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UNITED KINGDOM POLICY TOWARDS THE EAST EUROPEAN SATELLITES

Note by the United Kingdom Delegation

The main thesis of this paper is that if there is eventually to be any weakening of the Soviet hold over the Satellites it will come about through evolution rather than revolution. A policy is outlined whereby favourable evolutionary trends could be encouraged, particularly by fostering a spirit of nationalism in the Satellites and playing up to their sense of national identity. This is a long-term policy. If, as appears likely, there is going to be a major crisis in East/West relations in the short term, it will undoubtedly be hard to make headway. But a prolonged quarrel with the Russians would make the proposed policy all the more necessary and we should therefore not be deterred from putting our ideas into practice now.

Introduction

2. It is a primary Western interest that Communist influence should be diminished and Western influence increased wherever possible. In pursuing this interest, Western efforts should not be confined to the primarily defensive aim of checking the expansion of Communist influence outside the Soviet bloc. It is equally important to exploit to the full every opportunity of increasing the influence of the West in areas where the Soviet Union at present enjoys hegemony.

3. The East European Satellites⁽¹⁾ constitute a field for Western activity which has not been adequately exploited; for reasons which are discussed below, there are opportunities for pursuing a more positive policy in this area in the long-term Western interest.

(1) The special cases of East Germany and Albania, with whom Her Majesty's Government are not in diplomatic relations, are not considered in this Memorandum.

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4. It must be recognised, however, that since there are vital Soviet interests at stake in Eastern Europe there are strict practical limitations on what the West can do at present. A realistic assessment of the scope for Western activity must take full account of these interests and must not aim too high. It must distinguish between those elements in the Soviet-Satellite relationship which can be accepted as quasi permanent and those which are liable to change.

Soviet Policy in East Europe

5. For strategic, political and economic reasons the Soviet Union will, in the foreseeable future, seek to maintain its domination of the East European Satellites and its control over their destinies. Whatever the ultimate Soviet aim may be, e.g. to swallow up the Satellites as constituent republics of the Soviet Union or to allow them to retain some measure of national identity, its present interests appear to be best served by allowing them to pose as sovereign independent countries (see par. 6 below).

6. The strategic value of the Satellites to the Soviet Union, though in some respects modified by developments in the nuclear and missile fields, is still important. It will continue to be a vital Soviet interest to deny to the West a belt of territory which in effect advances the Soviet frontier several hundred miles Westward. The Northern Satellites (Poland and Czechoslovakia) will continue to have special strategic importance to the Soviet Union as long as Germany remains divided.

7. Politically, the maintenance of the status quo in the Satellites is a corollary both of the Soviet Union's strategic aims and of its overall ideological purpose. More specifically, it serves Soviet interests in the following ways:

- (i) it helps to keep the Satellite régimes under Soviet control;
- (ii) it provides the Soviet Union with five nominally independent, but in fact subservient, allies in its dealings with the West, and with a solid voting bloc in the United Nations and other international agencies;
- (iii) it enables the Soviet Union to use the Satellites as agents in its political and economic penetration of the non-Communist world and thus gives flexibility and diversity to the Communist world offensive. The facade of national sovereignty and independence in the Satellites is used by Soviet propaganda to foster among the

uncommitted countries the belief that adoption of the Communist system does not involve loss of sovereignty;

- (iv) it affords the Soviet Union a fairly reliable bloc of support within the Communist world.

8. The economic importance of the Satellites to the Soviet Union is less easy to assess. Although a substantial percentage of Soviet trade is with the Satellites, who are largely dependent on the Soviet Union for their supplies of raw materials, they cannot be said to be vital to the Soviet Union either as markets or as sources of supply. Nevertheless, their economic importance to the Soviet Union should not be underestimated. On the other hand, the system of economic interdependence and integration in the bloc which the Soviet Union is promoting through the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance and through bilateral intra-bloc trade and credit agreements is an essential factor in the consolidation of Soviet control over the Satellites. Soviet interests are linked with those of the Satellites in preserving the present pattern of economic development in Eastern Europe.

9. Implications for Western policy

It follows from this assessment of Soviet interests that the Soviet Union will not tolerate, and will in the last resort use force, if necessary, to prevent:

- (i) the overthrow of a Satellite Communist régime by internal revolt;
- (ii) any active intervention by the West to instigate or support such a revolt;
- (iii) the transfer of a Satellite régime's allegiance to the Western camp;
- (iv) the establishment of a "national Communist" régime in any of the Satellites on the Yugoslav model.

Since the West is not prepared to risk global war to loosen the Communist grip on Eastern Europe there can be no question in present circumstances of our adopting a policy aimed at liberating the Satellites or inciting their peoples to armed insurrection. This need not, however, preclude the West from seeking to exploit trends within the Satellites themselves and in their relations with the Soviet Union which may help to weaken Communist control over them.

