



522 FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK 36, N.Y.

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF YUGOSLAVIA

A Report from Fred Warner Neal

Belgrade
October 6, 1954

Few things better illustrate the unique position in the world of Titoist Yugoslavia than its foreign policy. If the policy sometimes appears ambiguous, it is no more so than the role of Yugoslavia as a Communist nation outside the Soviet community--neither wanting nor able to get back in, forced to identify itself often with western forces it once denounced, but reluctant to abandon many tenets it held to during its years as a Soviet satellite.

Yugoslavia's foreign policy has, of course, done a complete about-face since those years. In 1947, Yugoslavia was at swords' points with the United States as a result of shooting down U.S. aircraft. Yugoslavia was the focal point of aid to Greek revolutionists who threatened to install Communism in Greece. As a satellite of the USSR, Yugoslavia loudly applauded Soviet efforts to frighten Turkey into a change of policy on the straits. It daily denounced the West for imperialism and aggression and saw the world irrevocably divided into hostile Communist and capitalist camps.

Today, Yugoslav hostility is reserved chiefly for the Soviet Union. Yugoslavia is in fact, if not in theory, a military ally of the United States, and American aid is helping to build the Yugoslav army and economy. It has concluded a military alliance and a treaty of friendship with Turkey and Greece. It denies there is an essential clash of interests between socialist and capitalist countries. It searches hopefully for allies to join it in a wished-for "third force." And all the while it insists that the Marxist-Leninist dialectic is the guiding light of its policies.

This situation is at once a product, a reflection, and a cause of considerable ideological confusion in Yugoslavia as well as of a clash between ideology and the realities of world politics. The basic factor, of course, is the split with the Soviet Union in 1948. But if Yugoslavia's relations with the USSR are important in determining what it does in the foreign policy field, so are its relations with the United States. The

American policy of aid to Yugoslavia in 1950 and thereafter did not of itself pull Yugoslavia into the camp of the West; Yugoslavia had no place else to go. But U.S. policies did facilitate and accentuate the trend. To the extent that this is advantageous for the United States, it may be counted as a success in an area where American successes have not always been conspicuous.

Actually, Yugoslavia and the United States were unwilling lovers. Expelled--quite unexpectedly--from the Cominform, Yugoslavia for nearly two years thereafter was unable to break away from the patterns of thought it had acquired under Soviet tutelage. A highly placed Yugoslav Communist, now one of the leading exponents of closer relations with the United States, told me recently that in 1949 he was more worried about aggression from the West than from the Soviet Union. In fact, it was only when the crushing drought of 1950 nearly toppled the wobbly Yugoslav economy that Tito finally made up his mind that he had to accept American aid. When that aid was not followed by attempts to subvert Yugoslavia's Communist government, the attitude in Belgrade was more one of surprise than of thankfulness. Another factor which made for hesitation very likely was a doubt as to how far and how fast the bewildered Yugoslav Communists would go in supporting friendly relations with the recently-hated West.

The same type of consideration for public opinion was a factor in American caution in aiding Tito, but the major consideration in Washington was doubt that the split between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union was "real," complete, or conclusive. While officially these doubts seem to have been resolved, apprehensions regarding Tito remain in the minds of many Americans, including some important policymakers. The recent trend toward "normalization" of relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR has doubtless increased these anxieties.

These doubts about the "reality" and conclusiveness of the Yugoslav-Soviet split seem to be based on a misconception of the nature of the dispute itself, as well as on a misunderstanding of events in Yugoslavia that have followed it.

First of all, it must never be forgotten that the Soviet Union expelled Yugoslavia from the Cominform; Yugoslavia did not withdraw of its own volition. It is true that it was the insistent manifestations of independent thought and action on the part of Yugoslavia that impelled Moscow to act. But the result was both terrible and unexpected for Yugoslav Communists. The late Boris Kidrič, a member of the Yugoslav Politburo, once described to me the "agonizing, sleepless nights" he suffered while struggling with his conscience at the time of the split in 1948. Blažo Jovanović, chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Montenegro, said in a recent conversation that "the Cominform resolution was the most terrible thing that ever happened to me." A younger Yugoslav Communist told me: "I had been brought up to believe that Stalin and the Soviet Union were always

right. That they could be wrong simply never occurred to me." It took more than a year in jail and "political education" before this young man came to realize that, from Tito's viewpoint, Stalin and the Soviet Union were wrong.

