

University of Southampton

**Britain, the Balkans, and the Politics of the War-time Alliance:
Great Power Collaboration and the Pre-Percentages Agreement
of May 1944**

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When I survey the vast amount of paper: COS papers, Cabinet conclusions, memoranda circulated for various ministerial and inter-departmental committees, records of the EAC, FO print, etc., etc., - papers full of interesting facts and suggestions among the inevitable verbiage - I pity the lot of the future historian.

- John Colville, diary entry, 14th May 1944.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS

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This study explores aspects of British policy towards the Balkans in the wake of the Moscow Conference of October 1943, and in particular the attempts of the senior policy-makers to formulate a viable political strategy for that region in the first six months of 1944. It considers certain questions - what did 'the Balkans' mean to the British; who were the key individuals involved in policy formulation; what impact did on-going events have upon those individuals (and therefore the plans they submitted for consideration); and what controversies and debates did this involve them in - and to resolve two key issues: on a general level, how and when did the British begin to shift policy from a war-time to a post-war orientation; and, more specifically, how did the British approach the question of the post-war settlement as it affected the Balkan region. At the same time, and most importantly, it undertakes a detailed analysis of the 'Politics of the War-time Alliance' - an examination Britain's relations with her Great Power Allies, and in particular the Soviet Union, which, it argues, were far more influential in shaping British policy than local developments 'on the ground'.

Bringing these various themes together, the study examines the background to and circumstances of the Anglo-Soviet 'Spheres of Activity' Arrangement of May 1944, and the diplomatic exchanges that followed. It argues that, far from wanting to divide the Balkans into classical 'spheres of influence' (as has often been suggested), the British proposal was little more than a short term military arrangement, designed to persuade their allies (and in particular Soviet Russia) to adhere to the policy of collaboration agreed at the 1943 Moscow Conference. After examining the Russian and American reactions to this initiative, it concludes that the ultimate failure of the agreement resulted as much from administrative incompetence and a break-down in inter-Allied communication as from irreconcilable political and/or ideological differences. By way of a conclusion, it suggests that both British policy in general and the infamous Percentages Agreement (reached by Churchill and Stalin at the **TOLSTOY** Conference in October 1944) in particular should be reconsidered in view of this earlier episode; and that the traditional view - that the British attempted to establish mutually exclusive 'spheres of influence' as an answer to their problems *vis-à-vis* Russia and the fate of South Eastern Europe - is in need of serious revision.

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This thesis is the product of five years of postgraduate research at the University of Southampton. Everything I have written is my own responsibility.

Introduction: The Crisis in Anglo-Soviet Relations of May 1944 and the Pre-Percentages Agreement - A Turning Point in British Wartime Diplomacy

The Percentages Agreement reached at the **TOLSTOY** Conference, Moscow, October 1944, has received a great deal of attention from historians of both the Second World War and the Cold War.¹ The negotiations which took place in the Kremlin between the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin remain a subject of some historical - not to mention political - controversy. As such, they have aroused considerable interest. The same cannot be said of the diplomatic background which preceded it. In the spring and summer of 1944, a series of discussions took place which culminated in a rather messy attempt at defining certain wartime areas of responsibility for the respective Allied Powers in the Balkan Theatre. This episode - which, for want of a better historical title, may be called the Pre-Percentages Agreement - has received less critical analysis.

Certain reasons may explain this relative lack of attention. The events of the summer fail to fire the imagination in the same way as those which followed. There are no "Naughty Documents", no late night meetings between great men in dark Kremlin offices - in fact, little that indicates that the future of South-East Europe was being predetermined in Macchiavellian fashion. Indeed, if the Pre-Percentages episode is notable for anything, it is for bureaucratic maladministration - at least as far as the Western Powers are concerned - and not for skulduggery or intrigue. However, this relative lack of appeal should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the events of May and June exerted a significant influence on those responsible for the formulation and execution of foreign policy; and that, as a result, those events played a pivotal role in shaping later developments. The policy that Churchill sought to pursue at Moscow in October 1944 - whatever it was - was influenced as much by diplomatic precedent as by prevailing conditions. It follows, therefore, that, in order to establish a proper historical context for the **TOLSTOY** agreement - and to put into perspective the historiographical debate which accompanies it -

an in depth analysis of the earlier negotiations (and the circumstances in which they took place) is required.

* * *

As we shall see, by the end of April 1944, the British policy-making establishment had made steady - if unspectacular - progress in considering Britain's post-hostilities requirements in the Balkans, and in formulating plans in response to these. What Elisabeth Barker once described as the "ideas and plans and enthusiasms and dreams" of the responsible Foreign Office (FO) departments - and the other various inter-departmental committees involved in the field of post-hostilities planning - were taking shape in detailed memoranda, and, increasingly, these were beginning to receive attention from the highest levels of government.² However, and as the British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden was forced to admit to Churchill, actual policy, as opposed to "ideas and dreams", remained substantially unaltered.³ Policy was essentially dictated by the exigencies of war, and by the paramount aim of "extirpating Hitlerism." In order to pursue this fundamental goal without distraction, the British put long term political planning on a back-burner; and, while the military struggle remained in doubt, post-war contingency planning was seen as a relatively low priority.

This was hardly surprising. The British had appreciated for some time that the variegated nature of the anti-Hitler Alliance meant that some degree of disagreement between its adherents was inevitable, especially where post-war political questions were concerned. The experience of war-time co-operation in the months before the Moscow Foreign Ministers Conference of October 1943 had merely served to confirm this impression. On a variety of questions, both strategic and political, the Allies had demonstrated a worrying inability to agree on - never mind co-ordinate - policy. The disputes that had arisen in this period not only disrupted the cohesion of the wartime alliance, but also threatened to call into question its ultimate efficacy - as an effective instrument for the

extirpation of Hitlerism in the short term; and as a viable political entity upon which plans for post-war reconstruction could sensibly be based.

British policy-makers were certainly worried by this longer term outlook; and, indeed, they had started to consider questions relating to the post-war settlement as early as Autumn 1942.⁴ However, it was the immediate politico-military situation that dominated the minds of Churchill and the war-time executive in this period. Their short term philosophy dictated that problems should be tackled on an exclusively *ad hoc* basis, as and when necessary.⁵ This attitude, while understandable, was nevertheless unfortunate. The various problems that did arise proved so intractable that they convinced Churchill, in particular, that questions of longer term significance would have to be deferred indefinitely. As a result, and although elements in Whitehall started to consider the shape of the post-war settlement in some detail (even going as far as putting plans to the War Cabinet for their consideration; and approaching the other Great Powers), little progress was made before October 1943.

In fact, and as we shall see, it was only in the *belle époque* which followed the conferences of late 1943 that the British policymaking elite began to address post-hostilities questions with any degree of optimism. According to Gladwyn Jebb, Acting Head of the FO Economic and Reconstruction - or E and R - Department (which was responsible for post-hostilities planning) the apparent successes of the Moscow Foreign Secretaries' Conference (October 1943) and the subsequent meeting of the Big Three at Tehran (November-December 1943) were instrumental in stimulating meaningful post-hostilities planning in Britain.⁶ Even this did not alter the overriding orientation of policy, however. During the early months of 1944, the interests of the alliance - and in particular military factors - continued to exercise a preponderant influence, over and above exclusively national policy considerations.⁷ The emphasis remained fundamentally short term and strategic in orientation: longer term political questions, although certainly regarded as

more significant than hitherto, continued to occupy a relatively low priority in the minds of the executive. As the following months were to illustrate, the near-exclusive concentration on the military aspects of policy was to have serious repercussions in the political sphere, both short and long term.

Moreover, and if the "ideas and dreams" which began to circulate in the early months of 1944 are any indication, the policymakers in London were afflicted by what might euphemistically be called a post-summit hangover. Their various attempts at identifying likely post-hostilities problems - and at formulating strategies for tackling them - reflected the 'mood' of optimism (some might call it over-optimism) which the success of the 1943 conferences had engendered. The importance which the British policymakers attached to certain diplomatic agreements reached at the inter-allied meetings must not be underestimated. The issuing of the Moscow Four Power Declaration and the creation of the European Advisory Commission (the EAC) suggested, for a while at least, that real strides had been made towards the erection of an infrastructure for meaningful inter-allied co-operation in both the immediate and longer term periods. In signing the Declaration, the Allies had - apparently - pledged themselves to a policy of consultation and collaboration in the pursuit of common goals. By setting up the Commission - though admittedly not in the form that Eden, for one, had originally envisaged - they had seemed to sustain this promise. This public acceptance of the principle of collaboration had a profound effect upon the attitude of senior British policymakers - an effect which went beyond influence which the establishment of personal contacts exercised (or enhanced). Thinking about the Soviet Union - certainly as a factor in the post-hostilities planning forum - was undoubtedly transmogrified; and this, in turn, fundamentally altered the way in which long term policy towards the Balkans was considered in Whitehall.

Two constraints, in particular, hampered the policymakers in their attempts to formulate a political strategy for the longer term. In spite of the apparent success of the political discussions at the conferences of late 1943, the

orientation of policy remained fundamentally unchanged. The Alliance remained together because of the common military interests of the Big Three; and, therefore, strategic considerations continued to exercise a preponderant influence over British policy. Unfortunately, these considerations - and the policies they necessitated - were often at odds with Britain's longer term political interests. In effect, British policy was shaped, not by exclusively national interests, but by what might properly be called the "Politics of the Alliance", to which they were bound and upon which they had staked their future. One thing above all else was clear to the London policymakers: the "Politics of the Alliance" could not be jeopardised for the sake of unilateral political advantage. The policies followed by London concerning the various Balkan countries prior to June 1944 were tailored to fit this rationale: it follows, therefore, that they cannot be understood independently of it. This meant that, when the time came to consider the question of post-war policy, the planners quite naturally gravitated towards solutions which complemented the existing position - and therefore advocated policies based upon the wartime collaborative model.

As a result, and while British policy concentrated upon securing the short term goal of military victory, those interested in long term planning advocated the establishment of a lasting international peace through collective security and continued Great Power co-operation.⁸ As they appreciated all too well, the success of this policy would ultimately depend upon the extent to which they were able to establish a viable machinery for inter-allied consultation and collaboration in the shorter term. It was hoped that the wartime experience would demonstrate both the practicality and expediency of such a system. In line with this, such political initiatives as they were forced to pursue in the shorter term were tailored to complement the common politico-military effort. The policy controllers were convinced that the fragile political consensus, established in the crucible of war, had to be sustained at all costs; and that it must not be compromised by any insensitive or precipitous attempt to resolve contentious political issues. In practice, this meant that, on

questions where the political views of the Allies diverged and military imperatives did not compel action, problems were avoided; or, alternatively, that interim compromises were established *in lieu* of later discussion (i.e. at the peace settlement).

This first constraint - enforced short-termism - was exacerbated by the second: the "mind-set" which refused to countenance the failure of collaboration as the model for future Great Power relations. As we shall see, the FO - and the various inter-departmental committees involved in what Jebb dubbed "crystal gazing"⁹ - were not averse to pointing out areas of interest (strategic, political, and economic) that His Majesty's Government (HMG) should, and indeed must, seek to uphold. They were equally candid in identifying areas of potential disagreement with the Soviet Union and/or United States. Their advice, however, consistently shied away from resolving the contradiction in policy which had arisen: how to uphold inescapable responsibilities and interests as and when these came into conflict with those of Britain's Alliance partners, whilst simultaneously avoiding direct confrontations with those self-same partners which could compromise the politics of collaboration to which all supposedly subscribed. While, therefore, the preservation of the Alliance should perhaps be seen as the *sine qua non* of British political **strategy** in this period, the preservation of the *modus operandi* upon which this strategy depended must be regarded as the *sine qua non* of British political **tactics**.

Recognising and distinguishing between strategy and tactics in this context is critically important when seeking to understand the vagaries of policy planning in this period. When senior figures in the FO like Sir Orme Sargent (Deputy Under-Secretary at the FO, and responsible for the supervision of British policy towards both the Soviet Union and the Balkan region) declared that it was necessary to tell the Soviets clearly that HMG resented their behaviour or could not subscribe to particular viewpoint, they were invariably responding tactically, seeking to uphold the strategy of

collaboration in which they placed faith (and which the Soviet behaviour or attitudes they were criticising were threatening to upset). It should not be forgotten that, in diplomacy, *perceived* truth is at least as important as *actual* truth. The British had to make certain that the Soviet perception of their position on any given issue was in power political terms a viable one. Any diplomatic initiative in opposition to examples of truculence had to seem to be commensurate with both the will and the ability to act. As the British appreciated all too well, if they failed on either of these counts, the Soviets would begin to question Britain's power political position. By failing to insist upon a say in matters of obvious interest, HMG would undermine the faith of its Great Power peers in Britain's ability to act. This, in turn, would lead them to question her status as a viable partner; and, concomitantly, reduce the chances of their pursuing genuine collaboration (as opposed to, say, coercion) in matters where their interests came into conflict. Under the circumstances, therefore, it is clear that the importance of dissent as a tactical weapon must not be overlooked.

At the same time, however, the FO appreciated that the scope for using these tactics - when presented with evidence of Soviet (or, indeed, American) malfeasance - was limited. Excessive or frequent dissension on the part of any Ally would inevitably try the patience of the others; and, concomitantly, place an intolerable strain on inter-Allied relations. A policy of confrontation would only serve to undermine the edifice of collaboration; and beget an environment of mutual recrimination and hostility which was quite incompatible with the longer term goal of collective security through continued collaboration.

What the British required, therefore, was a political strategy which combined tactical acquiescence in some cases with tactical resistance in others. Striking this sort of balance proved to be no easy task. The growing realisation that, relatively speaking, Britain was the weakest of the Big Three, and therefore poorly placed to dictate the course of events, encouraged the policymakers in London to adhere ever closer to the policy of reactive

short-termism - and to stress the importance of Great Power collaboration in each and every area of policy. The fact that the intentions of Britain's Great Power partners remained largely a matter of conjecture (and could not, therefore, be allowed for with any degree of certainty in their post-hostilities plans) merely served to reinforce this tendency. As a result, and even in cases where serious doubts were expressed about both the ambitions of their Allies and the security of their longer-term interests, the policy mandarins invariably argued that the exigencies of existing political strategy necessitated the pursuance of collaboration. Tactical responses to emerging situations were invariably determined by these strategic desiderata; and occasional annoyances were therefore tolerated, if not always tacitly. Indeed, if anything, these annoyances tended to strengthen the resolve of the policymakers to prove that collaboration not only could but should work. They accepted, stoically, that this process would be both difficult and frustrating: the obvious differences in interests and outlooks (both structural and ideological) which existed between the Great Powers made this unavoidable. Nevertheless, and because the experience of the Moscow Conference in particular suggested that no inter-Allied difference should be regarded as insurmountable, attitudes in Whitehall waxed towards over-optimism. In the circumstances, therefore, the continuing attraction of reactive policies and short-term compromises proved irresistible.

This state of affairs could only last for as long as circumstances prevented the Allies - and specifically Great Britain and the Soviet Union - from coming into direct conflict over issues on which they either could not or would not compromise. While the military situation kept operational theatres apart, and while circumstances continued to make it expedient to defer negotiations about longer term and/or political questions, it was possible to turn a blind eye to occasional evidence suggesting a darker side to the Soviet political agenda. Similarly, and where matters of longer term political significance (in which Soviet interests were more obviously at stake than those of Britain) arose, it was easier to defer to Russian wishes - if not by direct

concession then by tacit acquiescence and "letting events foreclose on options."¹⁰ In an earlier era of Anglo-Russian relations, British policy had followed a course described as aiming to "combine conciliation on inessentials with firmness on essentials."¹¹ In the opening months of 1944, British policy followed a different line - concession on inessentials, and conciliation, with a veneer of firmness, on essentials.

However, this sort of approach could only work for as long as the Soviets displayed an ability - and a readiness - to collaborate in kind. The relative distribution of military power had always meant that the Russians would be best placed to dictate both the pace and the nature of developments, certainly as far as Eastern Europe was concerned. Their ready acceptance of this fact did not, however, mean that the British regarded capitulation on issues of long term political significance or high principle as inevitable; or that they were ready to abandon their existing interests and responsibilities. The FO, in particular, was committed to defending collaboration with Russia as a cornerstone of policy. They were equally convinced that this could not be achieved through the abandonment of the rights and responsibilities, incumbent on all Great Powers, to an interest in the politics of each and every part of the world. In their opinion, by waiving such rights and responsibilities, they would only succeed in compromising their power political position by bringing Britain's relative strength into question. Mutual respect, sustained by the belief that each power possessed both the strength and the will to uphold its rights and responsibilities, was an essential constituent in their formula for collaboration. To place this respect in jeopardy by failing to project the necessary facade in diplomatic exchanges would be to threaten calamity.

In this instance, therefore, conciliation and firmness were equally important - and complementary - components of British diplomatic strategy. The British had to convince the Soviets that they could accrue significant advantages through collaboration, and therefore secure their adherence to this form of politics (as opposed to a recourse to military might). Conciliation was

an essential element in this process. Firmness, however, was no less important; and certainly in instances where essential interests were at stake. After all, and as Churchill warned, "force and facts" was the rationale upon which Stalin operated.¹² It followed, therefore, that if Stalin perceived an irreversible weakening of British power in the face of Soviet force, he could be expected to adjust his political strategy accordingly.

It was, therefore, particularly unfortunate that circumstances conspired to expose both the contradictions in and the fragility of the British position. By the end of April 1944, the respective spheres of activity of Britain and the United States on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other were converging at an alarming rate.¹³ This convergence was, ironically, a result of the military successes that the policy of collaboration had done much to secure. The advance of the Red Army had pushed the Axis forces back to a point where Soviet forces stood poised ready to enter the Balkans. The Western Powers, for their part, were readying themselves for **OVERLORD**, and on the offensive in Italy. However, these successes now meant that certain questions - both strategic and political - which had previously been deferred could no longer be ignored. More worryingly, these questions increasingly involved both political and military issues in a manner which made exclusively military or political decisions impossible.

The situation was hardly helped by the experiences which followed the Moscow and Tehran Conferences. For all the initial optimism, the reality of co-operation in this period soon proved disappointing. The Moscow Four Power Declaration had established that future Allied policy would be based upon the twin principles of consultation and collaboration. However, and as we shall see, turning these principles into practical policies proved problematical. Attempts at making arrangements for the post-hostilities period had been frustrated by the Allies' inability - or, possibly, reluctance - to reach agreement. On a whole range of issues, Allied policy was marked by a lack of consensus. This failure was significant, and not just as an indication of what was to follow

in inter-Allied relations in the post war years. The Allies had failed to conclude agreements on armistice terms or the administration of occupied enemy territories or liberated countries - which meant that they were ill-prepared for the problems that the immediate future threatened to deliver. The liberation and/or occupation of territory in Eastern and South Eastern Europe - and the attendant administrative responsibilities which this process devolved - was now a short-term probability. The manner in which this task was approached could not *but* have significance for the political future of these regions. In the past, the avoidance of particularly sensitive political issues had not only allowed the Allies to present a semblance of political unity: it had enabled them to concentrate exclusively on the paramount goal of military victory. Now, however, the policy of problem avoidance, and the facade of political consensus that it projected, was beginning to undermine its own achievements as a result of the very success that it had helped secure.

There were any number of questions on which problems were to be anticipated. Frontier adjustments and recognised transference of sovereignty (not to mention populations), the bane of earlier negotiations between Russia and the Western Allies, could not be ignored or treated with the *sang-froid* of 1942 and 1943: the Red Army was now in the process of establishing *de facto* Soviet control in disputed areas.¹⁴ It was generally believed (in the West, if not Moscow) that short term *de facto* arrangements would be reviewed and where appropriate altered at the peace settlement, the proper time and place for *de jure* adjudications. It had, therefore, become imperative for the Big Three to reach agreement on procedures governing short term *de facto* developments. The need to establish - and maintain - some form of political consensus, over and above understandings which had been reached in the military sphere, was pressing. Moreover, and because the conjoining of the respective theatres of activity was drawing closer, the need for a clear-cut delineation of strategic responsibilities in contiguous operational areas was increasingly urgent. This was especially true in cases where the local situation was threatening to fragment - and where domestic conflict or even civil war was a real possibility

(as in Greece and Yugoslavia) - and where the natural sympathies of the Great Powers meant that policies were apt to diverge.

The track record of the existing apparatus for active politico-military co-operation was less than inspiring. As we shall see, the EAC - Eden's "clearing house" for problems of this sort - rapidly proved to be a disappointment. Moreover, in the one area where military operations and post-hostilities administration were already operating concurrently, and the collaborative experiment could have been given a chance, the experience could hardly have been less encouraging. The arguments which had been carried on between Russia and her partners concerning the position *vis-à-vis* Italy both prior to and during the Moscow Conference in the autumn of 1943 had provided a taste of what was to be expected once military and political questions attained (or threatened to attain) parity of status.¹⁵ Those arguments would pale in comparison with the disputes which were to be anticipated over the Balkans, where the local experiences of war had created a potentially explosive cocktail of political problems, and where the respective interests and sympathies of the Great Powers lay in near diametric opposition.

The British had been worried for some time about the likelihood of conflicts of interest in this region with Russia. In particular, they feared that, as the military situation improved, the prospects for politically-motivated divergence in power political strategy would increase.¹⁶ Prior to the Moscow and Tehran Conferences, their attachment to the creed of problem avoidance had precluded meaningful progress in the political sphere, and their fears had multiplied. After these meetings, however, their new found faith in the principle of collaboration - and their belief that both the US and Soviet Governments had committed themselves to a policy of genuine tripartite co-operation - restored a modicum of confidence, and they lapsed back into the old bad habit of prevarication.

In May 1944, a somewhat different set of circumstances encouraged the British to adopt a more dynamic course. The arrival of Allied forces in the Balkans was now imminent; and the British appreciated that once they arrived, it would be exceedingly difficult to avoid direct involvement in the political problems of the region. In order to prevent the potentially catastrophic confrontations between the Allies that might otherwise arise, it was now necessary to attempt to reach agreement about the nature of and responsibility for politico-military operations in the post-hostilities period.

It is of course important to remember that, even at this late stage, the British were still concerned that a rupture in the military cohesion of the Alliance might prolong the war; and even facilitate an Axis revival. For very sound military reasons, therefore, the "Politics of the Alliance" remained sacrosanct. However, the growing realisation that any serious breakdown in relations might jeopardise the prospects for post-war collaboration assumed an increasingly important place in their thinking. Without co-operation in the post-war period, the likelihood of an equitable peace settlement being concluded would be slim; which would in practice mean that what was increasingly accepted as the premier long term political goal - the establishment of a new power political order, based upon the principle of collective security - would be dead in the water. In the circumstances, therefore, it was clear that an agreement about operational responsibilities in the various theatres, and the acceptance of a blueprint for the administration of occupied territories in the post-hostilities period, had to be reached; and quickly. If these were not forthcoming, developments in the period immediately following the cessation of hostilities might easily encourage the establishment of exclusive spheres of influence and the pursuance of unilateral policies - all of which would be bound to prejudice future deliberations at the peace conference and beyond.

The crisis which broke in May 1944 put the situation clearly into perspective. A concatenation of events, and in particular certain developments concerning Greece and Roumania, precipitated an urgent review of British and

Soviet interests - and involvement - in the Balkans. At one point, following a pair of particularly offensive telegrams from Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov to Churchill, a serious breach in Anglo-Soviet relations appeared unavoidable. Although the threatened schism was subsequently avoided, the affair revealed the extent to which British and Soviet - and indeed British and American - attitudes on collaboration differed. It was now clear that London and Moscow - and London and Washington - were operating on different wavelengths, both in principle and in practice.

This dichotomy was particularly worrying to the British. Their thinking - and longer term policy appreciations - had been predicated upon their belief in the *modus vivendi* that had (apparently) been established at the Moscow Conference. Molotov's telegrams of the 28th and 29th April persuaded the Prime Minister that an urgent review of the situation was required, a view that was sustained by subsequent developments: and, in particular, by further telegrams from Moscow outlining the possible creation of a new South Slav Federation (based around the disputed region of Macedonia), and by discussions between the Prime Ministers of Great Britain and her Dominions in the first week of May. It was evident that, for all the rhetoric and hypothesising that had taken place in the preceding months *vis-à-vis* post-war Soviet policy, and in spite of the contingency proposals that the post-hostilities planners had postulated as a result, a different - and certainly more dynamic - approach would now have to be considered. Whereas previously it had been expedient to base policy on exclusively short term (and essentially politico-military) desiderata, it was now clear that British policy, whilst continuing to concentrate on the military position, would additionally have to deal with longer term political issues as they developed - before events foreclosed upon options, perhaps irrevocably.

It was obvious that, where the Greek and Roumanian situations were concerned, the degree of Anglo-Soviet consultation had been insufficient. It followed, therefore, that if collaboration was to remain the cornerstone of

policy, a more active regime of dialogue and negotiation would have to be initiated. Previous exchanges had taken place on too *ad hoc* a basis: a fact that could not be allowed to continue. A clearer understanding of respective British and Soviet positions on any given issue would have to be established, by both parties. Ignorance, whether real or feigned, could not be allowed to engender and entrench suspicions - suspicions which might ultimately poison relations beyond help. Collaboration could not succeed in an environment of reciprocal recrimination - a fact that the subsequent intervention of the US Government in what had previously been an Anglo-Soviet affair merely served to confirm.

However, and crucially, it was not merely the machinery of collaboration that the events of this period had called into question. The policymakers were forced to consider the validity of collaboration with Russia as an appropriate basis for policy in the longer term. With the military situation moving inexorably in favour of the Red Army, it was recognised that it was no longer prudent to ignore the political implications of Soviet military predominance in Eastern Europe. This was valid for both the shorter term (that is, the immediate post-hostilities period), and the longer term (the period following the peace settlement). Some contingency plans would have to be laid, based upon current trends and not merely wishful thinking, and taking into account both short and long term possibilities.

The acceptance by senior figures of the need to consider longer term political issues was in itself a significant step. It did not, of course, mean that a sea-change in policy was in progress. It did, however, indicate that the British were at last ready to consider issues of longer term and political (as well as military) significance; and signified an awareness on their part that these were not merely abstract problems which could be left for a peace conference (which it was anticipated would be held, but which had not been definitely agreed to or planned for by the Great Powers) to resolve.

Chapter I: Planning A Foreign Policy - Interests and Priorities in the Wake of the Moscow Conference of October 1943 (with particular reference to Anglo-Soviet Relations and the Future of the Balkan Region)

During the year 1944, the anti-Hitler Alliance was troubled, to a disturbing extent, by misconceptions and misunderstandings of the intentions of at least one of the major partners, Britain... Chief of these was the belief that Britain, for the sake of its national and imperial interests in the post-war world, was determined... to intervene in the affairs of South East Europe in order to establish a dominant position, or at least to prevent its domination by any other power... However, in any attempt to interpret British long term objectives in this area, it must be stressed that... ideas and plans... enthusiasms and dreams, were not the same thing as British policy... British policy was the outcome of the contact or conflict between the political and military advisers... [namely] the Foreign Office and Chiefs of Staff.

- Elisabeth Barker.¹

The above, astute observation by Elisabeth Barker highlights what remains a serious problem for historians seeking to analyse British policy towards the Balkans in the opening months of 1944. It is clear that a great many different "ideas and plans" and "enthusiasms and dreams" exercised the minds of senior British policymakers in this period. Barker is quite right to point out that these were not the same thing as policy; indeed, that policy was, instead, the end product of an interactive process which saw them considered and prioritised in line with prevailing national interests and capabilities. It is therefore important to draw a distinction between Barker's "ideas and dreams", and the realities of policy.

This, however, is only part of the problem. The "pursuit of politics by other means" inevitably threw up situations in which various interests - political, strategic and economic - came into conflict. War, by its very nature, disrupts and distorts the rationale upon which policy is normally based. It therefore forces policymakers to re-evaluate interests and re-align policies. The military imperative necessitates the suspension of peace-time strategies, and

forces policymakers to concentrate upon short term priorities, invariably at the expense of longer term - and in particular political - interests. This process inevitably leads to the distortion of national foreign policy, a distortion that invariably obscures what in reality long term foreign policy is - or is likely to be.

During the opening months of 1944, the policymakers of the Allied Powers suffered as a result of this kind of distortion - which should perhaps be regarded as the political equivalent of Clausewitz's "frictions."² Physical manifestations of policy - dictated by short term, military considerations - gave rise to series of misconceptions about longer term political objectives. This problem, serious enough at the height of the war (when the Allies were at least bound together by a common military interest) became increasingly problematical as the military imperative ceased to be the over-riding concern; or, to put it another way, as the Allied Powers began to consider how to re-align their policies so as to take into account their various - and by no means homogeneous - post-war interests. In this transitional phase, policy began to revert to a more normal form, and policy initiatives came to reflect the longer term aspirations of the various powers. This of course created a new set of problems for the policymakers: namely; how to gauge when and where their policies should change; how to gauge when and where the policies of the other powers had changed; and how to respond to these changes.

These problems are, of course, just as relevant for the historian today as they were for the contemporary policy-maker at the time. In order to assess what policy actually was, the historian must attempt to separate short term, war orientated initiatives from policies which were initiated with the post-hostilities and post-war period in mind. This process is extremely difficult, not least because it is often impossible to determine into which category specific manifestations of policy actually fit - if indeed they can be shown to fit exclusively into any category at all. Analysing war-time - and especially military - initiatives with a view to unravelling longer term political aims is therefore a

difficult business. One not only has to remain aware of Barker's warning; one also has to avoid misreading the purpose of initiatives, and remain attuned to the prevailing *raison d'être* on which policy was based.

With this in mind, it is perhaps advisable to approach the question "what was the British attitude towards the future Balkans at the beginning of 1944" from an angle that does not concentrate upon manifestations of policy occurring in the region; and instead concentrate upon evidence from various post-hostilities and post-war planning studies which were produced in this period. This reduces the danger posed by distortion. The various memoranda and minutes submitted on "probable tendencies" during this period were not prey to the Clausewitzian "frictions" which had invariably blighted earlier war-time planning studies; and they therefore reflect with greater clarity the interests which future policy hoped to uphold. Though indicative of "ideas and dreams" - as opposed to policy - they nevertheless played a key role in the interactive process which shaped policy; a fact that in view of Barker's warning about "misunderstandings" it would be foolish to ignore.

* * *

The most important factor in the Balkan conundrum - and the factor which provoked the most thought amongst British policymakers in the opening months of 1944 - was what Geoffrey Wilson (of the FO's Northern Department) referred to as the "Soviet imponderable."³ The military successes of the Red Army were greeted with a mixture of public praise and private concern by the British. The farther west the Soviets penetrated, the more senior figures - Churchill among them - worried about the post-war situation. The conferences of late 1943 had established a mood of optimism, a mood that the Prime Minister certainly shared. Eden's failure to resolve various outstanding political issues at the Moscow Conference was not regarded as particularly significant at the time: his success in getting the Americans and Russians to agree to the establishment of the EAC, and the principles which the Great

Powers had (apparently) subscribed to when signing the Moscow Four Power Declaration, more than off-set other more disappointing results.⁴

Increasingly aware that they lacked sufficient material strength to sustain a bullish approach to inter-Allied diplomacy, the British were perhaps bound to indulge in "wishful thinking" - to believe that collaboration would deliver the hoped-for results. This honeymoon period did not last for long, however; and, as we shall see, the British soon began to question the success of the Moscow Conference - and the real value of the Declaration and Commission.

Churchill, for one, was well aware of - and deeply concerned by - the problems that lay ahead *vis-à-vis* Russia and Anglo-Soviet relations. As he warned Eden in April 1944, "you may take it that they will take every conceivable advantage of their position. Force and facts are their only realities."⁵ Unfortunately for the British, the facts were that Soviet force was deciding the military outcome in Eastern Europe; and this, not unnaturally, encouraged them to press for an advantageous political settlement. The question that must therefore be put is: how did the British policymakers approach the Balkans and the need for a Balkan policy (or policies), and in doing so attempt to reconcile their position - and longer term requirements - with the probable post-war reality of Soviet pre-eminence in that region?

In fact, a great deal of time was spent considering the question of probable Soviet policy, and its likely impact upon British interests in the Balkans. Indeed, these two issues were so involved that it was almost impossible to consider one without referring to the other. The memoranda produced on both shed light upon the major concerns of the policymakers. The interests which they identified and priorities which they argued had to be adopted reveal both "what the Balkans meant to the British" and how this fitted into the wider question of Great Power relations. It is therefore on the production of these memoranda - and on the conclusions that the planners

reached - that those seeking to understand British policy in this period should concentrate.

Considering Policy in the Opening Months of 1944: the Foreign Office and the War Cabinet Planning Committees

It was in late 1943 that the British began trying to organise their thoughts about the post war shape of Europe in a systematic way.

- Elisabeth Barker.⁶

The FO's Economic and Reconstruction Department may have set the ball rolling in the latter stages of 1942 (as Jebb suggests in his memoirs) but the British did not begin to consider specific questions of post-hostilities and post-war policy in any great detail until the summer of 1943. Indeed, matters only really took off after Churchill circulated a minute on 31st July 1943 in which he expressed concern about "the growing volume and complexity of the political and civil problems connected with liberated or occupied enemy territories." This minute led to the establishment of the Armistice and Civil Administration (or ACA) Committee, which was given the following brief:-

To consider and where necessary advise the War Cabinet on matters of detail and execution connected with armistice terms and instruments of surrender; with the military administration of occupied enemy territory; with the liberation and handing over to territorial Governments of enemy occupied territories; and with the discussion of such matters with our Allies.⁷

Later on, in April 1944, these terms of reference were expanded, and the ACA Committee was reconstituted as the Armistice and Post-War (or APW) Committee. Its role was re-defined as follows:-

To consider and where necessary advise the War Cabinet on questions affecting armistice terms and their execution, and the administration of territories, liberated or conquered, and general political and military questions in the post-war period.⁸

The ACA Committee had not been the only body of this sort created in the summer of 1943. While the War Cabinet were setting up the ACA Committee, the Chiefs of Staff (or COS) Committee had appointed a sub-committee of their own - "for the purpose of insuring that military issues which will affect the future policy of HMG in the UK when hostilities cease are duly given considerations."⁹ The Post-Hostilities Planning (or PHP) Sub-Committee was to play a central role in the consideration of British interests and policy desiderata.

These committees, and of course the various political departments of the FO (with which they liaised), were the main forums in which long term interests and policy options were considered.¹⁰ The papers which these organisations produced, and the debates which took place under their auspices, indicate which interests were identified as priorities - and, in effect, which interests became the determinants of policy. Their activities in the opening months of 1944 were to a large extent shaped by the results of the Moscow and Tehran Conferences. The FO was forced to reassess its position in light of the decisions taken - or not taken - at those meetings: the committees, which were busy producing their first memoranda at about this time, were forced to take the decisions which had been reached - and the attitudes which had been established - into account in their work. No less important was the psychological impact on the policy-makers of the decision to "consider and where necessary advise" on longer term issues exercised over the policy-makers. The new planning bodies were charged to consider longer term issues; a clear indication that the previous attitudes to "crystal gazing" were being relaxed.

The advice which these "think tanks" passed on to the higher echelons of the war-time executive constituted the qualified and prevailing expert wisdom of the day on long term policy questions.¹¹ The responses which their work provoked fell into two categories. The reactions of the various senior officials who read them reflected the attitudes of the governing elite; those of

the War Cabinet and the COS, as collective bodies responsible for the execution of policy, reveal what policy actually was.

