

NIE-29/2

Probable Developments in Yugoslavia  
and the Likelihood of Attack Upon  
Yugoslavia, Through 1952

4 January 1952

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE  
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# NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

## PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN YUGOSLAVIA AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF ATTACK UPON YUGOSLAVIA, THROUGH 1952



NIE-29/2

Published 4 January 1952

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PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN YUGOSLAVIA  
AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF ATTACK UPON  
YUGOSLAVIA, THROUGH 1952

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The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff participated with the Central Intelligence Agency in the preparation of this estimate. All members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate on 29 December.

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## PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN YUGOSLAVIA AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF ATTACK UPON YUGOSLAVIA, THROUGH 1952

### THE PROBLEM

To estimate probable developments in Yugoslavia and the likelihood of attack upon Yugoslavia, through 1952.

### CONCLUSIONS

1. The present Communist regime in Yugoslavia will probably retain control over the country during the period of this estimate.\*
2. Although the regime has officially refused to modify its goal of an industrialized and collectivized economy, there will probably be slight and temporary readjustments within the period of this estimate.
3. It is unlikely that present dissatisfaction among the peasants and discontent within the middle and lower ranks of the Yugoslav Communist Party will reach the point of seriously weakening the regime.
4. The assassination or death of Tito would weaken the regime and would afford added opportunity for the USSR to exploit political confusion and discontent, but would be unlikely to break the regime's hold over the country or to produce fundamental changes in its foreign or domestic policies.\*
5. Although the Cominform will continue its efforts to overthrow the regime, these efforts will probably fail.
6. If the adjacent Satellites, with Soviet logistic support, should attack before 1953, they could at least drive the Yugoslav forces from the plain area generally north and east of the Danube. The Yugoslav forces probably could not maintain effective organized resistance even in the mountainous area for an extended period unless adequately supported logistically from the outside. Guerrilla warfare

\* The Director of Intelligence, USAF, prefers the following wording:

"Barring a Soviet-Satellite attack, the present Communist regime in Yugoslavia will probably retain control over the country during the period of this estimate."

\* The Director, Joint Intelligence Group, prefers the following:

"4. The assassination or death of Tito would so weaken the regime that almost anything could happen. It is possible that his present assistants could promptly stabilize the situation without any fundamental change of policy. But it is equally possible that the CPY could be torn to pieces and emerge as a regime subservient to Russia."

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would almost certainly continue should organized resistance cease.

7. The evidence of growing cooperation between Yugoslavia and the Western Powers has probably convinced the USSR that an attack by the adjacent Satellites would involve not only serious risk of war

between the US or UN and these Satellites, but also the danger that such a conflict would develop into a general war.

8. On the basis of the foregoing, we believe that an attack upon Yugoslavia in 1952 is unlikely.\*

## DISCUSSION

### INTRODUCTION

9. Since the publication of NIE-29 (20 March 1951) and NIE-29/1 (4 May 1951), the following developments have taken place affecting the internal and external position of Yugoslavia:

a. Increasing discontent, especially among the peasants.

b. Unrest within the middle and lower ranks of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY).

c. Growing disparity between the military capabilities of Yugoslavia and those of the neighboring Satellites.

d. Increased economic aid from the West.

e. Provision for substantial military aid from the West.

### Stability of the Regime

10. From the outset, the regime has placed a heavy strain on the population, particularly on the peasant majority. Until recently, the regime relied upon collectivization of agriculture and upon forced delivery of foodstuffs to ensure adequate food supplies for the growing number of industrial workers. It held peasant discontent in check by repressive measures.

11. In recent months, the regime has abandoned the forced delivery of some foodstuffs and has relaxed some of the more apparent repressive measures. So far, this relaxation has encouraged the peasants to express their grievances more openly. Peasant discontent increased in the fall of 1951 with the government's announcement that the peasants' right

to withdraw from state agricultural cooperatives on the expiration of their three year contracts for trial membership was to be restricted or denied. As long as the regime sacrifices the production of consumer goods to the needs of the program for industrialization, and as long as the program of collectivization is maintained, peasant discontent will almost certainly continue.

