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Annex B COS X

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[L.C.] → LIBERATION OF THE SATELLITES.

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A policy aiming at the detachment of the satellites from the Soviet bloc by a series of ostensibly spontaneous uprisings presents obvious attractions. Success would materially change the balance of power; the psychological effect of the liberation of any satellite from the Soviet yoke would - as the example of Yugoslavia has shown - be far-reaching throughout the Soviet orbit and, indeed, in the free world; and the adoption of a policy specifically aimed at the liberation of the satellites would in itself give coherence to our propaganda across the Iron Curtain and constitute a powerful encouragement to the potential resistance movements while there is still time. In the preparatory stages, moreover, any step which increased Soviet doubts as to the reliability of the satellites would tend to discourage Soviet aggression by calling in question the safety of their lines of communication under war conditions. Finally, the physical and other resources which the Western powers would have to contribute to the preparation of the requisite uprisings would be relatively small, and would not compete appreciably with the task of building up their own strength.

2. These are powerful arguments for the policy described above, but they must be related to the practical prospect of success. It is axiomatic that resistance groups, even if well supplied with light arms and explosives, cannot obtain decisive results against regular troops unless the latter are either neutralized by a greater threat or already in a state of disintegration. It can also be taken as certain that the satellite forces, even if they could be induced to lead or join the revolt, would be ineffective against the Soviet Army unless the latter were neutralized by disintegration or by a political or military threat which would prevent their employment against the revolutionary movement.

3. Thus, with the possible exception of Albania, none of the satellite countries, would, in the foreseeable future, be able to consolidate any initial success which might be gained by a carefully organized general rising unless the Western powers were able to neutralize the Soviet Army, either by armed intervention on a sufficient scale or by diversionary action elsewhere or by the possession of such preponderant strength that the Soviet Government would be unwilling to incur the risk of a general war. Of these three pre-conditions for success, the first two are inconsistent with the over-riding requirement that war except in defence of a vital interest, must be avoided; as regards the third, there can, for some years at least, be no certainty the Western powers will be able to attain, and sustain, such a position of superiority that the Soviet Government would beyond question be deterred from intervening to suppress a satellite revolt.

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4. There is a further important consideration. The creation of resistance groups for mass revolt and the provision of the necessary arms etc. demands time: but all experience shows that, once prepared, "resistance" cannot stand still indefinitely or, indeed, for very long. A decision to embark on liberation by internal revolt would consequently involve making a decision, within relatively narrow limits, as to the timing of the revolt; and this in turn necessitates an assumption as to the date on which the Western powers would attain a sufficient margin of superiority to prevent Soviet counter-action. If the assumption were falsified by a wide margin, the resistance movement would either collapse, with disastrous, and perhaps lasting, effects on morale throughout the orbit, or else proceed with its plans in the hope of obliging the Western powers to intervene against their better judgement. Indeed, the necessity for a resistance movement to maintain its momentum at all costs involves a real danger even during the preparatory period; its leaders may well be obliged to embark upon incidental activities and projects which can lead to a premature outbreak and, in default of armed intervention from outside, total collapse.

5. From the foregoing it follows that a policy aimed at detaching the satellites by fomenting internal revolt without serious risk of war with Russia can only succeed, if at all, when the Western powers have attained overwhelming military superiority; and that even to prepare revolt in the expectation of attaining this superiority before the movement comes to fruition would be fraught with dangers. It remains to consider whether, in fact, as has been assumed in the preceding paragraphs, a policy of fomenting revolt stands or falls by the prospect of success.

6. It can be argued that an unsuccessful revolt, or - to a lesser extent - the mere existence of a resistance movement, even one too weak to attempt a general uprising, could bring real advantages to the Western powers in their present state of relative weakness. In differing degrees both would impose a certain strain on Soviet resources; any covert activity within a satellite would increase Soviet nervousness about their lines of communication in war-time and so tend to discourage or delay plans for an offensive; an organised resistance movement is a useful source of agents and intelligence; and the knowledge that such a movement existed would help to maintain morale within the satellite country concerned. Moreover, if the Soviet Union were itself to launch an attack on the West, internal resistance movements in the satellite countries could not be suddenly improvised, whereas, if they had been prepared in advance, the criterion of their ability to succeed without involving the Western powers in war with the Soviet Union would be inapplicable.

7. Against these undoubted advantages must be set the following powerful disadvantages:-

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- (a) It is doubtful whether any serious resistance movement could be started or maintained without definite assurances of Western intervention at the critical moment. For the reasons given in the first part of this paper such assurances could not be honestly given.
 - (b) If the Western powers led a resistance movement to believe that armed support would be given, and failed to give it, leaders of the movement would be forced either to call off the uprising at the last moment or to proceed with a plan which was doomed to complete failure before it had started. In the first case the forces of resistance in the country concerned, and elsewhere in the orbit, would receive a fatal setback; and in the second case they would probably be extinguished.
 - (c) An unsuccessful rising would almost certainly destroy any intelligence network which the Western powers might have built up among, or with the help of, resistance elements.
 - (d) Failure of a revolt in one satellite country would result in a strengthening of the Soviet hold over the rest of the orbit.
 - (e) Public opinion might drive the Western powers into intervention on behalf of an uprising against their better judgment, and so lead to war with the Soviet Union - ex hypothesi, at a moment when their strength was not judged sufficient to incur a risk of war.

Conclusions

7.

- 1/3
- (i) A successful uprising leading to the liberation of one or more satellites is - with the possible exception of Albania - impossible in the foreseeable future without Western intervention.
 - (ii) An unsuccessful uprising, without Western intervention, would do more harm than good to the Western cause.
 - (iii) Western intervention, in conditions which would not lead to war with the Soviet Union, would require a degree of military superiority which cannot at present be foreseen.

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- (iv) It would be dangerous even to plan or prepare for revolt unless and until the necessary margin of military superiority had been achieved - by which time other less hazardous and more fundamental methods of solving the Russian problem may well have presented themselves.
- (v) None of the foregoing objections to mass resistance movements applies at any stage to specialist operations designed either to disrupt the machinery of government or the economic structure of satellite states, or to poison relations between the satellite governments and the Soviet Union.

LIBERATION OF THE SATELLITES.

A policy aiming at the detachment of the satellites from the Soviet bloc by a series of ostensibly spontaneous uprisings presents obvious attractions. Success would materially change the balance of power; the psychological effect of the liberation of any satellite from the Soviet yoke would - as the example of Yugoslavia has shown - be far-reaching throughout the Soviet orbit and, indeed, in the free world; and the adoption of a policy specifically aimed at the liberation of the satellites would in itself give coherence to our propaganda across the Iron Curtain and constitute a powerful encouragement to the potential resistance movements while there is still time. In the preparatory stages, moreover, any step which increased Soviet doubts as to the reliability of the satellites would tend to discourage Soviet aggression by calling in question the safety of their lines of communication under war conditions. Finally, the physical and other resources which the Western powers would have to contribute to the preparation of the requisite uprisings would be relatively small, and would not compete appreciably with the task of building up their own strength.

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