* * *

The earliest studies relating to long term policy questions involving Russia and the future of South Eastern Europe were commissioned before the Moscow Conference convened. They were no less significant for this, however. In September 1943, the COS directed the PHP Committee to produce a paper on the "long term impact of Russian policy on British strategic interests." As Sir Leslie Hollis (Senior Assistant Secretary, Military, in the Cabinet Office) informed Sir Orme Sargent, "the object of the appreciation is to formulate the basic principles on which the COS should found their military advice when called upon to express an opinion on questions of policy affecting Russia."¹² The COS were however aware that such work would entail a degree of risk. "A study of the above character," Hollis warned, "might lead to very awkward repercussions with the USSR", should news of it get out. He therefore asked Sargent whether the FO would like the terms of reference firmed up - making secrecy a top priority, and establishing that "it remains the policy of HMG to foster and maintain the friendliest possible relations with the USSR."

Christopher Warner (the Head of the FO's Northern Department) was pleased by this development.¹³ The COS were now "approaching the question of the impact of Russian policy on British strategic interests from the widest standpoint" - which in his opinion was all to the good. He was, however realistic about the difficulty of the job in hand:-

It will not be easy... since we have not yet any real evidence as to what Russian policy is as regards the future. I doubt if they have altogether made up their own minds yet. It will no doubt be a definite objective of our tactics at the... Three Power Conference to test Russian intentions, and the results may give the PHP Sub-Committee a little to go on. The Russians are in fact likely to have two alternative policies and not to make their minds up finally until they can assess the results of co-operation with us during the war.¹⁴

These observations notwithstanding, however, the FO were in favour of the PHP tackling the issue. On 2nd October, therefore, Sir William Strang (at this stage an Assistant Under-Secretary at the FO and from November 1943 the UK representative on the EAC) told Hollis that the PHP could examine the long term impact of Russian policy on British strategic interests under the terms of reference that he had suggested.¹⁵

The FO remained in close contact with the PHP during the paper's production. In response to a request from the PHP in January 1944, Warner prepared a paper of his own on the "Probable Post-War Tendencies in Soviet Foreign Policy as Affecting British Interests." After showing the paper to Sargent, who suggested various amendments, Warner forwarded the paper to the PHP in February.¹⁶ The PHP subsequently tried to annex the paper to its own study - a move which the FO strongly and successfully opposed.¹⁷ Instead, the decision was taken to issue the paper in FO print, and this was finally done on 29th April.¹⁸

Warner's paper was perhaps the definitive statement of the Northern Department's attitude towards the Soviet Union in the months following the Moscow and Tehran Conferences, and as such underscored the FO's handling of Anglo-Soviet relations in the following months. Right from the outset, Warner argued that while it would be folly to underestimate Russia's strength, it would be dangerous to presume too much about Soviet intentions:-

The probable long term impact of Russian strategic policy on British interests depends upon Russia's power, her major interests, and her general outlook on world affairs. Of her power, and her capacity to use it if she wishes, there can be little doubt. Her major interests and outlook [are] far more difficult to predict.

Warner harboured few illusions about the material potential of the Soviet Union, but felt that in the immediate post-war period her priorities would be rehabilitation and internal development. These priorities would, in turn, encourage Russia to focus external policy on guaranteeing security:-

The logical deduction seems to be that, provided the British Commonwealth and the United States do not appear to the Soviet authorities... to be supporting a combination against her, and give reasonable consideration to her views, Russia will welcome a prolonged period of peaceful relations with [them]. She will need at least five years for rehabilitation and many further years for the development of her internal resources... During this period it is unlikely that she would be prepared to risk the interruption of a major war, whether during that period she had adopted a policy of co-operation or had decided to play a lone hand.

"This prediction," Warner warned, "is based on the assumption that the Russians do not suspect us of having designs hostile to her security":-

Should she not be so satisfied (and her demands are likely to be high and her methods perhaps very drastic to British and American eyes), she will always be in fear of an eventual combination with Germany against her, her attitude towards this country will be suspicious and potentially antagonistic, she will be more preoccupied with her own security and will take her own measures to provide for it. She would then be an intensely disruptive force in Europe... manoeuvring to increase the strength of her own position... by establishing her influence... through Left Wing Governments and by interfering in their internal affairs through both intrigue and through power politics.

This warning notwithstanding, Warner was convinced that the Russians would give the policy of co-operation the chance to succeed before embarking upon a more disruptive course. He therefore concluded that, in the immediate post-war period, Russia would pose no threat to British strategic interests. He was also optimistic about the longer term. "If [co-operation] gives satisfactory results from the Russian point of view," he argued, "[the] experiment may become an established feature of her foreign policy and the period during which she would constitute no major threat to major British strategic interests may be indefinitely prolonged."

Warner also made specific references to Soviet regional interests, including those in the Balkans:-

Soviet opposition to [Balkan] confederations... is no doubt in reality [motivated by a] determination to take no risk of a combination on her western frontiers which might, out of fear of

herself, turn to Germany... the Soviet Government's attitude is unlikely to change, at least until they have reached satisfactory settlements with the individual states... As regards Roumania and Bulgaria, they no doubt prefer that these countries should be independent but wholly under their influence... It is a vital Soviet interest that no strong Power should be able to threaten the Black Sea or to draw on Roumanian oil for aggression against the Soviet Union.

He went on to outline specific claims against Roumania, involving territorial adjustments, oil supplies, political guarantees, and the right to establish military and naval bases; and anticipated the domination of Bulgaria - which might have implications for the Straits should Russia establish airfields on Bulgarian territory.

Reaction to Warner's paper was, on the whole, favourable. Sargent thought it contained "a good deal of useful material." Sir Alexander Cadogan (Permanent Under-Secretary - the senior civil servant in the FO) considered it a "fairly objective survey and estimate" with which Eden would concur.¹⁹ He was right; Eden subsequently described Warner's paper as both "very useful" and "excellent." He also directed that copies should be sent to Churchill and, if the Prime Minister agreed, to the Dominion Prime Ministers (who were attending a conference in London).²⁰ The diplomatic staff in Moscow agreed, informing Whitehall that "we find ourselves in full agreement with its analyses of the position and with the main conclusions of this altogether admirable document."²¹ Warner himself, while claiming that his paper "did not propose a general policy and was not designed to suggest one," was nevertheless convinced of the validity of its assumptions over six months later.²²

The PHP paper - the reason for Warner's memorandum - was in the mean-time attracting attention of its own. Warner himself minuted that "there are some very odd things" in its first draft (submitted to the FO on 25th February - the same day that Warner forwarded his paper to the PHP).²³ A second draft was debated amongst the various FO departments between 19th and 28th March, at Jebb's request. J.G. Ward, Jebb's 'number two' in the

Economic and Reconstruction Department, queried its treatment of the Balkan situation. "It seems to me," he minuted, "that something ought to be said about the ultimate strategic impact on us of possible Russian predominance in Central and South Eastern Europe." Wilson, minuting for the Northern Department, was not so sure. "This would certainly be useful," he minuted. "But can it be done? The position of Russia in Central and South Eastern Europe after the war depends upon so many imponderables that it would surely be better to wait, if time permits, until the picture is a little clearer before we try to decide what to do about it." Wilson did at least concede that while "predicting the future" was impossible, "we can certainly say what views Russia has expressed" up to this time. Frank Roberts (Acting Head of the Central Department) was unhappy with this equivocation.²⁴ In his view, greater dynamism was called for:-

However difficult the task may be, it is surely unrealistic to leave completely out of account the most serious danger of all, i.e. a Russian domination of Europe either directly e.g. through a continued military occupation... or indirectly e.g. through other pacts on the lines of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Pact.²⁵ The danger may not now be actual, but it is precisely the sort of danger which affects our most vital interests.

Roberts was not advocating the abandonment of the policy of collaboration. He was, rather, arguing that collaboration should not be allowed to preclude consideration of outstanding problems - and in particular the problem of how to reconcile Soviet and British interests in the region (whatever these might be). Wilson, realising the force of Roberts's case, submitted the following observation:-

Russian influence in the whole of this area is bound to be greatly increased after the war, with consequences that may ultimately be serious to British strategic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, unless we and the Russians are following a common policy and backing more or less the same political groupings.

By the end of March, therefore, Ward was able to minute that "there is a general consensus of opinion that we ought to survey the post-war Russian position in South Eastern Europe."²⁶

The PHP paper dealt with the whole field of strategic interests, and not simply with the position in the Balkans.²⁷ Its terms of reference, however, meant that regional issues had to be considered as part of the overall picture; and were therefore an important indication of attitudes towards regional as well as global interests. The PHP had stuck to Hollis's brief, and although they acknowledged the possibility of the Soviet Union reverting to a policy of isolation after the war, they qualified their position in unequivocal terms:-

We have assumed that the Soviet policy will continue to be that of the Moscow Declaration and the Four Power Pact, and that Russia will be prepared to play her part in some international security organisation centred on an alliance of the Four Great Powers.

Where South Eastern Europe was concerned, the PHP anticipated that Soviet policy would concentrate on preventing the future re-establishment of German hegemony. Roumania would probably be occupied, with territory claimed by the Russians being incorporated into the Soviet Union. The Soviets had also expressed a wish to establish bases there, which would have to be conceded. The position regarding Bulgaria was less certain; but Russia's traditional links with that country meant that her influence was "bound to be strong" after the war. Again, a request for bases was anticipated, which if granted would have implications for the security of the Straits. As far as Yugoslavia was concerned, the relations between the Soviets and Tito's Partisans suggested that the Russians would exert a strong influence in the post-war period, although in this instance it was felt that geographical factors might limit the scope for complete domination. Overall, therefore, the PHP's conclusion was pragmatic, if somewhat pessimistic. "In general," they maintained, "Russian influence throughout South Eastern Europe is bound to be very greatly increased after the war." The probable impact of this on British strategic interests was also adumbrated in the clearest of terms: the USSR would be in a strong position to threaten Britain's line of communications through the Mediterranean.

The paper ended by suggesting "that the following basic principles should govern the military advice given by the COS on policy affecting the Soviet Union":-

A real endeavour to secure the full and friendly participation of the USSR in any system of world security appears to be the best way of avoiding friction between us. Failing the establishment of such a system, we must endeavour to perpetuate and strengthen... our present relations... In furtherance of the above aims we should not oppose any reasonable demands of the USSR where they do not conflict with our vital strategic interests as indicated.

Perhaps the best indication of the prevailing attitudes towards post-war policy and the future of the Balkans in the opening months of 1944 was contained in the ACA Committee paper "British Interests in South East Europe", which was presented on 14th April.²⁸ This paper was produced in connection with the plans being drawn up for the military occupation of the region, a task undertaken by the PHP Committee in the opening months of 1944. The PHP Committee, after liaising with the FO, had produced a paper on the subject, but the project rapidly ran into difficulties.²⁹ Jebb warned his colleagues in January that the project was proving problematical:-

This paper has not been easy to prepare, for the situation in that part of the world after this war will be as complicated as it will be potentially dangerous. Neither has it been easy to define our own objectives, since many conflicting elements enter in, and in any case nobody knows what the situation is likely to be when Germany collapses. Further, whatever our objections may be, it may well prove very difficult to achieve them... if for instance, the Russians should manifest... strong [contrary] desires.³⁰

The paper, when submitted, attracted a fair amount of criticism. In particular, it was accused of being unrealistic in its assessment of the prospects of US and Soviet support (without which, Jebb admitted, the whole plan would have to be revised).³¹ However, after the production of an accompanying paper - in which new factors were taken into account and a revised plan was proposed - the PHP paper was presented to both the COS and ACA Committees.³²

Before considering the debate which these two papers engendered, it is important to clarify what they had in fact proposed. They argued that British forces for the occupation of the Balkans should be found for the following political reasons: to fulfil the British obligation under the Moscow Four Power Declaration, in so far as it contemplated the restoration of peace and order through joint action; to remove the danger of local disturbances encouraging the USSR to undertake unilateral counter-measures, which might in turn seriously disrupt Anglo-Soviet-American relations; and to avoid "the possibility of a physical occupation of the whole area by Russia" - which, on the whole, the UK could not contemplate with equanimity.³³ One scenario in particular terrified the PHP (and, indeed, the FO): namely, that Soviet military strength would allow the USSR to dominate the region (whether by accident or by design); and that the British - because of their relative military weakness - would be unable to counter this trend. This, it was believed, would undermine Britain's strategic position; and place her interests in the region at the mercy of the Soviet Union. The policy which the planners advocated in response was collaboration, and the repudiation of unilateralism by the Great Powers. Regional threats of this sort engendered real concern in London, but not for exclusively regional reasons. The British were afraid that local disputes and resulting tensions would upset the cohesion of the wartime Alliance, the preservation of which was seen as vital policy goal. This was reflected in the supplementary paper, which took into account two probabilities: that the Soviets would insist upon a greater role in the occupation; and that the US would refuse to accept any commitments involving large-scale troop deployments in the Balkans. The PHP planners repeated their earlier advice - that a sharing of responsibilities was vital, for the preservation of British strategic interests, and for the longer term stability of the Alliance. If these papers - and the attached minutes - are any indication, thinking on future Balkan policy in the opening months of 1944 was dominated the desire to preserve the bases of Great Power collaboration.

The COS accepted the PHP papers as "suitable for use as a guide to the UK representative on the EAC", with the proviso that it should not bind them to any specific commitments at this stage.³⁴ They were not at this stage hostile to plans envisaging post-war co-operation with the Soviets; nor did they voice opposition to the concession of non-essential interests (so long as these did not compromise stated strategic requirements, and as long as they guaranteed the co-operation of the Soviet Union in the longer term).³⁵ The ACA Committee, however, raised certain objections. At their meeting on 17th March (at which the PHP papers were discussed), Richard Law (Minister of State at the FO; later Lord Coleraine) found himself caught up in a dispute between the Minister of Production, Oliver Lyttleton, and the COS over arrangements for mobilising resources against Japan following the defeat of Germany.³⁶ Lyttleton argued that the COS had failed to allow for other factors when planning for this contingency - one of which was the need to meet military and political commitments in Europe in the immediate post-hostilities period. In view of the importance of this argument, Law was asked to produce a paper outlining Britain's political and economic interests in South Eastern Europe, and "a consequent assessment of the importance to these interests of providing British forces for the occupation of different areas in that part of the world."

In briefing him on the ACA instructions, Law left Jebb with few illusions about the importance of this task. As he explained, "we shall have to make up our minds collectively on the following: what are our minimum political demands in Europe? i.e. to what extent are we prepared to hand South East and Central Europe to the Russians? It is essential that we should make up our minds about the minimum demands which we shall have to insist upon with the COS."³⁷ The FO responded to this call with alacrity. Ward suggested that an inter-departmental meeting should be arranged as soon as possible to consider the matter.³⁸ His E and R Department colleague, Lord Hood, agreed to the idea of a meeting at which the prioritisation of British interests could be thoroughly debated.³⁹ He also submitted a preliminary appreciation, setting out his own views on the matter at hand. "The peace and prosperity of the

Balkans," he argued, "is a vital British interest because the lack of it will a) trouble world peace and security; b) affect vital British interests: our communications through the Mediterranean and the Middle East; and c) open the way for German political and economic domination." He also repeated a view that the Southern Department, in particular, had held for some time. "Peace and prosperity," he maintained, "will never be achieved if the Balkan countries are left to themselves. Guidance and leadership from outside are essential."⁴⁰

Hood's fears regarding Germany were particularly significant. At this stage of the war, the Germans were still resisting strongly on all fronts; maintaining the maximum possible military pressure against them remained the top priority. This, of course, meant safeguarding the bases of tripartite co-operation - and, in particular, avoiding potentially disastrous squabbles with Russia about post-war policy, especially as these might lead her to conclude a separate peace with the Germans. There was also the post-war situation to consider. The threat of a post-war German revival was a common *bête noire* amongst FO mandarins. In Hood's opinion, this threat would have to be countered; and Russia would clearly have to play a central role. This, of course, raised another difficult question: how to involve Russia in Balkan reconstruction without conceding effective hegemony in the region to the Soviets. As Hood pointed out, if the Russians were left to their own devices, the Balkan States would probably be faced with two unpalatable alternatives; sovietisation, or incorporation into the USSR. "Sovietisation," he contended, "might provide peace and prosperity, but a number of weak Soviet republics would not present an effective barrier to German aggression. If on the other hand the states were effectively welded into the Soviet Union, the latter would present a menace even more serious than Germany." It was therefore unsurprising that Hood advocated what was perhaps the only way out of this hegemoniacal *cul de sac*: strict adherence to the policy of collaboration, and, in particular, to the principles of the Four Power Declaration.

Sargent agreed to chair a meeting; invitations were despatched; and Ward, anticipating the debate, circulated a draft outline of priorities.⁴¹ The conclusions reached at the meeting, which was held on 28th March, were subsequently incorporated in a draft paper prepared by the E and R Department. This was circulated for discussion on 1st April.⁴² After a further internal FO debate, the paper was printed as ACA(44)23 on 14th April.⁴³

This paper must not be interpreted as a statement of policy towards the Balkans. It was drawn up with reference to a specific problem - post-hostilities military occupation - and also considered the position of various non-Balkan States. All the same, the paper reveals a great deal about prevailing attitudes, both by what it says and by what it omits. Yugoslavia was not included: according to P.S. Falla (of the E and R Department), "it was not considered to be a sufficiently strong interest to prevent disorder there."⁴⁴ He also noted that war-time operations - such as the possible expulsion of Bulgarian troops from Greek Thrace - were considered to be beyond the paper's remit. The earlier realisation that, militarily speaking, the fate of Roumania would have to be left to the Soviet Union was also confirmed.

The introduction to this paper left no doubt about the basis upon which existing policy was predicated:-

In the Moscow Four Power Declaration HMG agreed to take a share in united action for the organisation and maintenance of peace and security and for the enforcement of surrender terms on enemy states. The fulfilment of this pledge will involve British action in South East Europe... The many political and economic problems of this area, if left unresolved, may prevent the establishment of peace and security and may threaten their maintenance in the future.

It went on to outline Britain's interest in the region, and explain HMG's reasons for wanting to play a leading role in its post-war reconstruction:-

Great Britain's interest in South Eastern Europe is first her general interest in world peace and prosperity. As a world power dependent for her own prosperity on international trade and with possessions in every continent she cannot disinterest

herself from disorders in any part of the world. Many recent wars have started in the Balkans and, if pre-war antagonisms are not removed, South Eastern Europe will remain a potential storm centre. By abdicating our responsibilities for the general settlement of this region we may moreover encourage the growth of zones of influence leading to the division of Europe into rival camps under the leadership respectively of the UK and the USSR which in the long run is bound to be detrimental to Anglo-Soviet relations.⁴⁵

This clarifies a key point: namely, that at this stage the establishment of post-war peace and security under the auspices of continued Three Power co-operation was the *sine qua non* of British political thinking. The Balkan region, with its plethora of problems and history as a "political storm centre", demanded attention - it could not be allowed to foment future unrest which could ultimately prove deleterious to British prosperity (and in particular her commercial interests, which would inevitably suffer should further crises emerge). This attention, however, would have to take the form of tripartite intervention - any other course would lead to a divergence of interests; and, possibly, to the establishment of spheres of influence. As far as the FO were concerned, this latter tendency had to be resisted at all costs. The politics of consensus could produce and safeguard peace and security for the longer term. The politics of divergence would only lead to conflict and chaos.

With the broad parameters of policy established, the paper turned to consider the particular importance of the Balkan region to the British:-

South Eastern Europe has moreover particular historical and geographical significance for this country. It is the road to the Middle East. Unrest in the Balkans may spread to adjacent areas which are of vital interest to the British Empire because of our lines of communication through the Mediterranean and Red Sea and the oil supplies in Iraq and Persia, while the effective domination of South Eastern Europe by a rival Great Power would constitute a direct threat to these vital interests.

Little needs to be added to this, so complete is the above summary. The FO clearly felt that the main political requirement facing HMG was the preservation of the war-time Alliance, and its conversion to a peace-time role.

It offered the only hope for keeping a region as volatile as the Balkans under control. The threat of future disruption would increase if the countries - or, rather, peoples - of the region were left to their own devices. Active intervention, and the imposition of an internationally agreed post-war settlement, was therefore both justifiable and necessary. The only alternative - unilateralism - might resolve local difficulties, but only by putting other more important interests in jeopardy.

A few further points should be made about the commitments which the FO felt should be made. As far as priorities and geo-political considerations were concerned, it is fair to say that "the British approached the Balkans from the south."⁴⁶ Of the "inescapable commitments", those outlined for the Balkans concentrated upon the southern littoral and the adjacent islands. The Dodecanese were identified an area of particular interest because they threatened to provide the basis for a future dispute between Greece and Turkey. The occupation of these islands "as a purely British commitment" was consonant with the desire to maintain peace in an area close to an identified communications route. The commitments which the paper advocated for the Greek mainland also reflected this. These included "a small combatant force" for Athens "to support the interim Greek administration which it is hoped may be set up there as a prelude to the restoration of constitutional Government", and a detachment for Salonica which would help secure the removal of Bulgarian troops from Greek Thrace.⁴⁷ The "desirable commitments" outlined included the despatch of a British force to Bulgaria, and, if possible, Albania. The Bulgarian commitment was suggested with a clear long term objective in mind. "Our interest," the author argued, "lies in preventing the extension of Soviet influence towards the Straits and the Mediterranean."⁴⁸ The value of these occupation forces would be twofold: they would clearly demonstrate Britain's interest in the future of that part of the world (and therefore preserve her claim to a role commensurate with her Great Power status); and they would also ensure that Bulgaria evacuated territories seized from Greece and Yugoslavia. They would also help check the spread of Soviet influence, which

might otherwise be advanced through Moscow's penetration of what was regarded as a traditionally Russophile state.

However, and in spite of considerations of the latter sort, it would be wrong to conclude from this paper that the British policy-makers were departing from their oft-stated commitment to multilateralism in general, and co-operation with Russia in particular. British antipathy towards the Soviet Union, and a desire to limit her influence in the Balkan region, are too often taken for granted, and cited as key determinants of British policy in the latter stages of the war - usually as a result of the apparently unilateralist stance adopted by the British *vis-à-vis* Greece. While there was of course an element of truth in this - the British were undoubtedly anxious to limit as far as possible the spread of Soviet influence in the direction of the Eastern Mediterranean - it is wrong to over-stress this point. It must be remembered that Greece was a somewhat atypical case - at least as far as the politics of the war-time alliance were concerned. The British had for some time been "taking the lead" where Allied relations with the Greek resistance organisations and political factions were concerned; and, moreover, had done so with the apparent consent of their Allies.⁴⁹ The Russians, in particular, had consistently pronounced themselves ignorant of - and disinterested in - the situation in Greece (a state of affairs which, as we shall see, would change all too soon); and had therefore conceded the initiative to the British.⁵⁰ The British therefore continued to operate a "business-as-usual" approach towards Greece which, though essentially unilateral (and envisaging as far as possible the minimisation of Soviet influence), was not incompatible with the general policy of tripartite collaboration. In other areas where political initiatives were either envisaged or pursued, the British adhered fairly rigorously to the Four Power blueprint established at Moscow. The Bulgarian occupation proposal contained in this paper was a case in point; for, as it pointed out - and in spite of all the arguments in favour of a British role in Bulgaria - "there can be no question of any British occupation except in agreement with the Russians."⁵¹

Evidence from other FO papers during this period tends to confirm that in the first months of 1944 the British policy-makers continued to be governed by the blueprint established at the Moscow Conference. The policy of collaboration was pursued, even though on a host of issues the Soviets proved obdurate, even truculent. Warner, for one, felt that this obduracy was not indicative of the general abandonment of co-operation by Russia.⁵² Furthermore, and as Wilson pointed out, the Soviets had in fact co-operated in a number of instances; and in many of the cases where they had proved most difficult, they could hardly be expected to back down. As he explained, "the implementation of Russia's policy in Eastern Europe (whatever it may be) will always be a matter of more urgent importance to them than to us and therefore one on which they will be sorely tempted to take unilateral action if they do not think we are prepared to act reasonably."⁵³ Sargent, ever the pragmatist, argued that it was inevitable that frictions should emerge between war-time Allies, especially in cases where several of the Allies involved were relatively inexperienced when it came to diplomatic activity.⁵⁴ He was therefore inclined to adopt a tolerant attitude where occasional Soviet lapses were concerned:-

Although some of them... raise what may be fundamental political issues on which the Soviet Government are determined to maintain their point of view, even at the cost of direct disagreement with Great Britain and the US, as a whole the incidents arise, I am certain, out of ignorance and clumsiness, and are not the result of ill-will or careful calculation.

In any case, and as he was quick to point out, the British were in no position to rock the boat. They had to adhere to the policy of collaboration until and unless circumstances confirmed it had failed; their longer term interests demanded no less.⁵⁵

Throughout this period, the belief in collaboration - and more importantly the commitment to collaboration - persisted. The policy-makers were, nevertheless, on the horns of dilemma; and clearly appreciated as much. On the one hand, they wanted - indeed needed - the policy of collaboration to work, to believe that the Soviets would live up to their promises. On the other,

they had only the vaguest notion of what the Soviets intended; and, faced with various examples of Soviet obduracy, had good cause to doubt Moscow's commitment to genuine co-operation in the longer. The evidence contained in the various long term forecasts and planning studies suggests that up to May 1944, the policy-makers gave the Soviets the benefit of the doubt. However, and as Eden himself was well aware, the future was far from certain; and British policy remained dangerously committed to the whim of fortune. His response to Sargent's paper of 1st April was particularly revealing:-

Sir Orme Sargent is reassuring. I would dearly love to accept his summing up, for I share his valuation of Anglo-Soviet understanding. But I confess to growing apprehension that Russia has vast aims and that these may include the domination of Eastern Europe and the "communising" of much that remains.⁵⁶

As subsequent events demonstrated all too well, Eden's fears - and the dilemma around which they were woven - would soon be transferred onto a higher plain.

Chapter II: Churchill, the Foreign Office and the Politics of Collaboration - the Debate on the Atlantic Charter and the Four Power Declaration, March-April 1944

On 25th January 1944 Anthony Eden sent Winston Churchill a long minute on the question of the western frontier of the Soviet Union. The Foreign Secretary saw no reason to oppose a revision of these frontiers in favour of the USSR, because, as he told the Prime Minister, "the boundaries now asked for by the Russians fall short of the boundaries of Tsarist Russia. I am convinced that we should agree to all these claims." Eden was, however, concerned about the timing of any announcement of British support for such frontier adjustments. A premature declaration might, he felt, lead to difficulties; and therefore, as he explained, "we should maintain our decision not formally and publicly to recognise them before the peace settlement, as otherwise we should have a clamour here and abroad about violating the Atlantic Charter." Eden's readiness to concede the strength of the Soviet claims was motivated by a developed sense of pragmatism. His minute of 25th January had been prompted by an earlier paper by the Prime Minister, in which Churchill had argued that the circumstances prevailing at the end of the war would probably make Soviet claims irresistible. "The Russians," he had warned, "may very soon be in physical possession of these territories, and it is absolutely certain that we should never attempt to turn them out."¹

These minutes show that both Churchill and Eden were prepared to concede *de facto* recognition of the situation which the "tremendous victories" of the Red Army had created. *De jure* recognition, however, was another matter. Political considerations, domestic and international, made this far more problematical. The politics of the Alliance, and in particular the principles upon which it was supposedly based, imposed serious constraints upon the policies of the Allied States in general, and the Western Powers in particular.

For the British policymakers, these constraints were especially acute. The FO had long since realised that military victory would devolve certain

political responsibilities upon the Allies. They also appreciated that, unless they were considered properly and in advance, these responsibilities would make the problems of managing what Hitler described as "the most unnatural Alliance in the history of the world"² increasingly tortuous: and that this in turn would have obvious implications for the settlement of outstanding political questions in the post-war period. For the British (or at least the FO), who regarded the preservation of the wartime Alliance as the *sine qua non* of long term foreign policy objectives, this was a particularly serious state of affairs. In their opinion, the myriad political problems which they believed would arise in the post-hostilities and post-war periods could only be resolved satisfactorily if the three Great Powers remained committed to a policy of genuine and tripartite collaboration.³

In the circumstances, therefore, it is easy to see why the Great Power Conferences of late 1943 had been regarded as so important by the British. Before these meetings, discussions on political questions (and especially those of exclusively post-war significance) had been kept to a minimum. War-time diplomacy had developed a somewhat surreal air: the efficacy of the war-time military alliance became the key consideration, and political distractions were left unresolved "for later consideration." The political agreements that were concluded between the Great Powers were left deliberately vague and "open to interpretation", so as not to cause offence to any contracting - or indeed non-contracting - party. War-time foreign policy dealt in abstractions: woolly principles were the order of the day.

This rigid adherence to what amounted to an apolitical stratagem had caused a great deal of anxiety in British foreign policy-making circles.⁴ Their commitment to what was in effect a 'non-policy' meant that the blueprint for future Great Power collaboration remained substantially unresolved: and, consequently, that there was a worrying lack of consensus on how to deal with a variety of key post-hostilities and post-war issues which were crowding in upon the Allies. It was, therefore, hardly surprising that the British seized upon

the opportunity afforded by the Moscow Foreign Secretaries' Conference to consider this blueprint with their Great Power partners; and to lay the foundations for what they hoped would be fruitful co-operation in the longer term. The agreement on the Four Power Declaration had marked an important stage in this process.

According to Sir Alexander Cadogan, the signing of the Moscow Four Power Declaration had been important because it had moved the Allies closer to an ultimate goal - "the exact application of principles" by the three Great Powers *vis-à-vis* the post-war settlement.⁵ Furthermore, and as we have seen, this document certainly influenced the policy-makers in their initial attempts at post-war planning. It had not, however, guaranteed that the ideals which it claimed to uphold would be observed in practice. Indeed, elements in the FO had warned - both before and after the Moscow Conference - against placing too much faith in a document that dealt more with metaphysics than with practicalities.⁶ Cadogan himself appreciated that the success of the Conference would be determined by the future behaviour of the Great Powers. He had briefed the British Ambassador in Washington, Lord Halifax, on his main hope: that the Conference had initiated an evolutionary process which would encourage the Allies to collaborate more effectively in the political sphere, establishing in fact the principle of joint responsibility to which the British attached such importance. Cadogan's enthusiasm had been piqued by the decision to set up the EAC: however, as Cadogan would subsequently confirm, the issuing of the Four Power Declaration had complemented the creation of Eden's talking shop, and was therefore no less significant from the British point of view. As Cadogan told Halifax, the proof of the pudding would lie in the eating: the efficacy of the declaration and commission - and therefore the success of the conference - would be determined by the way in which they were utilised in the months ahead.⁷

Unfortunately, the EAC soon failed to live up to Cadogan's expectations. A combination of American intransigence and Russian

ambivalence effectively neutered this body, and forced the Allies to fall back on an unsatisfactory regimen of triangular telegraphing - with predictable results for the efficacy of tripartite collaboration.⁸ As events soon showed, the value of the Four Power Declaration was, similarly, less than Cadogan *et al.* might have hoped.

* * *

On 31st March 1944 Churchill sent Eden a minute in which he set out his fears about Soviet policy in Europe.⁹ The spectre of aggrandisement was never far from Churchill's thoughts: even legitimate Soviet demands were apt to trigger alarms in the mind of the Prime Minister. The response which he advocated in such circumstances was invariably the same: he would seek to invoke the Anglo-American Alliance, in all its strength and influence, to dampen untoward Russian ardour; and, circumventing the cluttered diplomatic channels, he would rely on the efficacy of his personal diplomacy with Stalin and US President Franklin D. Roosevelt to restore unanimity to the Anglo-Soviet-American camp. In this instance, his advice followed the classic formula:-

I think it of the utmost importance that the President and I should endeavour to concoct a joint message to Stalin on general policy... I also think a short category of points of difference which require adjustment between the President and me, and the State Department and the Foreign Office, is needed.

In other words, the Anglo-Saxon powers should concert their efforts to bring the Russians 'on-side' with the common policy, as soon as the British and Americans had agreed on what the essentials of that policy should be.

On this occasion, the Prime Minister was particularly worried about the problems that would arise if the Allies failed to uphold the ideals embodied in the Atlantic Charter. Asking Eden for his views, he outlined his own thoughts on the subject:-

What are we to say to our Parliaments and nations about modifications in the Atlantic Charter? We are being blamed today for departures from idealistic principles. Actually, all this is done for the sake of Russia, which is resolved to seize the Baltic States and take what she wishes from Poland and Roumania. Nor do we know that a second series of demands may not follow her further military victories.

He continued in a similar vein. "Any division between Britain and the US will make us powerless in this matter," he warned Eden; but "together we can probably control the situation." Churchill's motives were clear. By invoking the spirit of the Atlantic Charter, he hoped to open up a new avenue in a wider diplomatic struggle: the attempt to foster a general understanding on the reconstruction of Europe and the settlement of outstanding political questions. He had received short shrift in recent attempts at *ad hoc* personal mediation - most notably over Poland - and was searching for a new line of attack.¹⁰ The Atlantic Charter seemed to provide him with a convenient opportunity.

In fact, Eden had already discussed the question of Soviet adherence to the Atlantic Charter with Churchill; and had sent him a minute on the subject on 26th March.¹¹ The Russians had associated themselves with the Resolution adopted at the Inter-Allied Meeting at St James Palace on 26th September, 1941, in which the various Allied Governments had "made known their adherence to the common principles of policy set forth in the Atlantic Charter and their intention to co-operate to the best of their ability in giving effect to them." At this meeting, the then Soviet Ambassador, Ivan Maisky, had made a statement declaring that his Government agreed "with the fundamental principles of the Atlantic Charter."¹² He had, however, qualified the position by adding the following codicil to his statement:-

Considering that the practical application of the principles [of the Charter] would necessarily adapt itself to the circumstances, needs and historic peculiarities of particular countries, the Soviet Government can state that a consistent application of these principles will secure the most energetic support on the part of the Government of the Soviet Union.

Eden did not dwell on Maisky's statement in his minute to the Prime Minister. He had, however, made his point. Maisky had been deliberately vague in setting out how the Charter should be interpreted; and the Soviet Government's adherence to the Charter, which was conditional on that basis, was therefore of little significance. Furthermore, and as Eden's concluding remarks pointed out, "adherence to the Charter does not constitute a binding contract in the legal sense":-

It is rather a declaration of intentions. If the Soviets fail to live up to that declaration, we and other adherents would have a political grievance, but the Soviets would not be guilty of a breach of a treaty obligation.

Maisky's qualifications had therefore been irrelevant. If the "circumstances, needs and historic peculiarities" of the Soviet Union failed to justify Soviet behaviour - and the historic peculiarities of the Soviet Union could hardly have offered any comfort on this score - the Soviet Government could still argue that they were not bound by any legal commitment as far as the Charter was concerned.

Churchill was having none of this, however. "This question is one of the greatest importance," he told Eden on 1st April.¹³ The Prime Minister had been infuriated by attacks from the political left criticising the Government in general - and himself and Eden in particular - for "weak departures from the Atlantic Charter." He was not prepared to accept this opprobrium, which he believed was due to others. As he told Eden, "the only reason why we and the Americans are falling below the Atlantic Charter level is in order to keep in step with Russian territorial demands - for the Baltic States, for part of East Prussia, for the Curzon Line, for Bessarabia, and there may be more." The whole issue revolved around what the Soviets believed they had acceded to; and, therefore, on their interpretation of the Charter. They seemed to be arguing that the Charter was not a Treaty but a Declaration of intention; and that, in any case, complaints about territorial aggrandisement were not reasonable as far as the territories accorded to Russia under the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement of 1939 were concerned.¹⁴ Churchill was not

ready to defer to this interpretation, and certainly not to the implication that Britain had accepted the validity of the Molotov-Ribbentrop deal:-

Did they at any time suggest this to us? Is there anything on record between us on the subject? Have we at any time given any formal, official or public indication that we knew all the time that they were playing on the basis of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Line? My impression is that we have not done so and that the whole world thinks that the Russians are committed to non-aggrandisement.

