Commentary by G.T.C. Campbell, dated 30 June 1948, on the telegram received on 29 June 1948 from Mr Peake, British Embassy in Belgrade, to the Foreign Office on Soviet-Yugoslav relations

[…]

What is Tito going to do? Powerful and courageous Communists have in the past recanted fully and publicly in the most abject way when they have been branded as deviationists. But Tito is vain and bold, and above all he arrived at his present position without the direct help of the Soviet Army. The announcement made by Belgrade Radio yesterday, which constitutes a reply to the Cominform communiqué, rejects the allegations, and is a first indication that Tito is not going to take the blow lying down. The proposal that matters of difference should be settled by discussion between the Central Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Yugoslav Communist Party reflects, I think, what Tito considers to be the way out of the present situation. But once having castigated the Yugoslav leaders vehemently, I doubt whether the Kremlin will open any discussions without a recantation beforehand.

If Tito stands up to this Soviet attack, one can expect the Soviet Union to go to almost any length to remove him, and the entry of Russian forces into Yugoslavia may well be accompanied by fighting.

We do not know whether the Soviet government expects a recantation by Tito or his removal, but it would seem that they will only be satisfied with one or the other. Having dealt with the question in private correspondence during the last three months through the Cominform, they may have been forced to come out into the open in this spectacular manner because they feared that Tito would himself break away. They would infinitely prefer to expel him than to let him contract out.

On the question of what action we can take, I think it is agreed that good use can be made in propaganda to Europe and the Middle East of various points of Soviet doctrine which are in the Cominform communiqué. These teach salutary lessons to would-be collaborators. As regards Yugoslavia, it would be best for us not to appear to take sides, and in particular to ignore any overtures or appeals to us from Tito until the position is much clearer. This Eastern European split will widen more quickly without our intervention. In this connexion I hope that the American Embassy’s suggestion mentioned in paragraph 5 of the telegram within will not lead to any precipitous action by the State Department. Our views on the unwisdom of such action have already been explained to the U.S. Embassy in London.

The position of Markos must now have become precarious, and the Greek army may be able to profit from this. No doubt they will discuss this development closely with their American advisers and take any action which will turn the situation to their advantage.

I cannot decide whether it would be better from our point of view if the Soviet Government deposed Tito by force or if Tito were to toe with Party line and remain, having declared his penitence. The first would have the same, if not more, effect upon public opinion in countries outside the Iron Curtain, particularly in the United States, as the February coup in Czechoslovakia. It would serve to hasten a North Atlantic treaty. But in the long run, I am not sure whether we would not prefer to have a chastened Tito in Belgrade rather than Soviet puppets and the Soviet army. Yugoslavia would thereafter be the less easy to bring into the Western European camp at a later date.

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