Maintaining they had not sinned, the Yugoslav Communists begged to be taken back into the Soviet fold and even expected they would be. At the Danube Conference in Belgrade in 1948--shortly after the Cominform Resolution against Tito--a Yugoslav economist told me there was no reason to be surprised that Yugoslavia still voted with the USSR, sometimes even against her own interest. "This matter will soon be all patched up," he said, referring to the Cominform Resolution.

At the Fifth Party Congress in 1948--called unexpectedly because of the Cominform Resolution--Marshall Tito pledged his faithfulness to the USSR and promised to "work with all our might to mend relations between our Party and the Soviet Union." The foreign policy of Yugoslavia, he emphasized, is in "full accord with the foreign policy of the Soviet Union for its policy corresponded and corresponds to the interests of our country...." When he concluded, the official report of the Congress shows, the hall rang with cries of "Long live Stalin, long live Tito."¹

The reasons for the Soviet Union excommunication of the Yugoslavs were complex. The Soviet charges and the Yugoslav defense which Stalin rejected summarily--make fascinating reading and have been published in English by the Royal Institute of International Affairs under the title of "The Soviet-Yugoslav Dispute." The basic reasons surely were ideological. This assertion is meaningful, however, only if one recalls that a prime tenet of international Communist ideology had long been that the interests of Communism were identical with the interests of the Soviet Union. Tito's manifestations of independence--as slight as they were--indicated a reluctance to accept that doctrine. This alone was enough to make him first suspect and then heretical in Soviet eyes. And a heretic, if unrepentant, as Tito was, must be denounced and excommunicated.

Only after a year of violent Soviet anti-Yugoslav action and propaganda did the Tito regime reconcile itself to the fact that the breach with Russia could not be closed. But even then Tito denied this implied friendly relations with the West. At the Third Congress of the People's Front in 1949, Tito denounced the "western reactionary press" for "lies and fabrications [in saying] that we have no other course but toward the West." He ridiculed reports that "the American government is considering the question of giving aid to Yugoslavia, that Tito met with Western representatives." Such "lies and slanders against us," he declared, are simply "fabrications" designed to widen as much as possible "the rift which was created by the Cominform Resolution, therefore no fault of ours."²

Nor did Tito in 1949 fear aggression from the Soviet Union. "Tales ... about a concentration of troops in the

direction of Yugoslavia in the countries of the people's democracies and the USSR, about our alleged troop movements in the frontier regions, etc.," he declared, were only a "veritable hysteria of warmongering ... [by] the western reactionary press and over the radio, calculated to provoke fear and alarm in our country and to prevent peaceful work on the Five Year Plan ... All this is calculated to create a psychosis of war and distrust among the peoples of our country and the people's democracies and the USSR" 3

Then Tito asked: "Well, what now? Reaction in the West hates us. We are not loved in the East. Can we go on this way?" His answer, perhaps consistent but hardly accurate, was: "Of course we can, because we must, because at present there is no other way out." 4

The "way out" came sooner than Tito expected. It came only five months later, in the form of an Export-Import Bank loan of \$20 million. The Yugoslav press referred to it casually as "simply an ordinary commercial transaction." 5

Actually, the Yugoslav economy was in dire straits. Geared as it had been almost entirely to the East, the economic blockade by the USSR and its satellites brought it almost to a standstill. When economic distress was compounded by a severe drought in 1950, the need to survive won out over brave words. An offer of direct American economic aid was hastily accepted without dialectical shilly-shallying.