The Prime Minister certainly had a point; but he had been well aware for some time that the Soviets were intent upon pressing these claims. The issue had caused serious problems during the negotiations on the Anglo-Soviet Treaty in 1942.¹⁵ In any case, in continuing his minute, Churchill moved on to more contentious ground:-

I also feel that nothing would disturb the Russians more than the fact that it would have to be made public that they started from the Ribbentrop-Molotov Line, of which they are ashamed in principle, but which they are resolved to profit by in fact. Thus, in this matter, we have a very powerful leverage for discussion with them, and I am pretty sure that they would go a long way to have our support for their view of the starting point of the Atlantic Charter being for them condoned by the Allies.

Churchill had already threatened Stalin with the prospect of a parliamentary statement on Poland, to the effect that "we can recognise no forcible transference of territory."¹⁶ Such questions, he had argued, would have to be decided at the post-war peace conference. Stalin had however, called Churchill's bluff, and warned him that such a statement could have dire consequences for Anglo-Soviet relations:-

Of course you are free to make whatever statement you please in the House of Commons - that is your affair. But if you do make such a statement, I shall consider that you have committed an unjust and unfriendly act towards the Soviet Union... I feel that the method of threats and discrediting, if it continues, will not conduce to our collaboration.¹⁷

The Prime Minister had already complained that "force and facts" were the only factors that Stalin considered when determining Soviet policy.¹⁸ In this

case, both the force and the facts favoured the Soviets. The Russians would certainly have been embarrassed by any public reference to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Line. Conversely, they would have been delighted to receive the backing of the Western Powers for their territorial claims. This did not alter the underlying reality of the situation: which was that, whatever the British may have done in the way of denunciation, the Soviets would have retained the political initiative.

The military balance of power in Eastern Europe - the main determinant of political strength at this juncture - was undoubtedly weighted in Moscow's favour. It may be a moot point: but the question "who needed the Alliance the most?" - especially where deciding the future of Eastern Europe was concerned - must be taken into account when considering the political position. Without dwelling on specifics, it is clear that, as matters stood in April 1944, the political and strategic situation effectively precluded the public denunciation of Soviet policy at this time. Churchill knew this, and in spite of his violent criticism - even condemnation - of Russian behaviour (which caused him no end of anxiety about the future), the Prime Minister remained convinced of the need to maintain close relations with the Soviet Union.¹⁹ It was not so much political strategy as the tactics by which to achieve it that dominated Churchill's thinking. The realities of domestic and international politics precluded an open breach with Russia. The patience of the British public would have been sorely tested by a premature outbreak of 'cold war' rhetoric, and not only because of the revelations about previous policy that this would have led to. Senior policymakers were well aware of the burdens that a conflict with Russia would place upon Britain's already depleted resources, and that there would be little prospect of Britain emerging victorious from such a struggle. The commitment of the United States to a conflict with Russia was, moreover, uncertain. Churchill may have argued the merits of an Anglo-American alliance as a bulwark or deterrent, but the American themselves were displaying little enthusiasm for a protracted commitment to European security once the war ended. For a variety of reasons, therefore, it was clear that any attempt to

restrain the Soviets would have to be pursued first and foremost through diplomatic channels - and more specifically through the agreed policy of collaboration. Provoking a first class row with Moscow at this stage of the war by accusing Stalin of a policy of aggrandisement would hardly have expedited this.²⁰

Unsurprisingly, therefore, Eden moved quickly to head off the Prime Minister. On 5th April he sent Churchill a minute replying to the latter's note of the 1st.²¹ This began by dealing with the issue of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Line:-

The Russians never told us explicitly that their adherence to the Atlantic Charter was made with the reservation that territorial aggrandisement only began west of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Line, nor is there anything on record between us on the subject.

Eden went on to play down the whole question of interpretation, arguing instead that it was practical evidence which mattered. "The verbiage can of course be twisted to mean anything as occasion requires," he told Churchill. As far as the Russo-Polish frontier was concerned, Stalin had shown a willingness to commit himself to the Curzon Line, "which the Russians regard as a very considerable concession." Pushing for further concessions might prove counter-productive; for, as Eden warned Churchill, "any mention by us of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Line at this stage might tempt them to revert to that line and so to open their mouths wider than they are doing at the moment."

In any case, much of the "leverage" that Churchill had referred to had been dissipated by previous acquiescence - public and private - to the strength of the Soviet claims over the Baltic States and Bessarabia. In doing so, the British had established that, in principle, they would entertain Russian claims to territories in advance of the 1939 frontiers. Furthermore, the problem of the Atlantic Charter had now transcended the issue of Soviet aggrandisement:-

As to our falling below the Atlantic Charter level, I am afraid that quite apart from keeping in step with Russian territorial demands, we should have had to state sooner or later that [this]

declaration did not necessarily apply to enemy states so to assert our power to detach pieces of Germany and other enemy territories at the Peace Settlement.

Eden had presented Churchill with an argument that the Prime Minister, for all his rhetoric, could not refute: namely, that the Atlantic Charter was rapidly becoming a political liability. Whatever its original purpose, it was now in serious danger of unravelling in the face of changing circumstances. Its syntax was flawed: it could not function as a comprehensive blueprint for peace; nor could it be used to coerce its former adherents into accepting a predetermined and legally binding settlement.

Churchill was not convinced by Eden's paper. On 16th April, he sent a further minute to the Foreign Office, asking for clarification on several points.²² The Prime Minister had been heartened by a speech given by Cordell Hull, the US Secretary of State, on 9th April, in which he had set out his vision of future Allied policy. The most significant extract of this speech read as follows:-

As the Nazis go down to defeat they will inevitably leave behind them in Germany and the satellite states of South Eastern Europe a legacy of confusion. It is essential that we and our Allies establish the controls necessary to bring order out of this chaos as rapidly as possible, and do everything possible to prevent its spread to the German-occupied countries of eastern and western Europe while they are in the throes of re-establishing government and repairing the most brutal ravages of the war. If confusion should spread throughout Europe, it is difficult to over-emphasise the seriousness of the disaster that may follow. Therefore, for us, for the world, and for the countries concerned a stable Europe should be an immediate objective of Allied policy.²³

This had persuaded Churchill that his favourite theme of Anglo-American unity - as expressed in his minute of 31st March - might still have mileage in it. Hull had apparently thrown his weight behind a policy of fulfilling responsibilities to the liberated countries of Europe, and had combined this with a call for the Big Three to establish a common policy on post-hostilities questions. He had also advocated a similar approach for dealing with the Axis Satellites and Germany itself. The Americans were preaching the

politics of consensus, and warning of dire consequences should this approach to post-war reconstruction fail. These were sentiments completely in accord with Churchill's own. Buoyed up by this, he ordered the FO to reconsider Eden's minute of 5th April. Churchill clearly felt that with the Americans apparently 'on-side', the Russians could be prevailed upon to ameliorate their attitude and adhere more closely to the principles of the Atlantic Charter, verbiage notwithstanding.

Sir Alexander Cadogan responded by sending Churchill a more realistic appraisal of the situation on 20th April.²⁴ As he now told Churchill, Hull's rhetoric was irrelevant: the powers of leverage available to the Western Allies were ephemeral. Cadogan did not bother to repeat Eden's earlier arguments; he merely repeated the position established in the minute of 5th April. "I have no change to suggest in the Foreign Secretary's minute," he commented, somewhat tersely. He had already tackled Churchill over the latter's request for "a short category of points of difference which require adjustment" in a minute of 17th April. "Most of the points which you mention are at present under discussion with Mr. Stettinius (the US Under-Secretary of State) and his delegation," he had written. "I wonder whether it would not be better, at the end of their visit, to review our discussions with them and see what points you might then wish to raise with the President."²⁵

Cadogan shared the dislike of his Whitehall peers for Churchill's attachment to 'personal approach' diplomacy; and, especially, the Prime Minister's correspondence with Roosevelt. He was also rather worried by the prospect of Churchill "running the show" while Eden was away on sick-leave.²⁶ Churchill had a propensity to "crash into policy" when his curiosity was piqued, a fact that irritated Cadogan immensely.²⁷ He was in no mood to allow the Prime Minister to run roughshod over foreign policy during Eden's absence; and was determined that, where Great Power relations and the interpretation of the Atlantic Charter were concerned, any interventions by Churchill were to be met with resolute resistance. He had given Churchill some warning of this on

17th April, telling him that the question of the Atlantic Charter was in a rather different category from the other points he had raised; and enclosing some notes on it which, he hoped, would satisfy Churchill's curiosity.²⁸

Cadogan clearly had little time for Churchill's interventions in the realm of foreign affairs. It is, however, unfair to suggest that the Permanent Under-Secretary's exasperation reflected any personal antipathy towards the Prime Minister, or that he doubted Churchill's ability or judgement *per se*. Cadogan was exhausted, and admitted that Churchill, too, was buckling under the strain imposed by a multitude of problems.²⁹ Under the circumstances, the Prime Minister's grasp of the minutiae of policy was perhaps bound to slip. His minutes were invariably *ad hoc* reactions to immediate developments, not detailed appreciations of policy and the metaphysical reasoning upon which this was predicated. The job of bringing the Prime Minister up to speed - and of correcting his lapses of perspective - fell to Cadogan *et al*. The memorandum on the Atlantic Charter which the Permanent Under Secretary enclosed with his minute of 17th April is a classic example of this.³⁰

Cadogan's memorandum reads like an exercise in pragmatism. From the outset, he made it perfectly clear that, for all its idealism, and in spite of the rhetoric on specific issues of principle, the Charter could only be interpreted in its entirety, and with due regard for the circumstances of the day. As he told the Prime Minister, "the Charter must be read as a whole. Political and economic security, prosperity and independence are ideals to which we can all subscribe. We must however recognise that adjustments may have to be made between their requirements in practice." Cadogan argued that in any given political situation - for example, when deciding on national frontiers - rival issues would have to be reconciled in ways that might seem to contradict the Charter. In order to satisfy economic desiderata, it might be necessary to compromise principles of ethnography.³¹ It was simply not possible to avoid some form of compromise. Pragmatism dictated that a modicum of expediency should be applied; for, as Cadogan pointed out:-

The principles of the Charter must be interpreted flexibly and reconciled on broad lines if our "hopes for a better future of the world" are to be realised in substantial measure... In any case if we do not wish to see the Charter discredited and disregarded we must be very careful to apply it in each particular case in such a manner that it does not endanger world security, which, in the present state of the world, is an over-riding issue. Without security, indeed, no progress can be made in the realisation of any of the other objectives of the Charter.

The achievement of security for its adherents was, it would seem, the *sine qua non* for the Charter's implementation. The need to realise this target justified the compromising of "other objectives": after all, one could hardly make an omelette without breaking eggs.

In the circumstances, it was hardly surprising that Cadogan continued by stating that "we cannot make any promises to the enemy and the only possible terms on which we are prepared to make peace with the enemy states and their Satellites are those of unconditional surrender." If the Charter was of necessity to be "interpreted flexibly" when applied to its adherents, the enemy states could hardly expect to receive preferential treatment. Cadogan went on to explain what should happen:-

In formulating our final terms we shall bear in mind the principles of the Charter. But the enemy states and their satellites cannot hold us to the letter of the Charter. Civilised Governments temper justice with mercy, but criminals cannot claim of them, as of right, all the liberties and privileges of the unoffending citizen, without some expiation.

This was fine rhetoric, but motivated as much by realism as idealism. Cadogan knew as well as anyone that the Soviet Union's "security requirements" were likely to transcend the limits of reason - at least as far as Western public opinion was likely to be concerned. Stalin was not likely to "temper justice with mercy"; but if he could be satiated at the expense of the enemy states, he might be persuaded to minimise his demands against fellow subscribers to the Atlantic Charter. As far as "leverage" was concerned, Cadogan appreciated that Britain's only hope of prising loose the grip which the Red Army was inexorably tightening over Eastern Europe lay with

diplomatic chicanery and a policy of qualified concession. Stalin would have to be bought off - any haggling would be over price, not principle. The Charter was intended to provide security, and would therefore have to take Soviet sensibilities into account. Without Soviet support, its already weak verbiage would cease to have any real relevance. If the price of securing Russian support for the sort of political consensus that the Charter was designed to foster was deference to the Soviet interpretation of that declaration, then so be it. If this, in turn, entailed some acquiescence on certain material demands - especially if the 'material' in question had already been prejudiced by military developments - then, as far as public opinion was concerned (if not private conscience), it was better to pay in the coin of the enemy.

The most revealing paragraph of the memorandum, however, put the problem facing the British clearly into perspective. As Cadogan told Churchill:-

Seeing that the Charter has been subscribed to by all the United Nations it is evident that no very precise interpretation of it ought to be made by any one State. The exact application of its principles will indeed be the subject of further agreements between all of them. The Moscow Declaration was the first step in this direction.

Cadogan's motives here are somewhat obscure: he could have been attempting an oblique criticism of Britain's Great Power partners. He was certainly unhappy with the recent upsurge in Soviet obduracy *vis-à-vis* Poland, which was threatening to undermine the prospect of future collaboration (at least as far as interpreting the Charter was concerned). He may also have been irritated by the American habit of using the Charter as a vehicle for criticising Europe's colonial legacy, which rankled in British circles. These were not, however, his primary concerns at this juncture. Cadogan's other aims notwithstanding, one thing is clear: he was anxious to prevent Churchill from embarking upon what would have been the potentially disastrous course of unilateral interpretation. Cadogan was effectively admitting that, as matters stood, the Charter *meant* everything and nothing. It had never been given a definitive form acceptable to all of its main adherents. In doing so, he

unwittingly echoed the words of the famous Radical polemicist Richard Cobden, who, a century before, had been highly critical of an earlier example of woolly diplomatic verbiage - the phrase "balance of power":-

So far as we can understand... [this] is a mere chimera - a creation of a politician's brain - a phantasm without definite form or tangible existence - a mere conjunction of syllables, forming words which convey sound without meaning.³²

Cobden may have been writing about the theory of the balance of power, but his words are appropriate to this later instance. If a more modern epithet were to be applied to the Charter, it would probably be the unfortunate aphorism "sound-bite."

Cadogan, however, did not seem unduly concerned by this lack of substance. The psychological importance of the Moscow Four Power Declaration, and indeed of the improvement in Anglo-Soviet relations that had followed the conferences at the end of 1943, explains this display of *sang-froid*. The policy-making establishment in Britain felt that the Moscow Conference had resulted in a genuine breakthrough where Anglo-Soviet relations were concerned.³³ Whether they were right or not was somewhat irrelevant: the fact was that they *believed* that an important breakthrough had been made, and - for a while at least - acted accordingly. This exercised a considerable influence over the way in which they regarded questions of this nature in the months that followed.

The Four Power Declaration had been promulgated in an attempt to translate the principles of the Atlantic Charter into a more practical form. Now, six months on, Cadogan was forced to admit that this "first step" had yet to be built upon. This relative failure was indicative of a malaise that was afflicting the whole field of foreign policy at this time: a malaise that had little to do with principle, and everything to do with practical power politics. As we have seen, in the months before the Moscow Conference the British had diligently pursued a strategy of putting aside long term political issues for the duration of hostilities; and had instead concentrated almost exclusively on matters

pertaining to the on-going military struggle. They had avoided as many sensitive political issues as possible; and referred those which it had been impossible to ignore altogether to a putative peace conference, at which problems could be resolved with everybody safe in the knowledge that victory had already been secured.³⁴ As the current situation demonstrated all too clearly, this strategy continued to underwrite British policy.

Cadogan was tacitly admitting that collaboration under the auspices of the Four Power Declaration had proved a relative disappointment. The high principles of the Atlantic Charter had not been adapted in quite the way that the British, at least, had hoped for. This did not mean that he regarded the Declaration with less enthusiasm than hitherto; or that he was beginning to question the current policy of collaboration. What it did mean, however, was that Cadogan believed that the policy of the pre-conference period still had much to recommend it: and that if, as was looking likely, the translation of principle into practice was at this stage unrealistic, it would have to be deferred. The issues which the Four Power Declaration had failed to resolve would have to be considered afresh, probably at the peace conference. In the meantime, the old policy of papering over the cracks should continue to operate. The Allies would continue to issue statements outlining 'agreed' positions; and, through behind-the-scenes diplomacy, reach interim compromises which would keep the *modus operandi* of the war-time Alliance intact - hopefully without compromising the post-war settlement in the process. Short-term expediency of this sort offered the prospect of dividends in the longer term. It would maintain close relations, and perhaps even result in the implementation of the terms of the Four Power Declaration. It would also improve the prospects for collaboration in the longer term - which was what the British wanted, and what the Charter was supposed to facilitate.

This helps resolve an apparent inconsistency in Cadogan's argument: his insistence that the precise interpretation of the Charter ought not to be the prerogative of any one State with his readiness to recognise the provisional

position set down by the Soviet Government in 1941. Referring to Maisky's statement of 26th September 1941 - that the practical application of its principles would "necessarily adapt itself to the circumstances, needs and historic peculiarities of particular countries" - he advised Churchill that "this seems to be common sense and might be re-emphasised."³⁵ In practice, of course, this would mean conceding the initiative to the Soviets - but, in doing so, it would devolve some responsibility upon them. By acceding to the Russian view, the British would be giving little away - certainly not in the *de facto* sense. The Red Army, by entering any given territory, would ensure that physical control would be exercised under Stalin's writ. The "circumstances" existing in these territories would be beyond British influence, at least while the war lasted. The "needs" would be the responsibility of the occupying (or liberating) power. The "historic peculiarities" could be argued over at leisure as soon as the prevailing "circumstances" permitted. By agreeing to let the Soviets exercise the initiative under these terms, the British were conceding nothing that the march of events would not have prejudiced sooner or later. Concomitantly, the Soviets were bound more closely to a declaration of intent which, even though it was not legally binding, they would be hard pressed to escape or redefine - not least because they themselves had promulgated the working definition under which it was operating. This diplomatic chicanery was, it is true, a bodge: if the Soviets refused to play along, and "ploughed a lone furrow", the British would find themselves open to charges of culpability. In such circumstances, the acceptance of the Soviet demands would begin to look like appeasement or, at least, smack of criminal naivety.

Operating with the benefit of hindsight, it is now possible to level accusations of this sort - but to do so without proper reference to the context of April 1944 serves no purpose. When the prevailing circumstances of the day are taken into account, a different picture emerges. The British were clearly in no position to coerce the Soviets into accepting their interpretation of the Charter. Force and facts: there was simply no way out of this conundrum. If Stalin was to be forced into compliance, the United States would have to play a

leading role in doing so. The British could play the part of willing assistant in any concerted campaign: alone, however, they were forced to attempt the finesse, and pull from the fire such brands as their relative weakness - and Soviet strength - permitted.

* * *

One crucial issue pertaining to this debate - perhaps the most important issue of all - was left untouched by Cadogan. Churchill had wanted to force the Soviets to adhere to the principles of the Atlantic Charter - to which he felt they were morally, if not legally, bound - by invoking the Anglo-American "special relationship." As he had told Eden, "together we can probably control the situation." In essence, therefore, Churchill was presuming that American support for his initiative - in word and deed - would be forthcoming. The question must surely arise, therefore: what was the American attitude to all of this; and, more importantly, what did the British policymakers understand it to be?

The evidence available to the British was not promising. Churchill may have claimed that a public Anglo-American commitment to upholding its principles would prove sufficient to hold Stalin to the Charter line - but in many respects this common front was every bit as ephemeral as the Soviet adherence to the principles of the Charter. The position has to be considered from the perspective of "force and facts." Britain alone was unequal to the task of coercing Russia; that was one of the main reasons for Churchill's enthusiasm for the idea of an Anglo-Saxon alliance. In order to persuade Stalin to adhere to the common line, the Western Powers would have to convince him of their commitment to action. Unfortunately, most of the available evidence suggested that, while the British had the will to act but lacked the means to do so, the Americans, who had the means, lacked the will.

US policy towards the Balkans - a region in which any clash between the Great Powers over the interpretation of the Atlantic Charter was certain to have repercussions - epitomised the problems facing Churchill. Roosevelt had already told the Prime Minister, in February, that he was "absolutely unwilling to police the Balkans."³⁶ Information from the British Embassy in Washington seemed to confirm the view that the Americans were anxious to avoid not only military involvement but also responsibility for the administration of civil affairs in the region in the post-hostilities period. The FO, alarmed at this news, instructed the British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, to take the matter up with the US authorities. As they explained, "we realise that the US are determined not to become involved in military operations in the Balkans, but their participation in the Control Commissions and other Inter-Allied machinery in the Balkans may be very valuable in the future and we do not want to encourage them to run out altogether."³⁷ Halifax, however, had remained pessimistic, and on 19th March had sent a detailed report on the attitude in Washington. In his opinion, American disinterest in the Balkans was manifest. Roosevelt's reluctance extended to "the whole Balkan field" and not merely to the realm of civil affairs. His objective was to transfer as many troops as he could to the Pacific theatre with the utmost speed: which meant that the participation of American troops in the military occupation of South East Europe was highly improbable. Indeed, as Halifax warned London, "if we try to involve them too deeply in Europe this might frighten them off the whole thing."³⁸

The FO was not to be put off, however. As we have seen, Cadogan informed Churchill on 17th April that most of the points the Prime Minister had raised in his minutes to Eden were being discussed with Stettinius and his State Department delegation.³⁹ Halifax had suggested in his telegram that the FO might use this opportunity to broach the subject of policy in South Eastern Europe with the Americans: and the FO set about drawing up a list of points for discussion with Freeman Matthews, Deputy Director of the State Department's Office of European Affairs. A paper to this effect, prepared by Hood, was forwarded to Jebb and submitted as a brief for Sargent on 14th

April.⁴⁰ As Hood pointed out, "it would be helpful if we could obtain from Mr. Stettinius some clarification of the attitude of Washington" on the question of possible US participation in "Inter-Allied action in Central and South Eastern Europe." Such information as the FO had been able to garner suggested that the Roosevelt Administration was ambivalent on this question. On the one hand, the War Department, President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff seemed anxious to minimise any American commitment: on the other, the State Department was pressing for a greater role when it came to advising the C-in-C, Middle East, on political matters concerning the Balkans. Jebb increased the level of uncertainty by noting in the margin of Hood's paper that one of the Stettinius party, "when tackled at dinner the other day, seemed to suggest that the Americans had a deep interest in the Balkans." Opinion in Washington seemed to be divided - though weighted more against involvement than for it. Hood therefore suggested that the FO should follow Halifax's advice of 19th March, noting that while it was "unrealistic to expect much help from the American military in cleaning up Central and South Eastern Europe... we should encourage the separate tendency of the State Department to take an interest in the Balkans."

The issue of American involvement was closely linked to a wider question - that of the longer term military commitments that might accrue to Great Britain in the post-hostilities period. The FO was at this time busy preparing an appreciation for the ACA Committee on the subject; and a paraphrase of this paper was included in Sargent's brief.⁴¹ Hood, who had been involved in the paper's production, doubted whether it would be possible to separate military and political affairs: a fact that, as he pointed out, was bound to complicate matters with the Americans. He was, nevertheless, convinced of the need to secure as much American involvement as possible in all aspects of policy:-

In most cases there is... a political commitment: administration... pending the emergence of a capable national government; administration of disputed areas pending allocation of sovereignty; participation in Allied machinery for the control of

enemy states. Whilst we must necessarily draw up our plans on the basis that we shall not receive any real help from the US Army, and that we must arrange matters as best we can with the Soviet Government, it is clearly in our interest to encourage the Americans to take as large an interest as possible in this area.⁴²

Hood's admission that some form of Anglo-Soviet agreement would have to be reached puts Cadogan's earlier comments about interpreting the Atlantic Charter firmly into perspective. Without American military support, it was even less likely that the Soviets would defer to British arguments; and, in what would amount to a basically two-Power division of responsibility in South East Europe, the weaker power - Britain - would have to tread carefully to safeguard her interests. Disputes over syntax would not improve the chances of securing collaboration.

The concern caused by the prospect of American non-involvement can be extrapolated from Hood's following remarks:-

Even if the US Government are not prepared to send any soldiers, it would greatly strengthen our hand in dealing with the situation if we could rely on the moral support of the US Government, and, in particular, if they can be induced to participate in the Inter-Allied Control Commissions and other machinery.

The situation that Hood was referring to was the sensitive - and precarious - position that the likely post-war distribution of power in the region portended: namely, the Soviet Union militarily ascendant, and consequently with a pronounced political advantage over a committed but weakened Britain. In such circumstances the moral support of the US would be invaluable. It would not of course be the same as military assistance; but it would be better than nothing.

Hood proceeded to outline policy options for maximising such potential advantages as still existed - in other words, how best to gain American aid. It would be wrong, he argued, to let slip in conversation that HMG assumed that the US Government was reluctant to commit itself to military involvement. It

would instead be wiser to focus on the possible advantages that might be gained by both Britain and the US should the latter accept even a reduced role. "We might," he suggested, "concentrate on persuading the US Government of the desirability of their participation in political and civil activities." Hood drew comfort from the token role promised in administering military relief, and the acceptance of a general obligation to participate in the procurement of supplies for relief in the Balkans during the military phase, which the US Government had made in earlier discussions. He was also cheered by the fact that, in spite of the attitude of the US Chiefs of Staff, the War Department's recent draft armistice terms for Bulgaria contemplated "an Anglo-American military occupation and control of Bulgaria on identical lines to their Three Power proposals for Germany." This suggested that, despite all the evidence to the contrary, it might still be possible to exploit American ambivalence - and the contradictory position of the federal departments - to secure some form of commitment.

Hood concluded his paper with what was perhaps the most revealing passage of the document. He was convinced that some form of American commitment to a role in South Eastern Europe could be anticipated:-

The main grounds... on which to base expectation of US participation in this area are the fact that the USA is a party to... the general commitments assumed... in the Moscow Four Power Declaration, [and], in particular, articles 1,2 and 4. Mr. Hull at any rate appears to recognise the need for the USA to take part in Allied action in SE Europe - see his recent speech of 9th April.

The articles to which Hood was referring are so significant as to be worth recapitulating:-

- 1) United action pledged for the prosecution of the war against the respective enemies will be continued for the organisation and maintenance of peace and security.
- 2) Those [Allied Powers] at war with a common enemy will act together in all matters relating to the surrender and disarmament of that enemy.

4) [The contracting Powers] recognise the necessity of establishing at the earliest practicable date a general international organisation, based on the principle of sovereign equality of all peace-loving states, and open to membership by all such states, large and small, for the maintenance of international peace and security.⁴³

Indeed, the Americans had sought to extend its terms of reference even further. The second article had originally continued with the words " ...and occupation of enemy territory and territory of other states", but this and other phrases had been dropped at the insistence of the Soviet Government.⁴⁴ The final form of verbiage (which, like that of the Atlantic Charter, left much open to interpretation) was relatively unimportant: it was clear that some form of commitment had been entered into. Moreover, and precisely because the Declaration had stemmed from an American proposal, it was fair to assume that they of all the Allies should adhere to it. Cadogan's advice to Churchill on 17th April had included the point that the principles of the Atlantic Charter, or more precisely their application, would be the subject of further agreements between all of the United Nations, and that the Moscow Four Power Declaration had been a first step in this direction. The Prime Minister had been encouraged by Hull's speech, in much the same manner as Hood. All in all, the opinion of the FO, as conveyed by Hood's paper, was that some commitment had been fixed *in principle* at Moscow; that this commitment had been accepted by *all* the signatories; and that, therefore, it should be possible to use this to secure some form of US participation in the reorganisation of South Eastern Europe. In the circumstances, therefore, the main thing was to take American sensibilities into account, and not to "scare them off." Moreover, the US Government had to be persuaded to volunteer as much material support as possible, as a fillip to the moral backing which the British needed. This explains why the FO were opposed to Churchill's approaching Roosevelt at this juncture: this, they feared, might jeopardise the chance of assistance in the longer term.

The situation in South Eastern Europe was discussed at a meeting in the Foreign Office on 18th April.⁴⁵ The American position was argued by

Freeman Matthews; the British were represented by Sargent, Sir Ralph Stevenson (British Ambassador to the Yugoslav Government-in-Exile), Oliver Harvey (Assistant Under Secretary responsible for supervising the Central Department, and previously Eden's Private Secretary), Douglas Howard (Head of the Southern Department), Jebb, Ward, and Lord Hood. The presence of so many senior FO officials reflected the importance attached to the discussion by the British. Sargent, who chaired the proceedings, wasted no time in setting out the British position. As the minutes of the meeting recorded:-

He explained that both the US Government and HM Government had undertaken certain responsibilities under the Moscow Four Power Declaration and it was thus necessary to consider what these undertakings represented in terms of commitments and to estimate the relative importance of the latter.

Sargent handed Matthews a copy of the memorandum "British Interests in South Eastern Europe", which had been presented to the ACA Cabinet Committee on 14th April. This was akin to placing all one's cards on the table: again, Sargent's candour indicated the significance which the FO attached to securing some form of US commitment. However, the optimism of Hood's paper and Halifax's telegrams - based on the apparent readiness of the State Department to pursue some sort of role - were swiftly dashed. As the minutes recorded:-

The American representative reiterated several times in the course of the meeting that the US military authorities were strongly opposed to accepting any commitments which would involve the despatch of American troops to any areas east of Italy.

The State Department may have been ready to subscribe in principle to the rhetoric of the US Secretary of State; but in reality it was constrained by the obstinacy of other federal departments, and this precluded any commitment on policy. Of course, it is important to remember that, whatever Halifax may have thought, the State Department's ideas of what American policy towards the Balkans should be were by no means identical to those of the British. Indeed, and as other developments suggested, there was a worrying lack of

consensus between London and Washington where this was concerned.⁴⁶ British faith in individuals or federal institutions in the US may have reflected their failure to grasp the fundamental realities of American government: that the power or influence of any one organ is circumscribed by the checks and balances exerted by other groups involved in the shaping of policy.⁴⁷ While this failure may have been caused by an inability to understand the idiosyncrasies of the American political system, it is more likely that it resulted from a bout of 'wishful thinking' - an understandable reaction caused by Britain's relative weakness and a subconscious tendency to gravitate towards the power which was supplanting her position in international politics.⁴⁸ This lapse in perception, though interesting, was irrelevant to the immediate issue at hand: for, as the record shows, the realities of the American position were brought rudely home to the British during the meeting on 18th April.

Matthews' response to Sargent's prompting was unequivocal. The fratricidal wrangling in Washington was ignored: Matthews was adamant that where international affairs were concerned, the US Government spoke with one voice. Matthews said nothing to suggest that the Americans would change their position and accept any military commitment as far as the Balkans was concerned, although he did accept that troops might have to be deployed in North Eastern Italy to prevent the outbreak of disturbances in territories claimed by the Yugoslavs. This did not indicate a softening of policy, however: a commitment of this sort would have to be met through the redeployment of forces already in Italy. In such circumstances, the US Government could legitimately claim that it had not entered into any new commitments or diverted resources from other theatres. Given the changing nature of the Anglo-American army in Italy, it was also likely that such an operation would be an almost exclusively British affair. As far as other areas of South Eastern Europe were concerned - Greece, the Dodecanese, Bulgaria, Albania - the Americans agreed that military commitments could be made, as long as these remained purely British initiatives. Earlier predictions to the effect that no

American troops would be made available for operations east of Italy were therefore realised.

Matthews was, however, quick to stake a claim to a say in political matters. The State Department was, he said, in favour of representation on the Balkan Affairs Committee that Lord Moyne (the British Minister Resident in the Middle East) was endeavouring to set up in Cairo.⁴⁹ The US Government was considering a Greek request, to the effect that they should ask the Russians to press Bulgaria to evacuate Greek Macedonia.⁵⁰ He also envisaged some sort of military mission being sent to Bulgaria in the post-hostilities period - though not, of course on any large scale. As far as Albania was concerned, Matthews agreed with the policy advocated by the ACA Committee paper: liberation from Italy, restoration of independence, freedom to conclude arrangements with her Balkan neighbours, and frontier questions to be settled at the peace conference. Here again, however, the use of American troops to further this end was ruled out - unless these could be provided out of those already fighting in Italy. As far as the Satellites States were concerned, Matthews was certain that "the USA would wish to participate in any control machinery established." The problems of Yugoslavia were, at Sargent's suggestion, left alone.⁵¹ The impression that this created was that the US Government was either unable or unwilling to promise material support for a policy which it largely sympathised, but was ready to guard with jealous presumption its right to a full voice in political affairs. Britain would be left with the material burden of "policing the Balkans" for the Western Powers, but subject to the political mores of Washington. If one refers back to Hood's list of objectives, it is clear that the results of this meeting would have been a disappointment to the British. Matthews may not have said anything which flatly contradicted the terms of the Moscow Four Power Declaration, but he had certainly offered an interpretation of that document that was contrary to the FO's reading. If the Americans insisted upon the right to a full say when it came to shaping political affairs, while refusing themselves to commit any resources in support of whatever initiatives were undertaken, that was their prerogative. However, it indicated

that Cadogan's warnings to Churchill about the danger of unilaterally interpreting the responsibilities incumbent upon adherents to declarations applied as much to the United States as to Soviet Russia. In other words, the British could not presume upon American assistance on the basis of their reading of a vague statement of principle. The most that they could hope for if they advocated a rigid adherence to principle was moral support. Unless or until the United States displayed a different attitude - one tempered by force and facts, and not woolly idealism or a domestic political tradition which encouraged diplomatic introversion - Britain could expect little to accrue from a policy of badgering Washington.⁵² Moral support, with the chance that material assistance might arrive later on, was better than nothing. It is nevertheless hard not to draw the conclusion that if, as Cadogan had suggested, the Moscow Four Power Declaration had marked the "first step" towards tripartite agreement on how to apply the principles of the Atlantic Charter, and how to operate a policy of collaboration, then the attitude of the United States some six months later - as expressed by the Stettinius delegation in connection with South Eastern Europe - spoke volumes about the efficacy of that "first step."

The weaknesses of Churchill's vision of Britain and the USA acting together "to control the situation" were, similarly, exposed by these conversations. For Great Britain, the weakest of the Allied Great Powers in material terms, and therefore the Power most dependent upon diplomatic co-operation where her interests were concerned, the lack of consensus which these developments revealed was deeply worrying. However, the position needs to be put into perspective - and not least because of the distinction which should be made between Churchill's prose and national policy. In fact, 'policy' was reflected, not by the Prime Minister's minutes to Eden and the FO, but by the responses to them, and the position that was established once their correspondence lapsed. The Prime Minister has recently come under fire from various revisionist historians, who have accused him of "selling out" to the United States and pursuing a policy which sacrificed national interests in a vain

attempt to form a sort of 'Pax Anglo-Americana'.⁵³ What these historians fail to appreciate is that, as Elisabeth Barker has pointed out, what Churchill said - and even wanted - was not necessarily the same thing as national policy.⁵⁴ It is relatively easy to focus upon the comments of individual policymakers and to extrapolate from these the particular "ideas and dreams" that they favoured. It is also easy to assume that when the most senior policymakers pronounced upon policy questions, what they said either reflected or rapidly became policy. Such assumptions are, however, dangerous. Policy - in all areas of war-time government - was the aggregated product arrived at once the "ideas and dreams" submitted by the interested parties had been debated, and tempered by reason and compromise; and was quite often fundamentally different from what Churchill himself called the 'morning thoughts' of the individuals involved. It would be quite wrong to assume that Churchill's reading of the Atlantic Charter as expressed in his minutes of late March and early April 1944 represented the views of the policymaking establishment *in toto*. In fact, the Prime Minister's contributions displayed not understanding, but instead a worrying failure of comprehension on his part. Churchill has often been accused of 'convenient lapses' of memory and perspicacity by historians seeking to criticise his performance: in this instance, however, such accusations would seem to be somewhat unfair. In fact, it does not actually matter whether the Prime Minister was guilty of using his memory 'selectively' in this case - because his views did not prevail. It was the Cadogan-Eden thesis that carried the day, and upon this thesis that the assessment of policy towards the Atlantic Charter - and the application of principle as a tool in Britain's war-time diplomacy - should concentrate.