The present situation in the Satellites and in Intra-Bloc Relationships

10. The Satellite régimes are now more securely entrenched than at any time since their seizure of power. Since the events of 1956 the attitude of the Satellite peoples towards their régimes has been moving towards resigned acquiescence and even apathy. Hopes of any effective internal resistance or of Western intervention in the event of another rising have now largely died. At the same time a gradual relaxation of repression (although varying in degree between individual Satellites) and an improvement in living conditions, resulting in most cases from more efficient administration, have combined to blunt the edge of popular discontent and to encourage a mood of passivity. To some extent the régimes have even been able to mobilise in their own support a revived sense of national pride of achievement.

11. In this situation the greatest problem which the Communist rulers of Eastern Europe must overcome appears at present to be not active public resistance or revolt, but the apathy of the peoples, their poor response, particularly among the younger generation, to Marxist-Leninist indoctrination and their reluctance to co-operate wholeheartedly with the régime in "building Socialism". The provision of better material conditions may, it is true, mean that the people will come to accept the continued existence of the Communist régimes and lose interest in the possibility that these régimes may one day be ousted. On the other hand, as the level of education and of living standards rises the populations may become more, rather than less, inclined to question the ideological basis of the Communist system and to criticise its shortcomings. Their desire for contact with Western ideas and culture may also increase, and the régimes may be obliged to satisfy this desire to a greater extent in an effort to promote co-operation from their subjects. The Hungarian and Polish régimes have already done this to some degree.

12. The Satellites may also come under increasing pressure from the Soviet Union to present an impression of "normality" to the outside world in order to increase their value as allies in the political and economic struggle inherent in Khrushchev's policy of peaceful co-existence. This may cause them to relax their internal policies and to increase their cultural, commercial and other contacts with the free world. There is evidence that they have already embarked on such policies under Soviet direction and that the more "reactionary" régimes are concerned about the effect of reduced international tension on their own internal positions.

13. A further factor which may work to the advantage of the West in the long term is the evolution in the nature of the Satellite-Soviet relationship. Since 1956 the concept of a monolithic bloc which developed under Stalin has been gradually replaced both in propaganda and in theoretical pronouncements, by that of a "Socialist Commonwealth" of equal, or nominally equal, independent states. This trend is partly reflected in the fact that Albania has so far been able to defy the Soviet Union without incurring the penalty of the expulsion from the Bloc. The new concept of a "Socialist Commonwealth" has the merit of helping to mask the bogey of Soviet imperialism and to increase the force of the Communist appeal to the new and underdeveloped nations (see para. 6(iii) above). In this sense, the "Socialist Commonwealth" constitutes a more formidable challenge to the West than did the Stalinist monolith. On the other hand, in showing greater tolerance of national idiosyncrasies (e.g. in Poland) and in encouraging the Satellite régimes to make an outward show of independence in spheres which do not affect vital Soviet interests, Khrushchev is running the risk that these régimes may acquire a taste for more genuinely independent behaviour and for making their own decisions over a wider field than at present.

14. Such a trend may be assisted by evolution within the Satellite régimes themselves. As the older generation of Satellite leaders is gradually replaced, and as the régimes become more self-confident, they may develop a more "national" mentality. The new men will not necessarily be more liberal or less dogmatic than the Old Guard (in Czechoslovakia, for example, present indications are to the contrary): but the fact that they are inheriting a more stable political situation than that which faced their predecessors during most of their period of rule is likely to be reflected in greater confidence and in the desire both to rid their countries of some of the stigma of satellite status and to acquire more independent international prestige. The Roumanian leaders have given some striking signs of independent-mindedness since the 22nd Congress of the CPSU. Further, as the Satellite economies develop, the political influence of the managerial class, with its stronger sense of the realities of national economic and social needs, is likely to increase in relation to that of the traditional Party hack, preoccupied with observing the letter of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. The resistance which certain reactionary elements in the Hungarian Party have met Kadar's attempts to recruit non-Party technicians into the government machine seems to indicate that the hacks are aware of and fear the rising power of the a-political managers. Finally, the general improvement of material conditions in the countries of East Europe may give their sense of national pride a raison d'être and so help it to revive.

15. It may be therefore that the Satellite régimes will seek to exploit the new climate in intra-Bloc relations in order to further cautiously their individual national interests within and outside the Bloc. In this, the Soviet Union's desire to retain the support of the Satellite Parties in its differences with the Chinese may give the Satellites at least a modest bargaining card.

