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ОПАСНОСТЬ ВОЕННОГО ВТОРЖЕНИЯ И ПОЗИЦИЯ ЮГОСЛАВИИ В ОТНОШЕНИИ БАЛКАНСКОГО ПАКТА (1953–1954)

В статье автор, привлекает широкий спектр военных и дипломатических источников, которые призваны показать связь между существованием прямой военной опасности и югославским подходом к Балканскому пакту. Работа содержит обзор военно-стратегической ситуации, также в статье проанализированы угрозы национальной безопасности Югославии и их влияние на создание военно-политического союза на реальную военную ситуацию на Балканах.

Впервые с опорой на архивные источники исследуется детально советско-югославский конфликт, который помещается в более широкий контекст международных отношений, сложившихся вокруг Балкан.

Советско-югославское противостояние выросло из межпартийного столкновения и превратилось в межгосударственный конфликт. Одной из главных проблем статьи является вопрос о подготовке советской агрессии

в отношении Югославии. Планы СССР автором детально проанализированы с использованием разведывательные данные югославского штаба. Слабость и плохая техническая оснащенность югославской армии планировалось компенсировать партизанской войной. Однако, и этого было недостаточно. Властям Югославии пришлось вступить в переговоры с США, которые планировали использовать республику в борьбе против СССР. После переговоров Югославии была предоставлена значительная помощь – военная и экономическая. В контексте этих же событий был создан Балканский пакт, что привело к росту военных поставок с Запада для югославской, греческой и турецкой армий, чтобы они могли противостоять возможному нападению Советского Союза и его союзников.

Ключевые слова: Югославия, СССР, Балканский пакт, холодная война, НАТО, военная опасность.

Aleksandar Zivotic

MILITARY DANGER AND YUGOSLAV APPROACH TO BALKAN PACT (1953-1954)

With the reference to a wide range of military and diplomatic sources, the author shows the connection between the existence of a direct military threat and the Yugoslav approach to the Balkan Pact. The work contains an overview of the military-strategic situation. The article also analyzes the threats to the national security of Yugoslavia and their impact on the creation of a military-political alliance on the real military situation in the Balkans.

For the first time, relying on archival sources, the author investigates in detail the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict, which is placed in the broader context of international relations that developed around the Balkans.

The Soviet-Yugoslav confrontation grew out of an inter-party clash and turned into an inter-state conflict. One of the main problems of the article is the question of preparing the Soviet aggression against Yugoslavia. The

plans of the USSR are analyzed in detail by the author using the intelligence data of the Yugoslav headquarters. It was planned to compensate for the weakness and poor technical equipment of the Yugoslav army with a partisan war. However, this was not enough. The authorities of Yugoslavia had to enter into negotiations with the United States, which planned to use the republic in the fight against the USSR. After the negotiations, Yugoslavia was provided with significant assistance - military and economic. In the context of these same events, the Balkan Pact was created, which led to an increase in military supplies from the West for the Yugoslav, Greek and Turkish armies so that they could withstand a possible attack by the Soviet Union and its allies.

Key words: Yugoslavia, USSR, Balkan pact, Cold War, NATO, military danger.

After the end of the Second World War, Yugoslav state and society were under dominant soviet influence. That influence affected the formation of socialist, economic and cultural relations. The construction of socialist society by soviet model was accompanied by complete following of soviet foreign political course. In addition, Yugoslav army was organized by soviet model and equipped with soviet armament and military equipment. Large number of Yugoslav officers was educated in different military schools and academies, while soviet military advisors were present in all commands, units and institutions of Yugoslav army. A few conflicts occurred between Yugoslav

and soviet side on the matter of reconstruction of Yugoslav armed force. That conflict culminated in summer 1948. The conflict between two nomenclatures of the party turned into inter-party conflict, and then into inter-state conflict between Yugoslavia and USSR and their allies, the countries of COMINFORM¹. One of the consequences of that conflict was the suspension of soviet military help and retraction of soviet military instructors from Yugoslavia. Because of the denial of soviet military help and without developed domestic military industry, Yugoslav army found itself in very

¹ About the conflict between Yugoslavia and COMINFORM countries see more in: [1; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 11; 25; 28; 29; 45; 47;].

difficult position. Frequent incidents on borders with countries of COMINFORM and the presence of great number of soviet solders in neighboring countries put Yugoslavia in front of the danger of Soviet military intervention with its allies.