If anything is clear from the FO minutes produced on this subject, it is that the major problem facing the British in this connection was the lack of political consensus between the Allied Great Powers where future policy was concerned; and the concomitant paralysis of British policymaking which this caused. Eden would admit in May that in essence Britain did not have a policy for tackling the longer term problems that he feared would arise in South

Eastern Europe once hostilities ended.⁵⁵ Cadogan's minutes to Churchill had already implied that this might be the case - and that it might afflict a far wider *tranche* of policy. One passage in particular stands out in this connection:-

The principles of the Charter must be interpreted flexibly and reconciled on broad lines if our "hopes for a better future for the world" are to be realised in substantial measure... we must be very careful to apply it in each particular case in such a manner that it does not endanger world security... it is evident that no very precise interpretation of it ought to be made by any one State. The exact application of its principles will indeed be the subject of further agreements between all of [the United Nations]. The Moscow Four Power Declaration was a first step in this direction.⁵⁶

This was in effect an admission that, as far as long term foreign policy was concerned, Britain had tied itself to a course which eschewed unilateralism in favour of inter-Allied collaboration. The exigencies of war had persuaded Churchill and his colleagues to defer political questions not directly related to the "extirpation of Hitlerism" to the putative peace settlement. Any political questions which could not be ignored in this way were dealt with in a manner suggesting a near-religious attachment to the principle of co-operation. Unfortunately, the application of the principles of the Atlantic Charter - as the blueprint for a "better future" and the establishment of "world security" - involved political questions which could not safely be deferred: the circumstances of military victory had to be squared with its idealistic verbiage. As the FO appreciated only too well, the application of such principles formed part of a wider policy riddle: namely, how to manage the transition of foreign policy from a wartime to a peacetime orientation, whilst taking into account the seismic changes in geopolitical topography that the war had engendered and all the while upholding identified British interests. This transition was always likely to be both a painful and a messy business. Cadogan's reference to the "first step" was perhaps the singly most important statement of policy made in this connection. The British had decided that political problems of long standing had, as far as possible, to be regarded as collective problems - if only because their relative weakness prevented them from considering unilateral solutions. Foreign policy had started to focus on the panacea of collective security

because it seemed to offer the only guarantee of upholding national interests in the post-war world. This was, of course, nothing new. Before the First World War, the British had pursued the policy of *Entente* diplomacy as a response to another security dilemma: the inability to sustain the level of defensive capability necessary to meet both imperial and continental commitments.⁵⁷ Britain had concluded agreements with the Powers which, arguably, posed the greatest threats to imperial security - France and Russia - and had therefore been able to concentrate upon resisting the primary continental threat - the establishment of German hegemony. The *Entente* policy had worked on the basis of reciprocal concession and mutual respect. The situation in 1944 was in many ways analogous. The old European States System may have gone, but political and strategic interests still meant that it was prudent for the British to engage in close and collaborative relationships with those Powers which, at the same time, constituted both the greatest threat to and the surest guarantee of British interests. It was therefore evident that some sort of accommodation had to be reached with both the United States and Soviet Russia.

It has been suggested that Churchill and Eden differed in their respective preferences for a long term partner for Britain, the Prime Minister favouring an Anglo-Saxon alliance, the Foreign Secretary a closer relationship with Russia.⁵⁸ There is certainly some truth in this, but the impression that this creates is too simplistic. Although the justifications for their ideas lie beyond the scope of this essay, it is only right to point out that British policy was not torn between East and West - as this argument implies - but was instead predicated upon keeping the Alliance together. Cadogan's assertion that the main aim behind the Four Power Declaration had been to establish a framework for collaboration was a far more accurate statement of British policy than Churchill's remarks about the Anglo-Saxon Powers "controlling the situation." The Prime Minister was involved in many aspects of wartime government, but the formulation of long term foreign policy - or, rather, post-hostilities planning - was arguably not one of them. He certainly commented upon the future, and made predictions based on perceived trends, but his hands-on input was

limited. His statements were invariably reactions to developments, and often showed little appreciation of either their gravity or import. Indeed, although the Prime Minister "crashed into" various areas of policy, and unwittingly influenced long term developments, he did so on an *ad hoc* basis - not because he had a vision to impart, but because his interest was aroused.⁵⁹ It fell to the FO to consider the conundrum of long term policy; and Cadogan's perspicacity in this respect consequently exceeded Churchill's. Cadogan and Eden, who had constant access to the various planning studies and appreciations drawn up by the political departments in the Foreign Office, the Foreign Office Research Department (or FORD), and the innumerable committees and sub-committees appended to the Cabinet, were cognisant of arguments which the Prime Minister, with all his other worries, had little time to consider. Churchill is famous for having castigated the FO for producing papers in which the odd-numbered paragraphs contradicted the even, and in which no conclusions were reached.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, these papers invariably reflected a greater depth of understanding of the multitudinous problems hampering the policymakers than Prime Ministerial rhetoric. This should be clear to scholars of wartime policymaking; but, invariably, the Churchill myth has obscured the true picture. In this instance, Cadogan was a far more reliable barometer of policy than the Prime Minister.

Cadogan's reading of the situation regarding Russia has been discussed above at some length. The arguments he deployed against Churchill's suggestions regarding the Atlantic Charter were compelling. He did not, however, go into details about the position of the United States: indeed, America was not even mentioned in his paper on the Atlantic Charter. When read carefully, however, the reason for this omission is clear: no direct reference to the United States was necessary. Cadogan was telling Churchill that the Moscow Declaration constituted the current basis of policy. The United States, like the Soviet Union, was a party to that declaration; and, as a result, all aspects of Anglo-American-Soviet relations, and particularly those connected to post-hostilities questions, came under the same umbrella.

The FO hoped that the collaborative approach to inter-Allied diplomacy would persuade Stalin to co-operate, especially in cases where his earlier sabre-rattling and bluster had failed to deliver the hoped-for results. The validity of this approach was enhanced by what Cadogan omitted: namely, that the Americans would not accept any commitment to a large scale involvement in South Eastern Europe. Churchill had wanted to gain Roosevelt's support in invoking the Charter against Stalin: the evidence at the FO's disposal suggested that any attempt to draw the United States into such a commitment at this time would serve to have the opposite effect. It was impossible for Britain to invoke the Charter unilaterally: without American support, she would appear isolated and weak. The Americans were not going to proffer material - and certainly not military - assistance in any attempt to forestall Russia. However, the FO calculated that, if handled carefully, they might offer vocal support for the principles which their Secretary of State had laid down at Moscow, and therefore establish diplomatic pressure on Stalin. In Cadogan's opinion, the Atlantic Charter and the Moscow Declaration were both valuable, because they influenced the diplomatic atmosphere existing between the Great Powers. If the principles of co-operation and collaboration could be shown to work in practice, and genuine progress could be made towards resolving the politico-military problems thrown up by the march of events, the prospects for future peace and security would be immeasurably improved. The Permanent Under-Secretary certainly harboured few illusions about the prospects of success: by April 1944 evidence was mounting to suggest that the optimism engendered by the Moscow Conference had been exaggerated. Cadogan realised the seriousness of this: the attitudes of many of the officials in the FO - and therefore the post-war plans that they were producing - were influenced by this optimism. Nevertheless, and as he told Churchill, until and unless a serious crisis broke to encourage a thorough review of the situation, long term policy appreciations would have to continue to follow the prescriptions laid down by the Four Power Declaration.

The debate on Soviet adherence to the Atlantic Charter lapsed after the Cadogan minutes of 17th and 20th April. It is often easy to lose sight of the problems that the sheer volume of material arriving in Whitehall and Downing Street caused the senior political figures when it came to managing war time diplomacy. Churchill's attention was almost immediately drawn to more tangible problems; and, in particular, to the crisis in Anglo-Soviet relations provoked by Molotov's "offensive" telegrams of 28th and 29th April.⁶¹ He did not respond to Cadogan's minutes, or, at least, before the May Crisis broke - by which time the context of the debate had changed yet again. On 3rd May, John Colville (one of Churchill's private secretaries) informed Pierson Dixon (Eden's Principal Private Secretary) that "Mr. Churchill has not yet had an opportunity of seeing the minute and note which Cadogan provided about the Atlantic Charter."⁶² Churchill's minutes about "brute issues" and an Anglo-Soviet "showdown" suggest that the Prime Minister's concerns, piqued by Molotov's outburst and the situation in the Balkans, had rapidly transcended the arguments about declarations of intent and commitment to principle. Not for the first time - or the last - circumstances called the tune; and circumstance was dictated by the politico-military situation, not idealistic verbiage. As we shall see, the May Crisis forced the long term planners to reconsider their strategy and engendered a bout of self-appraisal that resulted in a serious shake-up of policy. That shake-up led to a more hands-on approach to diplomacy, and, indirectly, to the policy of percentages. However, it is wise to remember - before jumping to conclusions about naked power politics and "spheres of influence" - that it was not until the Yalta Conference, and the promulgation of the Declaration on Liberated Europe, that the debate on principle reached its climax. In the intervening period, the politics of the Alliance - at least as far as the British were concerned - remained committed to the preservation of the shadow and the substance of collaboration. This was a thankless task; a fact that was appreciated, for one, by Colville, who noted in his diary that "this war would be much easier to conduct without Allies." Colville was pessimistic about the prospects for future collaboration. "I wonder if we shall ever reach a form of international organisation which will not be made a mockery by the fact

that national politics are always self-interested and thus conflicting," he mused.⁶³ Wishful thinking of this sort was, in the circumstances, understandable. Unfortunately, the harsh world of power politics afforded Churchill, Eden *et al.* no such luxury.

Chapter III: The Background to the May Crisis, as seen from British Sources

The circumstances in which Churchill penned his avalanche of minutes on the Balkans in the first week of May 1944 are particularly important to those seeking to understand British policy in this period. It becomes clear on close inspection of archival material that, although Molotov's telegram of 29th April provoked the most explosive outburst from the Prime Minister, the re-appraisal of Britain's interests and role *vis-à-vis* South East Europe that followed was prompted by a concatenation of events, not an isolated example of Soviet truculence. While it is unnecessary to dwell upon every minute detail of British involvement in the Balkans prior to May 1944, or, indeed, to embark upon a comprehensive review of the diplomatic exchanges between the Allies in the opening months of 1944 that touched upon them, it is important to highlight certain key issues which came to a head with the diplomatic correspondence that passed between London, Moscow and Washington around the end of April 1944. Of all the developments, perhaps the most obviously influential was the arrival of the Molotov telegrams, which concerned, primarily, Anglo-Soviet relations and the situation in Greece and Roumania. Churchill was a self-confessed advocate of personal diplomacy: the influence that his personal correspondence exercised over his thinking on policy should not be under-estimated. With this in mind, it is with the Prime Minister's personal correspondence with Molotov in the days before the latter's offensive telegrams that analysis of the May Crisis should begin.

I. The Churchill - Molotov Correspondence of April 1944 : Greece

The mutiny in the Greek forces in the Mediterranean and the Greek political crisis to which it was inextricably linked have been extensively researched. It is, therefore, unnecessary to re-examine the military and political measures that the British, under Churchill's personal direction, used to suppress the mutiny and restore some semblance of stability to Greek politics.¹ As a

forerunner to the May Crisis, however, the role played by the Soviet Union, and British reactions to this, are most interesting.

On 14th April 1944, Churchill sent a telegram to Molotov in which he attempted to persuade the Soviet Foreign Minister to accede to the policy that HMG had adopted in response to the Greek Crisis. He did so by following a tried and tested formula, combining the supply of information with a personal appeal for support.² By the time this telegram had been despatched, however, it was already clear that unequivocal Soviet support would not be forthcoming. A series of telegrams from Reginald Leeper, the British Ambassador to the Greek Government based in Cairo, had reported that the Soviet press agency **Tass** had criticised the actions of the Greek Government-in-Exile. These criticisms had not only found their way into the Soviet Press, but had also been repeated in Russian radio broadcasts to Greece. The senior Soviet representative in Cairo, M. Novikov, had refused to dismiss **Tass's** accusations - which seemed to indicate that the Soviet Government supported this attack. Denis Laskey (of the FO's Southern Department) had confidently declared at the height of the mutiny that the Soviets would continue to adhere to a policy of ambivalent silence on Greek matters. Now, however, he was worried:-

It looks as though the Soviet Government have now decided to change their previous policy of taking only a limited interest in Greek affairs and allowing us to handle them more or less as we choose. These **Tass** messages show only too clearly the divergence of views between us and the Russians and this is bound to have a harmful effect.³

Laskey, who had previously argued that by keeping the Russians "fully informed" the British would encourage them to maintain their acquiescence, now advocated a more dynamic diplomatic approach through Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, British Ambassador in Moscow. Meanwhile, Clark Kerr substantiated Leeper's position by informing Whitehall of a further **Tass** article which attacked the "reactionary" nature of the Greek Government.⁴

Sir Alexander Cadogan was now convinced that a new approach was needed if trouble were to be avoided; and on 14th April he sent the Prime Minister a cautionary minute.⁵ After drawing Churchill's attention to the Leeper and Clark Kerr telegrams, he argued that the **Tass** message constituted not only an attack on the Greek Government, but also "by implication our own action in the present crisis." Cadogan told Churchill that, in his view, a serious cross-roads had been reached in Anglo-Soviet relations concerning Greece:-

In the past the Russians have shown only a limited interest in Greece, and I had hoped that they would continue to let us handle Greek affairs as we see fit; but these **Tass** messages show that they are now apparently determined to intervene. The line they are taking is most unhelpful and is bound to undermine the effect of our own action since the lack of unanimity between ourselves and the Russians is clear for all to see.

As Churchill had already asked Molotov for support for his handling of the Greek Crisis, Cadogan felt that it was unnecessary to ask for further assistance over the **Tass** issue. The Prime Minister's earlier telegram, along with a draft telegram offering a detailed explanation of British policy towards Greece (which Cadogan enclosed with his minute), would, he hoped, prove sufficient to restore the *status quo*.

Churchill evidently agreed, for, in answering Cadogan, and whilst admitting that he "was very much annoyed" by the **Tass** reports, the Prime Minister blamed the affair on a breakdown in communication which the vicissitudinous situation had caused. "I think this all could have been avoided if we had kept them informed," he minuted, "but so much has been going on and the situation has been so fluid that it has not been possible hitherto to make them parties to our view."⁶ Churchill authorised Cadogan to despatch the second telegram to Molotov. He also cleared a further telegram, containing a copy of the latest instructions which had been sent to Leeper outlining the current parameters of British policy (as he had promised Molotov he would).⁷ Once again, the Prime Minister placed his faith in a two-pronged strategy; supplying information, and pursuing a personal dialogue.

Churchill's account of the mutiny was sent to Molotov on 16th April. Having dealt with these events, he turned to the wider issue which the **Tass** reports had raised. As he now told Molotov, "I hope the **Tass** Agency will not make our task more difficult than it is":-

This really is no time for ideological warfare. I am determined to put down mutiny and meddling in politics of the Greek forces in Egypt which are under our command and equipped with our weapons. There can be no question of making political terms with mutineers. I am sure you would not allow such things to go on in the Soviet Armies or among any forces which you might control. I hope therefore that **Tass** may be told to leave off this agitation in which they are engaged, the only result of which may well lead to bloodshed which I hope to avoid especially since things are improving now.

The Prime Minister also informed Molotov that Roosevelt had been kept fully informed of the situation, although he had not been involved with the **Tass** business.⁸ Concluding his telegram, Churchill re-iterated his faith in the existing apparatus of co-operation:-

In spite of my political views, which you have always known, I allow nothing to stand between British policy and the supreme objective, namely, the defeat of the Hitlerites and their expulsion from the lands they have subjugated. Your attitude... give[s] me confidence that our views on the main objectives and the temporary subordination to them of ideological issues are matters on which we can agree.⁹

There is little doubt that, at this stage, Churchill remained committed to the rather *ad hoc* diplomacy that was typical of this period. He was certainly short with Leeper when the Ambassador suggested that the Soviets should be tied to a Three Power Declaration supporting the Lebanon Conference¹⁰ as the best hope for achieving unity between the Greek political factions.¹¹ Leeper, who argued that the progress of the Russian armies in Roumania had created "a pressing need to secure as united a front as possible amongst Greeks," was left with no illusions as to the Prime Minister's strict adherence to a policy focused entirely upon the immediate problem. "It is all very well to talk about later," Churchill informed him, "but let us get the mutinies settled first so that no one

can doubt who is master. Then will be the time to address our Allies on future collaboration."¹²

Initially, at least, Churchill's faith in tried and tested methods seemed well-founded. Molotov's reply of 22nd April, although somewhat enigmatic, implied that the Soviet Government did not, after all, intend to pursue an independent line in Greece:-

The Soviet Government so far has extremely limited information on the Greek question for it to pronounce itself on the subject at present. In this case the British Government, which has its Military Mission in Greece, is in a more favourable position. For this reason we shall be grateful if, as far as may be possible, additional information regarding the affairs of Greece should be given to us by you.

Molotov was quick to defend **Tass**, reserving its right to publish information received from its "trustworthy" sources and disclaiming responsibility for any blood-letting which Churchill had been afraid might take place. He did, however, offer a crumb of comfort by informing Churchill that "in connection with your wish for greater care in **Tass** publications, **Tass** has been instructed that the verification of information for the Press should be made stricter." **Tass** might be above reproach, but it would nevertheless endeavour to take even greater care in the future.

Molotov also chose to respond positively to Churchill's comments on the nature of Anglo-Soviet co-operation:-

I express full agreement with you and can assure you, with regard to the opinion of the leading personalities in the Soviet Union, that notwithstanding known differences of political opinion in governing circles in our countries, we can in fact reach agreement on the fundamental questions which face us, remembering that we are Allies in the capital and fundamental question of bringing about the defeat of Hitlerite Germany and of liberating from the Hitlerites the territories seized by them, and also that we have resolved to adjust our collaboration to the post-war period. In any case we are doing and shall continue to do everything possible to that end.¹³

Molotov had already discussed Churchill's telegrams with Clark Kerr on 21st April, at which time the Soviet Minister had prevaricated over supporting British policy in Greece, once again using ignorance as an excuse for failing to respond more positively. Clark Kerr was nevertheless confident that Novikov would be instructed to co-operate more closely with Leeper so as to ensure that further outbursts of an ignorant or misinformed nature would be averted. Laskey shared this view, but noted that Molotov's reply to Churchill did not commit the Soviet Government to very much. Sir Orme Sargent was more pessimistic, failing to see anything in the Russian correspondence to indicate that Novikov would be ordered to co-operate more closely with his British colleagues.¹⁴ The Prime Minister's response was, however couched in the friendliest terms, and suggested that, both in the case of Greece and in the wider arena of Anglo-Soviet relations, all was well:-

I wished to give you information about the Greek situation and therefore went into some details. I shall take steps to keep you informed. Thank you for telling me that Tass has been instructed that the verification of information for the Press should be made stricter. All truth is not good to tell. .. Your [statement about our future co-operation] gives me much pleasure. I am a firm believer in the Twenty Years' Treaty which you and Eden signed in my presence when times were far less bright than now.¹⁵

The Prime Minister believed that his previous exchanges with Molotov had papered over the potentially damaging cracks which the mutiny and political crisis had caused in the edifice of Anglo-Soviet unity. His confidence was to be rudely shaken by Molotov's next communication.

II. The Churchill - Molotov Correspondence of April 1944 : Roumania

The British had, of course, displayed uncharacteristic dynamism in handling the politico-military situation in Greece. Their involvement in Roumanian affairs could hardly have been in starker contrast. Whereas the British regarded Greece as a country in which they had a particularly strong interest (for political and strategic reasons set out in various post-hostilities

planning memoranda), and conducted their operations accordingly, Roumania was seen as coming under the umbrella of Soviet interests.¹⁶

While there is an extensive historical literature on Greece in this period, the situation in Roumania has received less critical analysis.¹⁷ A brief review of the major developments - as affecting Anglo-Soviet relations - is therefore in order. By the end of 1943, London had accepted that the Russians would take the lead in handling Allied relations with Roumania. In spite of the close contacts they had established with the leader of the Roumanian opposition, Iuliu Maniu, and the hopes that he might inspire the overthrow of the Antonescu regime, the FO never lost sight of the fact that, for geographical - if not political - reasons, the Soviets were primarily concerned with "bearing the main burden of the war now being waged by Roumania" and would have to be approached in the first place where Roumanian affairs were concerned.¹⁸ Eden raised the question of policy towards Roumania at the Moscow Conference, discussing the question of contacts with Maniu and Roumanian peace-feelers with Molotov on 25th October. Unfortunately, however, Molotov proved most obdurate, demanding the unconditional surrender of Roumania and pouring scorn on the notion that contacts with Maniu or his followers would lead to any practical advantages for the Allies. Faced with Molotov's scepticism, and wary of earlier Foreign Office advice, Eden seemed to accept the Russian line. The question of Maniu and his group was, he said, for the Soviet Government to decide, and HMG would follow Molotov's lead in any future dealings with Maniu.¹⁹

The 'agreement' reached at Moscow in respect of Roumania was not, however, as clear-cut as the British record may suggest. Indeed, and as subsequent events would soon show, the protagonists left the conference with very different understandings about what, exactly, had been decided. The position - as recorded in the official conference record - seemed unequivocal. Molotov had opposed the idea of further contact with Maniu - by the British or anyone else - and Eden had deferred to his wishes. However, the impression

that this created was subsequently called into question: by Eden himself (in a minute to Churchill of 14th May 1944, which reviewed the position established at Moscow), and by the evidence provided in subsequent Anglo-Soviet exchanges.²⁰ These suggest that Eden had *not* intended to proscribe further British involvement in Roumania; or, more specifically, further contacts with Maniu. In fact, the aim of the British prior to the discussions in Moscow had been to reach agreement on a common policy with Russia on how to deal with Roumanian peace-feelers.²¹ Eden was not able to persuade Molotov to pursue the Maniu connection - hence the unequivocal rebuttal contained in the official record - but he *was* able to agree on a formula for the handling of future peace-feelers. The important thing, from the British point of view, was that *some* kind of agreement had been reached. This helps explain why, while the FO were not particularly pleased by Molotov's attitude, they were hardly surprised by it - or particularly concerned.²²

The extent to which the Moscow agreement subsequently fell foul of its own ambiguity can best be assessed by considering the Anglo-Soviet exchanges on Roumania that followed, and the arguments over interpreting the agreement that accompanied them. Less than a month after the discussions in Moscow, the British received a message from Maniu, notifying them of his desire "to send a special delegate out of Roumania for the purpose of discussing a political take-over in that country."²³ The FO agreed - which hardly upholds the view that the British had abandoned their right to a role in Roumania at the Moscow Conference.²⁴ More extraordinary, however, was the news that the Russians had "agreed to take part in negotiations with Maniu's emissary."²⁵ Not only did this constitute an apparent *volte-face* by the Soviet Government on the question of Maniu: it also seemed to indicate that the Russians were happy to follow a British lead in an area of particular sensitivity to the USSR. This augured well for the policy of collaboration, the advancement of which had, after all, been both a major goal for (and apparent success of) the Great Power Conferences.

The British had not limited their involvement to the question of Maniu's emissary, however. The history of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) Mission which parachuted into Roumania on 22nd December 1943 - Operation **AUTONOMOUS** - has been well-documented, and does not need further embellishment.²⁶ Its importance to the events of May 1944, and the questions which it raises about the Anglo-Soviet understanding concerning Roumania, cannot, however, be ignored. In his minute of 14th May 1944, Eden gave his interpretation of what the agreement with Molotov had involved:-

We agreed a formula for dealing with Roumanian peace-feelers, to the effect that we could consider no approach which did not take the form of an offer by a duly authorised emissary to sign an unconditional surrender to the three principal Allies. Although Molotov showed no desire that the Russians should be put in contact with Maniu, he did not object to our maintaining our contact.²⁷

The orders given to the SOE mission were quite in line with the above statement. Gardyne de Chastellain, the mission CO, had initially been instructed to concentrate exclusively on operational goals. At the last moment, however, SOE had suggested that the mission should be authorised to contact Maniu, and the FO had agreed. This last minute change was made following receipt of Maniu's proposals. The expanded instructions did not, however, indicate a new political initiative. SOE had wanted to ensure that the Roumanian opposition leader received advice first-hand about the need to accept unconditional surrender. This was authorised by the FO, on condition that Maniu should also be told that in future any approaches should be made to all of the principal Allies.²⁸

In effect, therefore, no new terms had been offered; and no unilateral negotiations had been authorised. The Soviets' sole cause for complaint lay in the fact that they had not been informed about the mission prior to its despatch, a fact that can hardly have inclined them to trust the British when the latter sought to explain the situation following the mission's capture. The FO had decided that it was unnecessary to inform the Russians of **AUTONOMOUS** before its insertion (which would have meant delaying the mission) even though

SOE had advised to the contrary.²⁹ Eden subsequently justified this by pointing out, quite legitimately, that nothing sinister had been going on. As he told Churchill in May 1944, "we did not inform the Russians at the time because a) they had shown no interest whatever in our Roumanian negotiations, and b) we were making no new departure in our Roumanian policy and were merely trying to carry out what had been agreed at the Moscow Conference."³⁰

Following the capture of the mission, the British authorities in Cairo voiced concern lest the Axis exploit the situation and spread rumours that the British had been trying to set up an anti-Soviet front in Roumania. Therefore, in order to head off this threat, they informed Novikov of the mission on 4th January.³¹ The Soviet Government chose not to respond to this information - at least, not directly. They made no representation to the British, either about **AUTONOMOUS** in particular, or about SOE operations in Roumania in general. Nor did they attempt to force an idiosyncratic, pro-Soviet interpretation of the Moscow agreement on HMG. The only detectable reaction came in the form of what became known as the **Pravda** Affair - a diplomatic spat which followed the publication of an article in **Pravda** on 17th January 1944 which accused the British of conducting clandestine negotiations with the Germans.³²

The British, who had handled matters poorly, were at least partially to blame for this episode. Their failure to consult (or even inform) the Soviets about the SOE mission prior to its despatch was at best insensitive. It could hardly have encouraged the Russians to increase collaboration; and therefore did little to nurture the spirit of co-operation that the FO claimed it so badly wanted to build upon. However, after negotiating the initial period of embarrassment, the British made good their initial *faux pas*; and, by the end of January, the **Pravda** Affair had apparently resolved itself.³³ This, in turn, suggested that the embarrassment caused by the **AUTONOMOUS** episode had blown over without serious damage having been done to Anglo-Soviet relations. The Soviets might initially have had good grounds for complaint; but,

having chosen to forgo any official representation about **AUTONOMOUS**, had lost the initiative by relying upon a rather clumsy press offensive to make their displeasure known. Once the bitter taste left by **Pravda** accusations had faded, therefore, the British could have been forgiven for thinking that the damage potential of the **AUTONOMOUS** débâcle had dissipated.

In the event, they were to be disappointed; for, as we shall see, the Soviets returned to the fray at the end of April. However, by that time, the situation had changed. Although the British were still embarrassed by their earlier blunders, the Soviet position had weakened. They had been aware of the de Chastellain mission for some months, and kept up to speed on subsequent developments. It is therefore likely that Molotov's reasons for returning to the **AUTONOMOUS** affair had more to do with political expediency than genuine outrage; and that the SOE mission only became a political issue once it suited the Soviet Government to make it one.

A brief review of the main developments between the **Pravda** Affair and Molotov's tirade adds weight to this view. The British, perhaps having learnt their lesson, made certain that before sending any official reply to Maniu, they consulted both the American and Soviet Governments. The response which the British eventually sent to Maniu's approach (of 10th November 1943) was determined by the replies they had received from Moscow and Washington. The Allies would receive his emissary "on the understanding that his only function would be to discuss operational details for the overthrow of the present regime and its replacement by a government prepared to surrender unconditionally." The Russians had agreed to this reply, having first made it plain that "they considered it absolutely necessary for a Soviet representative to take part in the negotiations."³⁴ The FO readily accepted this. They remained convinced that, as the Red Army would "be the first Allied force to reach Roumania," Moscow would have to "play the principal part in determining the armistice terms," - and, therefore, the situation which would exist in the immediate post-hostilities period.³⁵ They also appreciated the limited range of

options available *vis-à-vis* policy towards Roumania. Deference to Soviet wishes over Roumania could not be avoided: reasonable demands would have to be met.³⁶ While, therefore, the news that the Russians would participate in the negotiations with Maniu's emissary was received with optimism in London, this optimism was guarded. The FO appreciated that there was always a chance that the customary suspicion of the Russians might resurface, and lead them to disrupt the negotiations. Limiting this threat was consequently a premier consideration for the British.

The British could have been forgiven for anticipating less difficulty in securing American support for the talks with Maniu. Up to this point, the US Government had seemed happy to follow the line advocated by London in respect of Roumania. Unfortunately, the State Department now decided that the "time had come to affirm, and so far as possible guarantee, Western political objectives in Roumania."³⁷ While recognising the Soviet Union's primary interest, they felt that both the Western Powers "should apply to Roumania the general principles underlying our conduct of the war, assuming as far as possible Roumania's continued existence as a state with such territory as would enable it to make its way as an independent country."³⁸ Setting out its desiderata for future policy towards Roumania, the State Department argued for the despatch of American troops to the country as part of an inter-Allied occupation force, and anticipated the joint formation of surrender terms by the Big Three. What particularly worried the British, however, was the idea that the fate of Bessarabia and Bukovina should be decided after the war. This would almost certainly provoke the Russians into refusing to participate in negotiations, and thereby undermine the policy of collaboration before it had begun. In order to forestall this, the British managed to persuade the Americans that it would be expedient to let the Soviets to make "the initial proposals as to what the surrender terms for Roumania should be," and that the frontier issue should "not be raised in any way in connection with surrender terms." Fortunately, the Americans accepted this proposal.³⁹

Matters were not helped by Maniu. According to Quinlan, "the most that the British were able to get out of Maniu for several months was that his emissary would be 'leaving soon'."⁴⁰ The delayed departure of his emissary merely served to deepen Soviet scepticism about his value. British exasperation with the Roumanian opposition leader increased apace - the more so after Maniu compounded problems in January by pressing the British for clarification on a number of points connected with Roumania's defection.⁴¹ The FO therefore decided to put pressure on Maniu, and directed that none of his questions were to be answered prior to the arrival of the emissary.⁴²

Damage had already been done, however. Clark Kerr telegraphed from Moscow on 15th February that Molotov had written to him, expressing doubts about the prospects of a Roumanian defection. According to Molotov, the Roumanians could not break away from the Germans without assistance, and there were no Allied troops in the vicinity to effect such assistance. After Eden's visit to Moscow, the Soviets had seemed keen for the Roumanians to break with Germany, even if this led to a German occupation, and to pursue any avenues leading to this. Now, however, Molotov seemed to have changed tack, wanting the Roumanians to delay their defection until the Soviets were better placed to exploit the situation militarily.⁴³ Churchill, as usual preoccupied with the military situation, saw nothing amiss with Molotov's *volte-face*, and again argued that the Russians must be left to judge the merits of affairs in which they were primarily concerned.⁴⁴ Eden, agreeing with the Prime Minister, gave vent to his frustrations. "There is a constant temptation for us to respond to these various Roumanian peace feelers," he minuted:-

The frequency with which they are addressed to us is a measure of Roumanian dread of Russia. We have to be very careful not to give the Russians grounds for believing that we are playing our hand separately in dealing with Roumania. They have no such grounds at present. We shall have to consider carefully what reply we are to return. It may be that we should reason with the Russians about their attitude. The essential thing is on no account to act without them in respect of Roumania.⁴⁵

Maniu's emissary, Prince Barbu Stirbey, eventually left Roumania towards the end of February, and from there travelled to Cairo, arriving on 15th March. The British used the intervening period to prepare the ground as best they could. In a minute to Churchill on 13th March, Eden spelt out the current thrust of policy. "We have always taken the line that it is for the Soviet Government to decide on what terms Roumania shall be allowed to withdraw from the war," he claimed. "I have therefore suggested to the Soviet Government that they should submit their draft armistice terms for Roumania to the EAC. I have also asked them for their views on the line the Allies should take in their discussions with Prince Stirbey, so that we can instruct our representative to conform his attitude to theirs." The Foreign Secretary had not yet received details from the Soviet Government about the instructions they were sending Novikov regarding the talks, but submitted for Churchill's consideration a copy of instructions for Lord Moyne (who had been chosen to represent HMG in the negotiations) which he hoped would provide the basis for a tripartite approach.⁴⁶ Repeating these to Cairo on 15th March, Eden told Moyne that, as the Soviet Government had given Novikov no instructions, "except to listen and to report on what Stirbey has to say," he was unable to offer broad instructions of his own concerning the attitude the Minister should take in the discussions. He did, however, include "as an indication of our general views" a revised draft of the text he had submitted to Churchill.⁴⁷

The Foreign Secretary made it clear that the aim of British policy was to secure military advantage by persuading Roumania to surrender as quickly as possible. The consequences to the Axis of this defection would be grievous: "the German hold on the Balkans would become untenable, and Roumania would have made a valuable contribution towards the winning of the war." Eden was not unsympathetic to Roumania's plight, noting that "we can understand that Roumania is reluctant to take a step which may involve a complete German occupation and that she would prefer to wait until the Allied armies are on her doorstep to protect her against German vengeance." This did not materially alter the position, however, for as he explained:-

She must realise that having warred for over two years against the United Nations she cannot reasonably expect to get off scot-free and that a complete German occupation, which could be only temporary, may be inevitable. If Roumania only intends to surrender when Allied troops are already on the point of conquering her she will have made no serious contribution to our war effort and must expect us to say thank you for nothing. Roumania's contribution must consist in preparing and facilitating an Allied invasion of the Balkans and not in taking advantage of it when it has already taken place. The Roumanian Government must realise that if they wait to surrender until Anglo-American or Russian troops are on the spot they will have waited too long and their help will have lost its value.

Eden was, nevertheless, anxious to offer the Roumanians something positive in return for the "hard task" which the Allies were demanding, and proposed certain assurances safeguarding her future, should she co-operate.⁴⁸ The Foreign Secretary ended by telling Moyne that as far as frontier questions were concerned, the future remained uncertain. "It would be better," he felt, "for you to avoid the question of Roumanian frontiers in general."⁴⁹ Eden's implication was clear: the Allies were not ready to tackle so divisive an issue.

Eden authorised Moyne to pursue the general views outlined in his telegram, but only if - as he put it - "the occasion arises in conversation" with his Russian and American colleagues. In fact, and as he subsequently told Churchill, he thought it "most improbable" that the talks would progress to "actual discussions" (that is, with the Russians actively pursuing a dialogue with Maniu and *vice versa*).⁵⁰ The Soviet attitude prior to Stirbey's arrival in Cairo remained unhelpful. Sargent, in particular, felt that Molotov's posturing on matters affecting Roumania bordered on "utter nonsense."⁵¹ Officials in Cairo were, similarly, pessimistic.⁵² All in all, therefore, the omens did not seem too auspicious; and it is tempting to conclude that the FO saw the Stirbey negotiations as serving no useful purpose. To do so, however, would be a mistake. It was not British policy towards Roumania that really mattered here: it was, rather, British policy towards the Soviet Union. Evidence of collaboration, whatever the form, was invaluable. The Stirbey Mission afforded the British an opportunity for entering into a dialogue with her Allies, to

exchange views with them, and to attempt to reach agreement based upon mutual understanding. The negotiations therefore had a significance far beyond Roumania. They complemented a wider policy goal - namely, the establishment of genuine tripartite co-operation as a power political reality.

