

10. NSC 58 on Policy towards Eastern Europe

5 OCTOBER 1949

(...)

THE PROBLEM

To find means of improving and intensifying our efforts to reduce and eventually to cause the elimination of dominant Soviet influence in the satellite states of Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Rumania.

ANALYSIS

1. Since VE Day we have (a) checked the westward advance of Soviet power, at least for the time being, at a line running from Lübeck to Trieste and (b) made substantial strides in developing Western Europe as a counter-force to Communism. These are defensive accomplishments. The time is now ripe for us to place greater emphasis on the offensive to consider whether we cannot do more to cause the elimination or at least a reduction of predominant Soviet influence in the satellite states of Eastern Europe.
2. These states are in themselves of secondary importance on the European scene. Eventually they must play an important role in a free and integrated Europe; but in the current two-world struggle they have meaning primarily because they are in varying degrees politico-military adjuncts of Soviet power and extend that power into the heart of Europe. They are a part of the Soviet monolith.
3. It is assumed that there is general agreement that, so long as the U.S.S.R. represents the only major threat to our security and to world stability, our objective with respect to the U.S.S.R.'s European satellites must be the elimination of Soviet control from those countries and the reduction of Soviet influence to something like normal dimension.

GENERAL COMMENT REGARDING SATELLITES

4. The criterion which we employ in defining a "satellite" state is amenability to Kremlin direction. Thus Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Rumania are by this definition satellite states. Yugoslavia is not because, although it is a Communist state, it is not at present subservient to the Kremlin and an integral part of the Soviet system. Nor is Finland; because, notwithstanding the existence of a large Soviet naval base on its territory, Finland has demonstrated on the whole a greater degree of resistance to than compliance with Soviet pressure and has, in particular, been able to resist internal police domination by the MVD.
5. Certain generalizations can be made about the satellite states. For the most part, they were overrun by the Soviet Army during or after the war. Their present governments were established by Kremlin dictate or under Moscow guidance. And they are all minority governments dominated by Communists. In particular, internal police power, which is the key factor in a Communist power system, is under Moscow control.
6. Moreover, the satellite states have under Soviet compulsion reoriented their economies from the west to the east. The Kremlin forced this readjustment with the purpose of exploiting the satellites for the aggrandizement of Soviet economic-military might and preventing their contact with the West. Moreover, the satellite economies are being steadily

Sovietized. The Soviet pattern of state monopoly of trade and industry and of collectivized agriculture is being rapidly forced on these countries.

7. The cultural life of the satellite peoples, too, is being steadily Sovietized. A common pattern in education, religion, science and the fine arts is being pressed on the mind and spirit of Eastern Europe.

8. These developments do not have popular support in the satellite countries. The majority of the population in these states look upon their governments and the Soviet Union as an oppressive rather than an emancipating force.

THE ANATOMY OF SOVIET POWER IN THE SATELLITE STATES

9. What is the anatomy of Soviet power in these countries? The four basic factors making for Soviet influence and control are:

- a. Certain traditional ties, such as Pan-Slavism and the Orthodox Church, and in some segments of the satellite population a common fear of the resurgence of German aggression;
- b. The presence or encircling propinquity of recognized elements of the Soviet armed forces and security troops;
- c. Kremlin penetration and domination of the government, the party, and all other mass organizations (including economic enterprises) through both Soviet and satellite nationals;
- d. A common body of communist ideology adhered to by the ruling groups.

10. Where they exist, the traditional ties of race and culture are systematically utilized by the Kremlin as a binding force. Similarly, fear of the resurgence of German aggression is vigorously exploited by the Russians to hold these satellites in the Soviet sphere. The shabby old fabric of Pan-Slavism has been patched and tailored to serve as a rather ineffectual ethnographic and cultural comforter over Eastern Europe. The corrupt Orthodox Church, which had provided a loose religious affinity between Russia and some of the Balkan countries, has been recorrupted and forced away from the oecumenical concept and in the direction of recognizing the primacy of the Moscow Patriarchate, which in turn is thoroughly subservient, in fact if not in spirit, to the Communist Party and the MVD. II. The presence of Soviet armed forces and security troops in certain satellites and their near encirclement of all of them exert an intimidating influence throughout the orbit. Where Soviet forces are garrisoned within satellite states, they serve to reinforce the authority of puppet officials.