In modern historiography literature, the matter of potential military intervention of Soviet Union and its allies is solidly processed. The most important paper about this subject wrote Hungarian general and historian Bela Kiralji. This paper possesses historiography and source value because it was created as a result of memories of witnesses and participants of the event [30]. Very important data about the certain aspects of this problem can be found in the studies of Dragan Bogetic [2], Bojan Dimitrijevic [26], Loraine Lis [32] and Darko Bekic [17]. The most important source data are kept in the funds of Military History Archive of Serbia [33], while smaller parts of the sources are in Archive of Yugoslavia [12] and Diplomatic Archive of Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs [19]. Important part of archive sources is published in special collection of documents [16].

In modern historiography, the question about that whether a military aggression on Yugoslavia was being prepared is often imposed. Since soviet sources about that problem are not available, this question can be answered only by using the Yugoslav intelligence sources and a series of individual statements of participants in those events. Karel Kaplan, high functionary of Czechoslovakian Communist party said in his memoirs that J.V. Stalin had announced in January 1951, the beginning of reckoning with capitalist countries. In addition, similar statements gave soviet marshal Rokossovskiy in his dialogues with leaders of Italian communist party [17]. Marshal Zukov spoke about that with representatives of Yugoslav army during its visit to Yugoslavia in 1957. After the normalization of Yugoslav-Soviet relations in 1955. About the place and role in general war between USSR and its allies on one side and western countries on other, in most eloquent way spoke Hungarian general, Bela Kiraly, who escaped to west after Hungarian revolution in 1956. He emphasizes that in Hungary in 1951, headquarter war games took place. During them was practiced the possibility of action of Hungarian army against Yugoslav army forces [30, p.284]. The military preparation for attack on Yugoslavia had already started in 1949. When the reorganization of Hungarian military forces was conducted [30, p.284]. At the same time, on all command posts of other armies of Soviet allies were placed soviet generals or generals whose loyalty to USSR¹ was not suspected

in. Complete war plan was not delivered to Hungarian side. It was only suggested that in action against Yugoslavia, Romanian, Bulgarian, Albanian and Soviet troops and smaller contingents of Polish and Czechoslovakian army would participate. According to his statement, main forces of Hungarian army in coordination with Romanian army consisted strike echelon whose assignment was to take over the space between the Tisa and Danube and to form bridgehead on peaks of the Fruska gora. In that case, soviet troops would take over Belgrade. The other half of Hungarian forces would attack in direction of Ljubljana, previously forcing the Drava. In addition, Romanian forces would attack in two directions: with smaller parts of army, they would attack Banat and with larger number of forces, they would attack from Vlaska, in coordination with Bulgarian forces towards the valley of the Velika Morava. The rest of the Bulgarian forces would attack in several directions towards Skoplje in order to cut Yugoslav forces in two. The other strike echelon would represent powerful soviet motorized and armor-mechanized division, which would have had the assignment to break Yugoslav forces into more isolated groups.

Available intelligence sources of Yugoslav headquarters, which were presented during the negotiations with American military delegations and dialogues with the representatives of Greek and Turkish headquarters, confirm Kiralji's statement. According to the data, 50 infantry and 7 armor divisions, which belonged to soviet allies, 12 soviet armor and motorized divisions and 2000 planes were orientated towards Yugoslavia [34]. The Yugoslav war plans were based on the assumption that the main attack will be directed to three directions: Northeastern towards Zagreb, Central towards Belgrade, and Eastern towards Skoplje. The operative base for attack on Yugoslavia would have been consisted of territories of Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania while most of the military effectives these countries would have been engaged in attack on Yugoslav territory. It was being assumed that attack in direction of "Ljubljanska vrata" ("Ljubljana gate") would have been conducted by soviet forces from the territory of Soviet occupational zone in Austria. It was evaluated that main strategic goals during the first phase of the attack were the occupation of Belgrade, Zagreb, and Skoplje. During the second phase, the attack would have been directed at Trieste, central parts of Yugoslavia in order to come to the Mediterranean see and Albania and make continental connection with this soviet ally [41].

