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4 September 1953

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Developments Concerning Albanian Plan

1. On this date I called upon Mr. Ray Thurston, Deputy Chief, EE, State, to get our thinking on the same track with respect to recent developments concerning the latest Albanian paper. Mr. Robert Strong of Mr. Lampton Berry's office was present.

2. Mr. Strong and Mr. Thurston produced a copy of the Albanian paper with four covering memoranda as follows:

a. A memorandum by Mr. Berry recommending that a high-level task force be established to consider the matter further and make recommendations, and noting that any diplomatic action would have to be planned and timed most carefully in the light of other diplomatic problems, particularly those now burdening our relationship with the British.

b. A memorandum by Mr. Robert Bowie, Policy Planning Staff, expressing serious reservations as to the feasibility of detaching Albania but agreeing that certain preliminary diplomatic steps would appear to be desirable.

c. A memorandum from Mr. John Campbell, Policy Planning Staff, thoughtfully reviewing the Albanian paper, measuring the advantages and disadvantages involved, and recommending that certain of the suggested steps be taken, both at the diplomatic and service levels.

d. A memorandum by Mr. Thurston taking a generally very dim view of the proposal outlined but accepting the idea that certain highly tentative and preliminary discussions be undertaken initially with the British. It was his thought that these conversations should center around contingency plans for Albania in the event of general hostilities or in the event that a totally spontaneous uprising took place but that there should be no explicit mention of concerted action to stimulate such an uprising or bring it to fruition.

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3. Mr. Strong said that Mr. Berry planned to take this sheaf of documents to General Smith on 5 September, if possible, and if not, soon thereafter, and request of him the establishment of a task force to recommend future action. Mr. Strong said he understood that Mr. Berry was quite confident this recommendation would be accepted.

4. In a general discussion of the Albanian problem which followed, Mr. Thurston explained that his reservations concerning an attempt to detach Albania in the immediately foreseeable future arose primarily from the fact that the chief present aim of American policy in southeastern Europe was to bring about some sort of working agreement between Yugoslavia and Italy. He feared that exacerbation of the Albanian problem under current circumstances would serve to increase tensions between Italy and Yugoslavia while at the same time reviving Greek irredentism with respect to Northern Epirus. He expressed doubt that the balance of forces now existing in that area was sufficiently stable to permit successful accomplishment of the sort of action contemplated. He was particularly dubious of the ability of the Balkan Entente to serve as a useful instrument.

5. Mr. Thurston said his office was planning to pursue very preliminary talks with the British along the lines noted in his memorandum. He added, however, that he could not estimate when these conversations would be completed or what result they would lead to. Consequently, he saw no reason why CIA should not pursue its present plans for a service level meeting with the British in mid-October, providing the Agency had its own sufficient reasons to hold such a meeting. He did not think it would be worthwhile to postpone the meeting in the hope of gaining any benefit that might be derived from the State-Foreign Office talks.

SIGNED []

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Deputy Chief

Political and Psychological Warfare

PP [] /bod
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