It was in this rather undignified way that Yugoslavia's rapprochement with the West began. It has continued, and is likely to continue, because--to use Tito's words in another sense --"there is no other way out." The Soviet Union, to which ideology is so important, cannot take back a heretic without abandoning its whole scheme of things, which it shows not the slightest intention of doing. Tito, who since 1948 has built his reputation on being a heretic, cannot cease to be one. First, he does not want to-- he is undoubtedly stronger than ever in his own country since the Cominform break. Second, much of the political and economic theory and practice developed in Yugoslavia since the break are diametrically opposed to those of the Soviet Union. Third, Tito knows better than most what happens in Soviet circles to those who recant. Their lives, to paraphrase Hobbes on the state of nature, are nasty, brutish, short, etc. Should something "happen" to Tito--in the past, South Slav rulers have rarely died of natural causes--the question of Yugoslavia's return to the Soviet fold might conceivably arise again. But probably not, in meaningful form. The Yugoslav party effectively took care of those Communists who sided with the Cominform Resolution. As Tito told the Sixth Party Congress in 1952: "All of them ... were given the possibility to reflect upon their betrayal of the Party and the people while doing socially-useful work." 6 Certainly the entire present leadership of the Party is irrevocably committed to "Titoism" as is the Marshal himself.

Currently, relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet-Union-and-company are undergoing what Belgrade calls "normalization," and, as a result, are better now than at any time since 1948. Diplomatic relations have been renewed, and there also has been some renewal of economic relations, including railroad communications. Recently the Soviet Union stopped jamming Yugoslav radio programs, and Pravda has quoted Tito without adding invective.

"This beginning of normalization fills us with hope that the process will continue to develop," Tito explained recently, "although we should not lose sight of the fact that, as an inheritance of the past, there exist a number of complex problems which have not yet begun to be considered at all."

Most of this "normalization" has begun on Soviet initiative. Tito attributes this to a "change in Soviet foreign policy which has contributed to the easing of tension in the world."⁸ On the other hand, many Yugoslav officials privately state that the change is only one of tactics, aimed at preventing western integration and at wooing the socialists.

At any rate, there are advantages in it for the Yugoslavs, and there seems to be no reason to doubt their insistence that their acceptance of the improved state of affairs does not increase the likelihood of Yugoslavia's return to the Soviet camp.

Prior to the recent trade talks with the USSR, the Yugoslavs unofficially but at a high level informed the United States that nothing of a political character was involved. The American government was assured that no agreement involving the export of strategic materials to the USSR would be made, and that the USSR would not be permitted to take advantage of the current grain shortage in Yugoslavia to hurt Yugoslav relations with the West. In the discussions with the Soviets, an agreement for \$2.5 million trade each way was evolved. But the Yugoslav participants say they turned down Soviet offers to buy mercury, lead, and zinc at handsome prices. The trade agreement, American officialdom was informed, went no further than the British, the French, or even the Americans have gone.

The Yugoslavs point out that whatever relations exist between the USSR and Belgrade are entirely at official government levels and that there have been no Party contacts, nor will there be any. As for Moscow's side, a few minutes' conversation with the Soviet Ambassador about developments in Yugoslavia suffice to show that if relations between the two nations are warmer, the warmth is only on the surface.

In the meantime, Yugoslav relations with the West--fostered by American aid--are still developing. There are in Belgrade a U.S. military mission as well as economic missions of the United States, Britain, and France, all of which have joined in the aid program. Tito has taken pains, even in Communist

circles, to express publicly Yugoslavia's gratitude for this assistance.

At the same time, these relations with the West remain, and are likely to remain, a somewhat ambivalent mixture of cooperation and independent standoffishness. At first Tito accepted the aid and nothing more, and in effect, apologized to his people for it. Unable to cooperate with the Russians, he still refused to cooperate with the United States against the Russians. The same year that U.S. aid began, Yugoslavia voted in the U.N. against the United States proposal to intervene in Korea. On the other hand, the Yugoslavs admitted that the Korean war was caused by North Korean aggression.