Western Aims

16. It is in the interests of the West that these trends towards more independent Satellite behaviour both within the Bloc and outside it should be encouraged. To this end, we should aim, in our dealings with them, to stimulate the Satellite régimes to think and behave over as wide a field as possible as if they really were independent. We should also encourage their sense of national identity and, where possible, play on points of friction between them and the Soviet Union. This is bound to imply some normalisation of our relations with them, to the extent that the general state of East-West relations allows. It also follows that we should not be bound by the principle of "uniform treatment" in our dealings with the Satellites: we should not feel that our relations in any field with one Satellite necessarily sets the pattern for our relations with them all. We should exploit our opportunities for developing relations with individual Satellites as and when they arise.

17. Our main objective in developing our relations with the Satellite régimes should be to secure, through their co-operation or acquiescence, greater opportunities for acquainting the peoples of East Europe with developments in the West and to maintain in their minds the thought that most of the things which make life worthwhile are alien to the Communist system. Our aim should be to revitalise the links between Western and Eastern Europe which have been submerged by the isolation of the Satellites from the West during the Stalinist era. With the exception of Bulgaria and Roumania, all the countries of Eastern Europe have in the past made significant contributions to the Western cultural tradition, and it is to this tradition, rather than to Soviet materialism and synthetic mass-culture, that many of their writers, artists and musicians will want to continue to look for inspiration. We should encourage this instinctive orientation through our information work and cultural exchanges and stimulate the view that it is in a Western rather than an Eastern context that the creative talents of the Satellite peoples have relevance and value. The case for a major expansion of Western contacts with the Satellites rests on the existence not only of these cultural links (which are demonstrated by the wide popularity in Eastern Europe of Western as compared with Soviet books, plays, films and cultural exhibitions) but of continuing affinities with the West on the less easily definable level of social attitudes and everyday life. After thirteen years of Communist rule, the people of Eastern Europe are,

on the whole, still more responsive to the individualism and diversity of Western life, to its tastes and fashions and to the importance which it attaches to the family and the home, than to the collectivist ethos of Soviet society. The Bulgarian Prime Minister, Anton Yugov, remarked in a recent speech that "experience showed that wherever work on the ideological front was slack there was an inevitable penetration by bourgeois ideology and influence". This is one sphere in which the West should adopt the Marxist strategy of giving the inevitable a hearty push.

18. We must, however, face squarely the fact that in permitting the development of contacts with the West in any field the Satellite régimes will be guided purely by self-interest - by their quest for international respectability and their belief that, despite the ideological risks involved, they will on balance gain from freer contacts with the West. It can be argued that by being more forthcoming in our dealings with the Satellite régimes we shall only help to establish them more firmly, enhance their domestic and international standing, and discourage our real friends in the countries concerned. This argument is not without force, but it assumes that Communist rule in Eastern Europe is a temporary phenomenon which may be terminated in the not-too-distant future (e.g. by revolutionary action on the part of "our real friends") provided that the West determinedly cold-shoulders the Satellite régimes and demonstrates its resolve not to accept the status quo. This view does not take sufficient account of the extent of the Soviet commitment in Eastern Europe or of the trend towards popular acquiescence which has set in since 1956. It must also be borne in mind that in our cultural and information work we have to a great extent to depend on the co-operation of the régimes. Any attempt to pursue a more forward policy in these fields would be valueless if we could not secure this co-operation.

19. It is also misleading, even in a Communist context, to draw too sharp a distinction between peoples on the one hand and régimes on the other. It would be unnecessarily pessimistic to assume that such people as Satellite government officials, managers of state enterprises and Party functionaries below the highest level are wholly immune to outside influence and Western ideas. The development of more normal relations and contacts with the Satellite régimes should not, in fact, be regarded as an admission of defeat on the part of the West: on the contrary, it should be an important part of the Western counter-offensive.

20. In his valedictory despatch from Sofia of 22nd June, 1960 Mr. Lambert reached the following conclusions. "If there is going to be any change at all in Bulgaria, it will come by evolution, not revolution. Uncompromising hostility to the régime will not aid the process. Nor will it really encourage the anti-Marxists. Those who are at heart most opposed to Communism will not blame us for dealing with those in power. On the contrary, my experience,

such as it is, leads me to think that what such people look for is a British policy which is able to influence the Party, and through the Party the whole state of the realm. It seems to be widely held in the West that anything which builds up the self-esteem of a Communist Government is wrong; that they ought to be treated as outcasts, and with the contempt which they deserve. I hold this to be an error. Naturally we cannot endorse their policies: they do not even expect us to. But if we are to exert any influence at all over the Bulgarians, we must at least give the appearance of treating them as sentient beings. The wise attitude in this country is surely one which leads the Bulgarians themselves to see the difference between the free and independent society which they ought to be and the Satellite which they are. To set an angel with a flaming sword before them will not do. They must be positively encouraged." These conclusions apply with equal force to the other Satellites.