When the negotiations finally began, it seemed that the pessimism of the previous month had been misplaced, for a while at least. Stirbey held talks with Moyne, Novikov and Lincoln MacVeagh (US Ambassador to the Greek Government-in-Exile) on 17th March.⁵³ The FO reacted positively to the emissary's presentation, noting that Stirbey's attitude had been "sensible and more encouraging than might have been expected."⁵⁴ There was some concern that he had perhaps gone further than Maniu would have liked regarding the cession of Bessarabia and Bukovina, and in implying that the Roumanians would welcome a Soviet landing on the Black Sea coast. He was, however, closer to Maniu's previous position when arguing that if Marshal Antonescu (head of the incumbent Roumanian regime) were to lead operations against Germany, it would have a better chance of success because it would "last longer."⁵⁵ Unfortunately, however, the Soviet response was less encouraging. According to MacVeagh, Novikov felt that "he had said nothing which gets us any further."⁵⁶ The response from Moscow, when it came, was no less disappointing. Clark Kerr telegraphed on 23rd March that Molotov had told him that Stirbey did not in fact represent Maniu; and did not therefore have the authority to conduct negotiations with the Allies. He also doubted whether either Maniu or Marshal Antonescu would actually change sides.⁵⁷

By this time, however, events had taken a new twist. On 22nd March the British in Cairo received a message from Mihai Antonescu, Marshal Antonescu's Foreign Minister. This informed the Allies that the Conducator had been summoned to a meeting with Hitler, who was expected to demand more Roumanian troops for the front, and asked the Allies to clarify their position.⁵⁸ The British hierarchy in Cairo decided to respond immediately, in order to catch Marshal Antonescu before he left Roumania. General H.M. Wilson, in his

capacity as Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean, sent a message (dated 22nd March) urging Marshal Antonescu not to visit Hitler, but instead to surrender immediately to the three Allied Powers and order his troops to end resistance to the Soviet forces.

The British did not inform their Allies about this until Wilson's message had gone.⁵⁹ Once again, therefore, the British left themselves open to criticism from Moscow; and once again, Molotov chose to pass over the opportunity. Instead, he attempted to mould the British initiative to fit his own design. In a letter of the 25th of March he informed Clark Kerr that, although his Government took a dim view of the Roumanian Government, it was willing to "explore Antonescu's status" and was therefore satisfied with Wilson's message. The Roumanians, he felt, should be told that, in addition to the Supreme Commander's instructions, they should lay down their arms and refuse to fight the Russians, and those already at the front or on Soviet territory (the Ukraine and Crimea) would be sent to Roumania to fight the Germans. The Roumanians should concert their operations in this respect with the Russians, and send an emissary to the Soviet Commander to facilitate this. "Practical problems of mutual military aid" would be handled directly by the Soviet and Roumanian High Commands.⁶⁰ From this reply, Moyne and Christopher Steel (Moyne's senior political advisor in Cairo, on secondment from the FO) concluded that the Russians were satisfied with their handling of affairs, and, according to MacVeagh, sent copies of Molotov's proposals to Maniu (as a message "from HMG"). Again, this was done without informing either MacVeagh or Novikov (or, MacVeagh claimed, General Wilson) until after the messages had been despatched.⁶¹

Wilson's message to Antonescu (of 22nd March), and the subsequent proposals from Molotov, did not reach the Marshal in time to prevent his meeting with Hitler. This did not, however, lead to the immediate collapse of this British-inspired initiative, or prompt the Soviets to back out of the negotiations. Molotov told Clark Kerr on the 27th of March that he had no

objection to a copy of his letter of 25th March being sent to Antonescu; or, indeed, of Maniu being told of his terms, should the opposition leader decide to launch his *coup*.⁶² Wilson subsequently sent messages to both Mihai Antonescu and Maniu. He urged the Roumanian Foreign Minister to respond positively to the Allied olive branch, including the Russian proposals. He informed Maniu of the terms offered to Antonescu, and advised him to seize power as soon as possible, justifying this by claiming that Antonescu was incapable of severing Roumania's ties with Germany.⁶³ Wilson sent these messages with the minimum of delay. Other developments had in the meantime changed the complexion of the affair.

The Stirbey negotiations had lost momentum once Cairo received Mihai Antonescu's peace-feeler. Indeed, the inter-Allied exchanges which followed his approach rapidly developed a momentum of their own, and eventually both the Wilson-Antonescu dialogue and the Stirbey Mission became prisoners of these exchanges. Roumania's detachment from the Axis now seemed imminent; and the interested Allied parties moved to safeguard their interests accordingly. The Soviets had made their feelings plain with Molotov's letters to Clark Kerr, and these, along with Wilson's original message, formed the basis upon which further armistice terms were debated. The military establishment in the West immediately weighed in with its views. The British COS had already concluded towards the end of February that significant military advantages would accrue to the Allies should Roumania defect from the Axis.⁶⁴ The American Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCOS) now told the State Department that they shared this attitude.⁶⁵ This pressure induced the State Department to accept Molotov's proposals on the 29th of March. The British had in effect already adhered to the Russian line by communicating it to Bucharest. They were, however, careful to remind the Russians that they expected to be "consulted in advance in case armistice terms which the Russians may now propose carry stipulations or implications extending beyond the accomplishment of the military capitulation."⁶⁶

Molotov duly obliged. On the 1st of April he informed London that he was preparing to issue a declaration once Soviet forces crossed the river Pruth. This would read as follows:-

The Soviet Government declares that it has no intention of taking possession of any portion of Roumanian territory or of changing the existing social order of Roumania, and that the entry of Soviet troops into Roumanian territory is dictated exclusively by military necessity, and the continued resistance of enemy forces.

Molotov clarified that the territory in question was that contained within the Roumanian frontiers of 1940. In London, Churchill was most encouraged by this, minuting "good" when briefed by the FO.⁶⁷ Sargent was more restrained in his praise, noting that the reference to the "return" of Bessarabia overlooked the fact that Russia's Allies had never recognised the frontier adjustments of 1940. He was, however, forced to admit that some such move had long been anticipated, and that British recognition of the 1940 frontier was in the long term unavoidable.⁶⁸ Eden had already conceded as much in his famous minute to Churchill on the Western Frontiers of the Soviet Union of the 25th January 1944.⁶⁹ The British therefore decided to use Molotov's statement to apply further pressure on Antonescu.

In doing so, however, they came close to provoking the Americans. The first draft of a further message to the Conducator implied that certain territorial questions concerning Roumania had been settled by the Allies, despite their commitment not to undertake political business of this sort prior to the peace conference. The British now found themselves in an invidious position. On the one hand, they appreciated that they could not oppose the Soviet territorial claims. They might not like them, but the political realities of Anglo-Soviet relations made them irresistible. On the other hand, they could not be seen to support the Soviet claims, for fear of offending the Americans. In order to appease the Americans, therefore, the British altered their message - and thereby passed up an opportunity to improve their relations with Moscow.⁷⁰

The Soviets followed up Molotov's declaration by submitting their draft armistice terms for Roumania. The points already made by Molotov in his previous communications were now included. The Russians now demanded that the Roumanians pay an indemnity for the war damage they had caused. They also qualified their previous promise about not occupying Roumanian territory, claiming that the Red Army "must have unrestricted freedom of movement throughout if the military situation makes it necessary." As far as the 1940 Vienna Award was concerned, the Soviets now declared that they thought it unjust and were ready to assist Roumania in recovering all or part of Transylvania.⁷¹

The reaction of the Western Powers to this was mixed. According to the US Ambassador in London, Gilbert Winant, the British were satisfied with the Russian proposals. Winant felt that in reaching its decision, the FO had been swayed by the argument that Roumania "would fall into Soviet hands anyway if the Soviet military success continued."⁷² However, Winant's masters in Washington took a different line. The State Department remained opposed to what it considered as the premature settlement of territorial questions, and feared that the Russian demands contradicted certain fundamental principles which the USA had pledged itself to uphold. It was therefore unhappy with the terms which, it felt, Molotov was attempting to force through. However, and because the perennial struggle between political and military considerations had not yet moved in favour of the former, the State Department was forced to defer to the arguments of the JCOS, who were anxious to secure Roumania's surrender. Roosevelt, while "uneasy about abandoning the principle of unconditional surrender," was ready to compromise in this instance; and the Soviets were informed that the US Government accepted their terms on 8th April.⁷³

The Russian armistice terms were discussed by the British War Cabinet on 11th April. The Prime Minister, confirming that he supported the Soviets in their handling of Roumanian affairs, concentrated most of his energy upon the

Transylvanian question. As the minuted record of the meeting shows, he considered this issue - and the principles associated with it - to be the most important matter at stake:-

The Foreign Office took the view that Roumania had as good, if not a better, right to Transylvania than Hungary... It was, no doubt, undesirable to make a final settlement of a territorial question in advance of the Peace Conference. But the object of getting Roumania to change sides justified, in his view, taking prompt action.

Churchill told the War Cabinet that, with this in mind, he had informed Molotov that he accepted the Soviet armistice terms subject to two points: firstly, that the transference of Transylvania to Roumania should be confirmed at the peace settlement; and secondly, that the Western Powers should be allowed to despatch political representatives to Roumania if she changed sides and joined the Allies - "just as the Russians had political representatives in Italy."⁷⁴ Molotov had agreed to these conditions,⁷⁵ and the matter therefore seemed closed.⁷⁶

Contacts with Roumania had been maintained throughout these proceedings. Stirbey had received an enquiry from Mihai Antonescu on 6th April, which elicited a waspish response from Novikov, to the effect that the terms on offer were clear, and the Roumanians had better accept them or else.⁷⁷ The Allies eventually communicated their joint terms (that is to say, the Russian terms to which they had conditionally subscribed) to Stirbey on 12th April.⁷⁸ After a short delay (occasioned by the Russians insisting on a change in syntax in order to emphasise their predominant role in affairs), these were repeated to Maniu and Antonescu.⁷⁹

Subsequent communications did little to encourage enthusiasm. A letter containing new proposals was received from Maniu on 16th April; but as this was written prior to his receipt of the Allied terms, its contents were understandably at variance with their thinking, and it received short shrift both in London and Cairo.⁸⁰ A further letter was received on 20th April. Maniu now

accepted the terms, but only as a basis for further negotiation, and proposed to send a second emissary to Cairo for this purpose.⁸¹ Antonescu himself did not respond directly to the terms. Instead, he chose to allow de Chastellain to transmit one of the occasional messages that he sent from captivity (this was a convenient mechanism for Antonescu, which he used to communicate unofficially with the British). De Chastellain's telegram seemed to corroborate Maniu's claims about the Marshal: without specifically rejecting the armistice, it implied that the Antonescu Government remained steadfastly anti-Soviet and sceptical of Russian promises.⁸² Having received little encouragement from either source, the authorities in Cairo now began to lose patience with both Maniu and Antonescu, and set about "prodding" both parties.⁸³ On 21st April, Stirbey was told that the Allies were "not prepared to negotiate further", and that Maniu must "either accept or reject the terms on offer."⁸⁴ Antonescu was presented with an ultimatum: he must accept the armistice terms on offer, or they would be withdrawn. No response was forthcoming, and the authorities in Cairo therefore concluded that the dialogue with the Conducator had ended.⁸⁵ Maniu remained the sole point of contact, but he too seemed unlikely to deliver.⁸⁶ It appeared that the Cairo negotiations had stalled.⁸⁷

However, messages continued to pass between Churchill and Molotov. The Prime Minister remained committed to the policy he had outlined to the War Cabinet. In his telegram to Molotov of 14th April, he followed his appeal for assistance in Greece with confirmation of British support for Soviet policy towards Roumania.⁸⁸ This message contains the earliest hint that Churchill was considering a *quid pro quo* deal - reciprocal assistance in Greece and Roumania, with no questions asked. Attributing such motives to Churchill here is, however, premature (if not tendentious). The Prime Minister was recognising Soviet pre-eminence, but within carefully specified parameters. His offer may have been associated with the plea for co-operation in respect of Greece by design (as opposed to coincidence) - but this association need not imply that a deal was on his mind. Churchill could simply have been making a point about co-operation. In fact, he seems to have been at pains to stress that

the post-war settlement had *not* been prejudiced by the expedient measures agreed to for the post-hostilities period. Far from trading off interests at this stage, Churchill was attempting to encourage active collaboration by illustrating ways in which mutual advantage could accrue through closer Anglo-Soviet co-operation. At no point did he suggest that there was merit in the idea of mutually exclusive spheres of influence as an alternative to collaboration. Indeed, when he returned to the subject of Roumania on 16th April, he stressed that collaboration, not isolation, was the principle upon which he was operating, telling Molotov that "I wish you all success in your Roumanian negotiations in which, on the lines agreed between us, we consider you are the predominating power."⁸⁹ Russian predominance had therefore been recognised, but only once it had been associated with and validated by agreements with the other Great Powers. No formal abandonment of British political prerogative was admitted, and no *quid pro quo* received.

Molotov was happy to go along with this. As he told Churchill on 22nd April "we consider that on the question of Roumania, we have agreed with regard to the main urgent questions" The US Government had now accepted the Soviet armistice terms for Roumania, along with Churchill's amendments. "Now," Molotov suggested, "it is for us to increase from all sides the pressure on the Roumanians so that they shall abandon their hopeless criminal position."⁹⁰ Churchill replied in kind, echoing Molotov's phrase about "increasing the pressure" and once again offering his support, should the Soviets require it. His concluding remark - that "we regard you as our leaders in Roumanian affairs" - signified not an abandonment, but a subordination, of roles. After all, if one follows a lead, he cannot have abandoned the right to involvement altogether.⁹¹

* * *

The British had tied themselves firmly to the Soviet line regarding Roumania. Whether their conditional acceptance of territorial changes

prejudiced later developments is a moot point. This question was in any case irrelevant. The British were interested in the short term position: the decision to accept the Soviet armistice terms was made primarily on the basis of short term considerations. The military importance which the COS (and the US JCOS) attached to Roumania's defection was crucial. Their arguments - with **OVERLORD** imminent - exerted an understandably preponderant influence over policy. Before criticism is levelled at Churchill and the FO, therefore, it is important to consider what exactly they had conceded, and what they had gained as a result of this concession. The British could not dictate the pace of politico-military developments in Roumania. They did not possess the material resources for this - and even if they had, it is hard to see how these could have been brought to bear to forestall the Soviet predominance that the Red Army was rapidly establishing.⁹² The defence of fundamental British interests - and in particular her continuing good relations with the USSR - were of greater significance than the fate of one Axis satellite, even if sympathy for her plight tempered feelings towards her. The argument that Roumania could only be defended through the establishment of closer ties between London and Moscow may ring hollow today in light of subsequent Cold War developments. At the time, however, the future was far from certain; and it was believed, genuinely, that the establishment of closer relations with Russia afforded the best chance of limiting post-war Soviet demands in Eastern and South Eastern Europe.⁹³ Moreover, in the short term, the political concessions that Churchill had won from Molotov offered both the prospect of real influence and upheld the facade of Great Power status to which Britain clung. HMG's right to a say in the eventual settlement of territorial and political questions had apparently been accepted by Moscow. This implied that the Soviets accepted that the situation which had been recognised *pro tem* was renegotiable. The British right to political representation in Roumania, and their place on any future Allied Control machinery which might be set up (on the Italian model), had similarly been recognised. The trappings of status, the "rights and responsibilities incumbent upon a Great Power", had therefore been defended. This preservation of form was every bit as important as any substantial

achievements. The significance which the British attached to this apparent success should not be overlooked. When the events of the May Crisis are considered, these factors should not be forgotten. A policy may fail to fulfil the goals for which it is created; this does not necessarily mean that the reasoning behind it is flawed, or that it was not worth the attempt. Prior to the receipt of Molotov's telegrams of 28th and 29th April, the grounds for optimism were strong, and the validity of British policy unquestioned. It was only after their arrival that a review of policy was demanded. The contents of these communications, and the responses they provoked amongst British policymakers, are therefore particularly important.

III. The Molotov Telegrams of 28th and 29th April 1944: "Mare's Nests" and Mayhem

Elisabeth Barker has described Molotov's telegram of 29th April as "a little bombshell."⁹⁴ In fact, the Soviet Foreign Minister sent two messages which could be considered as "offensive."⁹⁵ In the first, sent on 28th April, he launched a vitriolic attack against HMG's handling of the Greek Crisis, whilst simultaneously accusing Churchill of dragging his feet over the question of Roumania.⁹⁶ Molotov had with one telegram thrown Anglo-Soviet relations - and HMG's Greek and Roumanian policies - into confusion. The understanding that had been nurtured over policy towards those countries had apparently collapsed. Worse was to follow. The next day, Molotov sent a further message to Churchill, which came perilously close to rupturing relations between the two Allies. He now accused the British of conducting a secret dialogue with Antonescu behind the back of the USSR, which threatened to have serious consequences for Soviet military operations on the Roumanian front.⁹⁷ Concluding his telegram, he levelled a barely concealed accusation of impropriety which could not but incense Churchill:-

The presence in Roumania with Marshal Antonescu of a British mission whose purposes are unknown to the Soviet Government and at a time when Roumania together with Germany is waging war against the Soviet Union can only encourage the Government of Antonescu and can in no way contribute to

hasten the capitulation of Roumania and the acceptance by the Roumanian Government of the Soviet armistice terms which have been agreed with the British and American Governments.

The FO reacted to this with a mixture of astonishment and outrage. The messages were received over the weekend, and it was not until Monday, 1st May, that the FO made significant progress in assessing them. This gap between the date of despatch and comment helps explain why the second telegram received attention before the first. It was initially considered on Sunday 30th April by G.L. Clutton (of the Southern Department), who described the accusations about **AUTONOMOUS** as "baseless and utterly outrageous." The whole affair was, in his opinion, a "regurgitation of the **Pravda** incident." Clutton linked it to proposals which had recently been sent to Moscow suggesting that a new joint operation be sent into Roumania, consisting of SOE and American Office of Strategic Services (OSS - the US equivalent of SOE) representatives, and appropriate Soviet forces.⁹⁸ The Russians had now responded with this attack, thereby making their feelings about the proposals plain.

Clutton's minute was written in isolation, and was accompanied by a telegram to Clark Kerr which advised the Ambassador to wait for further instructions before approaching Molotov.⁹⁹ It was in effect a prevarication on the part of a junior official, who had decided to wait for the opinions of his superiors. Moreover, Clutton had only commented on the second telegram, presumably because of its obvious sensitivity. As a result, he only considered the Roumanian situation, Greece not having been mentioned in this message. It was not until Monday that the implications of the *two* messages began to receive consideration *a deux*. Even then, circumstances conspired to complicate the FO's assessment. Molotov had chosen to launch an assault over two related but separate issues. These concerned Anglo-Soviet relations, and their respective involvement in the affairs of two different countries. He had done so in two separate telegrams, one of which referred to both Greece and Roumania, the other to Roumania alone. They had been despatched over the weekend. This meant that consideration of the telegrams was delayed. The fact

that the issues were divided between two telegrams increased the likelihood that a degree of confusion would arise; and that, as actually happened when Churchill became involved, it would be easy to lose track of which issue - and which telegram - was under consideration. This created some confusion at the time: it has made the historian's task even more difficult. Indeed, it is impossible to establish an accurate, composite picture of the situation if one overlooks the idiosyncrasies of the Whitehall system which operated at that time. Initially, any points that were raised were considered in isolation, usually by junior officials. A broader perspective was subsequently established by more senior officials who synthesised and expanded upon the views of their junior colleagues. This meant that the different charges levelled by Molotov were, in the first instance, considered separately by officials responsible for either Greece or Roumania; and that the wider picture was established only gradually, as the specific observations made by the junior ranks coalesced under the scrutiny of their superiors. At the time, this meant that Churchill, Eden, and others at the top of the executive infrastructure had to wait for the deliberations of their subordinates before making any decisions. They were invariably at a disadvantage when new problems emerged; the sheer volume of events precluded their having and retaining a complete grasp of each and every subject. They had to wait for their briefs, and were in the meantime in the dark (and prone to all the failings that accompany ignorance). A broad understanding of the problems facing Churchill, Eden, *et al.*, cannot, therefore, be gained by referring to their initial statements in isolation. It requires putting these into their proper context, and that means considering both the documents upon which their concerns were focused, and the briefs that their staffs supplied them with explaining the situation. In this case, that means beginning with the specific minutes prepared on the Molotov telegrams, and the way in which these were synthesised into a coherent assessment of the situation as a whole.

Molotov's accusations concerning the Greek situation were first considered in Whitehall on 1st May. Armine Dew (now working in the

Southern Department, but previously a Northern Department official and therefore well-versed in questions pertaining to Anglo-Soviet relations) thought that the "far from helpful" telegram of 28th April showed the extent to which Molotov relied - unhealthily - upon Novikov for information.¹⁰⁰ The Soviet Foreign Minister had claimed on 22nd April that he had had insufficient information on Greek affairs upon which to base any observations: now, however, he talked about "the insufficient consideration being given to 'legitimate desires of those Greeks who are the representatives of the Greek National Movement'." In Dew's opinion, Molotov had been somewhat hasty in criticising Churchill. His information was flawed, primarily because Novikov - his major source of intelligence on the developing situation - had apparently accepted Greek "Left Wing propaganda at its face value." Dew was nevertheless concerned about the implications of recent developments in Greece and Yugoslavia - and, in particular, the apparent decision of the Soviet Government, who were already "giving strong support to Tito in Yugoslavia", to do the same in respect of EAM/ELAS (the Communist resistance movement in Greece).¹⁰¹ Dew drew disturbing conclusions from recent events:-

The somewhat peevish remarks about HMG's control of Greek affairs and a disclaimer by the Soviet Government of any responsibility for decisions taken by HMG may indicate that the Soviet Government supported or even advised the setting up of the Government in the mountains and are rather annoyed that this move has not been very successful.¹⁰²

Dew suggested that this unsatisfactory situation might be remedied by increasing the supply of information to Moscow about Greece, but in general remained pessimistic:-

The outlook is not very hopeful. The Russians approach these questions from a subjective rather than an objective standpoint. The only common ground is that we and they should provide what is in the best interests of the war effort, but if the Russians think that this aim can be achieved in Yugoslavia and Greece only by giving out and out support to Tito and EAM it is not likely that we can agree with them.

Dew was afraid that the *modus operandi* governing Anglo-Soviet relations was in danger of collapse. Up to now, the fact that the Powers shared

a common military goal had been sufficient to preclude disagreements. Now, however, an argument about strategy threatened to upset the position. Dew did not say whether the impasse looming over the question of supporting EAM was essentially strategic or political: nor, in truth, was this particularly important. Any breakdown in the military consensus would be disastrous for Anglo-Soviet relations. Dew was well aware of this, but at a loss as to how to combat the approaching crisis. He was resigned to the fact that Molotov would neither volunteer support as Churchill had requested, nor reciprocate it as a *quid pro quo* for British acquiescence in Roumanian affairs. If the Soviets insisted on offering support to EAM, the British could do little to gainsay them. Their only option would be to continue supporting those elements in Greece that they preferred, whilst supplying the Soviet Government with accurate information in the hope that they might, in Dew's words, "adopt our attitude."

Douglas Howard, the head of the Southern Department, was quick to link the telegram of 28th April with the subsequent message about Roumania. The first "unhelpful message" and the "definitely unpleasant one about Roumania" were evidence that Molotov was "in particularly bad humour." Howard refused to accept that ignorance lay behind the Soviet outburst. It was, he felt, ridiculous for Molotov to suggest that he had been kept in the dark about British policy towards Greece. "Mr Leeper has kept Novikov pretty fully informed throughout," he claimed, "and if the latter fails to keep Moscow informed it is not our fault."¹⁰³ In his opinion, the recent Soviet interference in Greek affairs - far from being the result of ignorance - had been provoked by the publicity which had attended the recent mutinies and political crisis. He doubted whether the Russians were responsible for the creation of the Political Committee in the mountains; but he was convinced that the recent high profile developments in Egypt and the Middle East had persuaded Moscow that it was now expedient for them to voice both their support for their "co-religionists" (EAM) and their misgivings about British policy towards Greece. Howard was confident that the information already sent to Molotov (via Clark Kerr and the

Leeper-Novikov channel) had provided sufficient material to answer his telegrams. Agreeing with Dew, he suggested that the best way to deal with the substance of the Soviet telegram of 28th April was to ignore it and carry on as before.¹⁰⁴

Sir Orme Sargent agreed with Howard, and suggested that instructions should be sent to Clark Kerr informing him that Churchill would not be answering the telegram.¹⁰⁵ The Ambassador should also be told to stress the importance which the British attached to the Leeper-Novikov link; and that, if this was failing to meet desired standards, it was up to the Russians to improve matters. Sargent's views epitomised the attitude in Whitehall. In future, niggling outbreaks of petulance were to be met with silence.

Eden accepted this advice, at least as far as answering Molotov directly was concerned. However, he did not agree with Sargent's proposal about sending instructions to Clark Kerr. He felt that it was for the Soviet Government to pursue the matter as they saw fit, minuting that in his opinion "the ball is on their side of the net." The specific charges levelled by Molotov were, therefore, to be left unrequited. All the same, Eden was not ready to drop the matter altogether. On the wider issue of Soviet policy in the Balkans, the Foreign Secretary now had grave misgivings, misgivings which he shared with his officials:-

Far more important is the mounting evidence of Soviet intention to dominate Balkans. I should like Department to turn its mind urgently to this despite day to day cases. What is evidence of this Soviet intention? How is it to be carried out? Should it influence our policy and our military plans in later phases of war? If so, how? These are points we must consider.

In the first instance, Eden contented himself with ordering the cessation of pro-Russian propaganda broadcasts to the Balkans.¹⁰⁶ It is clear, however, that the Foreign Secretary had decided that the time had arrived for a thorough review of policy towards the Balkan region as a whole. Particular emphasis was to be laid upon the question of Soviet penetration into the peninsula, and its

impact in the longer term upon British interests and policy. While this did not mean that Eden had ordered a change in policy, it did indicate that his attitude had changed. Developments had called the wisdom and efficacy of existing policy into question. That policy, and the developments which had threatened to undermine it, would have to be reconsidered, and, if necessary, adjusted.¹⁰⁷

* * *

The somewhat fraught tone of Eden's minute is placed into context by other reactions to Molotov's telegrams, and in particular the Prime Minister's furious response. Churchill had penned a vitriolic reply to the "offensive telegram" - at midnight on 30th April - 1st May.¹⁰⁸ Fortunately, he had sent this in draft form to Eden for approval prior to its despatch. If this first draft had been sent, there would have been further heated exchanges; and, possibly, a serious rupture in Anglo-Soviet relations. Churchill, in combative mood, had thrown down the diplomatic gauntlet, showing little consideration for Russian sensitivities in the process. "I expect you and Stalin to believe me when I say I know nothing at all about this business," he thundered, "and I can only suppose you have got hold of a mare's nest." The Prime Minister clarified that, as far as he was concerned, policy towards Roumania had been agreed between London and Moscow, and that the British had not strayed from the agreed path:-

Let me make it clear that in all this Roumanian business, I am working with you and Stalin. I have accepted your terms of surrender offered to Roumania with the amendments I suggested as an absolute agreement between us. I am prepared to co-operate with you in every way. I am prepared to dismiss anyone who stands in the path. Tomorrow morning the Foreign Office will give you a full explanation. I am sure that nothing has been done by us which has not, for its object, the forcing of your generous terms on Roumania.

Churchill was prepared to concede that the question of agents and the communications which had passed between Bucharest and Cairo had caused "great difficulties", but would brook no accusations of duplicity.¹⁰⁹ He therefore confronted Molotov with two choices: he could either resume a policy of

collaboration, based upon trust and the acknowledgement of a shared politico-military goal; or he could jeopardise future developments by embarking on a policy of unilateralism, and thereby return Anglo-Soviet relations to an environment of mutual suspicion and recrimination. Churchill had no doubts about which was the more desirable, and warned Molotov accordingly:-

Tell me what you want, trust me and have no misgivings. I have already said we consider you our leaders in Roumanian policy on the basis of the terms we arranged. Of course, if you do not believe a single word we say, it really would be better to leave things to run out as they will. But considering the tremendous business we have in hand together, I trust you will send me an answer which I shall not have to hand back to your Ambassador.

From the tone of this message, it is clear just how angry the Prime Minister had been. This was a thinly disguised challenge to Molotov to either put up or shut up, and risked an open breach with the Russians. Churchill had had his fill of Soviet insolence. However, the draft suggests that, far from desiring an open break with the Soviet Union, Churchill remained convinced of the need to retain close links with Moscow. For all its aggression, his message constituted a strong, impassioned plea in defence of the previously agreed policy - as concerning Roumania, and as affecting the wider conduct of the war. He was leaving Molotov with no doubts as to where *he* stood on the issue of collaboration. The threats which he levelled at Molotov were of course little more than a warning: that if the Soviets abandoned the policy which had brought success thus far, they would have to shoulder full responsibility for consequent future setbacks. The matter was obviously in Soviet hands: the British could not dictate Soviet policy, merely attempt to influence it. Churchill may have been goading Molotov, daring the Russians to abandon their traditional attitude of distrust towards the West just as the Western Powers had done in reverse. However, to speculate on Churchill's tactical approach, while interesting, is to digress. It was his political strategy which really mattered in this instance. The Prime Minister was certainly stentorian in denouncing Molotov's ill-mannered faithlessness. However, by ending his message with what may have been an oblique reference to the imminent **OVERLORD**

operation, Churchill once again played upon the themes of unity and shared purpose. For all his anger, his initial impulse was to strike in defence of policy, not to abandon it.

A few more points should be made about this draft. Churchill can be criticised for using such bullish rhetoric - the wisdom of indulging in a game of brinkmanship so close to **OVERLORD** seems questionable. However, and perhaps for that very reason (the approaching invasion of Normandy), or perhaps because various political issues connected with the post-hostilities period were beginning to force themselves onto the agenda, the Prime Minister may have felt obliged to launch a pre-emptive defence of British prerogative. The "tremendous business" which Churchill anticipated in his draft had certainly exacerbated his fears *vis-à-vis* Russia. Once committed militarily on the continent, Britain would have even less time and even scantier resources with which to forestall undesirable Russian initiatives; and, as Churchill had previously intimated, the Soviets would be better placed to slacken off their efforts and to enrich themselves whilst leaving the Western Powers to shoulder the burden of defeating Hitler.¹¹⁰ If any convincing defence of prerogative was to be made, it would have to be undertaken from a position of perceptible strength, and whilst the possibility of retaliation remained.

Whether such thoughts influenced Churchill in his drafting must remain conjecture. It is unimportant, because the Molotov telegrams had created a diplomatic imperative, over and above such calculations. The Soviet Foreign Minister had levelled insulting charges, not only against the Prime Minister but by association against Great Britain. National honour, and prestige, were therefore at stake; and a response was called for. The importance of honour and prestige as political factors should not be overlooked, for as one authority on international relations has put it, "honour is the halo around interests; prestige is the halo around power."¹¹¹ Any failure to uphold these "twin impostors" would have been catastrophic to Britain's power political position, a position upon which her relations with Russia rested. The strength of

Churchill's language should be considered with this in mind. In any case, the most striking features of his draft remain his dogged adherence to the policy of collaboration, and his hope that the Soviets would see that the advantages of co-operation continued to outweigh those of unilateralism.

Eden responded immediately to Churchill's draft, providing him with a detailed account of the history of the de Chastellain mission and of the Anglo-Soviet exchanges referring to it.¹¹² The Foreign Secretary told the Prime Minister that although the Russians had not been informed about specific details in advance of its despatch, they had already agreed that the British could undertake operational missions within Roumania, and maintain their contact with Maniu. **AUTONOMOUS** had therefore been consonant with accepted policy. After the capture of the mission, the Soviets had been kept fully informed of developments, including the messages that de Chastellain had subsequently sent out through Maniu (with the almost certain collusion of Antonescu, whose prisoner he remained). The **Pravda** Affair had revealed the extent to which the Russians had resented the embarrassing revelations which had attended de Chastellain's capture. It had also given the lie to Molotov's claim that the British had failed to inform the Soviet Government about the mission. All in all, the available evidence suggested that Molotov's accusations were unfounded; and, therefore, that his entire initiative smacked of a deliberate attempt to embarrass HMG for what could only be political motives.

Eden was unequivocal in his condemnation of Molotov. The charges he had made were so flimsy that they were hardly worth a response.¹¹³ The tone of the telegram, however, could not be overlooked. "Molotov's message," Eden felt, "is couched in such offensive terms and is such a deliberate misrepresentation of the facts that I entirely agree that you should send a sharp message of your own." He was, all the same, careful to tone down some of the excesses of Churchill's initial draft, and in particular to get him to "soften" his last sentence.¹¹⁴ He also told Churchill about current efforts that were being made to send further missions into Roumania, this time as joint SOE-OSS

affairs. The Soviets had been informed of these plans, and asked whether they wished to participate in the missions. In view of Molotov's outburst, Eden had instructed SOE and Clark Kerr not to pursue the matter further; and Cairo was told to suspend all arrangements that had been made for despatching of the missions. The Foreign Secretary concluded by telling Churchill that he had already drawn up instructions for Clark Kerr, telling the Ambassador to counter Molotov's accusations along the lines which Churchill himself had now suggested. These directions, sent to Moscow on 2nd May, followed the same, predominantly defensive approach which can be detected in Churchill's own draft. Clark Kerr was told to impress upon Molotov the importance which the British attached to continuing co-operation between London and Moscow, whilst making it plain how much they resented outbursts impugning their honour.¹¹⁵

Eden's minute to Churchill reined in the Prime Minister: it did not remove the underlying concerns about Soviet motives. The Foreign Secretary had persuaded the Prime Minister to "soften" the tone of his response to Molotov. He did not even attempt to apologise for the Russian's tirade. In essence, Eden shared the views of his master. He believed in the policy of collaboration, and saw the necessity of maintaining close ties with Moscow. He was equally convinced of the need to fight for British honour. Eden differed from Churchill in style, not principle. In persuading Churchill to moderate his reply, he bought time - time in which to consider the implications of Molotov's outburst, and in which to construct a considered (as opposed to a knee-jerk) response. Eden had clearly been shaken by Molotov's telegrams - and for this reason had directed the FO to review the entire question of Soviet policy in the Balkans. He had now made sure that this review would take place in relative calm, without a Churchill-inspired diplomatic incident.

