily by the general explosiveness of the situation in the Balkans, since admittedly a major consideration is to avoid provocation which might upset the delicate balance between peace and war in that area. Nonetheless, there appears to the US to be scope for carefully planned and conducted action which would not upset the present balance in the Balkans

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and which would lay the groundwork for more forthright action at such time as it becomes apparent that it might be undertaken without undue risk. Moreover, it is conceivable that in spite of the indicated explosive situation, culminant action may be undertaken as diversionary activity to counter Soviet militant moves elsewhere, for example Communist annexation of Burma. It is proposed that activities presently being carried on be continued, with a view to establishing as strong a position as possible through organization and preparation both inside and outside Albania.

In making the above suggestions and soliciting British comment, the United States has in mind that the first two steps recommended in the British memorandum might well be taken when and if the imminence or actual outbreak of hostilities in the Balkans required. While it might not be possible to argue against Yugoslavia and Greece taking military action on Albanian soil required by reasons of military security, in any case, if they insisted on intervention, the US would join in the strongest possible pressure on them so to circumscribe their intervention as to avert conflict between them and to ensure that the intervention would be temporary.

The US agrees with the third step recommended by the British memorandum. It would seem desirable that Greece, Yugoslavia and Italy should all be told at the appropriate time that no outside power would be permitted to acquire a special position in Albania following the collapse of the present communist regime, but that the interested neighboring countries would be consulted on the subject of the establishment of a new democratic regime. In its reference to "internal stresses" the British memorandum presumably includes subversive movements encouraged if not inspired by the Yugoslavs. The US is of the firm belief that in the face of such an eventuality the US and the UK should not allow the Yugoslavs to prepare in this way the substitution of a Titoist regime for the present pro-Soviet one. Accordingly, they should take the most forceful diplomatic and other action as soon as necessary to impress upon the Yugoslavs that the character of a new regime in Albania must be the subject of intimate consultation between the US, the UK, Yugoslavia, Greece and Italy as the most interested parties.

The moves suggested in the preceding paragraphs and aimed at obtaining assurances from Yugoslavia, Greece and Italy that they do not profess claims to privileged positions in reference to Albania, as well as warnings to any of those states - should circumstances require such action - that no outside power will be permitted to acquire a special position as regards Albania, might well be accomplished on a broader basis than action by the US and UK alone. Should NATO consideration of such problems as the importance of Yugoslavia to the defense of the North Atlantic Area, and planning in regard thereto, develop favorably it might be appropriate and more efficacious to deal with these aspects of the Albanian problem in connection therewith.

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D. The United States would greatly welcome the comments of the UK on the foregoing which, although it represents the tentative thinking of the Department after consultation with the JCS on the strategic considerations involved, is to be construed as a projected rather than an approved plan of action. *20/11/50*

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