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SPECIAL ESTIMATE

CONSEQUENCES OF AN ATTEMPT TO
OVERTHROW THE PRESENT REGIME IN ALBANIA



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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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CONSEQUENCES OF AN ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW THE PRESENT REGIME IN ALBANIA

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the consequences of an attempt to overthrow the present regime in Albania by a coup.

ESTIMATE

THE PRESENT SITUATION

1. In Albania there is widespread dissatisfaction with the present regime. Even within the Albanian Government and within the Albanian Communist Party a loss of confidence in the long-term prospects of the regime and an increased sense of personal insecurity appear to have developed.

2. Resistance activity in Albania has increased during the past year, in part as a result of increased activity by emigre elements, some of them supported by Western governments. Rumors and reports of plans for the overthrow of the Hoxha regime have been widely circulated. Most of the European intelligence services, including those of the USSR and Albania, are aware of connections of the emigres with Western governments and probably believe that some sort of plan for the overthrow of the Hoxha regime is in the making.

3. Both the USSR and the present Albanian leaders have demonstrated sensitivity and uneasiness over this situation and have publicly accused the West, and especially the US, of "organizing provocations" against Albania.

4. The USSR almost certainly desires to keep Albania within the Soviet Bloc, even though it is an economic liability and an isolated outpost. Loss of Albania would be damaging to Soviet prestige and would reduce Soviet capabilities for exerting pressure on Yugoslavia

and Greece. Nevertheless, the USSR has not entered into a mutual assistance pact with Albania, as it has with its other European Satellites (except East Germany). Albania has such a pact only with Bulgaria.

5. The interests of Italy, Greece, and Yugoslavia in Albania conflict, and each of these three countries probably prefers continuance of the status quo to a change which might prove favorable to any of the others or detrimental to its own interests.

6. Of these three, Yugoslavia appears the most hopeful of eventually achieving some change in the Albanian regime favorable to itself. As we estimated in NIE-42/1 (20 October 1952), there are advantages for Yugoslavia in its present policy of applying political pressure against the Albanian regime without directly intervening or precipitating a coup attempt. By continuing their present course, the Yugoslavs can promote the predominance of the Yugoslav-supported group within the Albanian emigre movement. They can undermine order and stability in Albania without serious risk of international complications, while developing contacts with disaffected elements within the Albanian regime. If successful in these efforts, they will have placed themselves in a favorable position to exploit any safe opportunity for intervention or to exercise preponderant influence in any new regime.

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7. We believe that the Yugoslavs have no present intention of precipitating a coup against the Hoxha regime. They probably calculate that to do so would create serious risks of provoking Western disfavor and Soviet retaliation. They probably would stage a coup, if they thought it could be done without incurring these risks; they might therefore be willing to cooperate with other powers in a coup attempt at some future date. However, Yugoslavia's cooperation probably would be contingent upon sufficient Yugoslav control over the method and nature of the coup attempt to minimize the dangers to Yugoslavia and upon a belief that Yugoslavia could eventually dominate the new Albanian regime.

8. Under present circumstances, the other nations of Western Europe, including the UK, almost certainly prefer the status quo in Albania to the risks which would be involved in an attempt to establish a pro-Western regime.

REACTIONS TO A COUP ATTEMPT

Soviet Bloc Reaction

9. The Soviet Bloc reaction to a coup attempt against the Hoxha regime would depend upon the manner and speed in which the coup was carried out, upon the reactions of other interested powers, and upon the global situation existing at the time.

10. If the USSR should learn of a coup plan in advance, it almost certainly would take preventive action. A variety of such actions would be possible, ranging from improved security precautions and liquidations within Albania to the dispatch of Soviet or Satellite forces to Albania and shows of force on the Yugoslav and Greek borders. The Soviet rulers would exploit the situation so as to create maximum division, suspicion, and mistrust among the NATO countries and within the free world generally. If the USSR did not learn of a planned coup in advance, but the coup was quickly suppressed by the present Albanian regime, the USSR would exploit the situation in the same manner.

