Telegram from J. Sterndale Bennett[[1]](#footnote-1), Minister in the British Embassy in Sofia, to E. Bevin, Foreign Secretary, on the possible Bulgarian role in the event of military moves in the Yugoslav-Cominform dispute, dated 10 July 1948

TOP SECRET

Sir,

 [1.] It is difficult to judge at present what may be the ultimate repercussions of the present Cominform crisis and it is possible that it may be resolved without any developments of a military or otherwise sensational kind.

 2. Nevertheless the possibility of military moves cannot be left out of account. The invitation in the Cominform resolution to orthodox communist elements in Yugoslavia to restore the situation might well lead to internal disorder in Yugoslavia. Furthermore, there appears to be increasing acrimony between Yugoslavia and Albania and the possibility of an open breach between those two countries cannot be excluded.

 3. The question naturally arises what part Bulgaria might be called upon to play in either of these eventualities. It is reasonable to suppose that she would in any case have to draw a military cordon along her frontier with Yugoslavia to prevent any trouble spreading here. Whether she would be called upon to play a more active role would presumably depend upon orders from Moscow and there are reasons why Moscow might find it convenient not to call upon her. General mobilisation in Bulgaria or the entry into Bulgaria of Russian forces would at once raise issue affecting the military clauses of the Peace Treaty and give cause for the interference of signatories to that Treaty. The special concern of Turkey which would be aroused would result in a concentration of forces on the Turkish frontier which the Russians might prefer at this moment not to provoke.

 4. Nevertheless I have thought it worthwhile to survey the present presumed location of Bulgarian land and air forces and to estimate the total strength which could be put into the field; and on these points I enclose two memoranda prepared, respectively, for my information by the Assistant Military Attaché and the Air Attaché, who are sending copies of them directly to the War Office and the Air Ministry.

[TNA, FO 371/72583]

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Cominform, the Balkans

1. Sterndale Bennett, Sir John C. (1895 - 1969) - British diplomat. Head of Far East Department, Foreign Office (1940 - 1942, 1944 - 1946), Minister in the British Embassy in Ankara (1942 - 1944), Minister in the British Embassy in Bulgaria (1947 - 1949), Deputy Commissioner-General for South-East Asia (1950 - 1953). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)