Confronted with the possibility of military intervention, Yugoslav army tried to adjust its war plans to potential danger. However, Yugoslav army was in very difficult position. There was the deficiency of large quantities of artillery weapons of bigger caliber, canons and tanks. Yugoslav air force, also, did not possess jet planes. It had few radar systems and not

1 In Hungary the nomination of Mihajl Farkas for minister of defense, for his substitute was named Sandor Nogradu, who came to Hungary together with the Red Army in 1944. In Poland for minister of defense was named soviet marshal K.K. Rokossovskiy. In Bulgaria, for chef of general staff was named soviet general Trojanovski, under the false name Asen Grekov.

all units had enough means of transport and trucks. Besides this, there was great deficiency of munitions of all calibers. Food reserves were also, very small [40]. Weapons and military equipment, which lacked, could not have been produced in domestic factories and could not have been bought on West either, because of political and financial reasons.

In extremely unfavorable geopolitical conditions, Yugoslav headquarters was planning elastic and complete defense on three fronts. War plans included the maximal use of advantages of mountain and hill fields of the central areas of Yugoslavia, which were almost completely impenetrable for large armor and mechanized divisions. Besides this, Yugoslav headquarters evaluated that Yugoslav armed force does not have capacities to confront manifold superior enemy forces by frontal combat, so they decided to plan zonal line defense. It was planned gradual retreat in confrontation with superior forces of border front towards the third line of defense in mountain area of country where should have been organized final defense. On Eastern front, towards Bulgaria, from the Danube to Yugoslav-Greek border would have been concentrated three corpuses, one armor division, five mountain brigades, one armor brigade, two cavalry regiments, six artillery regiments, two anti-aircraft regiments, six engineer battalions, and one battalion for signal and one for supply. Three corpuses, two armor brigades, two cavalries, seven anti-tank and four engineer regiments would have defended the Central front, towards Hungary and Romania. On Northwestern front, partly towards Hungary and partly towards Soviet occupational zone in Austria, would have been concentrated three corpuses, one armor division, one mountain and one armor brigade, one cavalry regiment, six anti-tank regiments, one anti-aircraft regiment, five artillery and engineer regiments. In high strategic reserve of Supreme command were two corpuses, one armor division, eight mountains and one armor brigade, eight artilleries, five anti-aircraft and six engineer regiments, and also one signal and one supply regiment. Those forces would have taken echeloned arrangement across the depth of the territory. The organization of defense was planned in three lines since Yugoslav forces did not possess appropriate means for efficient resistance to powerful soviet armor and mechanized units on plain field of north parts of Yugoslavia. The first line would have spread from Yugoslav-Bulgarian border to the Danube and then the Danube, Drava and Mura to Yugoslav-Austrian border. The second line would have spread by the Vardar, South and Great Morava, it would have turned near Arandjelovac towards the Sava and then by the Sava to Zagreb and further towards Maribor and by the Mura to Austria. The third line would have started near Bitolj and continued via the Shar-planina, the Ibar, Maljen, Medvednik, and Spreca, and then from Banja Luka across Karlovac, Zumberk, Zidani most and Mozirje to Dravograd [15].

The war plan contained the real evaluation of strategic situation and the range of its powers. However, the level of military danger was so high that the quality war plan nor the extremely high moral of the army and the moral of complete population could not have guaranteed the defense of the territory without strong strategic partners and high quality armors and military equipment. The evaluation of Yugoslav General headquarters was that Yugoslav forces with existing weapons and military equipment could not endure very longin confrontation with Soviet units and its East- European allies. The extreme flexibility of Yugoslav war plans could not have compensated the technical inferiority, which included the advantage of configuration of Yugoslav theater of operations and achieved inner cohesion on the matter of confrontation to the possible aggressor. The possibility of guerilla war against aggressor was taken in consideration as one of components of total resistance so Headquarters of Partizan Units was formed. The commander was the head of the Political department of Ministry of People's Defense, General Svetozar Vukmanovic Tempo. The Presidium of National Assembly of FPRY [Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia] brought secret edict about the state of readiness of the country. War locations of federal institutions were determined and confidential archive sources were packed and brought in the inner parts of the state. Most of the Yugoslav social productions were spent on the support of armed force. The army had the priority in the supply with food. The efforts on the matter of organization of defense were complicated by extremely difficult state of the economy. Catastrophic drought in 1950, brought the country to the verge of hunger. The most important part of the military industry was transferred in the central part of the country, before all in the area of Bosna and Herzegovina. On inner plan, they took series of measures, in order to improve state in the army. However, extreme efforts of domestic industry could not have supplied army with elementary needs in case of war, since Yugoslav resources were not enough, for successful confrontation to the aggressor. Border incidents were occurring very often and large number of Yugoslav border solders died in them. These incidents raised the fear of possible military intervention. The general non-readiness of the country for efficient defense conditioned the change of foreign political course. Since the normalization of relations with Soviet Union and its allies was impossible in Yugoslav state and party leadership appeared the idea of approach to West, whose public opinion was mentioning the possibility of Soviet invasion, was appearing very often.