Officials in the FO continued to consider the implications of the Soviet assault and the best way to respond. As far as Roumania was concerned, they soon confirmed that British options were limited. Edward Rose (of the

Southern Department) noted that "there is really nothing we can add to what the Prime Minister said in his message on 24th April." As he pointed out, "we have always taken the line that it is for the Soviet Government to give the lead as far as Roumania is concerned, and if they think we can do something more then it is up to them to say what and we will do it." Going on to exhibit what Churchill subsequently described as the FO habit of arguing for two conflicting policies in the same minute, Rose suggested in consecutive lines that, firstly, the Roumanian section of the telegram of 28th April should be ignored (in the same manner as had been advocated for the Greek section); and that, secondly, that the Russians should be told that everything possible was being done to "increase the pressure" as they had requested, and that it was up to them to suggest new ways of doing so. In effect, therefore, Rose failed to provide any advice at all - other than to stress the need for a decision on policy. "Otherwise," he warned, "this vicious circle of telling each other to do something without specifying what may go on forever."¹¹⁶

Howard continued to have little sympathy for Molotov's position. "What the devil do they expect us to do about Roumania in addition to bombing and supporting the Soviet Government in their surrender terms and negotiations in Cairo?" he asked. "Molotov is being so unreasonable that one is tempted to snap back at each paragraph." He felt, however, that the "stiff reply" which had been sent in answer to the second "outrageous" telegram would suffice, especially as it was now impractical to respond to the Roumanian paragraph of the earlier message (in view of the decision to ignore the passages concerning Greece).¹¹⁷ Sargent agreed, and once again suggested that instructions should be sent to Clark Kerr, telling him: firstly, to inform Molotov that Churchill would not be replying (to the first message); secondly, to stress the importance of using the Leeper-Novikov channel to resolve problems arising over Greece; and thirdly and "to retort if necessary as regards Roumania on the lines suggested in Mr. Rose's minute." Eden now accepted Sargent's advice, although he felt that Clark Kerr should not be encouraged "to open up first about Roumania."¹¹⁸

By this time, however, the situation had developed still further. Matters were now far from being confined to the Anglo-Soviet dispute over Greece and Roumania. Officials in London had now had time to consider the implications of the Molotov outburst, and to form new opinions about the current state of policy. Moreover, new developments had complicated matters still further. The whole question of British policy towards the Balkans, and in particular Soviet penetration into that region, had been thrown into turmoil.

IV. Macedonia and the Greater Yugoslavia Question; or How Federations lose their Appeal

The Molotov telegrams were instrumental in prompting the review of policy which took place during May 1944, but they were by no means the only influence which shaped events in London. A variety of developments persuaded Churchill and his colleagues that something unpleasant might be in the wind.

Concern had been growing for some time in the FO about the Russian attitude towards Bulgaria. The Soviets had for some time maintained an enigmatic silence on the position of this Axis satellite (with whom they were not at war). By late April, it was felt that this silence might indicate more than indifference on Moscow's part; and a telegram to this effect was sent to Clark Kerr on 26th April.¹¹⁹ The British Ambassador had handed a letter to the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Andrei Vyshinsky, at the beginning of April, in which he asked for a clarification of Russian policy towards Bulgaria. Clark Kerr had not informed London of having received any reply - which London thought was "odd"¹²⁰ - and the FO had now drawn its own conclusions:-

M. Vyshinsky's secretiveness about Bulgaria lends colour to the supposition that the Soviet Government may be turning over in their minds the idea of a separate deal... If that supposition is correct there is some danger that part of the scheme may be an offer to support Bulgaria's claim to Greek Thrace and Yugoslavian Macedonia in return for active collaboration in the war.¹²¹

The FO was also worried because recent intelligence suggested that both the Partisans in Yugoslavia and EAM in Greece now supported the idea of territorial adjustments in favour of Bulgaria.¹²² Clark Kerr was therefore instructed to approach Vyshinsky, and inquire about recent Russian contacts with Bulgaria. He was also told to put forward HMG's "emphatic view as to the impropriety of depriving our Yugoslavian and Greek Allies of territory for the benefit of our Bulgarian enemies." Britain could in no way condone or support a policy of territorial bribery in order to secure Bulgarian aid. He was also told to impress upon Vyshinsky that any decision about the future of Macedonia - which the FO believed to be inextricably linked to the Bulgarian question - would at this juncture be premature.¹²³

The Ambassador replied on 30th April.¹²⁴ He had received from the American Embassy copies of diplomatic correspondence between the Soviet Foreign Ministry and the Bulgarian Minister in Moscow which, he claimed, seemed to "dispose of any likelihood that the Soviet Government are contemplating a separate deal with the Bulgarian Government." In his opinion, and although "the attitude of the Soviet Government towards Bulgarian irredentist claims" remained unclear, it was most unlikely that the Russians would advance Bulgarian claims over Yugoslav territories at a time when they were anxious to offer full support to Tito. He also felt that, given "the present stage of developments in the Balkans", it was unlikely that the Soviet Government had "committed themselves to any hard and fast decisions as regards the future of Greece." Clark Kerr was ready to concede that, in the longer term, the Russians might consider territorial changes favouring Bulgaria. "In the pursuit of long term 'Slavonic policy'," he suggested, "it may have occurred to Soviet authorities that Bulgarian claim to Greek Thrace might be worth their support as part of the eventual solution of the Balkan problems." He was, however, less certain about their enthusiasm for the Macedonian project, which he felt was an indigenous Balkan - or more properly Yugoslav - phenomenon.¹²⁵

Within two days, however, Clark Kerr had forwarded evidence which suggested that his previous forecasts of Russian interest in this area had been premature. An article in the Soviet journal **Red Star** on 30th April had commented enthusiastically on the impact which Tito's promise of "complete autonomy" for Macedonia had enjoyed amongst Bulgarians.¹²⁶ According to **Red Star**, Tito's programme, which looked forward to the creation of a Federal Yugoslav State, had brought over to his side "even those Macedonians who previously opposed great Serb policy of pre-war Yugoslavian Government and were therefore inclined to support Bulgaria." The idea was therefore praised, because it had led to a loss of support for (and consequent weakening of) the Sofia Government: which, in the words of the Soviet propagandists, had "linked up the fate of Bulgaria with that of Hitlerite Germany."

Matters had taken a further twist with the publication of another article on 1st May, this time in the journal **Trud**, which suggested that the Soviets were about to launch a new policy towards Greece.¹²⁷ This flatly contradicted Clark Kerr's forecast of 30th April; for, as he now warned the FO:-

The present article warrants the assumption that the Soviet press has received directive to play up EAM and to discredit new Greek Government by argument that Greek situation, in all essential respects, is analogous to that prevailing in Yugoslavia. This assumption is supported by detached tone of Molotov's acknowledgement of Prime Minister's message about Greece. It looks therefore as if attitude of Soviet Government towards Greece is beginning to crystallise in a direction which diverges from our own.

The Ambassador, clearly worried by the turn of events in Balkan affairs which this seemed to represent, proposed to tackle Molotov at the earliest opportunity.¹²⁸ Clark Kerr also planned to raise the matter of the **Red Star** article which, in addition to expressing Soviet satisfaction over Tito's propaganda *coup*, had implied that the Soviet Government now regarded an autonomous Macedonia as being consonant with their own hopes for the settlement of the Balkan question. He was afraid that the Soviet articles might undermine the fragile stability which the British had struggled to achieve in

Greek politics. In order to retrieve the situation, he advocated a direct approach, both in London and in Moscow:-

In view of importance of our avoiding serious divergence between Soviet Government and ourselves about Greece, it would seem advisable that my own forthcoming oral representations to Soviet authorities should be re-inforced by some plain-speaking to Soviet Ambassador in London.

The Ambassador sent further telegrams on 2nd May, this time on the question of an autonomous Macedonia. He was concerned about plans which Tito had (allegedly) formulated, proposing the creation of a new Yugoslav state. Clark Kerr had read a press report of an interview given by Tito's spokesman on Foreign Affairs, Josip Smoljaka, to Cyrus Sulzberger of the **New York Times** on 11th April, in which Tito's policy had been given a comprehensive airing.¹²⁹ The Ambassador was disturbed by this report, and complained that he had not been kept fully informed of developments.¹³⁰ According to the report, Smoljaka had clarified Tito's aims regarding a future Balkan state by stating that Tito's Government "definitely does desire to see establishment of a federated state between Southern Slavs to which it is hoped Bulgaria will adhere." Smoljaka had gone into some detail, outlining the ideals upon which the new federal state would be based.¹³¹ He had been careful to offer the usual assurances about respecting the wishes of the people, promising that their approval would be sought after the war had ended. He also explained, stage by stage, the process by which this state would be created:-

We believe in the idea of federation with equal rights for all. It would be possible and desirable to include Bulgarians in this federation. Said, it is up to them to decide for themselves... Our first aim is free Federal Yugoslavia. That said, that is not enough to insure peace in the Balkans. We must have Balkan federation and first step would be Union of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Second, we will invite Albania to enter with full and equal rights. Then we will be strong enough to repel any attacks from whatever quarter.

The position of Greece has also been clarified. "So far as Greece is concerned," Smoljaka had stated, "Greece must either be included in the



Federation or we must have a permanent alliance with her. That is naturally up to the Greeks." The solution of the Macedonian question would also have to be an integral part of this programme. According to Smolaka, Macedonia had previously been a "great bone of contention" between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The establishment of regional peace and security - which was the goal of those championing the federation - could not be achieved if dissent over Macedonia persisted. Smolaka claimed to have the answer. "The best solution of this problem," he argued, "is to give Macedonia full autonomy within Federal State." He had, of course, been careful to avoid making irredentist demands. The Macedonia to which he had referred was Slav; "Greek Macedonia," he stated, "naturally belongs to Greece."

All of this had alarmed Clark Kerr. The Ambassador had therefore sought the advice of John Balfour, British Minister at the Moscow Embassy, who had "local knowledge of pre-war Balkan problems." He now passed this advice on to London.¹³² Balfour had commented on the extent of Bulgarian support for amalgamation with Yugoslavia and the creation of a federal state (within which an autonomous Macedonia would fit), and on its pre-war antecedents. Balfour believed that support for amalgamation persisted in Sofia, and that certain influential political groups were in favour of bringing Bulgaria and Yugoslavia together. The views of the main Yugoslav groups were also outlined. According to Balfour, the Serbs had argued for a Greater Yugoslavia as a bulwark against Great Power domination of the Balkans, whilst the Croats had hoped that a union with Bulgaria would counter-act "the predominant influence of the Serbs" in Yugoslavia. Balfour then listed various factors which, in the *ante-bellum* period, had precluded the establishment of a federation between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia: separate royal dynasties in the two countries; "mistrust of Bulgaria in Yugoslav governing circles"; and "the inter-play of greater rivalry in the Balkans" (that is, Great Power rivalries). He also noted other, more current, objections which could be raised against the scheme. It would, he suggested, be "most disquieting to the Greeks and Roumanians"; and would enjoy "a distinctly left wing complexion."

In Balfour's opinion, Tito had now adopted the federal conception. His programme, "which appears to commend itself to the Soviet authorities", embraced much of the pre-war thinking. He had, moreover, taken steps to counter-act objections to the scheme. He had promised that Greek Macedonia would not be forcibly absorbed into a Slav bloc. Nor would the Greeks be coerced into joining a Slav Federation against their will. Balfour, for one, harboured no illusions about the price which the Greeks would have to pay in order to retain this independence. "The evident corollary," he warned, "is that Greece should be ruled by those elements best qualified to ensure their permanent friendship to the proposed new southern Slav state."

Balfour had not offered a detailed criticism of Tito's programme, but his assessment made it plain that it ran contrary to British interests. The creation of a federation which had "distinctly left wing" political leanings, and which enjoyed the patronage of the Soviet Union, would leave Britain with a marginal influence in the Balkan hinterland. Moreover, Greece would be left isolated, and at the mercy of a powerful Slavic super-state. This would further diminish Britain's standing in the region. Such an erosion of influence was bound to cause concern. The plan also implied changes in the socio-political make-up of the post-war Balkan states, and this conflicted with certain political commitments which Britain had made. The assumption that the governing bodies within the respective Balkan countries would support or acquiesce in the formation of the new bloc seemed to suggest that the pre-war elites - including the royal dynasties - would no longer exercise power. This could not but embarrass the British, who had assumed responsibility for (and made promises to) the Governments-in-Exile and other political refugees. Tito's blueprint suggested that such elements would face strong opposition if they attempted to return to power; and, indeed, that they might be prevented from returning home at all. If that happened, the British would be unable to discharge their responsibilities. They would also see the political allies in which they had invested their hopes excluded from power. British prestige and influence would suffer accordingly. All in all, therefore, the picture painted by

Balfour could hardly have inspired less confidence.¹³³ Churchill responded to these various telegrams in a somewhat haphazard fashion. His initial reactions - to the **Trud** and **Red Star** articles - suggest that he knew little about the issues at stake; and, in particular, the Macedonian Question.¹³⁴ The next day, however, Churchill indicated that he had begun to grasp the threat posed by a Greater Yugoslav bloc. Having read Clark Kerr's later telegrams, he was now worried by Tito's supposed plan, and sent a further note, this time to Cadogan. "I should like a very short note on this - one page," he minuted. "I have read both these telegrams. How do they strike you? How should we feel towards a Bulgarian-Yugoslavian bloc? It certainly does not seem very pleasant at first sniff."¹³⁵

The Prime Minister's curiosity may have been piqued, but he continued to approach these questions as part of his wider interest in Yugoslav affairs.¹³⁶ There is nothing to indicate from these minutes that he linked it directly to the dispute with Molotov over Greece and Roumania, or that his bout of anti-Bolshevik fervour extended to Tito in this connection. Indeed, his minutes on the subject made no reference to the Soviet Union, and the political and ideological ramifications of Tito's programme were similarly ignored. Churchill was preoccupied with the question of policy towards the resistance movements in Yugoslavia - Tito's People's Liberation Movement, and General Mihailović's nationalist Yugoslav Home Army (JVO). Minuting to Eden on 7th May, ostensibly about the Smolaka interview, he was more interested in complaining about the lack of progress which had been made on the resistance question. He was remarkably unconcerned by Smolaka's comments:-

The article from the New York Times is well worth reading. It is very far-reaching and by no means objectionable to our point of view... I have spent a long afternoon with the various officers from Yugoslavia. I am convinced that this week we should arrive at a decision of policy of clear-cut character. I should be very glad to talk about this with you at the first convenient opportunity.¹³⁷

The Prime Minister's thoughts were clearly still dominated by short term, war-orientated considerations. He had grown accustomed to favouring

the military position over the political; and his attitude towards HMG's Yugoslav policy tended to reflect this. It is possible that, as a result, his ability to grasp longer term political implications was impaired. Perhaps he had grown so used to delivering the homily that "politics can wait for the peace settlement" that he had come to believe it himself. It is difficult to explain his equanimity about the Macedonia - and Greater Yugoslavia - conception in any other fashion, especially when his other minutes of 4th May concerning Soviet policy and the Bolshevik threat are considered. Of course, his reading of the Yugoslav political situation, and his faith in Tito, may have persuaded him that the matters now arising were still relatively inconsequential; and that settling political questions at the peace conference remained the best course. Alternatively, his concentration on the military aspect of policy towards Yugoslavia may have distracted him, and blinded him as to the political implications of the developments Smolka had hinted at. The claim that Smolka's exposition was "by no means objectionable to our point of view" flatly contradicted the various, up-to-date projections which outlined future political and strategic desiderata. Such incongruity cannot but suggest that the Prime Minister had, momentarily at least, lost the plot.

Eden soon put his master back on track. In the first of two minutes sent to Churchill on 12th May (in answer to queries about the **Red Star** article), the Foreign Secretary explained the recent history of Bulgarian and Partisan involvement in Macedonia, and gave the FO's reading of current Soviet policy:-

The **Red Star** article is an attempt to detach Bulgaria from Germany by pointing out that Tito by his promise of Macedonian autonomy and the formation of Macedonian brigades in his army to fight the Germans has provided a far better solution to the Macedonian question than that claimed by the Bulgarian Government... that by occupying Southern Serbia they have liberated Macedonia.¹³⁸

In the subsequent minute, Eden dealt comprehensively with the issue of the proposed Bulgarian-Yugoslav bloc:-

The formation of some such bloc under Russian influence is a distinct possibility. An arrangement on these lines was always

advocated by the "Left Wing" and Agrarian parties in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia before the war and it is from these parties that Tito and the Bulgarian resistance movements draw most of their support.

Eden reminded Churchill that, in the past, the opposition of the royal dynasties in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria had blocked the path to union. However, and as he now warned Churchill, there was every chance that in the near future this obstacle might well vanish; for, as he put it, "who is now to say that both may not soon disappear?" The Foreign Secretary, playing devil's advocate, conceded that, ethnographically, the creation of an autonomous Macedonia within the proposed federal structure would solve the outstanding Macedonian problem. He also accepted that the inclusion of Bulgaria within a Greater Yugoslav state could provide greater stability by helping to balance out the existing Serb-Croat-Slovene rivalries. Eden was not, however, prepared to support such a solution. The benefits he had outlined were far outweighed by the probable disadvantages, which he now set out in some detail:-

The Greeks hate the idea and from the purely British point of view such a bloc is a doubtful proposition. It would overshadow Greece both politically and militarily. It would undoubtedly give the Russians a preponderating position in the Balkans. It might advance claims to Greek territory in Greek Macedonia and in Thrace. The latter claim would be for an outlet to the Aegean, something to which we have always been opposed. In present circumstances it would in practice mean having the Russians on the Aegean. It would also have the effect of separating Turkey from Greece by a strip of Bulgarian territory and this would weaken their capabilities of mutual defence.¹³⁹

Churchill accepted his Foreign Secretary's advice, and his interest in Tito's programme lapsed. As far as future policy was concerned, one can see in Eden's minute the outlines of subsequent British strategy for the defence of their position in the Eastern Mediterranean. Every effort had to be made to exclude the Soviets from the Aegean littoral, and to promote a Graeco-Turkish axis friendly to Britain as a bulwark against Soviet penetration. In view of these considerations, and for the reasons given by Eden, the Greater Yugoslav conception was highly undesirable, and British support for Tito's programme (in this connection) a non-starter.

Six months earlier, Eden had championed the creation of regional federations at the Moscow Conference. Molotov had effectively wrecked this initiative, and the suggestion had lapsed.¹⁴⁰ Now, however, the positions were reversed. The substance of the arguments which Molotov had raised were now applied by the British to counter a federal proposal contrary to their strategic interests. The political irony of the situation is manifest.

V. The Conference of Dominion Prime Minister, May 1944 : Smuts and Curtin indulge in "Crystal-Gazing"

Events in and around the Balkans at the beginning of May were not the only factors which influenced the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in their ruminations about foreign policy. Churchill was busy hosting a conference of the Dominion Prime Ministers in London. At these meetings a variety of subjects came up for discussion: the future of the Balkans was one of them.

Field Marshal Smuts, Prime Minister of South Africa, had given notice as early as 20th March that, in his opinion, "serious attention will have to be given to the future set-up in Europe which might provide for the security of its countries and in particular for Britain." He had therefore asked the FO to undertake a review of the traditional policies of the European powers, and in particular of Russia, justifying his request by pointing out that "the long range objectives of national policy remain a fairly constant factor." Smuts had argued that the long term policy of the Soviet Union required urgent attention.¹⁴¹ Churchill had agreed with Smuts, and the FO had produced a paper as required.¹⁴² This survey did not, however, remove the fears of the South African Premier about Soviet ambitions. Indeed, when the conference met to consider this question, it soon became clear that many of Smuts's misgivings were shared by his peers. They were concerned about the long term political situation, and in particular the disadvantages that would accrue to the British Empire if, in formulating their short term strategy, they continued to ignore longer term political interests.

The position in the Balkans was first mentioned on 1st May, at the second meeting of the Prime Ministers (at which the current military situation was comprehensively reviewed).¹⁴³ Speaking in defence of Churchill's Mediterranean strategy, Smuts was adamant that the Italian campaign should be continued, not as a side-show but as a major operation in its own right. He did not, however, confine himself to Italy, and went on to argue that "more should have been made of the situation in the Balkans where there was a mass of brave men who could most advantageously be brought into the battle front against Germany."

The New Zealand Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, did not share Smuts's enthusiasm for increased Allied involvement in the Balkans. At the fourth meeting of the premiers on 3rd May, he advised against future military operations, warning that the peninsula was a region "of seething factions who would turn to whoever would give them the most support or hold out to them the most hope for the future."¹⁴⁴ Churchill replied somewhat testily that Fraser need have no cause for concern:-

There had never been any question of major action in the Balkans. It was merely a question of assistance by commandos and air action. Due priorities must prevail in the application of resources... When the position was eased in Italy, we certainly might do more in this direction... but nothing we could do there would be comparable to the main operations elsewhere.

At this point, Smuts launched a bitter attack against the strategic "switch-over" from the Mediterranean to North Western Europe. This had been forced upon the British by the Americans and the Soviets, and had, in his opinion, done grave damage to the strategic position in the South:-

We had not done justice to our successes in the Mediterranean... We had deprived ourselves of the means of exploiting our victory. We had lost the Greek islands; we had given too little help to the Partisans; and we were in danger of leaving the whole field clear in South East Europe to the Russians.

He continued by arguing that future military operations "should not be such as to hinder our political strategy." The Americans and the Russians had

forced the Empire to accept the strategy currently being followed: the Empire could not allow the situation to deteriorate further, to the point where "our post-war policy in South East Europe would be prejudiced."

Churchill sympathised with Smuts's arguments. He admitted that, personally, he "would have been in favour of rolling up Europe from the South East, and joining hands with the Russians." The politics of the Alliance had, however, forced him to compromise. The Americans had insisted upon an invasion in the North West, and fought (unsuccessfully) to persuade the British to break off operations in the Mediterranean altogether. However, the strategic decisions reached at Tehran were binding and irrevocable - which meant that Allied fortunes now depended upon the success of **OVERLORD**. Neither personal prejudice nor political calculation could justify the abandonment of strategy - or the jeopardising of Alliance cohesion - so close to the invasion.

This did not, however, prevent matters from developing a stage further. At the meeting on the morning of 4th May, the Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin, spoke his piece.¹⁴⁵ Whilst accepting that the Empire had entered into politico-military commitments which for the duration of the war in Europe it could not - and should not - try to escape, he questioned other aspects of policy. He was afraid Britain was not ready to confront the various political problems which were likely to emerge in the post-hostilities period. The spectre of Communist expansion loomed large. Curtin presented his fellow premiers with a disturbing vision of the future:-

He asked how seriously we took the risk that after the defeat of the Nazis, Communist or Leftist organisations might move into control in Germany... We had been informed that in the Balkans the Russians were developing Communist cells. In France, the Communists were, it appeared, the one really organised party. In Italy, Mussolini, who had been anti-Communist in policy, was no longer in power, and the pendulum of ordinary public opinion was apt to swing from one side to the other. Personalities counted. If the Communist Party, whatever might be said about it, could throw up personalities who would attract public attention and support as the Nazis had done, they might well appeal to oppressed and discontented elements.

Curtin feared a Soviet-inspired upsurge in Communist influence across Europe. He felt that, if current policy were any indication, this trend would not be resisted until too late. He also warned that a strong resurgence of Russian nationalism (the first stirrings of which, he suggested, could already be detected) might lead Moscow to utilise the Communist parties of other countries to act as something akin to "Russian diplomatic agents." The time had come to take remedial measures to check this danger.¹⁴⁶ Concluding his survey, the Australian Prime Minister emphasised the crucial position which the Soviet Union would occupy in the post-war period. It was therefore vital for the Empire to determine the thrust of Russian policy, and respond accordingly - because, as he reminded his colleagues, "all post-war adjustments would primarily depend on how far we could succeed in our arrangements with Russia and how far in fact Russia sincerely intended to collaborate."

Curtin had exposed the dilemma which plagued the British in their attempts to formulate policy. The short term military position had necessitated co-operation with elements which in the long run were always likely to prove hostile to British interests. As matters stood, it was not possible to break away from existing policies of support and collaboration: the British were simply not strong enough, either politically or militarily, to force the pace in this way. A dynamic policy was therefore impractical, and the British were now being forced onto the defensive. Their best chance was that, by continuing to champion the military-driven *modus vivendi* which had been established for the short term, they might salvage something for the longer term where political interests were concerned. This would of course involve HMG in a dangerous and unpredictable game; for, as Curtin pointed out, everything would depend on the Soviet Union. Did the Soviets really mean adhere to the principles of collaboration which they had apparently pledged themselves to? Would they shape their policy to reflect this commitment? How could Britain be sure that they had done so, both in principle and in practice? And, unable to make accurate predictions about Russian policy, how should Britain approach developments in the future? Negotiating this minefield was an unenviable task.

It was, nevertheless, a task that the British, desperate to uphold their interests and their power political position, dared not shrink from.

Churchill gave vent to his feelings about Communism at the seventh session of the conference.¹⁴⁷ Unsurprisingly, he spoke in terms which were hardly flattering. Communism, he argued, was a "quasi-religious movement with a quality of its own. It was the whole life and soul of many of its votaries. The main movement was a profound movement of equalitarianism enforced without regard to any form of morals we had known; and like all totalitarian Governments it made the mistake that the individual under it was not free." The Prime Minister was therefore confident that the inherent flaws in this system would lead inexorably to its collapse. "The spirit of freedom in the world would face up to the brutish regimentation of Communism," he claimed. "The best counter in experience to all violent movement from the left was the improvement of basic conditions for all."

Churchill did not allude to Curtin's speech of the previous day, but his prescription for fighting the Communist contagion - "the improvement of basic conditions for all" - mirrored closely the FO's blueprint for handling the Soviets in the international arena. By proving to the Soviets that co-operation could deliver benefits over and above confrontation, they hoped to forestall the adoption by Russia of an aggressive, ideologically motivated foreign policy. Churchill did not at this stage advocate direct ideological confrontation as the best means of combating Communism. Instead, he suggested that an attritional approach would eventually undermine the socialist position. The blueprint for a future anti-Communist strategy can be seen in this thinking.

The Prime Minister also took care in this connection to make a distinction between political ideology and national politics. He had outlined a means by which to undermine a political system, as opposed to any state practising it. This distinction is a fine one, but the fact remains that Churchill's opposition to Communism did not necessarily preclude his co-operation with

(or indeed admiration for) the Soviet Union. Indeed, it was argued in some quarters that, by successfully undermining the ideology of the Soviet Union, it might be possible to establish closer relations between the West and Moscow.

This is, however, all hypothetical, and of little relevance to the immediate situation. At this stage of the war, it was events that dictated British policy, not philosophical discourse. The warnings given by Smuts and Curtin had a profound effect on Churchill, because they complemented concomitant political developments, and persuaded him that steps now had to be taken to prevent the erosion of Britain's political position. Curtin's comments may well have been the straw that broke the camel's back; for, on the afternoon of 4th May, immediately after hearing the Australian Prime Minister's presentation, Churchill sent Eden a series of minutes on the Communist threat and the need to reconsider the whole basis of British policy. The evidence of Soviet malfeasance which had accumulated over the previous week was now brought into focus for Churchill: a reaction of some sort was in the circumstances perhaps inevitable.

VI. Churchill's Minutes of 4th May : Brute Issues and Bedlam

In his minute of 1st May (about Molotov's telegram of 28th April), Eden had concluded that there was now an urgent need for a review of the political situation in South Eastern Europe.¹⁴⁸ Further telegrams - from Ambassadors Clark Kerr, Halifax and Leeper, and from Lord Moyne - soon reinforced this belief.

Clark Kerr had telegraphed his views on Molotov's telegram of 29th April on 2nd May.¹⁴⁹ His comments were short and to the point. "I trust an answer to this unreasonable Soviet complaint will soon be forthcoming," he wrote. "It seems to me just possible that the Soviet Government's suspicions of our behaviour in Roumania are encouraging them in their nascent tendency to play an independent hand in relation to Greece. The sooner therefore we dispel

these suspicions the better." These views were complemented by a message from Lord Halifax, who had just had a conversation with the Greek Ambassador in Washington.¹⁵⁰ The latter had expressed the fear that, following the advance of the Red Army into the Balkans, the Russians would encourage the formation of a new Slav bloc which would dominate Greece. According to the Greek Ambassador, Leeper had promised Venizelos (who had acted as caretaker Prime Minister in the interregnum between the Tsouderos and Papandreou administrations) that Britain would continue to defend Greece against threats and destabilising influences. He had offered categorical support to this effect, claiming that "HMG would do everything in their power to protect the integral security and effective independence of Greece." Leeper had - apparently - continued by claiming that the US Government were in "substantial agreement" with HMG on this question. Halifax's Greek colleague had concluded by expressing the hope that, if and when the Germans evacuated his country, Anglo-American forces would arrive in Greece before - or at least simultaneously with - Soviet forces. Halifax had been asked to confirm Leeper's pledge, and to ask the State Department to back the general thrust of this policy.

Halifax's telegram was not answered until 13th May. It did not result in any detailed minutes in Whitehall; but, in the circumstances, this is hardly surprising. It merely confirmed opinions which were already circulating, and therefore required little attention.¹⁵¹ In the meantime, however, Leeper had sent contrasting telegrams from Cairo on Soviet policy. On 1st May he reported that Novikov had not yet approached Papandreou, the new Greek Premier, and that his unusually low profile might indicate that he had received new orders from Molotov.¹⁵² "The general impression amongst the Greeks here," he reported, "is that Novikov was now keeping so quiet that he must have received instructions from Moscow to do so."¹⁵³ Leeper also defended his own record, claiming that he had remained in contact with Novikov throughout the recent crisis. He felt, however, that further contacts with his Russian

counterpart should be postponed until after the conclusion of the Lebanon Conference.

The Foreign Secretary replied on 2nd May. "I do not wish to press you to see M. Novikov yourself," he told Leeper, "but it is essential that he should be kept fully informed about Greek affairs. M. Molotov, as you know, told the Prime Minister that the Soviet Government are very inadequately informed about Greece." As Eden reminded Leeper, the amount of information which could be disseminated through Clark Kerr was small. The British Embassy in Moscow could not be expected to supply Molotov *et al.* with information on every point. Novikov was supposed to brief Moscow on the Greek situation, and it was up to Leeper to furnish him with the necessary accurate data.¹⁵⁴

However, a further telegram from Leeper on 3rd May suggested that, far from agreeing to Churchill's call for an end to "ideological warfare" in Greece, the Russians had decided to increase their involvement in the affairs of that country in a manner quite at variance with British interests.¹⁵⁵ Evidence had now surfaced indicating that the Soviets intended to send a military mission to EAM; and Leeper now suggested that the current diplomatic crisis had been engineered by Molotov as a clumsy attempt to secure justification for this mission.

This news received a mixed reaction at the FO. Eden had previously refused to consider such a mission unless the Russians gave assurances that they would follow the British line in Greece. Laskey, noting this, pointed out that the Russians 'could scarcely get in without our assistance'. He also argued that some gains might accrue by permitting the Soviets greater access; and suggested that, once the existing mess had been cleared up and results of the Lebanon Conference were known, a Soviet mission might be contemplated.¹⁵⁶ His departmental chief took a totally different view. Howard considered the proposal to be completely out of the question:-

We should certainly do nothing to encourage or help the despatch of such a mission until we are certain the Soviet Government are going to support our policy. And even if they do undertake not to raise any difficulties in our policy very doubtful whether we should assist the Russians to gain a footing in Greece. It would be looked at most unfavourably by the King and most of his Government - and as things are shaping at present I can see no advantage in having Russians in touch with Communist elements in Greece.¹⁵⁷

Churchill agreed with Howard. He had already told Eden to be careful when dealing with the Russians. "Never forget that Bolsheviks are Crocodiles," he had minuted on 2nd May.¹⁵⁸ This minute had been sent while the sting of Molotov's accusations remained fresh, and reflected bad temper, not reasoned argument, on Churchill's part. All the same, the Prime Minister's concern was both deep and persistent. On 4th May, he showed that he was eager to respond to any indication that the Soviet reptile was opening its maw. Leeper's warning about the Soviet mission to EAM prompted him to write the first of several minutes to the Foreign Secretary:-

We ought to watch this movement very carefully. After all, we lost 40,000 men in Greece and you were very keen on that effort at that time. I do not think we should yield to the Russians any more in Greece. Moreover, I am prepared to discourage Tito from establishing relations with EAM. Probably it would be wise to await the response if any to our telegram to Molotov, and the whole case against EAM should be prepared so that they can if necessary be shown it before we launch it.¹⁵⁹

The rather personal tone adopted about Eden's previous involvement in - and consequent responsibility for - Greece seems both inappropriate and unfair. It may have been Churchill's way of responding to Eden's softening of his reply to Molotov - a move which Churchill probably interpreted as weakness in the face of Russian pressure - and the Prime Minister might therefore have been attempting to stiffen his colleague's resolve. Alternatively, he may have fallen prey to a bout of petulance: he was clearly still sore from Molotov's assault, and had grown increasingly concerned as evidence of further Soviet malpractice surfaced. Curtin's scaremongering had evidently pushed him beyond the bounds of patience, and Eden provided a convenient target.

When this minute arrived at the FO, Howard could make little sense of its last sentence.¹⁶⁰ Churchill seemed to be proposing to denounce EAM in the hope that this would forestall further Communist intrigues in Greece, even though this policy had been dropped in favour of reconciliation (as exemplified by the Lebanon Conference). The Prime Minister was clearly out of touch with current policy, and had reverted to the line that he had adopted the last time that EAM had provoked his wrath. Howard sympathised with Churchill's feelings, and agreed that both Moscow and Tito should be warned away from closer contacts with EAM.¹⁶¹ However, this sympathy could not disguise the fact that Churchill's grasp of the situation was sketchy. His political judgement had been clouded by a combination of temper and ignorance. This is clearly a case where the Prime Minister, anxious to force his opinions onto the agenda, was out of context with the developing situation. While, therefore, it is only right to suggest that his minutes influenced those around him - even in instances such as this, where his advisors had a better understanding of the point at issue than he had himself - it is equally important to remember that they cannot automatically be regarded as accurate statements of British policy.

All the same, the weight carried by the Prime Minister's words should not be underestimated. Even in cases where his minutes displayed lapses in understanding, the broad thrust of his argument could be expected to exercise considerable influence. The peculiarities - some might say inaccuracies - which characterise this particular minute on Greece do not reduce its historical importance. Indeed, they help illustrate how Churchill's fears about the wider context shaped his thinking when it came to dealing with specific issues. The Prime Minister may have concentrated this minute upon the Greek situation, but his thoughts were clearly focused on a far bigger picture. Churchill's concerns were not confined to the situation in Greece; for, as we shall see, he did not send this minute in isolation.

Leeper's telegram was not the only message from Cairo which attracted Churchill's attention on 4th May. Lord Moyne had informed London two days

earlier that Novikov had demanded that the Stirbey negotiations should not be reported by the press; and that, in order to calm the Russians, he (Moyne) had agreed.¹⁶² Churchill noted rather caustically that, in the present circumstances, agreeing to such Russian demands might strengthen Britain's hand against them.¹⁶³ If any resistance to Soviet policy was to be mounted, propaganda would have to play a significant role. Getting the press on-side, and letting the Russians prejudice their own case, was too good an opportunity to miss. In any case, by deferring to Soviet demands of this sort, nothing significant would be conceded, and grounds for claiming that co-operation was being practised as well as preached would be strengthened.

The Prime Minister's subsequent notes to Eden did not concentrate on specific examples of Soviet malfeasance. Churchill had clearly taken Curtin's remarks to heart. Previously, he had been reluctant to consider policy in the longer term. Now, however, a concatenation of diplomatic incidents altered his perspective. Localised events, occurring almost simultaneously in the Balkans, had raised serious questions about Britain's longer term position in the region. More worryingly, the Soviet response to these developments suggested that the Russians were close to adopting a unilateral political agenda - an agenda which would prove prejudicial to British interests in the region. This coincided with the meeting of the Dominion Prime Ministers which had convened to discuss the current situation and consider future Imperial policy. The influence which these developments exercised over Churchill and his colleagues was determined by their coincidence. The sum of the whole was greater than its parts. Had each incident occurred in isolation, with no correlation being drawn between them, the situation might have panned out differently. However, the concatenation *did* occur; and Curtin's remarks proved the catalyst which persuaded Churchill to act.

