

Formation of “Athens-Belgrade” Axis—Threat to Peace

Nikos Zahariadis, General Secretary, Greek Communist Party

The formation of the “Athens-Belgrade” axis is already under way or, to be more “precise, is in its final stage. The imperialist war threat in the Balkans is becoming more and more real.

In the international sphere this axis is a concrete measure in carrying out the anti-Soviet, anti-people’s and anti-democratic policy of American imperialism. This axis supplements and extends the North Atlantic Treaty.

The spearhead of the “Athens-Belgrade” axis is pointed first against the Albanian People’s Republic; which the Greek monarcho-fascists and the Titoite provocateurs, in collaboration with de Gasperi’s Italy, wish to divide among themselves; second, against the Bulgarian People’s Republic which they in collaboration with the Ankara cut-throats, wish to squeeze and suppress. With the “Athens-Belgrade” axis American policy in the Balkans acquires a still wider base and a new weapon for its adventurous war preparations.

For the Greek monarcho-fascists this axis represents a concrete form of subordinating Greece to the anti-Soviet aggressive strivings of the U.S. The only form of “construction” carried out by the Yankees in Greece was the laying out of dozens of up-to-date aerodromes, harbour improvements, a wide network of military roads, non-stop manoeuvres of the Greek armed forces conducted in the presence of U.S. observers and also continuous manoeuvres by American and British fleets in Greek waters. The newly-baked Marshal Papagos, who has never smelt powder, boasts of “500,000 well-armed soldiers of the Greek army,” which alleges, is the best fighting force in Western Europe. And will be used for foreign political purposes. It would seem that Plastiras also fully agrees with these Papagos plans.

For the people of Greece this axis constitutes a direct threat to the territorial integrity of their country (it must be borne in mind that Tito keeps a covetous eye on Salonika, the Vardar Valley and the whole of Aegean Macedonia). After ten years of ceaseless imperialist occupation and armed struggle, another war threatens the Greek people. The Americans reckon on making the Greeks the first victims of their unbridled military adventure.

As regards the espionage clique of Tito-Rankovic and company, this axis crowns their betrayal of the democratic struggle of the Greek people; a treachery which began in 1943 when the British imperialists realised that the national liberation struggle in our country, under the leadership of the Communist Party of Greece and the E.A.M., represented a mortal danger to their domination and to the regime of their lackeys in Greece. In the war which the imperialists perfidiously began against the Greek people, they used from the very outset, the Tito espionage clique. The main purpose of British policy was to prevent by every possible means the victory of the people’s revolution in Greece. And if, in the final analysis, this should prove impossible, the imperialists would force Tito occupy Salonika and Greek Macedonia in order thereby to tighten the noose around free Greece.

The story of the subversive activities of the Tito clique since 1943 is also an endless chain of sabotage, provocation, espionage and treachery towards the people’s liberation movement in our country. The moment the Titoites established contact with ELAS they strove to create their own organisation and recruited agents, particularly among the Slav-Macedonians. Since then the aim of the Tito clique was to raise a wall between the Greeks and Slav-Macedonians for, even at that time, this clique had its designs on Salonika and, Macedonia. In fact, the Tito clique continued the Greater Yugoslavia policy of conquest which always had as its aim the whole of Macedonia, with Salonika as its centre. Since then, provocateur Tempo (Vukmanovic), who ran away from

the Germans without giving battle and sought shelter in the regions occupied by ELAS, behaved like a little satrap, propagating dismemberment everywhere, As a result, late in 1944, in the critical days for our struggle, when the British were preparing an offensive against ELAS; Tito ordered the Slav-Macedonian units of ELAS, then under the command of the criminal Goce, to withdraw to Yugoslavia, which they did.

This was necessary for Tito since he wanted to use these units against ELAS. In December 1944, when in Athens and Piraeus, ELAS units were engaging troops of the British General, Scobie, and when the outcome of the battle was not yet decided, Tito and Tempo were preparing Yugoslav divisions and the Goce units, for the seizure of Greek Macedonia and Salonika, then in the hands of ELAS. The British supplied Titoite units with munitions flown from the air base of Hrupista. When, during the fighting in Athens, we asked him to help us with ammunition. Tito, contrary to his promises, gave practically nothing. And during the ELAS retreat, when we asked permission for our units to enter Yugoslavia in the capacity of democratic, political refugees, Tito again refused. All Greek political refugees, without exception, who entered Yugoslavia were subjected to quarantine, terror and pressure, Rankovic's agency and the military counter-espionage (Second Bureau) recruited among them hundreds of agents who gave written undertakings to work against the Greek democratic movement. A number of leading Communists were murdered by Titoite agents in the regions of Kastoria, Florina, Edessa and Karadiova. Vlahos, who assassinated Janis Zevgos, a member of the Politbureau of the Greek Communist Party, was also a Tito agent from Skopje”