Confronted with possible war, unready for efficient resistance to the attacker, Yugoslav government found itself caught in the middle between ideological prejudices and political pragmatism. The approach to West meant the repression of firmed political and

ideological views on capitalist world. On the other hand, West suspected the honesty of Yugoslav leadership in conflict with COMINFORM. However, the loss of China in 1949, and the beginning of war in Korea, encouraged American diplomats to think about the role of Yugoslavia in potential conflict with USSR. They concluded that Yugoslavia could have had very important role in that conflict. The strategy of wedge¹, which included western geopolitical penetration on the space of soviet interest zone, enabled strategic advantage to western forces [32, p. 121–139]. Yugoslav territory enabled western powers to have higher operative profundity during the potential conflict and tighter continental connection with their allies: Greek and Turkey. In order to exploit Yugoslav geopolitical position in the most efficient way, it was necessary to strengthen Yugoslav defense power.

Even though that it was confronted with terrible state of its own armed forces and serious military threats, Yugoslavia refused the possibility of accepting western military help emphasizing the insisting on neutrality in possible war. However, the culmination of situation on Yugoslav borders influenced the change of Yugoslav attitude. In the beginning of 1951, Yugoslav emissary in Washington, Vladimir Velebit [17, p. 251–255], opened the series of dialogues. The negotiations resulted by arrangement of visit of the chief of Yugoslav headquarters, general, Koca Popovic to Washington in May 1951. In July in 1951, Popovic met general Eisenhower in Paris. During August 1951, Yugoslav military delegation visited USA and made first arrangements about American military aid to Yugoslavia [19]. During the negotiations, Yugoslav officers left very favorable impression on American hosts by its expertise and readiness to confront soviet military intervention [25, p. 21]. Political opening to west was followed by media and cultural opening to western world. Therefore, large number of Yugoslav officers was sent in school centers of western armies in order to get education and improvement.

After the visits of Yugoslav political and military delegations to Western countries, and the visits of their delegations to Yugoslavia at the end of 1950, and the beginning of 1951, Yugoslavia received important military and economic aid. This continued up to 1957. Yugoslav army got large amounts of artillery weapons, tanks, different armor vehicles, trucks and radars. Yugoslav air force received large number of planes. The important part of that contingent was jet planes. Anti-aircraft and anti-armor component were improved. Firepower of defensive component of Yugoslav army was enlarged in armor and air force units. The cooperation with Western countries and the delivery of necessary equipment helped in strengthening the capacities of domestic military industry. This led to the radical modernization of Yugoslav army.

The deliveries of military equipment had the function to enable the creating of conditions for efficient defense of the Mediterranean. In war plans of NATO command, Yugoslavia had very important role. The Mediterranean region represented a very sensitive area in potential war because of the possibility of swift and easy Soviet interruption of communication between West and Middle and Near east [21]. Yugoslav inclusion in defense of southern wing of NATO, according to military evaluations had extreme significance. However, Yugoslav military and political leadership excluded the possibility of approach to NATO. Reasons for this kind of attitude were multiple and manifold. They included mostly political and ideological dogmas, and less about the complete bonding for one out of two confronted sides. Yugoslav side insisted on organization of collective defense without close ties for military and political structures of NATO [32, p. 128–133].