Here they evolved an important revision of the Marxist-Leninist theory of just and unjust wars. Previously, Communists interpreted this doctrine as justification for a war of "liberation of an oppressed people" by another nation. Now Edvard Kardelj, the chief Yugoslav ideologist and also one of the chief architects of Yugoslav foreign policy, declared that the only just wars were wars "of an oppressed people against their oppressors, or the defensive war of a people for their independence against the aggression of a conqueror or interventicnist." He specifically excluded from the category of just wars attempts of the "Soviet Union and every other country to bring happiness to other peoples by forcing its political system and its hegemony on them."⁹ By this definition, neither the North Korean aggression nor the U.N. intervention against it were just wars. This amounts to saying that aggression should be condemned but so should outside action to combat aggression. However, this was not the Yugoslav position, which constantly emphasized the role of the United Nations as a collective force against aggression.¹⁰

Some of this ideological ambiguity can be explained simply as a holdover from the days of Soviet domination. But perhaps more important is the Yugoslav hope that it can form, or help to form, a "third force" of socialistically-inclined nations that will make its stand less solitary. Especial warmth, for instance, is shown for India, which President Tito is scheduled to visit soon. The Soviet position that Western socialist parties are anti-Marxist and therefore evil has been abandoned by Yugoslavia--albeit with some questions in the minds of many Yugoslav Communists--and rather mildly socialistic countries, like those of Scandinavia, have been embraced as ideological brothers, or at least cousins. Also, Yugoslavia promptly recognized Communist China and, despite the fact that the Chinese deliberately snubbed this effort, still looks longingly toward Peking as potentially "Titoistic."

However, since the Korean war, Yugoslavia has moved into a more realistic position operationally if not theoretically. While in 1950 Kardelj felt impelled to apologize to the Skuptšina that his vote for the U.S. resolution on joint action for peace "was no unprincipled concession to America, as is claimed by

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Cominform propaganda jugglers,"¹¹ since that time Yugoslavia has been more often than not on the American side in the U.N., especially where European problems have been concerned.

In their own way, the Yugoslavs have thus been edging step by step closer to the general foreign-policy position of the United States. Their first reaction to the Atlantic Pact was one of almost hostile suspicion. But in late 1951 Marshall Tito spoke of the Atlantic Pact as "the logical consequence of Soviet policy" and pledged collaboration with the Atlantic Pact countries on "all questions of an international character...where there is no conflict with our principles."¹² NATO was first viewed in Belgrade as a "provocative force."¹³ The EDC proposal was greeted by official silence but much critical comment in the Yugoslav press. Then, not many months ago, Tito cautiously announced that "under certain conditions" Yugoslavia might consider "affiliating" with EDC.¹⁴

Not only has the Yugoslav position on NATO been greatly modified, but also the Balkan military alliance of last August alters Yugoslav relations with NATO significantly. Since both Greece and Turkey belong to NATO, and since both countries are pledged to aid Tito in the event of aggression--and vice versa--the absence of Yugoslavia from NATO is more formal than real. Indeed, some observers in Belgrade felt that the Balkan Pact was a backdoor entry into NATO. (Yugoslavia has not been asked to join NATO, and indeed membership might require embarrassing explanations to the Yugoslav people.) But when a foreign correspondent and a "neutralist" Western diplomat recently bet that the Balkan Pact would be followed within six months by Yugoslav membership in NATO, Foreign Secretary Koca Popović said the wager revealed "an abysmal lack of understanding of the principles involved."

Tito's reaction to the Brussels Pact is another example of ambiguity. The Pact, he said, "does not fully correspond to our views for the discovery of peaceful ways to the solution of international problems." It would be advantageous only if it "works toward international European stabilization and removal of antagonistic elements which would certainly facilitate European integration. ... If it takes on the predominant character of a military bloc with distinctively military aims, then it ... becomes an element of intensifying of tension. Further development ... will demonstrate to what extent and upon what foundations is our cooperation with this Western European community possible."

However, Tito added: "We cannot take a negative position toward the Brussels Pact, but on the contrary consider it necessary to endeavor to find for ourselves corresponding forms of cooperation with the members of the Pact, together, of course, with our allies Greece and Turkey...."¹⁵

In the meantime, two other factors--possibly related--doubtless are contributing to a more definite Yugoslav foreign policy. One is the continuing military and economic relations

with the United States, which Yugoslavia finds increasingly satisfactory. The other is a changed official view regarding the danger of Soviet military aggression. While Yugoslav officials privately discount the likelihood of Soviet military aggression against the West, their official statements during the past three years have increasingly tended to indicate otherwise. In reply to the question of what the United States gets in exchange for arms to Yugoslavia, Tito said in late 1951: "America gets several years." He added that the armaments of the Soviet Union and satellites "is a menacing threat to our country and to world peace."¹⁶

It is difficult to discount entirely the possibility that at least part of the changed Yugoslav attitude is determined by the belief that there is a close connection between American economic aid and the necessity for military assistance. It is a fact that if the Cold War should suddenly end and American aid be withdrawn, the Yugoslav economy would face hard sledding indeed.