Tito the spy, and his gang pursued this same line in of treachery and sabotage during the new stage of the armed struggle of the Greek people which began in March 1946. In the Greek Democratic Army, and in the liberated regions, they had their espionage centre headed by Mitrovski, Keramidejev and Goce. They tried to penetrate the leading bodies of the Greek Democratic Army (G.D.A.), to organise Slav-Macedonian units the commanding staff of which would be directly subordinate to Skopje, and to know what was taking place in the High Command of the Greek Democratic Army. Tito's aims, from the very beginning of the new phase of our struggle, were to prevent by all means, the victory of the Greek Democratic Army and to obtain its defeat. And in the autumn of 1948 when Monarcho-fascism, after its defeat in the battle of Vitsi, was in the throes of a severe crisis, both Tito and the Anglo-Americans realised that they must do everything possible to save the Athens government from catastrophe. At that time, Tito had already been exposed by the Information Bureau of Communist and Workers' Parties as a nationalist-renegade who had broken with Communism.

The Greek Democratic Army was a serious obstacle to Tito, to the Anglo-Americans and to monarcho-fascists. Beginning with 1949, the Keramidjiev-Mitrovski-Goce clique, which received its orders from the Titoite henchman, Kolisevski, in Skopje, redoubled their efforts to undermine the Greek Democratic Army from within. The result was that Slav-Macedonian soldiers from the Greek Democratic Army began to desert to Yugoslavia where they were received with open arms and at once used for saboteur activities.

At this same time, the Tito clique, trying to conceal its relations with monarcho-fascism, intensified its slanderous campaign, the chief “argument” of which was an allegation that the Greek Communist Party and the Information Bureau were planning to betray the armed struggle of the Greek people. In this instance, Tito resorted to the old method of the robber who cries “Stop thief!”

Open collaboration between Tito and the monarcho-fascists began at Kaimakchalan in the spring of 1949. Only a few days after the meeting of Yugoslav and monarcho-fascist officers,

under the observation of U.S. and British military representatives, the units of the Greek Democratic Army were out-flanked at Kaimakchalan on Yugoslav territory. Then followed the treacherous blow of the Titoite troops, delivered from the rear of the Greek Democratic Army, then fighting at Vitsi.

This completed the chain of betrayal by the Tito gang. Further details have now come to light in Athens. The open preference of the Tito clique for Plastiras has aroused the anger of Tsaldaris supporters.

One of the main reasons for this preference, and for the exclusion of Tsaldaris from the new government by the Americans, was the desire to make it possible for Tito to claim that he was entering into agreement, not with monarcho-fascists, but with “democrats”. In connection with this discord inside the fascist clique an extremely important fact was disclosed. Suggestions for a peaceful solution of the Greek question which the American and British Governments were forced to make early in May 1949, under the pressure of world public opinion and the peace policy of the Soviet Union and because of the severe crisis prevailing at the time in the monarcho-fascist army, were rejected by Tito because, more than anything else, he feared democratic Greece. At that time Tito promised to give every possible help to monarcho-fascist Greece against the Greek Democratic Army and demanded in return that the Anglo-American imperialists should relinquish any attempt to secure a peaceful solution to the Greek question. The latter gave their consent to this. And, as we saw earlier, Tito kept his promise. As admitted by Papagos and other members of the Athens Government, the Tito aid, which American journalists have rated the equivalent of the assistance received by monarcho-fascists from the Americans, the Athens Government won the decisive battle of Vitsi-Grammos in 1949.

Following the defeat of the Greek Democratic Army, another round of treachery by the Belgrade gang against the Greek people began. Unconcealed attempts to hammer out an “Athens-Belgrade” axis are underway: the North Atlantic Pact—the weapon for military ventures by the American imperialists against the Soviet Union and the People’s Democracies—is being extended to include the Balkans. For the purpose of concealing this new treachery, and to deceive the Yugoslav people and world public opinion, the Titoite spies declare shamelessly that the elections of March 5 in Greece constituted a “democratic revolution”, that with the representative of this “revolution”—Plastiras-Yugoslavia can and should enter into an agreement. Tito thinks that the world is so naive as to swallow this fairy tale about a “democratic revolution” in Greece—a term which not even Plastiras dares to use. Tito conceals the fact that Plastiras was one of the most despicable “heroes” of the so-called “Ukrainian crusade”, in other words, of the armed intervention by the Entente against Soviet Russia in 1918. He is silent about the fact that Venizelos, the most loyal ally of Tsaldaris, is Vice-Premier in the Plastiras Government. He is also silent about the fact that Papandreou and Tsuderis—out and out reactionaries and most reliable representatives of Greek plutocracy—participate in this Government. He conceals the fact that Plastiras came to power on the orders of Grady, the American Ambassador, who simply drove Venizelos out of the Premiership for the sole purpose of facilitating collaboration between Belgrade and Athens.