12. Although the regime has officially refused to modify its goal of an industrialized and collectivized economy, there will probably be some slight and temporary readjustments within the period of this estimate.

a. Additional measures will probably be taken to decentralize administrative control and to encourage initiative through increasing the authority and responsibility of local management and labor and through allowing enterprises to retain a portion of their profits.

b. It is probable that within the next few months the regime will place more emphasis upon the production of consumer goods in

\* The Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Department of the Army dissents from this paragraph and would replace it by the following:

"8. During 1951 the Satellites adjacent to Yugoslavia achieved the capability of attacking Yugoslavia provided they are given logistic support by the USSR. Despite this capability, we believe it unlikely that Yugoslavia will be attacked during 1952 unless the USSR is prepared to accept general war. However, there is a continuing possibility that unforeseen political events and/or miscalculation by the Soviets might precipitate hostilities in Yugoslavia, intended to be localized, but which could expand into general war.

We conclude therefore, that there is a serious possibility of an attack on Yugoslavia during 1952."

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order to increase the incentive for peasants and workers alike. This will not be done at the expense of the already-strained programs of heavy industrialization and military preparedness.

c. Tito has made clear that collectivization of the land remains an objective of the regime. Although recent party directives indicate that collectivization will be forwarded wherever possible, it is probable that the amount of land under collectivization will be increased only slightly during the period of this estimate. Recent evidence indicates that the collectives established on land of marginal productivity will be reorganized and some of this land returned to peasant owners.

d. Current and future peasant discontent will be firmly handled on a local level, but with such discretion that relations with the West will probably not be impaired.

13. We believe that discontent among the peasants is not likely to become a serious threat to the stability of the regime within the period of this estimate and that the regime will probably be able to cope effectively with peasant discontent. Tito's control of the CPY, the armed forces, and the security forces appears to be firm. On the other hand, anti-Communist elements in Yugoslavia are sharply divided and lack effective leadership.

#### *Unrest within the CPY*

14. Discontent also exists in the middle and lower ranks of the CPY. Some pro-Soviet sentiment still exists in these groups, and they are disturbed by the Western orientation of the regime. Moreover, they have lost prestige and power as a result of the relaxation of controls and of the regime's attempt to penalize officials guilty of misusing their powers.

15. The high officials of the CPY are apparently not troubled by the current shifts of policy, which they almost certainly regard as a "temporary retreat." Such adjustments have always been recognized by Communists as compatible with Communist strategy. Moreover, it must be apparent to any Yugoslav Communist who has supported the present regime against the Cominform that

the likelihood of his survival in a regime controlled by Moscow is negligible.

16. Those members of the middle and lower ranks of the CPY who have expressed dissatisfaction with the regime's policy of relaxing controls are being gradually removed from office, as are those who have made themselves excessively unpopular because of their fanaticism and severity. A quiet purge of the dissatisfied elements within the CPY will continue at least through the winter of 1951-1952. This purge will strengthen the regime's control over the Party. Although there will probably be some liberalization of the administration, we estimate that control will remain firmly in the hands of the present Communist leaders.

#### *Probability and Consequences of a Coup*

17. Efforts of the Cominform to overthrow the regime by subversive means have thus far failed. The regime's large and efficient security forces will probably be able to discover and liquidate any officials over whom the Cominform is able to acquire influence.

18. A coup d'etat directed against Tito by high members of the CPY, the armed forces, the security forces, or by other dissatisfied elements is unlikely. Tito now commands the loyalty and obedience of the Party and the armed and security forces, and even opponents of the regime apparently prefer it to the reestablishment of alien control from Moscow.