However, this involvement of Yugoslavia in NATO war planes led across the integration on regional basis. Greek and Turkey became members of NATO in 1952. During the preparations for defense of the Mediterranean, Greek and Turkish forces would have had the assignment to form the collective front against the potential aggression of USSR and its allies. Therefore, military and political negotiations over the creation of Yugoslav-Greek-Turkish alliance started in 1952, with the mediation of Western countries. The negotiations were opened by mutual visits of political delegations and were continued by dialogues between military delegations. During the visit of Turkish military delegation to Belgrade, in December 1952, the modalities of mutual military cooperation were arranged with necessary strategic observations [35]. At the end of the same month, the delegation of Yugoslav General Headquarters visited Athens. The negotiations were more concrete since Yugoslavia and Greece were neighboring countries which would have had common front towards Bulgaria in potential war. They talked about the characteristics of border front towards Bulgaria, the strength of enemy military forces and forms of common organization of defense, the possibilities of common military operations and the size of necessary military forces for performance of military operations [34]. It was especially emphasized the necessity of organization of common Balkan front in possible war in order to avoid the possibility of break of continental connections between Balkan countries which would reduce the chances for successful defense. They especially considered the matter of Albania. They left the possibility of common preventive military action against Albania in case that governments of Balkan allies do not succeed to ensure the neutrality of Albania.

The frame arrangement about friendship and cooperation between the three countries was signed in Ankara on February 28, 1953 [22]. The negotiations

¹ About the strategy of wedge, see more in: [27, P.56 – 64].

about the creation of political alliance were preceded by tripartite Yugoslav-Greek-Turkish military negotiations which took place in Ankara between 17-20 February 1953. During these negotiations were defined the creation of common front and frame strategic priorities [38]. By special instruction to all diplomatic branches Balkan Pact was defined as an alliance which represents wide range and solid base for enlargement and deepening of cooperation between three countries on the matter of common safety [14]. Yugoslav political and military leadership thought that this way it succeeded to ensure the contra balance to soviet aggressive approach and national safety. In spite of all this, the danger of soviet military intervention still existed. That is why the necessity for continuance of further military and political negotiation on the matter of mutual connections between Balkan allies, imposed itself. Further military negotiations had the purpose to define common priorities, coordinate military plans and to precise the tasks of individual military groups and to coordinate the organization of system of common supply from western allies and mutual communications [39]. Besides this, the matter of equipping of ally armies by arms and military equipment of mostly of American origin was imposed. The organization of common front consisted of unification of armament of ally military forces. The creation of Balkan Pact led to intensifying of donations of western military help to Yugoslav, Greek and Turkish army which brought to enlargement of operative powers of all three armies and armies itself were enabled to confront the possible attack of Soviet Union and its allies.

Mutual military attachment imposed the necessity of deepening of whole interstate cooperation between ally countries. Military needs imposed precise definition of existing alliance. Therefore, the question of new agreement forms of alliance. Further negotiations, common interests, and necessity for strengthening of the existing cooperation brought to deepening and widening of the frame of Ankara agreement. This is the reason why it was made new Agreement about the alliance, political cooperation and mutual help which was signed on the Bled, on August 9, 1954 [36]. The agreement had extremely important military significance. The agreement defines obligations of ally countries which includes that in case of war they act together since attack on one member was considered as an attack on all three members. That way the military alliance of three countries was completely defined which brought to intensifying of the level of their national safety. The dialogues followed political negotiations between three headquarters, which were about military cooperation in case of a war. They also defined collective war aims and the ways of cooperation and certain common operative zones. These matters were solved during the conference on which participated chiefs of headquarters of ally armies in Athens [37]