12. Stalinist penetration of the governments and mass organizations of satellite states is a tangible mechanical instrument of Soviet power. It is the Kremlin's reinsurance against ideological corruptibility on the part of satellite officials, the guarantee that its political, economic and cultural policies will be implemented. The permitting of all satellite organizations, but particularly the leader positions in police organizations, by Stalinist agents means that no satellite citizen in a position of responsibility is immune from the Kremlin's displeasure. This produces a degree of sensitive subservience which could never be achieved through ideological hypnotism alone.

13. There are three discernible strata in the accreted ideology of Marx, Lenin and Stalin. There is first the traditional conglomerate of Marxist-Leninist philosophy based on dialectical materialism. Quackery that it is, it is nevertheless an outlook on the world adhered to in common not only by the U.S.S.R. and its satellites but also by such non-conformists as Tito and the Trotskyites. Whatever differences may divide them, whatever opportunist accommodations they may be forced to make to the mammon of private capitalism, they are united in common detestation of the infidel bourgeoisie.

14. The second stratum is the Leninist-Stalinist blueprint for the capture and retention of power. It is the working formula for totalitarianism, the modern science of revolution, coup d'Etat and tyranny. From the Russian revolution to the Czech coup, this formula has been proved effective. It is not, however, of itself a force binding the satellites to the U.S.S.R.

15. The third stratum is specifically designed as a magnetic law to hold the satellites in the Kremlin's orbit. It is the Stalinist dogma that (a) the non-Soviet world is unalterably hostile to not only the U.S.S.R. but all of the "New Democracies" simply because their goal is Communism, (b) the U.S.S.R. is the socialist fatherland, leading a movement predestined to triumph over the non-Soviet world, (c) the satellite states can survive and realize their destiny only through identification of their interests with those of the U.S.S.R., faithfully following the infallible and invincible leadership of the Kremlin, and (d) the citizens of the satellites therefore owe primary allegiance to the U.S.S.R. It is this dogma which provides the rationalization for the imposition of Soviet imperialism in all of its aspects, political, economic and cultural, and for satellite acceptance of a colonial status. It should also be noted that the inclination of the West a quite understandable one to act on the basis of (a) above tends to reinforce this myth and causes the satellite leaders to believe that they have no future outside of the Stalinist camp.

16. Three of the basic factors identified in preceding paragraphs: (a) military intimidation, (b) penetration and (c) the Stalinist dogma are the root cause and the conditioning force of other mechanisms of Kremlin power and influence in the satellites. Such derivative factors as the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance²² (and the reverse of this medal: the prohibition of satellite participation in ERP), standardization of military equipment, defensive alliances and common propaganda lines would not necessarily have developed had it not been for these three basic factors. While the derivative factors are of secondary importance in an analysis of the real anatomy of Soviet power, they are of great practical significance in considering what we can do toward reducing Soviet influence and control in the satellite states. It is in that context, later in this paper, that these mechanisms, particularly the economic, will be examined.

17. Returning to the basic factors, where are the weak points in this anatomy of Soviet influence and control? The weakness of the traditional ties between the U.S.S.R. and its satellites lies in their comparatively shallow hold and in the traditional conflicts of the area, which have historically always outweighed the cohesive influences at work. Pan-Slavism may have some meaning in Bulgaria but it is an absurdity in Albania. And certainly the long-standing national antagonisms of the Poles, Rumanians and Hungarians toward the Russians not to mention mutual antipathies among the satellites themselves are strong counter-currents to the new Stalinist internationalism.