Churchill contacted Eden immediately after the meeting with the Dominion Prime Ministers on the morning of 4th May. His instructions left little to the imagination:-

A paper should be drafted for the Cabinet and possibly for the Imperial Conference setting forth shortly, for that is essential, the brute issues between us and the Soviet Government which are developing in Italy, in Roumania, in Bulgaria, in Yugoslavia and above all in Greece. It might be possible to get this on one page. I cannot say there is much in Italy, but broadly speaking the issue is: Are we going to acquiesce in the Communisation of the Balkans and perhaps of Italy? Mr. Curtin touched on this this morning and I am of the opinion on the whole that we ought to come to a definite conclusion about it and that, if our conclusion is that we resist the Communist infusion and invasion, we should put it to them plainly at the best moment that military events permit. We should of course have to consult the United States Government first.¹⁶⁴

This minute puts Churchill's earlier comments upon the Greek situation into perspective. The Prime Minister's previous observations had sketched out a policy for resisting a Communist "infusion and invasion" in Greece, referring specifically to EAM as the probable vehicle for Communist intrigue. Now, however, he was painting on a far larger canvas. The content and thrust of Churchill's later minute pointed to a coalescing of the various strands of the Prime Minister's thinking into a single, clear idea. The long term political situation in South Eastern Europe hinged upon the Soviet imponderable: if Britain wanted to retain a say in the politics of the region, she must formulate a policy accordingly. Churchill's inference was clear. He was admitting that policy had not extended to catering for the sensitive political issues which would arise in the wake of the current hostilities. In effect, HMG had been operating a non-policy, in the interests of the war effort and inter-Allied cohesion. However, the time had now come to reach "definite conclusions." The issue was: was this non-policy still viable, or was a more dynamic initiative now called for; and, if so, could a dynamic policy be successfully implemented?

Churchill developed this train of thought in a further minute, sent hot on the heels of the first, in which he proposed to combine tactics with strategy:-

Pray consider whether it might not be wise for us to recall our Ambassador from Moscow for consultation. We should like to have a talk to him. It would make a good gap with the Russians

at the present time. Averell Harriman has already departed for the United States... Let me know what you feel about this. I am not very clear on it myself, but evidently we are approaching a showdown with the Russians about their Communist intrigues in Italy, Yugoslavia and Greece and I do not think that they would like very much a period in which they had neither a British nor an American Ambassador there. I must say, I think their attitude becomes more difficult every day. I hope you have had a talk with Harriman. Take some opportunity of telling me all about this.¹⁶⁵

Churchill's mind was made up. He might not have been "very clear" on the specifics, but in general the evidence of "Communist intrigue" was too compelling to ignore. While he displayed a somewhat cavalier attitude where attention to detail was concerned (see for example, how rapidly he changed from "I cannot say there is much in Italy" to "We are approaching a showdown with the Russians about their Communist intrigues in Italy"), his fears about the big picture were far more consistent - and consequently far harder to refute. He had realised that a policy vacuum was now threatening to undermine Britain's long term political position; and rationalised that unless immediate steps were taken to remedy the situation, the Soviets would swiftly come to dominate the region, with potentially disastrous consequences for Britain's interests and status in the post-war period. Haunted by the implications of this, he now directed Eden to tackle a conundrum that he himself had long been unable to resolve - how to marry the demands imposed by immediate politico-military responsibilities with longer term political desiderata, before on-going developments foreclosed upon options.

Chapter IV: Eden and the Pre-Percentages Agreement - an Exercise in Reactive Diplomacy

I. Plain speaking in London ; Eden tackles Gusev

By the morning of 5th May, Anthony Eden was in an unenviable position. He was being assailed from all sides, subjected to demands for action and faced with criticism about the state of policy towards the Balkans. Churchill's string of minutes had merely increased the pressure. However, the Foreign Secretary was not unequal to the challenge. The FO had made good progress in unravelling the various issues which lay behind the current conflagration. Eden had already directed the Southern Department to prepare a paper on the "mounting evidence of the Soviet intention to dominate the Balkans", and its corollaries for British interests in the region. In the circumstances, Eden had done as well as could be expected: his response had been measured and determined. His concern now was that the dispute with Moscow might deepen, thus causing lasting damage to Anglo-Soviet relations and jeopardising Britain's longer term interests. The Foreign Secretary therefore needed to tackle the two institutions which posed the greatest threat in this respect; the Soviet Government, and the British Prime Minister. His first target was the Russian Ambassador, Feodor Gusev.

Sir Archibald Clark Kerr had advised Eden that the best way to head off a "serious divergence" over Greece was to follow up his own approaches to Molotov with a bout of "plain speaking" to the Soviet Ambassador in London. Eden had agreed to this, minuting in pencil against Clark Kerr's suggestion "Yes - who is to do this?"¹ The obvious candidate was, of course, he himself. On 4th May he received a detailed brief from the Southern Department, with an accompanying note by Laskey, which summarised the current situation and suggested a strategy for tackling Gusev. Together, these two papers provided a clear, concise summary of British policy.²

Laskey's note contained specific advice on the Greek position, in addition to that offered by the general brief. He began by offering a possible explanation for the recent Soviet criticism. "M. Gusev," he suggested, "may refer to the strong action we have taken to suppress the mutinies in the Greek Forces, since this seems to be the factor which has caused the Soviet Government most misgivings about our policy towards Greece."³ Laskey continued by suggesting the best way to portray recent actions to Gusev:-

It might be emphasised that we do not wish to deprive any Greeks, whether they be in the Greek Forces or not, of the right to discuss and to influence the future political developments of their country. We could not, however, allow this political interest to take the form of mutinies.

He also pointed out that, if Papandreou succeeded at the forthcoming conference in the Lebanon in getting all the political factions to participate in his new Government, the demands of the mutineers would have been "completely satisfied." With this in mind, Laskey suggested that a joint Three Power statement could be released on the eve of the conference - or, if this proved impractical, the issuing of separate statements by the Allies - reaffirming the Great Powers' commitment to collaborate with one another in the task of political reconstruction. As he pointed out, there was little in this about which the Russians could reasonably object.⁴ In essence, therefore, Laskey was advising Eden to follow the lines of existing policy. His emphasis was on collaboration - and adhered closely to the principles set out in the Moscow Four Power Declaration. As far as he was concerned, until the review of Soviet policy and British options was completed, policy would have to remain essentially the same as before.

The main FO brief argued along similar lines. Little indication was given that a major change in policy was imminent. In fact, the brief's author seems to have been at pains to stress that *despite* recent provocation, policy would remain essentially unchanged, at least as far as Roumania was concerned:-

We hope that the recent telegrams exchanged with M. Molotov will have put an end to any misunderstanding which may have

existed about our attitude towards Roumania. As we have often emphasised, we consider that the Soviet Government should take the lead in our joint efforts to get Roumania out of the war, and we shall give them all the support in our power.

The "offensive telegram" was to be excused as a misunderstanding: the Russians would continue to play the predominant role in Roumania, supported by Britain. The word "joint" had been specifically inserted into the text to emphasise the point about collaboration. Soviet policy towards Roumania in the longer term was left undiscussed - in all probability because it had already been determined that nothing positive could be expected by raising this topic. British support was in any case confined to aiding the achievement of limited, wartime objectives; and, as nothing had been said to prejudice the peace settlement one way or the other, it was thought better to let sleeping dogs lie. Attitudes remained unchanged, in spite of the upheavals of the previous week. Bad manners were not, it would seem, enough to prompt a change in policy.

A somewhat different approach was suggested for the discussion of policy towards Greece. The Southern Department believed that as HMG had declared itself ready to follow the Soviet lead on matters affecting Roumania and the war, it was expedient to assume that Anglo-Soviet policy in that context functioned on a basis of agreed aims and principles. No such assumptions could be made in respect of Greece, because the Soviets had not communicated any reciprocal acceptance of a British lead. Indeed, recent developments had suggested that the two Great Powers remained worryingly ignorant of each others position *vis-à-vis* Greece, and that Anglo-Soviet relations had suffered as a result. The FO commented on this with the usual degree of understatement, noting that as a result of recent difficulties "there appears to be some danger that our two Governments may take divergent lines" in policy towards Greece. Eden was therefore advised to concentrate upon the military aspects of policy - the one area in which agreement with the Soviets could be anticipated - and to explain that Britain's "principal concern is to secure unity in Greece, since this will clearly be in the best interests of

Greece itself and will enable the Greek Forces both inside and outside the country to play a more effective part in the war."

The FO had been careful to brief Moscow on HMG's reasons for backing Papandreou as the new Prime Minister. He had a good political record; he wanted to unite the anti-Fascist opposition, and include representatives of all parties and organisations (including EAM) in a broad-based coalition government; and he seemed to possess the strength of character necessary to succeed. The FO, though confident that British support would strengthen Papandreou's position, was also convinced that Soviet backing would enormously enhance his programme. They hoped that the Soviets would see the advantages which could accrue to the Allied cause, and support the British initiative - and Papandreou - accordingly. There were certainly grounds for optimism here. In the past, conflicts between the various guerrilla factions had allowed the Germans to minimise their garrison deployments. It followed, therefore, that if an agreement could be brokered, and the immediate political aims of the guerrillas satisfied, a concerted effort could be launched against the Germans. They might then have to redirect resources from other theatres to combat resistance, thereby spreading their already depleted reserves even more thinly. This, clearly, was something which the Soviets would welcome.⁵ The FO were also able to turn an argument which Molotov had used against Churchill back on the Russians. As the brief pointed out, the FO was anxious to secure Soviet support for their policy in Greece "both because of the effect it might have on the general war situation and because we are primarily responsible for military operations in Greece, since it falls within the sphere of the Mediterranean Command." As we have seen, Molotov had accused Churchill of failing to live up to his promise to increase the pressure against Roumania. He had also implied that SOE's contacts with Bucharest had hampered the military operations of the Red Army in a theatre which came under Soviet jurisdiction. By pointing out that the military situation in Greece would improve once the Soviets offered support for the current British politico-military initiative, and that the British, who were responsible for

operations in that theatre, were particularly keen that this should happen, Eden would in effect be confronting Gusev with Molotov's reasoning in reverse. The Russians would either have to comply with Eden's request, or accept having their own criticism turned against them.

The Southern Department concluded its advice by suggesting how the Foreign Secretary might secure Soviet support in the political sphere. As they appreciated all too well, persuading the Russians to adhere to a policy which stressed military objectives was one thing: persuading them to agree to, or at least acquiesce in, political initiatives which ran contrary to their ideological or power political interests was quite another. If the brief is any indication, the FO continued to regard the policy of collaboration as the best way round this problem. Eden was told to tackle Gusev with the following argument:-

We have noticed a number of recent articles in the Soviet press supporting EAM and the Political Committee in Greece at the expense of the Greek Government in Cairo. We do not feel that these are helpful in the present circumstances. We have no wish to exclude either EAM or the Political Committee from a re-organised Greek Government. In fact it is our earnest hope that they will agree to participate with other parties and organisations, but they will scarcely be prepared to do so if they feel that they enjoy the exclusive support of the Soviet Government. Moreover, there is a serious risk that if things go on as they are, it will become clear to the whole world that we and the Soviet Government are pursuing different policies. If this were to happen, the effects would extend far beyond the question of Greece and the damage that would be done needs no emphasis.

By pursuing this line, the FO sought to transform the significance of the Greek political crisis, turning it into an acid test of Anglo-Soviet relations and the policy of collaboration. The success or failure of this policy would hinge upon the Soviet response. Moscow's answer would not necessarily resolve the conundrum of the Soviet imponderable: the British would be none the wiser as to Stalin's long term ambitions if he agreed to compromise. However, if the Russians refused to co-operate, the whole basis of policy would be called into question. The British would be bound to regard future Soviet initiatives with

increasing scepticism; collaboration would be exposed as a chimera; and the plans for a post-war settlement based upon the idea of collective security and lasting peace would be have to be revised. This was the message that Eden was advised to impress upon Gusev. Should the Russians refuse to co-operate in Greece, the British - and the world at large - would be forced to draw its own conclusions about Soviet policy, and respond accordingly.

* * *

Eden saw Gusev on the morning of 5th May. The events of the meeting were immediately recorded in a draft telegram for Clark Kerr.⁶ According to this record, Eden had aimed to confront the Soviet Ambassador about the position concerning Greece and Roumania. The latter was dealt with first:-

I supposed that the Prime Minister's answer and the explanation we had given about our men in Roumania had cleared up the position between us. As we had often emphasised we considered that the Soviet Government should take the lead in our joint efforts to get Roumania out of the war and we should give them all the support in our power.

This was clearly a damage limitation exercise. Eden told Gusev that as far as he was concerned the Roumanian question had been settled. As for the future, the British would undertake to keep Moscow fully informed on operational matters. Interestingly, this account indicates that the Russians had agreed to the dropping of further SOE-OSS mission into Roumania.⁷ It would therefore seem unlikely that it was this proposal that provoked Molotov's outburst. Eden was not, however, prepared to take any chances. The Russians had evidently been less than enamoured with the plan; and while Molotov's anxiety may not have been prompted by this proposal alone, it could not have been helped by it. By agreeing to curtail operations, therefore, Eden hoped to persuade Moscow of British good faith. Moreover, by taking this step, he foreclosed on the prospect of future Anglo-Soviet divergences on operational questions concerning Roumania.

With Roumania out of the way, the Foreign Secretary turned to Greece. He was, he told Gusev, "gravely concerned" by recent events, because "there seemed to me a danger that our two Governments might take divergent lines." Eden followed the brief of the Southern Department almost to the letter. He explained British policy in terms which Gusev could not possibly object to. "Our principal concern in Greece," he claimed, "is to secure unity, since this would enable the Greek forces inside and outside that country to play a more effective part in the war." In line with the FO's advice, the Foreign Secretary provided a thorough summary of Papandreou's credentials and political programme, portraying the Greek premier in the best possible light. He then emphasised the importance which he attached to Soviet support for the Lebanon initiative:-

M. Papandreou would succeed if he were fully backed by the Allies. But if the Soviet Government encouraged EAM to hold out, or was itself critical of the new Greek Government in its press and over its radio, then I thought M. Papandreou would fail and his failure would be due to a lack of unity between the Allies.

"This," Eden had concluded, "would be a serious state of affairs." In order to forestall such a development, the Foreign Secretary suggested certain steps that the Russians could take to bring an end the uncertainty which had so disrupted recent events:-

We should like from the Soviet Government... a public declaration of their support of the new Greek Government and an encouragement to EAM to take its place in that Government. If, however, the Soviet Government were reluctant to go as far as this we considered that at the least they should send instructions to M. Novikov in Cairo to tell the Greeks who came to see him that it was the duty of the EAM and all of them to join up in a Government under M. Papandreou to help in the joint prosecution of the war and not to make unnecessary difficulties.

Eden had concentrated on two of his favourite themes. He had emphasised that policy needed to concentrate on delivering military achievements. Political considerations had to be subordinated to this goal. He had also indicated the importance which he attached to M. Novikov's position.

The Soviet representative in Cairo should play a key role, liaising with his Anglo-American colleagues, transmitting and disseminating information in support of the Allied cause, and illustrating the Soviet commitment to collaboration.

Gusev responded by drawing Eden's attention to the support which Molotov had offered the previous Autumn. The British had asked the Soviet Government to associate itself with an appeal for unity between the guerrilla forces in Greece, and the Soviet Government had complied. The Russians were supporting British policy in the military sphere. Gusev was, however, reluctant to commit himself on matters relating to the political situation, using a by now familiar excuse. As Eden now told Clark Kerr, "he was not sure whether the Soviet Government would wish him to pronounce upon political matters in Greece. It might not feel that it had sufficient data to do this." However, this somewhat clumsy attempt to draw a distinction between the military and political situation in Greece cut no ice with Eden. The antics of the Political Committee in the Mountains and EAM made it quite clear that such a distinction could not be made. The Foreign Secretary immediately leapt to the offensive, pointing at recent articles in the Soviet press that had attempted to boost EAM at the Greek Government's expense. Quite apart from suggesting that the Soviet Government *was* prepared to pronounce on the Greek political situation (a point which Eden tactfully declined to make), these articles had created serious problems for the British. As Eden was quick to point out, they "could not be helpful in present conditions", and there was a very real risk that, if things went on as before, "the world would see that we and the Soviet Government were pursuing divergent policies." The Ambassador, somewhat embarrassed, claimed that "he was sure that this was not the intention of the articles." He promised to pass Eden's comments on to Moscow. The Foreign Secretary responded by repeating his earlier argument that "Greece was in our theatre of command and we felt therefore entitled to ask for Soviet help for our policies there, just as we gave it to them in Roumania which was in their sphere of military command."

The FO archives suggest that the controversial "spheres of activity" arrangement - and ultimately the infamous "Percentages Deal" - stemmed from this rather innocuous remark. The way in which the Soviet and American Governments reacted to this 'proposal', and the subsequent diplomatic exchanges that followed, exercised a considerable influence over both the developing situation in the Balkans and subsequent Great Power relations. However, it is difficult to see at this stage what was so controversial about the British Foreign Secretary's suggestion. He had merely pointed out that it was reasonable for a power responsible for conducting military operations in a defined theatre to ask for the support of the other powers when matters affecting the military situation arose. He had *not* suggested that this principle should be extended to cover political - or longer term post-war - developments. In fact, he had been at pains to emphasise that where political questions were involved, these had been - and must continue to be - handled subject to military requirements. At no time were classical "spheres of influence" mentioned. As we shall see, that particular *bête noire* would only enter the picture once the US Government became involved. By that stage, however, an incredible combination of diplomatic bungling and American paranoia had transformed the situation. As a result of this, a mythology rapidly built up around Eden's proposals. The reality was rather more mundane.

The interview ended with Gusev enquiring whether a reply had been sent to Molotov's telegram of 29th April. Eden replied in the affirmative, telling Gusev of Churchill's telegram and the covering message sent to Clark Kerr. He told the Ambassador that the message had created a most "unfavourable impression" in London. "We did not understand why these suspicions should be entertained," he complained. "We had done everything in our power to act with loyalty to the Soviet Union. We had signed a Twenty Year Treaty with them and we were carrying it out in the letter and in the spirit." Gusev feigned surprise at this, claiming that his Government had had no intention of creating a bad impression. They had only been asking questions, as was right and proper. Eden replied that while he was happy to receive questions "at any time on any

subject", it was "hardly possible" to interpret Molotov's telegram as an innocent inquiry. He then read extracts from the telegram he had sent to Clark Kerr on 2nd May (which in essence covered the same ground as his minute to Churchill of the same day). Gusev had "seemed reassured by them", and the meeting ended. Eden had said his piece. It remained to be seen how Molotov would respond: as Eden had pointed out earlier, the ball was now on the Russian side of the net.

II. Plain Speaking in London ; Eden tackles Churchill

The Foreign Secretary had returned Molotov's serve; but the domestic tennis match continued. Eden had yet to parry Churchill's volley of questions; and therefore, on 9th May, he responded to the Prime Minister's "brute issues" minutes.⁸ From the outset, he sought to reassure the Prime Minister that the FO had the situation under control. After informing Churchill that a review of Soviet policy in the Balkans was in hand, Eden moved to counter some of the Prime Minister's more ill-conceived suggestions. He was loath to recall Clark Kerr from Moscow at this time: the US Ambassador in Moscow, Averell Harriman, was already absent from the Soviet capital, and the departure of the British Ambassador would inevitably encourage speculation about the state of Great Power relations.⁹ Eden believed that a period of calm was needed, in which a cautious appraisal of the situation could be undertaken. Engaging in a bout of knee-jerk diplomacy would only serve to antagonise the Russians still further, and encourage rumours of disunity - both of which Eden was keen to avoid. He therefore advised Churchill that "we should first consider the extent to which the Russian and our own policies are opposed in South Eastern Europe and what sort of grounds we should have for complaint." The Foreign Secretary was anxious not to condemn the Soviets with undue haste. He was also keen to prevent suspicion from becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. As he appreciated all too well, jumping to conclusions was a sure-fire way to persuade the Soviets to abandon the policy of co-operation.

These were not the only worries on the Foreign Secretary's mind; for, as we have already seen, Eden doubted whether the British would be able to prove their case against the Soviets, even if they decided that something sinister was afoot.¹⁰ The British could hardly condemn the Russians for supporting groups which they themselves had patronised. As Churchill himself might have put it, they had sown the wind: they would now have to reap the whirlwind. The near-exclusive concentration on the military aspect of policy had left political interests dangerously exposed. In effect, foreign policy had been left in abeyance, frozen, for the duration of the war, in the interests of the war. The Grand Alliance was a product of this reasoning, constructed to meet a common military objective, sustained by the minimisation of political activity. Now, with the war apparently reaching its climax, the consequences of this decision were coming home to roost. Political issues, which had hitherto been set to one side, were becoming harder to ignore. The temptation to seize the political initiative was immense, especially for those whose influence would wain with the ending of hostilities, and for those who had much to lose with the restoration of the *status quo ante bellum*. Eden clearly appreciated the problems that lay ahead. He sympathised with Churchill, but could offer little prospect of successfully retrieving the situation. If the Soviets decided to exploit their predominant position, and abandoned co-operation in favour of aggrandisement, there was little the British could do to stop them.

Eden realised that this vision of the future offered little cheer for Britain. This, however, merely increased the Foreign Secretary's resolve. Determining strategy for the future was all the more important in instances where prospects looked bleak. If the position in South East Europe was going to deteriorate, the British should prepare themselves in advance, and salvage what they could from the wreck. It was for this reason that Eden suggested the new approach to long term policy-making; an approach in line with Churchill's thinking of 4th May.¹¹ However, and as Eden pointed out, it was impossible to make accurate predictions concerning long term Russian policy at this stage. The British simply did not have enough concrete evidence at their disposal;

and, moreover, such evidence as they did have was ambiguous. The Russians claimed that their policy was consistent with the aims agreed between the Big Three. In practice, this could be neither proved nor disproved. Information about Soviet activity was patchy. Without a complete picture of *what* they were doing, it was impossible to determine *why* they were doing it. As a result, and because their activities in Bulgaria, Roumania, Greece and Yugoslavia remained shrouded in mystery, Russian aims were obscure. As we have already seen, Eden recognised the danger of jumping to conclusions. He therefore advised Churchill to base his judgements on substance, not speculation. As he warned the Prime Minister, this would not be easy: substantive evidence was sadly lacking.¹² All the same, he felt that it would be better to wait for further evidence - certainly before taking measures which they might subsequently have cause to regret.¹³

Churchill remained sceptical about Russian motives: indeed, he had minuted on 8th May that "the Russians are drunk with victory and there is no length to which they may not go."¹⁴ He was, however, unable to counter Eden's logic. When he eventually responded to the Foreign Secretary's paper (on 21st May) he did so with a reluctant "You are right."¹⁵ By then, however, the situation had once more changed: the Russian reply to Eden's plain-speaking had been received.

III. A Further Rude Message : Anglo-Soviet policy towards Roumania and Molotov's telegram of 10th May

Having confronted both the Soviet Government (through the person of the Soviet Ambassador in London) and the British Prime Minister, Eden now practised what he had preached. He had urged Churchill not to jump to conclusions, and to delay rash decision-making until a greater understanding of the existing situation had been established. He had appealed to the Russians, asking them to reconsider their position and to adhere to the policy of collaboration. The Prime Minister had apparently fallen into line; and Eden now waited for Moscow's response.

In the meantime, the FO set about reconsidering both the circumstances and the implications of the recent events. Work had begun on the paper requested by Eden (which would eventually see daylight as "Soviet Policy in the Balkans"). A more balanced interpretation of Molotov's "bombshell" had crystallised as further evidence about the background to his outburst came to light; and a semblance of normality had been restored to affairs. All the same, the crisis was far from over - for, and until the Soviet response to Eden's plain-speaking was known, the British could draw no definite conclusions from Molotov's outburst, and policy would continue to remain in a dangerous state of limbo.

By 6th May, and lingering resentment notwithstanding, the British seemed to have weathered the storm and recovered their poise. Molotov's accusations had been considered one by one, and the correspondence that now passed between London and interested parties overseas reflected the conclusions that had been reached about them. Churchill's telegram to Molotov on 2nd May and Eden's conversation with Gusev three days later had dealt with the broad areas of concern. In contrast, the instructions sent to officials abroad - and the minutes produced in Whitehall which discussed them - tended to concentrate upon specific issues, dealing with these on a point by point basis. This was certainly the case as far as Roumania was concerned.

In his earlier telegram, the Soviet Foreign Minister had criticised Churchill for failing to indicate how he planned to increase the military pressure on Roumania. As we have already seen, it had been decided that this charge should be ignored, even though it was regarded as a gross misrepresentation of the facts. Sargent had advised that Clark Kerr should be told that no reply to this message would be forthcoming, and given "some speaking points in the event of Molotov raising particular points with him." Eden agreed: Clark Kerr should be supplied with the "necessary material", but warned not to initiate discussions, only to respond to Soviet enquiries.¹⁶ On 12th May, the Ambassador was provided with his instructions:-

The Prime Minister does not propose to reply to this message. If Molotov reverts to Roumanian question and asks what steps we are taking, you should explain that we are doing all we can at present by following the Russian lead in political negotiations... and in maintaining our bombing attacks on Roumanian targets. If the Soviet Government want us to do anything more they have only to suggest what it should be. You should make it absolutely clear that expect the Russians to give the lead.¹⁷

In other words, and in spite of Molotov's outburst, British policy towards Roumania remained unaltered. The comment about "political negotiations" referred to the armistice talks and moves to get Roumania out of the war - in other words, about short-term politico-military activities dictated by the war. The prose was therefore scarcely different from that of Churchill's telegram to Molotov of 23rd April.

The Prime Minister was in no mood to accept such soft-pedalling, and once again leapt to the wrong conclusion. Churchill got his telegrams confused, and, thinking that the instructions now being sent to Clark Kerr were concerned with Molotov's second telegram, complained to Eden that they were not strong enough. The Foreign Secretary, not immediately picking up Churchill's mistake, agreed; and the telegram was suspended. Churchill's error was soon realised, but Eden now ordered that the majority of the telegram should be cancelled because he felt that it could become confused with and therefore complicate the dialogue about **AUTONOMOUS**.¹⁸ On 17th May, E. M. Rose submitted a further minute, which, while acknowledging that the separate Roumanian problems might become confused, argued for the restoration of the deleted passage.¹⁹ Eden now relented, and on 20th May Clark Kerr was told to reply to any Soviet approaches of this sort along the lines indicated, as long as the **AUTONOMOUS** business had been cleared up.²⁰ With this, interest in Molotov's telegram of 28th April petered out.

Molotov's second line of attack, contained in the telegram of 29th April, had concentrated on the de Chastellain mission to Roumania. After despatching Churchill's reply to Molotov, the FO had instructed Clark Kerr to

counter further complaints from the Soviet Foreign Minister along the lines set out in Eden's minute to Churchill of 1st May.²¹ The Ambassador saw Molotov on 5th May, discussed the de Chastellain mission with him as directed, and then reported back to London. Eden clearly regretted that **AUTONOMOUS** had ever been launched. "It is a pity that these people ever went in," he minuted. "Was the FO ever consulted ? If so, we should not have agreed."²² Churchill evidently agreed with this. Having regained his temper, he now looked at the affair more objectively, with a view to apportioning blame for the debacle. Not for the first time, his wrath settled on SOE. On 7th May he made his feelings known to Eden:-

It does seem to me that SOE barges in in an ignorant manner into all sorts of delicate situations. They were originally responsible for building up the nest of cockatrices for EAM in Greece... It is a very dangerous thing that the relations of two mighty forces like the British Empire and the USSR should be disturbed by these little pinpricks interchanged by obscure persons playing the fool far below the surface... Why should we be confronted with the descent of two oil men in Roumania in November, with vague powers who immediately tumble clumsily into the hands of the enemy ? What reliance can be placed on Col. de Chastellain's cypher when it is in the hands of the enemy and can be used by Maniu whether he is a free agent or not ?²³

The Prime Minister had also had time to consider the background to Molotov's tirade. He was now less sure of his position. "Molotov's reaction was wrongful," he told Eden, "but is by no means certain that he will not find a briar patch of reproachful words and accusations in which to retreat."

The Southern Department responded to these criticisms in a series of minutes summarising the history of the de Chastellain mission and speculating about the probable causes of Molotov's assault. Howard remained unmoved by the Soviet Foreign Minister's complaints, minuting that "I don't think we need attempt to offer further explanations to Molotov about this wretched business. The fact is that Molotov has been stung."²⁴ Howard felt that the Soviet accusations were in fact a misdirected riposte, prompted by messages sent from Bucharest by de Chastellain which had contained "rude passages about Russia."

As Howard pointed out, de Chastellain may have sent the messages; but he had obviously done so at Antonescu's bidding, and was therefore not responsible for their offensive content. The first message had indicated the Marshal's response to General Wilson's telegrams of March; the second had reported the reaction in Bucharest to the Soviet armistice terms and Allied bombing raids. In Howard's opinion, it was Antonescu, not the British, who deserved Molotov's censure. As he noted, somewhat ruefully, "we could have kept the messages from the Russian's notice, but it has been our strict rule to show them everything, pleasant or unpleasant." By playing straight with Moscow, the British had ironically provoked the sort of crisis that their policy had been designed to avoid.

Under Howard's direction, Rose drew up minutes for both Eden and Churchill, in which various policy options were discussed and their questions were dealt with. However, before these were digested, a further telegram from Molotov arrived. The "briar patch" retreat had begun.

The Soviet Foreign Minister seems to have been intent on cornering the market in rude messages. His answer to Churchill's telegram, which arrived on 10th May, could hardly have been less conciliatory:-

I have received your message of 2nd May on the Roumanian question and have informed the Government about it. In spite of all ingenuity, the message is unconvincing since it contains no explanations concerning the question... You stated that the British Ambassador would give us detailed explanations. But, at his interview with me on 5th May, he did not give any explanations concerning the question of the de Chastellain mission in Roumania. On that question Sir Archibald Clark Kerr said that the fact that the Germans allowed to the Roumanians to keep captured British officers who were using a wireless transmitting set and cyphers for communication with the outside world seemed strange to him himself and that the relations between Marshal Antonescu and Maniu were a mystery to him.²⁵

Eden's reaction to this indicates that he shared Churchill's feelings about the whole affair.²⁶ He hoped the correspondence with Molotov would now be

allowed to lapse: further exchanges would only lead to another round of mutual recrimination - which could only be to the detriment of Anglo-Soviet relations - and would therefore be unlikely to improve the situation in Roumania in either the short or longer terms. The Foreign Secretary therefore resolved to wash his hands of the whole business. "I hope the PM will say no more," he minuted. "I wish that we could get these men out again. Please let me know when we authorised these men going in and who approved."

However, as Dixon confirmed in a note of 11th May, Eden had not read either of Rose's minutes about the de Chastellain affair.²⁷ This meant that, as matters stood, neither the Foreign Secretary nor the Prime Minister had been properly briefed - and this situation was not remedied prior to the meeting of the War Cabinet on the evening of 11th May, at which the affair was discussed. The official record of this meeting sanitises what could only have been a heated debate about Roumania and Anglo-Soviet relations.²⁸ Churchill started proceedings by offering a précis of the recent diplomatic exchanges:-

He recalled that on 29th April he had received a telegram from M. Molotov complaining of the presence in Roumania with Marshal Antonescu of a British Mission whose purpose was unknown to the Soviet Government. On 2nd May he had replied to M. Molotov pointing out that his suspicions were without foundation and stressing the fact that His Majesty's Government had throughout made every effort to work in harmony with the Soviet Government in relation to Roumania. At the same time our Ambassador had been instructed to give a full explanation to M. Molotov and had done so on 5th May. The Prime Minister had now received a further telegram of 10th May from M. Molotov, denying that our Ambassador had given any explanation concerning the British Mission and stating that the Prime Minister's message in spite of all ingenuity was unconvincing.

It is doubtful that the Prime Minister displayed the degree of calm that the record implied:-

He felt that he could not continue to correspond with M. Molotov whose attitude led him to despair of the possibility of maintaining good relations with Russia. The question was raised whether it might not be desirable to lay before the House of

Commons in Secret Session the difficulties which we were now experiencing in dealing with the Soviets.

The Prime Minister was evidently furious. He had been prepared to admit that the blame for Molotov's earlier tirade might rest as much with the British as with the Russians, and that in any case the **AUTONOMOUS** debacle had played into Molotov's hands. He was not, however, prepared to tolerate the personal slights which Molotov seemed intent on delivering, which called into question not only his integrity but also national honour. By even suggesting that Parliament be brought into the equation, the Prime Minister indicated that the affair now threatened to assume a significance far beyond its immediate (Roumanian) setting. Informing the House, even in Secret Session, would have elevated the crisis to a new, more public, plane.

However, the extent to which Churchill remained *au fait* with the intricacies of the situation must again be questioned. It is quite possible that he had not by this stage read - or at least had time to digest - Eden's long minute of 9th May concerning Soviet intentions in the Balkans.²⁹ He had certainly not had time to consider either Rose's minutes about the Roumanian situation or Howard's comments on them. It is therefore probable that the Prime Minister's last point of reference was Eden's minute of 1st May - a minute which had understated de Chastellain's involvement in political affairs, and had made no reference to the substance of the messages he had sent out from Bucharest (and to which Howard now attached great importance). Churchill may have ventured into Molotov's "briar patch" of 10th May without first having identified the genus of "briar." At the risk of mixing one's metaphors, he had perhaps found a "mare's nest" of his own.

Eden had restrained the Prime Minister once: he now attempted to do so again. A damage limitation exercise was evidently called for - Churchill was apparently unconvinced by his previous arguments (or unaware of them) - and Eden obliged with a detailed presentation to the War Cabinet. He began with

AUTONOMOUS, explaining the reasons for its despatch and summarising its current activity in Roumania:-

The Mission in question had been sent to Roumania last November by SOE in order to make contact with M. Maniu. Unfortunately the mission had been captured shortly after they had arrived in Roumania. Since then messages had been received from the Mission through the wireless transmitter possessed by M. Maniu.

In fact, the brief which had been given to de Chastellain had been more detailed, as Eden himself had admitted to Churchill on 1st May.³⁰ In this earlier minute, Eden had strayed onto dangerous ground by trying to argue that de Chastellain's instructions had been apolitical. The Soviet telegram of 19th November 1943, in which the Soviet Government had agreed to the British maintaining their links with Maniu (but which had not constituted a Soviet acceptance of the de Chastellain mission, of which they had not been informed), had defined the role of any emissary from Roumania as being "to discuss operational details for the overthrow of the present regime and its replacement by a Government prepared to surrender unconditionally."³¹ Eden believed that the instructions given to **AUTONOMOUS** were in keeping with this definition. However, even if the contacts with Maniu were motivated by strategic considerations, as he claimed, they could not *but* be political.

The problem here was again one of perspective. The Russians had always been likely to regard covert British operations in Roumania with a degree of suspicion. There was little that London could do to counteract this, short of abandoning operations altogether. It followed, therefore, that if anything went wrong with such operations, and/or they resulted in developments apparently at variance with Soviet interests, these suspicions would deepen. Moreover, the decision to maintain contacts with a political figure in Roumania gave the Soviets the advantage when it came to "creative interpretation" of developments. If they wanted to make an issue of policy towards Roumania, the Russians could easily distort the Maniu connection, with little chance that the British could convince neutrals that their activities in

this respect were above suspicion. The de Chastellain mission was therefore unavoidably political, whatever Eden may have said. The Foreign Secretary's explanation to the War Cabinet on 11th May may have been designed to fudge the issue and deflect criticism. Alternatively, Eden may actually have believed that the mission was purely operational, and that because any political element was tied to strategic objectives, it was above reproach. Either way, Eden's explanation did not satisfactorily dispel the impression that the mission had been ill-conceived. The political taint, from which it could not escape, had always meant that it was inherently risky.