19. The assassination of Tito remains a possibility. His death, whether from assassination or from other causes, would be a serious shock to the regime, and the ensuing confusion and uncertainty would provide the USSR a new opportunity to overthrow the regime. The CPY, the armed forces, and the security forces would, however, probably rally behind Tito's successors, at least initially. Throughout the period of this estimate, the foreign and domestic policies of the new leaders would almost certainly follow those established during the past three years by Tito. Discord over domestic issues might develop within the ruling group after the first few months, but fear of the USSR would probably prevent

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such discord from developing to the point of open conflict.\*

### The Military Situation

#### *The Yugoslav Armed Forces*

20. The Yugoslav army now consists of 325,000 men organized into 32 divisions, of which 2 are mechanized. The size of this army is not expected to increase significantly within the period of this estimate. Its fighting ability, by Balkan standards, is high, and it is supplemented by 60,000 members of the Frontier Guards (KNOJ). Security forces are estimated at 40,000. The Yugoslav air force (YAF) has 649 aircraft, of which 408 are assigned to tactical units. The YAF is a balanced air force designed not only to fight over Yugoslav territory, but also to carry out limited offensive missions outside the borders of Yugoslavia. Most of the aircraft are of German or Soviet World War II design and construction, and lack of modern equipment would make it difficult for the YAF to accomplish its missions, both within Yugoslavia and beyond the Yugoslav frontiers. The capabilities of the Yugoslav navy will remain negligible.

21. The numerical strength of the Yugoslav armed forces has remained relatively constant throughout the past two or three years, but Yugoslav materiel has deteriorated. The military supplies thus far provided by the West

\* The Director, Joint Intelligence Group, prefers to replace the last two sentences of the paragraph by the following:

"There is no apparent successor to Tito who has demonstrated anything like his combination of the ability to be tough and ruthless together with the wisdom to use moderation when the circumstances require it. Moreover, there is nobody in the country who begins to enjoy the prestige and respect that he does, however grudgingly the latter may be given. Yugoslavia is an artificially unified country. Down underneath, it is always in danger of disintegrating into the age old deadly enmities, Croat vs. Serb etc. It has been the main achievement of Tito to harness these dissident elements into the best team effort in their history. Since there is no apparent successor of proven equal caliber to take over, his death can well release factional discord whose ultimate result is unpredictable."

have consisted almost entirely of light equipment. Current Yugoslav military capabilities are seriously restricted by the following:

a. Insufficient quantity and obsolescence of much of the equipment.

b. Heterogeneity of present equipment, mostly of Soviet and German World War II stocks.

c. Lack of spare parts and of proper ammunition.

d. Severe shortage of heavy weapons, particularly of antitank artillery, antiaircraft artillery, and armor.

e. Lack of experience of the general staff in the tactical and technical utilization of combined arms.

22. US military equipment scheduled for delivery under the military aid agreement will replace some of the materiel now used by the Yugoslav armed forces and will supply newly organized supporting units. YAF capabilities will be appreciably increased by mid-1952 by the delivery of US and UK equipment, but little army equipment will be delivered before mid-1952. No significant increase of Yugoslav army capabilities can be expected before the end of 1952, because the new equipment must be delivered to the units, the troops must be trained in its operation and maintenance, and staff work must be improved. Even with such new equipment as may have arrived, the Yugoslav forces could not, during the period of this estimate, defend the plain area generally north and east of the Danube against the combined attack of the adjacent Soviet/Satellites. Furthermore, it is unlikely that they could maintain effective organized resistance even in the mountainous area for an extended period unless adequately supported logistically from the outside. However, guerrilla activity would almost certainly continue even in the absence of outside aid.

#### *The Satellite Armed Forces*

23. Yugoslavia's military capabilities, in relation to those of the neighboring Satellites, have declined steadily during the past two years. The armies of Albania, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria are now estimated at 590,000 men, organized into 38 divisions, of

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which 4 are armored and 2 mechanized. These forces have grown in size from 346,000 men organized into 28 divisions in January 1950, and it is believed they will continue to increase throughout the period of this estimate. The Kremlin is reorganizing the Satellite ground forces so that they will conform to the Soviet pattern. The Bulgarian army is apparently the most loyal and formidable. Its 12 divisions are almost fully equipped with Soviet materiel, reserve stockpiles are available, and morale is good.

24. The air forces of the Satellites adjacent to Yugoslavia have more than doubled in size since May 1951 and are now estimated to have a total strength of more than 1,100 aircraft, of which 25 are jet fighters. Their capability will probably be further increased by the replacement of many older aircraft by piston-engine aircraft of more recent design and manufacture and by an increase in the number of jet fighters.