18. The Kremlin's weakness with respect to its armed forces stationed in countries of the Soviet orbit lies in the fact that they are there on a legally impermanent basis unless new treaty provisions are made or the satellite states in which they are stationed are absorbed into the U.S.S.R. The removal of Soviet troops will, under present circumstances, leave the other instruments of Soviet influence and control without legal resort to the ultimate recourse of massive force.

19. Few weaknesses exist in the crucial factor of Stalinist penetration. With Kremlin agents permeating party and state structures and with mutual suspicion and denunciation having become, as they are in the U.S.S.R., ingrained in all human relationships, this channel of influence and control appears well-nigh invulnerable. Its only weakness would appear to lie in its self-stultification and demoralization the recurring necessity to purge personnel and in

²²The Council of Mutual Economic Assistance was formed in January 1949 by representatives of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, and Czechoslovakia for the purpose of exchanging experience and technical assistance in the economic field.

the nationalist resistance which constant Soviet interference partially generates and inflames. Such, after all, has been the experience in certain of the minority "nations" of the U.S.S.R. the Ukraine and the Baltic states. Moscow penetration and interference in these sub-states provoked resistance, most of which could be suppressed by individual or small-scale secret-police measures. But some revolts were of such magnitude as to require employment of the Red Army and State Security troops. Furthermore, the elements of the Red Army and State Security troops employed were not native to the "nation" in which they were used. This experience raises again the question of the efficacy of Stalinist agent penetration in the event the Soviet Army is withdrawn behind the borders of the U.S.S.R.

20. The weakness of the ideological hold which the Kremlin exerts over the satellite leaders lies in the Stalinist dogma of subservience to the U.S.S.R., particularly the dictum that satellite interests cannot and must not conflict with those of the U.S.S.R. That myth, happily, is the weakest segment of the accreted ideology of Marx, Lenin and Stalin. It engenders essentially the same popular reactions that colonialism has produced throughout history, for it is in fact a form of colonialism, The myth quickly loses its attraction for all those with real roots in the local scene once it becomes apparent that satellite interests, particularly in the economic field, must be subordinated to the imperious needs of the Soviet sovereign. This development must also have its effect on even those satellite leaders who view Moscow as the center of a new internationalism. The Stalinist dogma undoubtedly had validity in the minds of satellite leaders when they were revolutionaries seeking power. At that time, there was little conflict between their interests and those of the Kremlin; they were wholly dependent upon Moscow and could hope to realize their revolutionary aims and personal ambitions only through subserving the interests of the U.S.S.R. But now that they have the appearance and considerable of the substance of power, subtle new forces come into play. Power, even the taste of it, is as likely to corrupt Communist as bourgeois leaders. Considerations of national as well as personal interest materialize and come into conflict with the colonial policy pursued by the Soviet interests. When this happens, satellite officials may still remain, by force of other factors, Kremlin captives; but at least they are not entirely willing ones.

THE LESSON OF TITO

21. In examining the problem before us, it is instructive to analyze the reasons for Tito's present independence of Moscow control. How does it happen that Yugoslavia is not solidly aligned with the U.S.S.R. and its satellites?

22. The answer obviously does not lie in the realm of ideology. Yugoslavia's state philosophy, like that of the U.S.S.R. and its satellites, is Marxism-Leninism. Furthermore, Tito rose to power and now retains it by a sedulous application of the Leninist-Stalinist blueprint for totalitarianism. It is only in the third ideological stratum that of subservience to the interests of the U.S.S.R. that Tito openly deviates ideologically from the satellites. How has he been able to do it?

23. The key to Tito's successful rejection of Kremlin control lies in the fact that (a) the Yugoslav Communist Party was largely his personal creation, (b) the Soviet Army did not occupy Yugoslavia and establish there an ultimate repository of Kremlin force, and (c) he had been able from the outset to prevent effective Stalinist penetration of his party and governmental apparatus.

24. This having been the case, Tito and his associates were able to develop a party, secret police and army who had confidence in themselves, particularist pride in their own achievements and whose first loyalty was to themselves. They have therefore been thus far, in the conflict and showdown with the U.S.S.R., immune to Stalinist disciplinary action against their persons. It is ironical that the Kremlin-Cominform attack has served to

strengthen the domestic position of Tito and his cohorts and to solidify popular support around them.