But twist as he may, the facts expose Tito. Tsaldaris declared in the Greek parliament, that Tufa, the Director of the Yugoslav zone in Salonika, had been in this post since 1949 when Tsaldaris was Prime Minister. This fact shows that Tito was already secretly negotiating with Tsaldaris in 1949 and only after all this did he discover the “democratic revolution” of Plastiras as a means of consolidating the imperialist essence of the “Athens-Belgrade” axis.

Papagos himself exposed Tito when, in one of his confidential orders to military units, referring to the need to support fascist organisations in Greece, it is stated: "It is absolutely essential that Tito supporters in Greece should immediately become organised; they are our genuine allies." Having utilised Tito and his Army against the Greek Democratic Army, the monarcho-fascists now intend to use the Tito agents in Greece against the Greek Communist Party. Recently, Colonel Goodhouse, one of the chief British intelligence agents in Greece during World War Two, turned up once more in Athens. At present, Goodhouse, together with the gangsters from the Tito Embassy in Athens, is organising undermining work against the Greek Communist Party among former inmates of the concentration camps and recruiting agents from their ranks. At the same time, the "Voice of America", the B.B.C. and the propaganda lackeys of Djilas are now waging a joint campaign against the Greek Communist Party.

The realisation of the "Athens-Belgrade" axis under American direction is proceeding rapidly. Kardelj declared on May 16 that not only diplomatic relations had been restored with Athens but also postal, telegraphic, telephone, railway, and air communications and that Yugoslavia would have the use of a free zone in Salonika.

Trading is also going on around the question of Greek children in Yugoslavia. Tito is already handing over children to the monarcho-fascists. At the same time he refuses to return children to their relatives residing in the people's democratic republics.

And if a dog fight has recently broken out again between Athens and Belgrade on the Macedonian question, this is because each of the cliques tries to wrest from the other as much as possible, without a single thought for the Macedonian people who, with American blessing are oppressed, tortured and exploited by both these cliques. Neither one nor the other has abandoned its plans for territorial expansion.

All this leads to one clear and definite conclusion: the "Belgrade-Athens" axis embodies the military strivings of the American imperialists against the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies, above all, against the People's Republic of Albania, the dismemberment of which is being planned behind the scenes (counting the chickens before they are hatched!). This axis constitutes a direct and mortal danger to the Greek people now their independence has gone—their country having been turned into an American colony—for they may be the first to become cannon fodder.

The insolence of the Belgrade clique at the present time, the reality of its alliance with monarcho-fascism, is evident from the statement of Kardelj on May 16 when he threatened that Yugoslavia would also undertake other measures against the people's republics and, it goes without saying, against the Albanian People's Republic in the first place.

"For the Greek Communist Party there can be no greater aim than to fight irreconcilably against the "Athens-Belgrade" axis. Without this, the struggle of Greece for peace, for its territorial integrity—which Tito has traded to the Americans—for its independence, for democracy and bread for the people, is groundless.

It is necessary daily and ceaselessly to enlighten the people whose blood is once again to be bartered. It is necessary to organise the people and also to organise the activity on a mass scale, of all the people, concretely, daily, constantly and tirelessly! It is necessary to struggle even more concretely—both in the Yugoslav zone in Salonika and against communication lines and rail deliveries between Greece- Yugoslavia—against every manifestation arising from the formation of the "Athens-Belgrade" axis.

The people have the forces with which to destroy this axis and the plans which American imperialism is building around it. In this way we shall begin in a practical and concrete way to

realise our revolutionary vow: now, as in 1941-1945, the Greek people will not fight against the Soviet Union! In this way, we shall, in practice, impart a living and concrete content to our struggle for peace which is the most ardent desire of our people.

Workers of all lands, unite!

For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy!

Bucharest. Organ of the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties

No. 26 (86), Friday, June 30, 1950