Even today, in the period of normalization of relations with the Soviet world, Yugoslavia appears eager to cooperate with western military defenses against the USSR. This September, in assessing the role of the Balkan Pact in European Defense, Deputy Foreign Secretary Aleš Bebler declared that "all postulates on the possibility of isolation from the consequences of eventual aggression are illusory and in the long run defeatist. On the contrary, abstract neutralist delusions only encourage the aggressor in his intentions."¹⁷

Despite the factors which tend to clarify Yugoslavia's international relationships, its policy is still far from clear, even on its own premises. An example is the attitude toward German rearmament. For some time Yugoslavia has taken the "realistic" position that German rearmament was inevitable and that to attempt to postpone it would only aid nationalist and undemocratic forces in Germany. Germany should have full sovereignty, said Marshall Tito, "but I am not for a too great rearmament of Germany."¹⁸

This fall, Mr. Bebler spoke of the "paramount importance" to the peace of Europe of a united Germany. "Despite the fact that the western powers have not always done all in their power to achieve German unity without undue delay," he said, "events have nevertheless shown that the USSR is most to blame for the present division of Germany.....This situation in Europe has called forth the justified reaction of the free peoples and brought the necessity to unite in the face of common danger into the foreground. No effort should be spared to bring about the consolidation of Europe and peace in general. Bearing all this in mind, we have nothing in principle against the inclusion of Germany in such a Europe and the building up of her armed forces, which she needs both for her own defense and the defense of peace. We likewise consider completely justified the efforts of the Federal German Republic to achieve sovereignty and equal rights

as soon as possible."19

Here Mr. Bebler seems to say that (1) a United Germany is necessary for a peaceful Europe; (2) the Russians are most to blame for not uniting Germany; (3) Western integration is therefore justified; and (4) Germany should be separated by granting sovereignty to Western Germany as a means of defense. Tito himself followed this by telling the Skuptšina that (1) "the creation of military blocs increases world tension"; (2) diplomatic negotiations should have priority over military measures because this "avoids everything that causes elements of distrust and tension in the world"; (3) Yugoslavia "greeted the restoration of sovereignty and limited armament to Germany"; but (4) "we hope that this will serve the aim of stabilization and preservation of peace in Europe."20

Whatever confusion and reticence may exist in Yugoslav foreign policy, the net result of it has been to foster the objectives of the West. The most recent example is the Trieste settlement. In one sense this is a victory for Yugoslavia: Belgrade a year ago reacted so violently to the idea that Trieste could be settled without Yugoslav participation that the Americans and the British were forced to bring Tito's government into the consultations. On the other hand, except for the inclusion of certain safeguards for minority populations and minor territorial adjustments, the terms of the October 1954 agreement are much the same as those the Americans and British put forth last year. The Yugoslav acceptance of these terms is a clear result of the new orientation of Belgrade's foreign policy.

Probably the biggest gain of all, however, in terms of western defense objectives, is the Balkan Pact, which indirectly ties Yugoslavia into NATO defenses. In November 1951, Tito was asked at a press conference what he thought about an agreement with Greece and Turkey "in light of the military pressure brought against Yugoslavia by the satellite states." Tito replied: "Even today we say that we do not wish to create any pacts, not even a regional pact with Greece and Turkey."21

In February 1954, Yugoslavia joined with Turkey and Greece in signing a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. In August 1954, the Balkan Pact was signed, uniting the three countries in a military alliance. In October 1954, Tito declared: "We regarded the Balkan Alliance from the beginning as an absolute, vital necessity for the Balkan countries...."22

It is no secret that Yugoslavia backed into Turkish-Greek cooperation under the prodding of the United States. And there is no doubt that it ties her closer than ever to the West in general. The extent to which the Balkan Alliance is at present a real factor in the defense of Europe, however, is another question. A ranking foreign military observer in Belgrade gave this view of it:

"If U.S. aid were to continue, and if Turkey were to make a deal to remain neutral, and if the internal situation in Greece were sufficiently stable, and if the Yugoslav army were sufficiently loyal, then, if the Russians should attack, the united Balkan armies might be able to execute a useful delaying action.