25. Why did a rift occur between Tito and the Soviet bloc? The answer lies both in the nature of the Yugoslavs and in the nature of Soviet imperialism. The Kremlin made a gross miscalculation regarding the Yugoslav Communists. It underestimated the tough recalcitrant Yugoslav character and the organizational ability of the Titoists to resist Soviet pressure. With a heavy hand the Kremlin strove to force its colonial policy on Yugoslavia. As it did so it engaged its prestige against the Titoists. As arrogant Soviet pressure mounted, Yugoslav resistance increased until the open break occurred.

26. Notwithstanding the bitterness of their present quarrel, the Marxist-Leninist bond between the Kremlin and the Titoists remains. Let us not delude ourselves into thinking that Tito might like us better for being the butt of a Communist family feud. The best that we can hope from Tito is crafty self-interest in playing both sides, similar to that practiced by Franco in his relations with the Axis and the Allies during the last war. Uncongenial as such a relationship may be, it is far less inimical to us and other nations of good will than a Yugoslavia cemented into the Soviet monolith.

27. The Communist Reformation in Yugoslavia occurred quickly and sharply defined because of the especial conditions described in the preceding paragraphs. Conditions do not now exist in the satellite states which would permit them promptly to follow the pattern of Yugoslavia. The leaders of the satellite states did not come to power primarily through their own efforts. Most of them were transplanted from Moscow by the Red Army and Soviet secret police. The satellite leaders do not therefore have the particularist esprit de corps of the Titoists. Rather their parties and governments are thoroughly penetrated by Stalinists with the result that any conspiracy against Kremlin control is quickly detected, isolated and crushed. Furthermore, their armies contain informers and agents. And finally, Soviet armed forces are stationed on satellite territories or around their borders.

COURSES OPEN TO US

28. In seeking to bring about the elimination of Soviet power from the satellite states, two principal courses of action are conceivable. One is war; the other is measures short of war.

29. Resort to war as a course of action is raised in this paper solely for the purpose of making clear that it should be rejected as a practical alternative. This course is rejected, if for no other reason, because it is organically not feasible for this Government to initiate a policy of creating a war. It therefore follows that this paper is necessarily addressed to measures short of war. However, if war in Eastern Europe is forced upon us, that is a different matter and one which would create a wholly new situation beyond the compass of this paper. It scarcely need be added that we should always be prepared for such a contingency.

30. There remains then the category of measures short of war. Before discussing them, we should at the outset have clearly in mind another set of alternatives between which we must make a conscious choice. In attempting to cause an elimination of Soviet power in these countries, we obviously cannot expect a vacuum to result. The type of government which might succeed to power is intimately related to the removal of Kremlin influence and control. Therefore, should it be our aim to replace, as a first step, Kremlin authority with (a) governments immediately friendly to us or (b) any governments free of Moscow domination, even though they be Communist regimes?

31. Our ultimate aim must, of course, be the appearance in Eastern Europe of non-totalitarian administrations willing to accommodate themselves to, and participate in, the free world community. Strong tactical considerations, however, argue against setting up this goal as an immediate objective. None of the Eastern European countries, except

Czechoslovakia, has ever known any but authoritarian government. Democracy in the western sense is alien to their culture and tradition. Moreover, the non-totalitarian leadership, such as it is, in the satellite states has been thoroughly fragmented and crushed. It has little chance of coming to power save through armed intervention from the west. Were we to set as our immediate goal the replacement of totalitarianism by democracy, an overwhelming portion of the task would fall on us, and we would find ourselves directly engaging the Kremlin's prestige and provoking a strong Soviet reaction, possibly in the form of war or at least in vigorous indirect aggression. At best, we would find ourselves deeply enmeshed in the eastern European situation and saddled with an indefinitely continuing burden of political, economic and military responsibility for the survival of the uncertain regimes which we had placed in power.