from 4 to 12 November 1954. Since the matter of political and legal frame of alliance was solved by Bled agreement, the base for further military connections was made. During the conference, series of questions of strategic and operative significance were considered. Great attention was paid to questions of conduction of mutual plans of coactions in case of a war, cooperation of air force and the matters of organization of logistics, signals and exchange of maps. In addition, the intensive exchange of intelligence data. In strategic observations, great attention was paid to evaluation of enemy war plans. They concluded that there is great danger of separating of common forces from the main NATO forces in Europe. In that context, the role of Yugoslav army got on its significance since one their priority was the protection of continental connection between Balkan allies and NATO forces in Italy. Two priorities and the directions of high importance, according to the agreement were "Ljubljanska vrata" (the closest communication between Hungary and Trieste, where the Italian territory would have been in danger in case of intercepting) and the area of Macedonia as an area, which connects common front. In that context, the importance of Bulgaria, as possible operative base for attack on all three countries, which were members of Balkan Pact, was emphasized. The common plans included occupation of Albanian territory in order to ensure the provision of sea ways to Yugoslavia. Yugoslav navy had important strategic assignment. Yugoslav naval forces were planned to ensure the undisturbed supply of Yugoslav army by sea routes from USA and countries of western Europe with all necessary means. Yugoslav air force besides the assignment to support continental forces and anti-aircraft protection of territory, was in charge to protect from air convoys which would supply Yugoslav army.

From Yugoslavia's point of view, the duration of Balkan Pact was limited by potential military danger. After Stalin's death, first signs of improvement in Yugoslav-Soviet relations appeared, and, therefore, that meant the end of military danger, too. Yugoslav-Soviet relations started to normalize, during 1955 [13]. The pacification of that conflict coincided with Turkish-Greek conflict with regarding the status of Cyprus [22]. Yugoslavia turned to cooperation with the third world countries since 1954, making an alliance with Egypt and India as the foundation of wider movement of nonaligned countries¹. The Suez Crisis also, had an influence on repression of cooperation. Yugoslavia stopped receiving American military aid in 1957, and that marked the end of whole action [24].

Yugoslavia approached alliance with Greek and Turkey with Western assistance in conditions of complete military danger. In that moment,

¹ About Yugoslav Approach to Nonaligned movement see more in: [42; 43; 44; 46].

Yugoslavia and west had same interests. Defense capacities of Yugoslavia were very weak. The exit from this very difficult situation was only the finding of strong strategic partner, such as NATO. The program of military help brought to strengthening and radical modernization of Yugoslav army. That way Yugoslavia enlarged its defense capacity. The Balkan cooperation was limited by the duration of military danger. The Yugoslav-Soviet reconciliation and progressive change of foreign political course of Yugoslav state, brought to slow reduction of cooperation between the members of Balkan Pact and the suspension of military aid from USA and its allies¹.

Direct military danger, endangerment of national safety, catastrophic economic situation and impossibility of modernization of armed force suppressed ideological dogmas, stereotypes and prejudices. Yugoslav state leadership was in dilemma between real political approach to west and ideological, and political convictions. The real political attitude dominated with maximal distance from policy of western allies, as much as possible in conditions of complete dependence on western military and economical help. Besides this, the restraint from complete dedication to one of confronted blocks was conditioned by the fear of possible change of Yugoslav political and social system by principles of western democracy, but also, by negative experience which was a consequence of Yugoslav bonding with Soviet Union between 1945. and 1948. During

this period new Yugoslav foreign political doctrine of remoteness from block organization which was being rudimentary created. This doctrine was fully expressed during the creation of wider movement of nonaligned non engaged countries on the base of peaceful coexistence and it was created during 1954, and Tito's trips to India, Burma, Egypt and meetings of Broz, Nasser and Nehru on the Bryonies in July 1956, when the foundations of future Yugoslav policy were made.

On the matter of Balkan integrations, conflicts between Balkan states and their political and military relations during the second half of Twentieth century, can be said freely, that historical science has not even approximately given answers to series of complex questions which are the results of Balkan foreign political chaos. Did Yugoslavia approach to Balkan Pact just because of unfavorable safety circumstances? Did the integration with western countries influence decisively on preservation of its independence? Did Yugoslav political and military leadership see Balkan Pact as a means of defense of the country? Was Balkan pact limited by the duration of military danger? How much the experiences from past can be applied on actual geopolitical situation on Balkan? How military situation dictates political necessities and how the political necessities define security situation? Finally, is the military alliance a guarantee of preservation of peace? These are just some of questions, on which for now cannot be given answer based on historical researches of direct sources. At the same time, that is the courses of future researches.

1 About relations between Yugoslavia and Western countries: [1; 6; 17; 18; 31; 32].

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