21. It is, perhaps, necessary to emphasise that in encouraging the Satellite régimes to develop their contacts with the West, we need not and should not appear to acquiesce in, or condone, their domestic or foreign policies. On the contrary, we should continue to make plain our fundamental opposition to Communist precepts, our abhorrence of the methods by which they are applied and our determination to resist by all available means Communist subversion and penetration of the free world. We should lose no opportunity of rebutting and countering the Satellite contribution to the Soviet Bloc's propaganda or of exposing distortions and misrepresentations of Western policies in Satellite propaganda. We should continue to present the truth directly to the Satellite peoples through our overseas broadcasts, though we should avoid undue provocation of the régimes, e.g. by sarcastic comment on personalities or internal political shortcomings. Adherence to our current policy in these respects, is not, however, inconsistent with the considerations set out in paragraphs 15-19 above. It involves a duality of approach, but the Satellite régimes already practice it themselves and there is no reason why we should not do so. The gradual development of greater contact with the Satellite régimes and peoples will not be a smooth or easy process, since, apart from anything else, this tactical objective must always be subordinate to overall Western strategy in frustrating Communist aims and will inevitably be affected by the uncertain climate of East-West relations.

22. In general, we should recognise that to a varying degree the Satellites are bound to the Soviet Union not only by imposed ties, but also in some fields by genuine self-interest. Poland's loyalty to the Soviet Union, for example, is strengthened by the difference between the Western and the Soviet positions on the question of the Oder-Neisse frontier. In the economic field, the Satellites, particularly the more backward ones, are largely dependent on the Soviet Union for scientific and technological advice as well as for their basic supplies of raw materials.

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The West should seize every opportunity of reducing the element of Satellite self-interest in the Satellite-Soviet relationship, e.g. by providing, so far as strategic controls allow, alternative sources for the supply of commodities and industrial know-how.

23. Future policy

A policy based on the premises set out above must involve an increase in contacts of all kinds with the countries of Eastern Europe, including the following:

- (a) Exchanges of Ministerial visits (so far these have only been with Poland).
- (b) More visits in both directions by individuals of professional or political standing, technologists, students and young people.
- (c) The development, where possible, of wider contacts by our Missions in the Satellites.
- (d) A more forthcoming attitude by Ministers and officials to Satellite Missions in London, as their governments tend to regard this as a test of our relations with them.
- (e) So far as is practicable the development should be encouraged of trade between the United Kingdom and the Satellites and of United Kingdom participation in East European trade fairs.
- (f) Above all, a substantial increase in our cultural activities and information work in the Satellites. However, this could involve heavy additional expenditure which it may not be possible to undertake in the immediate future.

24. Co-ordination in NATO

Although matters affecting the Satellites are discussed in NATO and the situation in Eastern Europe is reviewed by NATO Ministers every six months, there is no deliberate co-ordination of Western policy towards the Satellites. There are also wide disparities in the scale of effort by individual NATO countries in the Satellites, e.g. in cultural and information work, and in the effectiveness of their representation. If, as we think, it is time for a more positive and active policy towards the Satellites this should be carried out by the NATO powers as a whole, preferably with some measure of co-ordination.

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25. Conclusions

- (1) While maintaining our refusal to recognise Soviet domination of Eastern Europe as permanent and irrevocable, we should accept the fact that the Communist régimes in the Satellites are, and will probably remain for a long time, firmly established unless there is some political convulsion in Russia or in the Bloc as a whole;
- (ii) We should nevertheless abandon a defensive or passive posture in dealing with the Satellites and adopt a more forward policy towards them, recognising, however, that such a policy must take account of the Soviet Union's sensitivity to any encroachment on her vital interests in Eastern Europe and of the prevailing state of East-West relations;
- (iii) This policy will involve establishing closer relations with the régimes, not as an end in itself, but as a means of extending our influence in each Satellite country as a whole;
- (iv) It does not imply an attitude of pliancy or appeasement towards the régimes; on the contrary, closer contact should give us more opportunity for frank speaking with them;
- (v) Nor does it imply any weakening of our efforts to keep in touch with and encourage the Satellite peoples, without, however, inciting them to revolt;
- (vi) We should, indeed, intensify such efforts by expanding our information and cultural work, particularly the latter, and by encouraging trade;
- (vii) We should aim at achieving a common NATO policy towards the Satellites, more effective NATO representation in Satellite capitals, e.g. Budapest, where this is lacking, and some degree of co-ordination of activities in the Satellites by NATO powers.

OTAN/NATO,
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