32. If, however, we are willing that, as a first step, schismatic Communist regimes supplant the present Stalinist governments, we stand a much better chance of success. Admittedly, it would be a difficult task to attempt to bring about a severance of satellite ties with the Kremlin. But it would not be nearly so difficult as challenging at the outset, not only the whole complex of Communist ideology and method, but also the long heritage of authoritarianism.

33. The more feasible immediate course, then, is to foster a heretical drifting-away process on the part of the satellite states. However weak they may now appear, grounds do exist for heretical schisms. We can contribute to the widening of these rifts without assuming responsibility. And when the final breaks occur, we would not be directly involved in engaging Soviet prestige; the quarrel would be between the Kremlin and the Communist Reformation.

34. Such a development could conceivably grow to the point where there would be two opposing blocs in the Communist world a Stalinist group and a non-conformist faction, either loosely allied or federated under Tito's leadership. A situation of this description might eventually provide us with an opportunity to operate on the basis of a balance of forces in the Communist world and to foster the tendencies toward accommodation with the West implicit in such a state of affairs.

35. With the foregoing in mind, let us now consider the most evidently beneficial course which we can follow. The obvious first step, perhaps even an essential prerequisite, is the creation of circumstances bringing about the withdrawal of Soviet troops from satellite countries. The conclusion of an Austrian peace settlement would remove the most evident present justification for Soviet troops in Hungary and Rumania. Similarly, an agreement by the four powers with respect to Germany, if and when it is achieved, should include provisions assuring preferably an elimination but at least a reduction of Soviet garrisons in Germany and Poland. These developments should go a long way toward loosening the Kremlin's hold not only on the states affected but also on adjoining satellites. There is no guarantee, of course, that such a move might not be followed by Soviet-satellite treaty arrangements or the Soviet Union's incorporating some or all of the satellites in the U.S.S.R., thus providing a new legal basis for the retention of Soviet forces in those countries. In such an eventuality, a new situation would have been created necessitating a full reexamination of this paper.

36. A second course open before us is to attack the weaknesses in the Stalinist penetration of satellite governments and mass organizations. In the light of what has been said, this will be no easy task. The weaknesses discussed in paragraph 19 do represent, however, a vulnerable sector on this front, especially if Soviet armed forces are withdrawn behind the borders of the U.S.S.R. The basic problem would seem to be to bring about the isolation, not only in satellite society, but particularly in the Communist Parties, of the Stalinist elements, and as they are identified and isolated, to create conditions which will reduce and eventually eliminate their power. [Security deletion in source text] The propensity of the

revolution to devour its own, the suspicions of the Kremlin regarding its agents and the institutions of denunciation, purge and liquidation are grave defects in the Soviet system which have never been adequately exploited.

37. This course is intimately related to and partly dependent upon the third course of action open to us an attack on the ideological front, specifically directed at the Stalinist dogma of satellite dependence upon and subservience to the U.S.S.R. This key doctrine should be unremittingly attacked all across the board in its political, economic and cultural applications. On the positive side, the reverse of the Stalinist dogma nationalism should be encouraged. The offensive should be maintained not only on the overt but also the covert plane.

38. The subsidiary mechanisms of Soviet control touched upon in paragraph 16 are of varying vulnerability. It is difficult to see, for example, how we can bring pressure to bear against such mechanisms as Soviet military missions in satellite states. The political and cultural fields, however, offer possibilities for the exertions of our influences. For instance, through formal diplomatic channels and within the U.N., we have some opportunity to bring pressures to bear on the political ties between the satellite governments and the U.S.S.R. And in our general ideological offensive mentioned in the preceding paragraph, we should not neglect pressing the attack, necessarily indirectly in most cases, against specific instrumentalities such as the various "popular" organizations in the satellite states.

