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THE DIRECTOR
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

INFORMATION MEMO

April 15, 1977, 12:00 PM

FOR: PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

FROM: Stansfield Turner, Director of Central Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency

SUBJECT: Sources of Future Balkan Conflict—Yugoslavia After Tito

(C) You asked for our best analysis of the worsening situation in Yugoslavia and what the future holds for its president, Josip Broz Tito. This memorandum addresses those issues.

Background:

(U) Notwithstanding the common Slavic ancestry of the Balkan people, the renewed conflict between the Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks (Slavic converts to Islam) is deeply rooted in past centuries of conquest and subjugation. Historically, Yugoslavs have been divided by history, geography, language and culture. The Ottoman Empire's victory over the Serbs at Kosovo Polje ("Field of Blackbirds") in 1389 marked the beginning of eventual Ottoman domination over the region and mass conversions to Islam.

(S) The Balkan wars of the early 20th century and World War I strongly influenced the ultimate formation of Yugoslavia—"the Land of the South Slavs." In 1929, Yugoslavia's creation as a unitary state, while favored by many South Slav intellectuals, largely ignored known entrenched divisions within its diverse populace, contributing to ethnic hatred, religious enmity, cultural clashes and language barriers. In 1941, Nazi Germany invaded Yugoslavia, partitioning the state into zones of occupation and annexed territories. The predominantly Roman Catholic Independent State of Croatia was created and ruled by the Ustashe—a fascist puppet regime. During World War II, a bloody civil war erupted between the Ustashe, the Bosniaks, the Serb Royalist "Chetniks," and Josip Broz Tito's communist partisans. With U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) assistance, Tito emerged from World War II as Yugoslavia's sole leader. In short order, Tito transitioned himself as Yugoslavia's dictator.

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(S) Tito sought to eliminate sectarian nationalism in favor of socialist unity in Yugoslavia by creating six federal republics. Included among these were: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia. Despite OSS/CIA warnings, Tito refused to closely align his governmental boundaries with Yugoslavia's diverse ethnic divisions.

(TS-WNINTEL) In an effort to stabilize the resulting domestic volatility in Yugoslavia, Tito is now resorting to mass arrests of suspected spies, dissidents and intellectuals. CIA HUMINT sources (LAZARUS) confirm, through eye witness accounts, that these prisoners are being executed *en masse*, and buried in unmarked mass graves around the country. Tito's purges have produced an illusion of peace and harmony within Yugoslavia, but a strong undercurrent of nationalistic strife remains.

Analysis:

(TS) Tito's remaining life expectancy is estimated to be no more than three years. In the absence of a chosen or natural successor to Tito, a power vacuum in Yugoslavia is viewed as certain. Nationalistic fervor will feed demands for greater autonomy and political reform among all six republics. These movements could splinter Yugoslavia and will likely result in civil war closely drawn along ethnic and religious lines. Religious animosity among the three major denominations—Eastern Orthodox (Serbs), Roman Catholic (Croats), and Islam (Bosniaks)—will remain the dominant divisive cultural factors in the Yugoslavia; and if exploited effectively, would contribute to armed unrest between ethnic factions extending through and beyond the 20th Century.

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