#### Likelihood of Attack Upon Yugoslavia

25. The ultimate Soviet objectives in Yugoslavia remain the elimination of the Tito regime, the replacement of this regime by a government subservient to Moscow, and the political, economic, and military reintegration of Yugoslavia into the Soviet sphere. There is no evidence to indicate clearly when or how the USSR intends to attain these objectives.

26. The following factors might indicate a Soviet intention to precipitate an attack by Albania, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria upon Yugoslavia during 1952:

a. The increase in the capabilities of the armed forces of these Satellites. It is estimated that during 1952 the air forces of the adjacent Satellites will outnumber the YAF in operational aircraft approximately two to one; their ground forces, with Soviet logistic support, could at least drive the Yugoslav forces from the plain area.

b. The Satellites adjacent to Yugoslavia have evacuated the majority of the civilians from key border areas.

c. Soviet and Satellites propaganda has long since made psychological preparations

for a possible attack on Yugoslavia by identifying the Tito regime with fascism and charging it with participation in Western preparations for future aggression.

27. On the other hand, the increase in the armed strength of the adjacent Satellites during the last two years does not necessarily reflect a Soviet intention to launch an attack upon Yugoslavia during 1952. Satellite military strength would almost certainly have increased substantially during the period as part of the Soviet program of preparedness, even if Yugoslavia had not defected. There has been no apparent sense of urgency in the preparation of the Satellite armed forces for offensive action, or in the coordination of their military activities. It is estimated that the Bulgarian, Rumanian, and Hungarian armed forces will not complete their reorganization and reach maximum effectiveness until the end of 1953 and the Albanian not until mid-1954.

28. The economic program of the adjacent Satellites, designed to advance simultaneously the industrial base and the immediate military capabilities of the Satellite area, has materially advanced their state of war-readiness. There is, however, no indication that the long-term aims of the economic program are being sacrificed to achieve greater immediate war-readiness.

29. Current Soviet and Satellite propaganda provides little evidence concerning the likelihood of an armed attack upon Yugoslavia within the period of this estimate. The volume of propaganda directed at Yugoslavia has remained constant. Recent propaganda is almost identical in its hostility with that of mid-1948. The mid-1951 declarations that the Yugoslav people "would find a way to freedom" disappeared by September and were apparently only a phase in the general war of nerves against Yugoslavia.

30. The Kremlin may believe that the existence of Tito now poses a less serious problem for the USSR than it has in the past and that the elimination of the Tito regime is not an immediate necessity. The USSR has effectively prevented the Titoist heresy from

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undermining its control over the Satellites, and Titoism has made little headway in the international Communist movement. Moreover, the Kremlin undoubtedly recognizes that Yugoslavia cannot become a serious military threat to the Satellites within the period of this estimate.

31. Past Soviet actions suggest that the Kremlin does not consider Yugoslavia as an isolated problem, but views it as one of several factors affecting the general position of the USSR. Consequently, there is little likelihood that the USSR will launch a Satellite attack upon Yugoslavia without carefully assessing the effect of such an attack upon the general Soviet political and strategic position.

32. The growing cooperation between Yugoslavia and the Western Powers and the concrete indications of that cooperation within the last six months have probably convinced

the USSR that an attack by the adjacent Satellites would involve not only serious risk of war between the US or UN and these Satellites, but also the danger that such a conflict would develop into a general war.

33. Therefore, we believe that an attack upon Yugoslavia in 1952 is unlikely.\*

\* The Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, Department of the Army dissents from this paragraph and would replace it by the following:

"33. During 1951 the Satellites adjacent to Yugoslavia achieved the capability of attacking Yugoslavia provided they are given logistic support by the USSR. Despite this capability, we believe it unlikely that Yugoslavia will be attacked during 1952 unless the USSR is prepared to accept general war. However, there is a continuing possibility that unforeseen political events and/or miscalculation by the Soviets might precipitate hostilities in Yugoslavia, intended to be localized, but which could expand into general war. We conclude therefore, that there is a serious possibility of an attack on Yugoslavia during 1952."

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