39. But it is probably in the economic realm that we can most concretely make our influence felt. All of the Soviet economic mechanisms of control, particularly the CMEA, are affected by the policies which we follow with regard to such matters as East-West trade, purchase of gold and export controls. The potential effectiveness of our economic tactics is widespread. If we can succeed in jolting the CMEA structure, the repercussions are bound to be felt in the political, military and cultural spheres. We do not have at hand and are therefore not operating on the basis of a thorough study of all of the elements of the problem. Not until we have completed an exhaustive study of all of the economic and political factors involved can we mobilize this economic potential and utilize it for maximum effect. This is a tactical problem which should immediately be worked out in detail.

FACTORS AFFECTING OUR CHOICE

40. The broad courses of action open to us are qualified by a series of other factors. They are considerations of (a) timing and tempo, (b) our long-term goals, (c) our world position, (d) our relations with the U.S.S.R., and (e) the relative vulnerability of the various satellites.

41. Although the time is now ripe for us to move to the offensive, this does not mean that we should attempt to move at a maximum pace. The tempo at which we move is necessarily qualified by the basic pragmatic approach which we have to foreign relations. The truism, sometimes ignored in the public mind, is here recognized that our pace must be accommodated to what the situation in the satellites warrants.

42. A course of encouraging schisms within the Communist world cannot be pursued without reserve because such a course is a tactical expediency which, however necessary, must never be permitted to obscure our basic long-term objectives a non-totalitarian system in Eastern Europe. The problem is to facilitate the development of heretical Communism without at the same time seriously impairing our chances for ultimately replacing this intermediate totalitarianism with tolerant regimes congenial to the Western World. Nor must we slacken, rather we should increase, the support and refuge which we may be able to offer to leaders and groups in these countries who are western-minded.

43. Considerations of our international position, particularly with respect to the U.N., impose further limitations on our policy with respect to the satellites. We cannot, for

example, come out in unqualified support of Tito or Titoism any more than we can take such a stand in favor of Franco and Fascism. Furthermore, we cannot pursue a wholly unilateral course because we have committed ourselves to the collective idea, because our western allies have far-reaching legitimate interests in Eastern Europe and because the full effectiveness of our operations depends upon their cooperation.

44. Our relations with the U.S.S.R. are another consideration which must be taken into account. The satellite question is a function of our main problem relations with the U.S.S.R. No examination of a proposed course of action toward the satellites is complete without thorough consideration of the probable effects it might have on the U.S.S.R.

Proposed operations directed at the satellites must consequently be measured against the kind and degree of retaliation which they are likely to provoke from the Kremlin. They must not exceed in provocative effect what is calculated suitable in the given situation.

45. Finally, considerations of the relative vulnerability of the various satellites must enter into our calculations. No one course of action can be applied alike to all satellites.

Obviously our policy both with regard to methods and tempo must differ among the several orbit countries. These are tactical problems which must be flexibly worked out by the operating elements within this Government.

CONCLUSIONS

46. Our over-all aim with respect to the satellite states should be the gradual reduction and eventual elimination of preponderant Soviet power from Eastern Europe without resort to war.

47. We should, as the only practical immediate expedient, seek to achieve this objective through fostering Communist heresy among the satellite states, encouraging the emergence of non-Stalinist regimes as temporary administrations, even though they be Communist in nature.

48. It must, however, be our fixed aim that eventually these regimes must be replaced by non-totalitarian governments desirous of participating with good faith in the free world community.

49. More specifically, bearing in mind all of the qualifications set forth in the analysis of this paper, we should:

- a. Seek to bring about retraction of Soviet military forces behind the borders of the U.S.S.R.;
- b. Endeavor to cause an increasing isolation of the confirmed Stalinists from the nationalist elements of the party and from popular support in the satellite states toward the end that their power be reduced;
- c. Attack the Stalinist dogma of satellite subservience to the U.S.S.R. and encourage nationalism;
- d. Bring fully to bear on the Soviet-satellite relationship the economic forces which we control or influence.

50. The operating elements within this Government should forthwith begin tactical planning and implementation of such plans in conformity with the strategic concept set forth in this paper. In connection with economic planning, it will be necessary first to undertake the study mentioned in paragraph 39.