Minute by Mr. Wallinger for the Secretary of State providing background on the Yugoslav-Cominform dispute, dated 1 July 1948

The Yugoslav-Cominform Dispute

[…]

 It seems clear from the above recital of the facts as shown by various documents that there are two main reasons for the present clash, the timing of which from a Kremlin standpoint, seems singularly inappropriate. The first reason is, in my opinion, the personality of Tito, whose much publicised features, arrogance and independence, have got under Moscow’s skin. But I doubt whether there would have been this public attack had it not been that Tito has impeded the implementation of the Kremlin’s foreign policy. This is the second reason. Tito’s stubbornness on this issue may have effectively prevented that close consolidation of the orbit in its foreign policy aspect which has been a major objective of the Kremlin since the E.R.P. and Western Union showed that the Western world was coming together in opposition to the spread of Communism. But this in itself does not explain why this moment should have been chosen for a showdown. We can only speculate on the exact reasons: but it seems justifiable to conjecture that Yugoslav obstruction on the Austrian Treaty issue, on Trieste (if the Kremlin wanted to reach a compromise with us – perhaps as a factor in their “peace offensive”) and on Greece have all weighed in Moscow’s thinking: and Tito is held responsible. As regards Greece, it is certain that Markos’s star is on the wane and that the Greek Army is having a great measure of success. The enforced abandonment of Markos would constitute a grave defeat of Kremlin policy: and there is reason to think that Tito, who has by no means given up his plans for a Balkan federation enforcing an autonomous Macedonia, finds that Markos as a Greek won’t stay on this basis (the recent friction between Greek Communists and Macedonian federalists). In fact there is here a paradox in that Tito resents the Greek national Communism of Markos while claiming the right to resist Kremlin criticism of Yugoslav national Communism.

 Finally it seems that we should now realise that, even if the present differences are composed by some compromise which Western thinking would consider inconceivable, the scars would remain and Tito and his fellow-leaders of Yugoslav Communism could never be really accepted back into the Moscow fold. Confidence between them has been destroyed forever.

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