11. If a coup were attempted and proved a quick success, the Soviet rulers would be faced with a difficult decision. Several possibilities

present themselves:

a. Global war: We believe it highly unlikely that the Soviet rulers would deliberately initiate global war over Albania.

b. Local military counteraction: Regardless of who initiated or supported the coup, the Soviet rulers might conclude that to accept the loss of Albania would open the Soviet Bloc to new and stronger challenges which would result in eventual and serious losses of position. Therefore, they might direct the European Satellites to advance through Yugoslavia in order to come to Albania's assistance. They would, in such an event, expect serious strains to develop in the North Atlantic coalition. On the other hand, they would recognize the risk that the West would come to Yugoslavia's support with consequent grave danger of global war. We believe that the USSR probably would not take this risk.

c. Acceptance of the loss of Albania and retaliation elsewhere: If the Soviet leaders were unwilling to accept the risks of global war which would be implicit in local military counteraction, they would be obliged to accept the loss of Albania. However, the Soviet leaders would probably intensify their pressures at vulnerable points in the free world (for example, in Berlin, Vienna, Iran, or Indochina) in an attempt to offset the psychological effect of the Albanian loss.

d. Political counteractions: At a minimum the USSR would intensify its propaganda campaign against the West, exploiting whatever rifts had occurred in connection with the Albanian coup. It might make shows of force and attempt to divide the West by threats of war. It might, depending upon its assessment of the attitudes of the various member nations, take an appeal to the UN or encourage some uncommitted country to do so.

12. In the long run, if local or global war were avoided, a coup attempt in Albania, whether successful or not, would make little difference in the Soviet attitude toward the West. The Soviet rulers would regard the coup attempt as merely an incident in the long-term struggle between Communism and capitalism. They probably would conclude, however, that the West was accelerating the

pace of the struggle. They probably would, therefore, intensify their military preparations and improve their war-readiness.

13. A coup attempt in Albania, particularly if it were successful, would raise the hopes of dissident elements within the other Satellite countries. It might in some cases provoke premature and futile resistance efforts. It would provoke greater security efforts by the Soviet and Satellite authorities.

Yugoslavia

14. Because of their recent predominance in Albania, their hopes to re-establish dominance in any new regime, and their extreme vulnerability to any Soviet or Satellite counteraction, the Yugoslavs would regard any attempt to overthrow the Albanian regime as a matter of vital concern to their national interests. If such an attempt proved successful and did not provoke Soviet retaliation, the Yugoslavs would almost certainly make intensive efforts to dominate the new regime. If the coup attempt proved unsuccessful, whether or not Yugoslavia participated, the Yugoslavs would make every effort to disassociate themselves from the scheme.

took over, the Italians would probably try to establish some measure of influence over it. Greece would display concern by re-asserting its claim to northern Epirus.

PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN ALBANIA IN THE EVENT OF A SUCCESSFUL COUP

17. Any new regime in Albania, regardless of its leadership, orientation, or outside support, would face substantial — but not insoluble — internal problems. If the new leadership were strong and competent, the people generally would support it. The new regime would require not only political and military support, but also continuing economic support by the West, presumably by the US. If

the major Western powers, and particularly the US, announced and fulfilled an intention to provide political and economic support to the new regime, Albanian popular support almost certainly would be forthcoming.

18. For some time after the coup regime was installed its precise political orientation would depend upon the personalities controlling it and their relationship with the West. As noted above, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Italy would all try to gain some kind of special position or predominance. The Greeks would probably want a special status for northern Epirus. The Italians would perhaps ask for restoration of some of their pre-war economic concessions, and also seek a gradual re-establishment of part of their pre-war political influence. The Yugoslavs would try to infiltrate and eventually to dominate the regime. The new regime, like all previous regimes in Albania, would need the

active support and protection of a larger power. The precise behavior of Albania's three neighbors would be influenced by the extent of US commitments to the new regime.

The Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believes that the following consequences inherent in any change in the government of Albania are deserving of note:

- a. An unfriendly regime would be replaced by a friendly regime.
- b. A Soviet-dominated territory would be removed from the midst of an area to be defended from Soviet attack.
- c. Dissident elements in other Satellite countries would be encouraged to oppose Soviet domination.
- d. Free peoples of the world and their governments would be encouraged in their opposition to the Soviets.
- e. Combined with the defection of the Yugoslavs it would help to demonstrate that the hold of the USSR on the Satellites is not unbreakable.

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