Telegram from the British Embassy in Prague to the Foreign Office regarding the possibility of war with Russia in Czechoslovakia, dated 10 July 1948

SECRET

FROM PRAGUE TO FOREIGN OFFICE

[1.] Though talk of imminent war among the general population appears to be less insistent than a month or two ago, there are still many rumours of warlike preparations or impending Russian occupation.

2. From several parts of Bohemia and Moravia, including Prague itself, there are fairly well confirmed reports that accommodation is being ear-marked or commandeered for billeting and in several cases it is said that the billeting office stated openly that the accommodation was for Russians. There are also stories of food dumps being made and of preparations for blackout and air-raid shelters, which cannot however be confirmed. Arms production has certainly been increased recently, probably for deliveries to Yugoslavia. Whether these deliveries will continue is not known but there are several fairly well corroborated stories of plans to free communications from civilian traffic, e.g. that all haulage and building contractors have been told that they will have no transport either by road or rail after July 21st. Roads however remain generally open.

3. Reconnaissance suggests that rumours of unusually large scale manoeuvres in Western Bohemia are exaggerated, but it appears possible that machinery is being prepared for large scale mobilisation when required. The Czechoslovak army is however of doubtful loyalty and so badly trained and equipped that it seems improbable that it could be relied on for anything more than internal security duties. It is reliably reported that the Russians have fallen considerably short on the equipment they promised.

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