"Of all these 'ifs' the surest is the loyalty of the Yugoslav army. Cominform elements have been largely eliminated --although one can never be too sure--and the officer corps is composed almost entirely 100 per cent of Communist Party members."

Tito himself has said that the "military element is not of primary significance. Without underestimating its significance for the prevention of aggression, this alliance in the present situation can primarily serve the further development of mutual economic and political cooperation, the removal of the elements separating our nations, and the creation of a united organism among them."²³

The economic advantages to Yugoslavia have yet to be spelled out. Unfortunately, the things Yugoslavia needs most--machinery and, currently, grain--can come in meaningful quantity only from the West and the Soviet bloc. The cultural advantages of the Pact are probably potentially greater in the long run. Plans for various kinds of research and cooperative educational ventures are interesting parts of the Pact.

The Yugoslavs, harking back to the anticommopolitanism of their Soviet days, boast that the Balkan Pact is a new type of regional alliance because "all members retain full sovereignty and are on equal footing." The emphasis on sovereignty is still a recurring theme in Belgrade, the alleged lack of "full sovereignty" being one of the mild criticisms pointed toward EDC.

The Balkan Pact does have some novel features, particularly in creating combined executive and parliamentary institutions. It calls for creation of a Permanent Council and a Consultative Assembly, the latter having been proposed by Greece. The Permanent Council, representing the foreign ministers of the three countries, will sit for one year in each country. Presumably it will provide an opportunity for continuing discussion on a high level and also for a detailed study of mutual problems. The Consultative Assembly was agreed to in a separate memorandum to the Treaty, and the details have yet to be worked out. It will be composed of an equal number of members appointed by the parliaments of the three countries and will have an advisory role only. Its job is to "examine and study the ways, methods and forms of the development of cooperation among the member states and advance suggestions and recommendations." Presumably proposals could be submitted to it by the Permanent Council.

In discussing both their foreign and domestic affairs, the Yugoslavs often use this expression: "We are searching for our road." That the search has changed the direction of Yugoslav

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foreign policy is due chiefly to the actions of the Soviet Union and in part to the actions of the United States. The ideological split between Yugoslavia and the USSR that began the change is, if anything, deeper now than ever. The half pro-Western, half independent foreign policy of Yugoslavia has gone a long way itself. Any sharp reversal of policy does not seem either likely or possible. Any "normalization" of relations with its erstwhile Cominform allies seems to signify nothing more than that Yugoslavia wishes to gain any advantage it can from a shift in Soviet tactics. If Yugoslavia's policy still appears confused, this is but a reflection of the ideological confusion in the country resulting from its yet unresolved position as a Communist nation on the anti-Communist side of the fence.

Fred Warner Neal

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FOOTNOTES

1. Political Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, 1948.

2. Third Congress of the People's Front of Yugoslavia: Political Report Delivered by Marshall Tito, Jugoslovenska Knjiga, Belgrade, 1949.

3. Ibid.

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5. Borba, September 15, 1949.

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7. Borba, October 26, 1954.

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9. Kardelj, Edvard, Medjdonarodna Scena i Jugoslavenski Polazaj (The International Scene and the Yugoslav Position), Belgrade, 1951.

10. The Zagreb Conference for Peace and International Collaboration, Zagreb, 1951.

FOOTNOTES
(continued)

11. Kardelj, Op. Cit.
12. Borba, November 1, 1951.
13. Politika, Belgrade, February 2, 1950.
14. Borba, June 6, 1954.
15. Borba, October 26, 1954.
16. Borba, November 1, 1951.
17. Medjunarodna Politika (International Politics), Belgrade, September 16, 1954.
18. Borba, November 1, 1951.
19. Medjunarodna Politika (International Politics), Belgrade, September 16, 1954.
20. Borba, October 26, 1954.
21. Borba, November 1, 1951.
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