Eden was equally unconvincing when outlining the background to the Anglo-Soviet agreement about contacts with Maniu. Indeed, he told the War Cabinet that the Soviet Government had supported this policy. This flatly contradicted the position described in the official record of the meeting of 25th October 1943, at which Roumania and Maniu had been discussed.³² To be fair to Eden, he quickly reviewed his position, and subsequently told Churchill that Molotov had not objected to the British maintaining contacts with Maniu even though he did not want to establish links himself.³³ Nevertheless, the Foreign Secretary's performance at this War Cabinet meeting left a lot to be desired. His conduct can be explained in one of two ways: he was either poorly informed, or he was being disingenuous. Either way, he left the legitimacy of de Chastellain's party - and its relation to the current Anglo-Soviet dispute - in question.

The Foreign Secretary was more convincing when it came to dealing with the Anglo-Soviet exchanges which had followed the launch of **AUTONOMOUS**, and outlining possible responses to Molotov's latest eruption. Eden admitted that the Russians had not been told about the mission prior to its despatch, but pointed out that Novikov in Cairo had been shown all the messages that de Chastellain had subsequently sent from Roumania. Interestingly, he made no reference to the Soviet telegram of 19th November, which would have corroborated his story about the Russians having accepted

such a mission in principle long before it went in. This suggests that Eden's other lapses of memory were the result of poor preparation rather than calculation. He was in any case adamant that nothing underhand had been attempted. Accusations of political collusion along the lines suggested by Molotov were nonsense; for, as he explained:-

We had throughout made it clear to Marshal Antonescu that there could be no question of his dealing with us in apart from the Soviet and United States Governments, and there was no foundation for the suggestion made by M. Molotov that we were carrying on clandestine discussions with the Roumanian Government.

In speculating about possible motivations for Molotov's accusations, the Foreign Secretary referred to the suggestion that the Russians hoped to exploit the Roumanian situation and to push for a Soviet mission to Greece. He did not, however, refer to Howard's argument (that the problem had arisen as a result of keeping the Russians too fully informed of developments), nor did he mention his own fears concerning the malfunctioning Anglo-Soviet information conduit in Cairo.

Recrimination was evidently not part of Eden's agenda. Instead, the Foreign Secretary sought to restore stability to affairs. He argued that Molotov's accusations should be dealt with in a manner consonant with existing policy and standard diplomatic practice. "The proper course," he argued, "was for the reply to M. Molotov to go from the Foreign Office through our Ambassador, who would be instructed to give the full facts to M. Molotov." As far as a personal reply by the Prime Minister to Molotov was concerned, Eden outlined two alternative courses of action. Clark Kerr could be told to inform Molotov that, in view of the tone of his previous message, the Prime Minister would not be responding in person. Or, perhaps more tactfully, Churchill could send a short reply "to the effect that a very full explanation would be given through the ordinary channels." Eden had already minuted to his staff that he hoped the Prime Minister would suspend his personal correspondence with Molotov. He was now seeking to force the Prime Minister's hand. The Foreign

Secretary was reining in his master. He was subtly - but firmly - insisting that the shaping and implementation of foreign policy remained his prerogative, and that he should be allowed to operate with a minimum of interference from above.

Eden finished by referring to the Conference of the Dominion Prime Ministers, and emphasising that any public statements resulting from this meeting should stress that the Dominions and the United Kingdom were united on questions of strategy and foreign policy. The implication of any such statement would be clear; the British Empire was committed to an agreed policy, and would not be deflected from this course. It would also serve to remind the Soviets that relative strength and consequent benefits could be achieved through co-operation in these fields.

* * *

The impression that all of this creates - that Eden had been poorly prepared for the War Cabinet - was sustained by subsequent developments. After the meeting, he immediately sought the advice of the head of the Southern Department.³⁴ Eden was obviously far from happy. At the War Cabinet, he had promised to submit a draft telegram to Churchill, outlining the instructions he intended to send to Clark Kerr. It may be that his request for "a word" with Howard was motivated by this. However, the Foreign Secretary's performance in Cabinet had shown that he was out of touch with the details of the de Chastellain affair. He had not read the minutes submitted by Rose or Howard before 11th May. Howard met Eden the following morning, at which time he was instructed to submit a "detailed account of the events which led up to the de Chastellain incident" and the draft telegram to Clark Kerr that Eden had promised to send to the Prime Minister.³⁵ These were ready by 14th May.³⁶ At the same time, it was decided that an answer prepared in response to Churchill's "briar patch" minute could be dropped. Eden had had a conversation

with the Prime Minister on the subject, and this, plus the content of the latest Molotov telegram, had rendered the draft redundant.³⁷

The minute of 14th May was probably the first comprehensive account of the de Chastellain affair that both Eden and Churchill had had a chance to study. The paper (sent as a minute from Eden to Churchill) began by reviewing the Anglo-Soviet discussions on Roumania that had occurred in the months prior to the despatch of **AUTONOMOUS**, and the brief given to de Chastellain. It then proceeded to deal with the capture of the mission, and the fracas with Moscow over the **Pravda** Affair that had followed. What was particularly interesting about this minute, however, was the explanation it gave for Molotov's attack on **AUTONOMOUS**: namely, that two of the five messages sent from captivity by de Chastellain had contained unflattering references about Russia.³⁸ The FO remained adamant that the mission had not contravened existing Anglo-Soviet commitments about Allied policy towards Roumania. They were, however, ready to admit that offence may have been caused by mishandling the messages which de Chastellain had sent. Indeed, he came in for some criticism as the harbinger of unpalatable tidings. However, the majority of criticism was reserved for the policy which had seen these passed on to the Soviets without due consideration of the likely consequences. As far as the Southern Department were concerned, by passing de Chastellain's messages to Novikov (and through him to Molotov), the authorities in Cairo had provoked the Soviet Government, and encouraged them to misrepresent both de Chastellain's role in Roumania and British policy towards that country. In essence, therefore, the FO now agreed with the substance of Churchill's assessment of 7th May. The Russians were far from blameless, but British ham-fistedness had played a significant part in provoking the affair.

The Southern Department now proposed to follow the policy mapped out by Eden's minute to Churchill on 9th May, his note on Molotov's 10th May telegram, and his presentation to the War Cabinet on 11th May.³⁹ Molotov's impudence was to be all but overlooked; an ambassadorial reproach, couched

in diplomatic language, would signify the extent of British displeasure. Having read Rose's paper, Eden had decided that, as the British now recognised that they would have to shoulder part of the blame for recent events, a further bout of recrimination with the Russians would serve no useful purpose. By muzzling de Chastellain (Rose said that he should be "killed" as a diplomatic channel; a choice of words which, given de Chastellain's circumstances, was in very poor taste⁴⁰) and skirting Molotov's briar patch, a good deal of the damage done to Anglo-Soviet relations could be repaired.

In fact, Eden went even further. Having told Gusev that the proposed SOE-OSS mission to Roumania would be postponed, he now told Churchill that he had ordered SOE to drop it altogether as a sign of good faith. His subsequent attempts to impose a blanket ban on further missions to Roumania enjoyed only partial success, however. Eden was forced to accept missions concerned exclusively with rescuing airmen and POW's. He was also subjected to a bitter attack by the Minister of Economic Warfare, Lord Selbourne, who was theoretically responsible for SOE. Selbourne, who had not been consulted by Eden about the ban, accused the Foreign Secretary of pursuing a policy of appeasement towards Russia. This choice of words was bound to wound Eden, who regarded it as "a gross impertinence."⁴¹ However, by that stage, the immediate points at issue - Anglo-Soviet relations, de Chastellain and Roumania, etc. - had to all intents and purposes been resolved.

Churchill responded positively to the FO's explanation. Once furnished with accurate (or at least up-to-date) information, the Prime Minister demonstrated a far greater degree of perspicacity than hitherto. His "briar patch" minute had already indicated that he accepted that Britain might have to accept a share of any blame for the recent problems over Roumania. He had lost his temper again after receiving Molotov's 10th May telegram; but had, broadly speaking, been ignorant of the details concerning **AUTONOMOUS** - and, in particular, about the possible causes of offence which might have provoked the Soviet outburst. Moreover, Churchill's previous attitude towards

the Roumanian question (and Anglo-Soviet relations in general) must not be overlooked. The Molotov telegrams had shaken the Prime Minister's faith in, but had not (thanks to Eden's steadying influence) undermined, policy. The Foreign Secretary had argued for - and won - time in which to reflect upon recent developments and reconsider policy. The evidence which had been accumulated under his direction was now presented to the Prime Minister. His reaction reflected the success of Eden's damage limitation exercise.

Churchill asked Eden to discuss the minute on de Chastellain and Roumania with him on 15th May. Dixon subsequently confirmed that the two men had discussed the matter, and Eden's draft telegram to Clark Kerr; and that Churchill had approved the Foreign Secretary's proposals for ending the dispute with Moscow.⁴² The Prime Minister's attitude was subsequently summed up in a telegram to Roosevelt on 19th May. "I have found it practically impossible to continue correspondence with the Russians," he told the President, "but I note that after each rude message they send to me, they have done pretty well what was asked."⁴³ Churchill had been encouraged by recent developments in the Polish situation, by a "gushing" message from the EAM delegates attending the Lebanon Conference, and by the reply (received on the previous day) to the proposals the Foreign Secretary had made to Gusev on 5th May. As far as Roumania was concerned, the Prime Minister evidently now agreed with the FO's assessment. He had demanded that Molotov accept his explanation of British policy - which was in essence to concede that the direction of wartime operations concerning Roumania was Moscow's prerogative. The British had examined the background to and activities of operation **AUTONOMOUS**, assessed the validity and probable causes of Russian complaints, and informed Moscow of their conclusions. They had also placed a moratorium on further operations in Roumania, as a sign of good faith. There was little to be gained from further discussion. For Churchill, Gusev's apparent offer of a *quid pro quo* on 18th May was evidence that the diplomatic activity of the previous three weeks had delivered the substance of British aspirations. This did not mean that he was prepared to forget or forgive

Molotov for his accusations. He subsequently criticised Clark Kerr for failing to indicate the depth of his displeasure about the substance of the "offensive telegram." "The Ambassador knows quite well that this is a false accusation," he complained to Eden, "yet he cringes before Molotov. Believe me, this is not the way to get on with the Russians." The Foreign Secretary did not respond directly to this barb; instead, he observed in an internal minute that "no one is more effusive to the Russians than PM."⁴⁴ In the end, the Prime Minister lost interest, and the FO was left to conclude the affair as it saw fit.

The FO now seemed keen to abandon any active role in Roumanian affairs for the duration. On 16th May, Howard suggested that, having tackled the immediate causes of Soviet dissent, policy should be allowed to move a stage further. Minuting on the Cairo negotiations, he proposed that the time had come to suspend all involvement in Roumanian affairs, the inevitable corollary being that the Russians and Roumanians would have to sort out the short term situation by themselves, and British policy would no longer attract unwarranted criticism from Moscow:-

I think the time has come for us to show complete lack of interest in the Roumanian business. We have burnt our fingers enough, and I see no reason why we should continue the thankless task of trying to get the Russians and Roumanians together, when all we get in return are the inevitable and cheeky snubs from Molotov.⁴⁵

Sargent immediately subscribed to this view. So did Eden - as he put it, "emphatically."⁴⁶ As he had told Churchill on 9th May, the Soviets were not going to be deflected when it came to Roumania; and the British, if they decided that Soviet policy had to be challenged, would be better advised to fight their corner elsewhere. Moreover, it would be easier to concede the whip hand to the Soviets in a country in which British domestic interest was limited.⁴⁷

Eden did not refer to the future of Anglo-Soviet relations, or the policy of collaboration, in agreeing to Howard's proposal. However, the meeting that

he had with Gusev on 18th May (the same day as he minuted his "emphatic" agreement with Howard's advice) suggested that these issues were uppermost in his mind - and both justified and necessitated the course of concession.

IV. Agreements as a Practical Matter : The Soviet response to Eden's Proposal of 5th May

Churchill and Eden had decided not to prolong the confrontation with Moscow about Roumania. Greece, however, was a different matter. Both the Prime Minister and the FO were convinced that what Clark Kerr had described as the Soviets' "apparent nascent tendency to play an independent hand in regard to Greece" would have to be resisted.⁴⁸ The Russians could not be allowed to upset the fragile truce that had been established between the warring factions in Greece, or prejudice the negotiations in the Lebanon, which the British hoped would result in political as well as military stability, and increase the effectiveness of guerrilla operations against the Germans. Moreover, the Soviets could not be allowed to prejudice the longer term interests which Britain had in Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean. However, strong language about resisting "nascent tendencies" did not indicate that the policy of collaboration with Russia was being abandoned when it came to the Hellenes. In fact, the nature of British policy towards Greece at this juncture suggests that the integrity of Anglo-Soviet relations remained of fundamental importance, and exercised a proportionate influence over regional policy.

The FO had responded cautiously to the Soviet offensive on Greece. Churchill had been warned not to reply to Molotov's "fly", having already clarified the position in earlier telegrams to the Soviet Foreign Minister. In the meantime, Eden had taken steps to ensure that his representatives in Cairo, and in particular Ambassador Leeper, kept their Russian colleague Novikov fully informed on Greek developments. As we have seen, the Foreign Secretary believed that Leeper's failure to keep in contact with Novikov had exacerbated - if not caused - the recent *contretemps* in relations with Moscow. Eden relied upon the Cairo channel to pass information which would otherwise have had to

go through Clark Kerr, and consequently have over-burdened that already strained ambassadorial conduit. While, therefore, Clark Kerr had been instructed to tackle Molotov about his Roumanian accusations, the FO decided that it would be better to ignore Molotov's complaints about Greece. Clark Kerr was told that if Molotov returned to the subject, he should merely stress the importance of the Leeper-Novikov relationship. Clark Kerr's subsequent advice had of course prompted the bout of "plain speaking" between the Foreign Secretary and the Soviet Ambassador on 5th May. That, however, marked the limit to which Eden was prepared to go in discussing Greek affairs with the Russians. Soviet intentions towards Greece remained unclear, and the extent of her involvement in the recent crises was uncertain. Existing evidence was circumstantial, and open to a variety of interpretations. Until new evidence emerged, or until the Russian reply to the "plain speaking" of 5th May was received, it remained expedient to postpone further action.

There was little immediate indication that Eden's conversation with Gusev had persuaded the Soviet Government to review its position *vis-à-vis* Greece. The situation was certainly confusing. As we have already seen, Leeper had reported that Novikov had adopted a lower profile since Churchill's comments to Molotov about "ideological warfare", which suggested that Moscow was prepared co-operate with Britain and remained relatively uninterested by Greece. He had also suggested that the Soviets were planning to send a mission to EAM, which flatly contradicted this view. Further reports did little to clarify the position. On 8th May, Leeper informed London that, although Novikov had resurfaced and resumed his sniping, Soviet radio had stopped the broadcasts which had promoted EAM and denigrated the Greek Government.⁴⁹

Unsurprisingly, this conflicting evidence encouraged prevarication in London. Laskey greeted Leeper's news with what amounted to cautious equivocation.⁵⁰ Howard offered some typically enigmatic advice. "If Novikov persists in his hostile and unhelpful attitude," he minuted, "we may have to take

this matter up again with Moscow. But we must wait a bit and see if he receives instructions from M. Molotov to modify his attitude."⁵¹ Eden continued to argue that Novikov's behaviour suggested that he had still not been properly briefed by Leeper, which was a "mistake on his part." However, he too declined to speculate about the direction of Soviet policy towards Greece, at least on the basis of available evidence.⁵² The policy of prevarication dragged on. Then, on 18th May, Gusev arrived at the FO with his Government's reply to Eden's proposal of 5th May.

After talking to Gusev, Eden immediately despatched a long telegram to Clark Kerr briefing him of the Soviet Government's reply:-

Gusev said that I would recollect that at our last interview I had spoken to him about the possibility of our agreeing between ourselves as a practical matter that Roumanian affairs would be in the main the concern of the Soviet Government while Greek affairs would be in the main our concern, each Government giving the other help in the respective countries. The Soviet Government agreed with this suggestion but before giving any final assurance in this matter they would like to know whether we had consulted the United States Government and whether the latter also agreed to the arrangement. If so, the Soviet Government would be ready to give us a final affirmative answer. I said that I did not think that we had consulted with the United States Government in the matter but we would certainly be ready to do so. I could not imagine that they would in any way dissent. After all, the matter was really related to the military operations of our respective forces. Roumania fell within the sphere of the Russian armies and Greece within the Allied Command under General Wilson in the Mediterranean. Therefore it seemed natural enough that Soviet Russia should take the lead in Roumania and we in Greece and that each should support the other. The Ambassador agreed.⁵³

The most striking feature of this account is the manner in which Gusev's "recollection" of the previous meeting contrasted with the account contained in Eden's telegram to Clark Kerr on 5th May. The key passage from Eden's earlier telegram is worth repeating at this juncture:-

I emphasised that Greece was in our theatre of command and we felt therefore entitled to ask for Soviet help for our policies

there, as we gave it to them in Roumania which was in their sphere of military command.⁵⁴

If Eden's paraphrase (of 18th May) was correct, Gusev had not indicated that the Soviet Government regarded the "practical agreement" as being confined to the military sphere. Eden may inadvertently have encouraged this misrepresentation of his proposals: by failing to emphasise that his plan dealt exclusively with military matters, the Foreign Secretary had certainly left the Russians room in which to "interpret" his proposal. However, he told Gusev on 18th May that "the matter was really related to the military operations of our respective forces" - which hardly indicates that a longer term, political accommodation (or a classical "spheres of influence" deal) had been Eden's intention. Eden's handling of the earlier meeting must therefore be questioned. Had he taken sufficient care to preclude either the accidental or deliberate misreading of his proposals by the Soviet Government?

None of this seems to have bothered the Foreign Secretary at the time. Eden was evidently relieved: the crisis in Anglo-Soviet relations appeared to be over (though, admittedly, a few outstanding points still had to be resolved). He immediately informed the War Cabinet of the Soviet Government's response; and, in doing so, offered a version of events which emphasised both his own role in the diplomatic triumph and his optimism for the future:-

He had recently put it to the Russians that if they wished us to allow them to take the lead in Roumania, they should be prepared to reciprocate by allowing His Majesty's Government to do likewise in Greece. He had just heard officially from the Russian Ambassador that the Russians had agreed that His Majesty's Government should pay the hand in Greece. They had asked, however, whether the United States would mind this, to which he had replied that he was sure that no difficulties would arise over that.

The Foreign Secretary may well have exaggerated about the strength of his approach to the Soviets, but as matters stood his account fitted well with Gusev's reply. His Cabinet colleagues were certainly happy, and expressed "satisfaction" at the latest developments. Once again, however, the meaning of

"taking the lead" was left undefined. It was left to the FO to clear up the ambiguities which remained.⁵⁵

Eden had directed his staff to "please consider how to handle this with the Americans."⁵⁶ The meeting with Gusev had taken place on a Thursday, and it was not until after the weekend that the Southern Department communicated its views. Laskey, minuting on 22nd May, was most encouraged by the new turn of events:-

This is very satisfactory and provided the Russians keep their part of the bargain it should ensure that our policies towards Greece do not conflict. It is noteworthy that the Soviet press have ceased to play up EAM. The formation of a proper Greek Government should also remove many of the grounds which might have led to a divergence of views between us.⁵⁷

Howard agreed with Laskey.⁵⁸ He was also keen to put the arrangement, and talk concerning a possible *quid pro quo*, into context. "This is good," he minuted. "We could but recognise that Roumanian affairs are primarily the concern of the Russians; and having recognised that, it was a good idea that they should do the same for us as regards Greece." These comments lend weight to the hypothesis that British policy was predicated on the assumption that diplomacy should be used to conceal (and therefore compensate for) material inferiority, as and where circumstances dictated. Howard certainly believed that this approach had, in this instance, succeeded. Eden had told the War Cabinet that the Russians had been persuaded by his "plain speaking" into a reciprocal recognition of local, short term predominance. This could not, however, conceal the weakness of Britain's position. Eden's plain speaking had in effect been hollow sabre-rattling, little more than a policy of bluff. It had also entailed a degree of risk. Howard's concluding remarks on the arrangement were particularly revealing. "It is," he warned, "the thin end of the wedge towards spheres of influence."

This minute confirms that the spheres of activity agreement was not envisaged by the FO as a delineation of spheres of influence. It may have

implied a step in that direction, but was not entered into with this in mind. It is important to remember that, while the relative post-war influence which Britain and the Soviet Union would be able to exercise over the various Balkan countries was being determined by the events of this period, these diplomatic negotiations played only a minor role in this process. It was, rather, military developments - and Churchill's "force and facts" - that were shaping the future. The FO saw the Eden-Gusev deal as a vehicle for minimising certain problems which on-going politico-military events were threatening to cause. As Howard's minute shows all too clearly, the British appreciated that spheres of activity might eventually develop longer term significance. This did not, however, mean that they were established with this in mind - not least because the shape which the future might ultimately take was at this stage far from certain.

Sir Ian Jacob, Churchill's military advisor, argued after the war that the acceptance of political realities, and the concomitant maximisation of one's advantages in the light of them, was a legitimate function of policy. He had no doubts about spheres of influence in this context. As he pointed out, "spheres of influence exist, and it is no good imagining that they don't exist. So if you can limit them in some way - the ones you don't like - so much the better."⁵⁹ Eden's ready enthusiasm for the spheres of activity deal may indicate that he appreciated this truism. It is important to realise, however, that the recognition of spheres of influence as a probable geopolitical reality is by no means the same thing as the deliberate attempt to establish them as such. It is difficult to believe that Eden had willingly signed up to such a policy - especially as he had tried (unsuccessfully) to persuade Molotov and Hull to accept a declaration repudiating spheres of influence at the Moscow Conference.⁶⁰

Indeed, Sir Orme Sargent's views on the Eden-Gusev deal suggest that spheres of influence arrangement was the last thing that the FO wanted. Sargent was worried, that the "practical matter" arranged with Moscow might interpreted as an attempt to establish spheres of influence. Such a policy was,

he believed, dangerous, because it signalled an abandonment of the right to a say in later developments, and implied relative weakness on the part of the conceding power. Sargent was vehemently opposed to the adoption of such a policy, and wanted to make sure that Moscow understood the current proposals for what they were. "If it comes to an arrangement on this basis with the Russians," he minuted, "we ought no doubt to put in a caveat that it only applies to war conditions and does not affect the rights and responsibilities of the three Great Powers in regard to the whole of Europe at the peace settlement."⁶¹ Sargent had access to the highest levels of the wartime government. It is inconceivable that he could have been unaware of any proposals for recognising the establishment of long term or political spheres of influence. There is, equally, no reason to suppose that he had any reason to give a false impression, either to his juniors in the FO or to diplomatic staff overseas, when penning his minutes. His comments should therefore be sufficient to scotch the idea that a long term political deal was on offer at this stage. If anything, Sargent was arguing for a re-evaluation of the admittedly limited arrangements proposed. He, at least, appreciated that the agreement lacked clarity, both in terms of its terms of reference (its orientation - political or military) and its duration.

Further evidence suggests that a spheres of influence deal was the last thing that the FO wanted at this stage. On 15th May, the British Ambassador to Turkey, Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugesson, had written to Sargent, informing him that the Yugoslav Ambassador to Turkey had challenged him about reports of an Anglo-Soviet agreement on post-hostilities zones of occupation for the Balkans.⁶² This news was received with ill-disguised contempt by Clutton:-

This story about divisions of zones of occupation for the Balkans is of course pure nonsense. Roumania will of course be occupied by Russian forces but there will presumably be an Allied military control commission of some sort. As regards the other Balkan countries we have not even discussed the matter with the Russians. In the case of Yugoslavia there will probably be no occupying troops at all and as regards Bulgaria we are at present trying to decide whether we shall have troops to send in ourselves.⁶³

Clutton's minute was written on 25th May, a week after Gusev's second meeting with Eden. The spheres of activity proposals - which had been discussed at that meeting - were not alluded to by Clutton, or by Sargent in his letter of reply to Knatchbull-Hugesson on 2nd June. This suggests that, as far as the FO was concerned, the spheres of activity agreement did not cover future zones of occupation. It also strengthens the impression that the Eden-Gusev arrangement was thought of as an exclusively wartime - and not a post-hostilities or post-war - measure. Sargent adopted Churchill's prose of 2nd May in his letter. He informed Knatchbull-Hugesson that the Yugoslav Ambassador's accusations "about a division between ourselves and the Russians of zones of occupation in the Balkans" was tantamount to a "mare's nest":-

The whole story is utter nonsense. While it is true that it is part of our policy to endeavour to work hand in hand with the Russians in the Balkans *this in no way means that we are intending to divide up the area into spheres of influence*. We have no such intention and have entered into no commitments on this subject with the Soviet Government or anyone else. Nor have we ever discussed with the Russians the question of military occupation when the Germans retire or are driven out. In fact we do not yet know how many troops we shall have available for occupation purposes when the moment of collapse comes. In the case of Roumania the geographical position of the Russian armies make the occupation by Russian troops inevitable but the Soviet Government in discussing armistice terms to be imposed on Roumania have agreed in principle to some form of Allied military control commission.

This leaves us with two possibilities. Either Sargent was being disingenuous; or, as far as he understood matters, spheres of activity were something quite different to spheres of influence. Concluding his letter, the Deputy Under Secretary denied that any such deal had been struck. Speculation of this sort about future arrangements was both premature and unhelpful; and Hugessen was ordered not to encourage it:-

Tell the Yugoslav Ambassador, if he reverts to the matter, that he is just talking nonsense and that there is no agreement about either spheres of influence or spheres of occupation. We, the Americans and the Russians are fighting the war together

against Germany and her satellites. When the collapse comes the occupation or liberation of the Balkans will be the joint responsibility of all three Powers. The composition, however, of the forces involved will depend on military factors such as the way the coming operations develop, availability of forces, etc., which cannot be foreseen as yet.⁶⁴

Sargent's letter suggests that, even after the crisis in relations with Moscow, the orientation of British policy remained fundamentally unchanged. Policy initiatives continued to concentrate upon delivering the maximum advantage to the military effort, and upon upholding co-operation and collaboration between the Allies as the best means of achieving this. Questions relating to the post-hostilities period would be tackled in a similar fashion. However, decisions on post-hostilities matters could only be taken where the military situation had developed, allowing a clear picture of what was needed and what could be done to form.

Policy was still essentially reactive. It was also based upon diplomatic as opposed to material strength. Sargent and Clutton had alluded to the paucity of resources available to Britain. After telling Knatchbull-Hugesson that no agreement had been reached with Russia about zones of occupation or spheres of influence, Sargent had reaffirmed the FO's commitment to the policy of tripartite co-operation. However, as far as planning on post-hostilities questions was concerned, dynamic co-operation would have to wait. Arrangements for the occupation and administration of territories would have to be left for the future, when relative troop dispositions could be assessed in relation to circumstances prevailing at that time. Sargent did not explain the reasoning behind this diplomatic prevarication. In the circumstances, it is probable that he, like Eden, remained convinced that it was still too early to open up a dialogue with Moscow on potentially sensitive political issues. He was also keen to avoid discussions on issues where Britain's relative material weakness placed her at a disadvantage. To engage in premature negotiations on zones of occupation for South Eastern Europe - never mind trying to agree to the establishment of classical spheres of influence - would be to court disaster. The different interests and ambitions of the Great Powers, which the FO

wanted to keep off the agenda until the peace conference, would be bound to surface in such negotiations. The military situation was still in a state of flux; which meant that any planning of this sort would have to be based upon speculative, hypothetical projections about future developments. Previous experience suggested that the chance of the Great Powers agreeing on assessments of probable (never mind desirable) developments - or, indeed, of how to plan for them - were not good. In the circumstances, the risk of a divergence of views, with all that implied for Alliance cohesion, was high. In the interests of Great Power relations, therefore, it was expedient to keep such low priority issues off the agenda for as long as possible.

It was, similarly, in Britain's interests to avoid negotiations in areas which might lead to the exposure of relative material inferiority. Post-hostilities questions were already causing headaches in London. It was proving difficult for domestic departments to reach agreement about future priorities and commitments. Attempting to reach longer term political accommodations with the other Powers was an even less attractive proposition. Negotiating mutually exclusive spheres of influence with Russia would not only deliver a crushing blow to the principle of collaboration: it would also emphasise the extent of Britain's relative weakness, and encourage the international community to reassess her power political status accordingly. Nor was this all. The FO knew that the Americans detested high-handed "spheres of influence" diplomacy, and that Washington would almost certainly repudiate any bilateral political deals which they might conclude with the Russians. The importance which the FO attached to American assistance - both in terms of immediate material aid and future co-operation in the field of international relations - should not be overlooked in this context. All in all, therefore, it was simply not in Britain's interest to abandon the policy which she was already pursuing. This was the rationale that shaped Sargent's "business as usual" attitude towards Great Power relations; and, indeed, the rationale upon which the Eden-Gusev arrangement was based.

Chapter V: A Turning Point - The Foreign Office Reaction to the Crisis in Anglo-Soviet Relations of April-May and Eden's War Cabinet Memorandum "Soviet Policy in the Balkans", 7th June 1944

As we have seen, prior to May 1944 the British policy-makers had made little headway in their attempts at producing a political strategy for the longer term. Although they had produced (or were engaged in producing) a number of memoranda on matters relating to post-hostilities questions, they had not reached any definite or binding conclusions about them - other than to advise strict observance of the various principles set out in the Moscow Four Power Declaration.¹ Consequently, and as Eden readily admitted, this meant that British policy was still tied to a short-term and essentially war-orientated agenda. The FO - and the various committees engaged in post-hostilities and post-war planning assignments - had certainly suggested areas of interest, both strategic and political, that HMG should seek to uphold in the longer term. However, their advice was invariably riddled with qualifications, based as it was upon the rigid conviction that the *modus vivendi* established at the conferences of late 1943 had to be preserved at all costs. There was still a marked reluctance to tackle - or even raise - issues which were likely to lead to difficulties with the Soviet Union. There had of course been occasions when, privately, the policy-makers had questioned both the direction of future Soviet policy and the ability of the British to meet any threat from this direction. However, up to April 1944, the various occasional annoyances which surfaced were tolerated, if not completely in silence then at least with a marked degree of restraint. Indeed, if anything, these various problems seem to have strengthened the resolve of the policy-makers to prove through their own actions that the policy of collaboration was not only a viable but also a mutually profitable way of resolving disputes.

The crisis in Anglo-Soviet relations which broke out at the beginning of May 1944 forced the policymakers to question the wisdom of this strategy. The war of words between London and Moscow - what, for want of a better description, can be called the May Crisis - had several effects.² It confirmed

what many in the policy-making establishment had feared for some time - that HMG and the Soviet Government had very different understandings of what collaboration and the much vaunted Great Power *modus vivendi* really involved. It also persuaded Churchill and Eden that a serious review of policy was now in order. It was evident that, for all the rhetoric and hypothesising that had gone before, nothing had been set in stone, and that a more dynamic approach was now in order. In essence, therefore, the May Crisis seemed to bear out what Christopher Warner had suggested in February: that if the policy of collaboration were to succeed, greater emphasis would have to be placed upon active consultation and co-operation.³ *Ad hoc* exchanges would no longer do: a serious effort would have to be made towards negotiated agreements. The terms of Anglo-Soviet co-operation would have to be defined with greater precision than hitherto if the bases of suspicion and dissent were going to be removed.

There was of course a second, more unpleasant, issue to consider. The evidence now at hand seemed to suggest that - ultimately if not immediately - the policy of collaboration might fail. The military situation on the Eastern Front had now clearly shifted in the Red Army's favour - a development that had clear implications for both the future of the various Balkan states and for British interests in the region. As Churchill now realised, it was no longer politic to eschew long-term contingency-making - and this realisation had a profound effect on the Whitehall mandarins. Policy-making now entered a new phase: a turning point of sorts had been reached.

* * *

The background to the May Crisis - and the way in which Eden *et al.* struggled to resolve it - has already been considered in some detail. The importance of these developments - as far as this chapter is concerned - lie with the reactions they provoked in long-term planning circles, and the consequent impact they had upon long term planning. This can best be gauged through the

second major consequence of Molotov's outburst (the Pre-Percentages Arrangement having been the first) - Eden's seminal paper "Soviet Policy in the Balkans", which was presented to the War Cabinet on 7th June.

It has often been assumed that "Soviet Policy in the Balkans" was produced as a response to Churchill's demand for a paper on the "brute issues which are developing between us and the Soviet Government" in the Balkans.⁴ In fact, as we have already seen, Eden had beaten Churchill to the mark several days before; and was therefore able to inform Churchill on 9th May that he had already commissioned a paper "on the development of Russian policy in the Balkans" and, most importantly, on "the extent to which it would be detrimental to our interest and the steps which we could take to counter it."⁵ However, and although clearly committed to a review of the whole field of policy, Eden was careful to warn the Prime Minister that it was too early to come to any definite conclusions about Soviet policy. To do so would be precipitate - if not dangerous - especially as the situation in the Balkans (about which he himself was anxious) had been arrived at as a result of policies to which HMG had previously subscribed; and, indeed, for which HMG was ultimately responsible. Eden therefore outlined what he felt the policy review should entail, and why:-

We should first consider the extent to which Russian and our own policies are opposed in South East Europe and what sort of case we should have for complaint. It will not be easy to show that they have embarked on a policy of communising the Balkans... even if we suspect that this is their long term objective. It is true that they are supporting Tito and give signs of doing the same with EAM but they can argue that they are only following in our footsteps and for the same reason as ours, namely to help the common war effort by mobilising the forces of resistance... For it is we who have built up Tito and... who launched and supported EAM. In both cases we backed them for immediate operational reasons.⁶

Eden's subsequent sentence clarified the dangerous position which had been allowed to develop. "All the same," he told Churchill, "I agree with you that the time has come to consider from the long term point of view what is

going to be the after-war effect of these developments instead of confining ourselves as hitherto to the short term view of what will give us the best dividends during the war and for the war."

Eden was therefore admitting what officials in the Southern Department had claimed the previous August: that HMG was operating without a long term foreign policy, at least as far as the future of the Balkans was concerned.⁷ The old policy of war-orientated short-termism was rapidly being overtaken by events. Worse still, the interim position (as defined by the Moscow Declaration, and given practical expression in the EAC) had failed to deliver the hoped-for results. A combination of military-dictated events and relative political unpreparedness now meant that existing policy - *ad hoc* collaboration on essentials, and *tacit* agreement to ignore (or at least defer) differences on non-essentials - would no longer suffice. The commitments which the Allies had (apparently) made at Moscow were now (apparently) being ignored.⁸ As a result, and because the respective interests of the Great Powers were now (apparently) coming increasingly into conflict, the 'mood' established by the conferences of late 1943 was being undermined - at an alarming rate. The Soviet tirade against British policy in Greece and Roumania now served to confirm various long-standing fears about Soviet ambitions in Eastern Europe, and exacerbated doubts which had survived the conferences about the longer-term political stability of the war-time Alliance.⁹ All in all, therefore, recent events suggested that the *locus standi* established at the end of 1943 had been illusory. They also encouraged the view that the success of those the conferences had been almost exclusively short-term and militarily-orientated; and, concomitantly, that success had been bought at the expense of longer term power political stability. The political achievements of the Moscow Conference - lauded at the time - were now being called into question. This was the position that the policy-makers responsible for "Soviet Policy in the Balkans" now confronted, and hoped to resolve.

Attitudes in the FO towards the Soviet Union at the beginning of May were, as usual, divided along what were essentially departmental lines. As "Soviet Policy in the Balkans" would soon show, the Southern Department remained generally anti-Soviet in outlook. The Northern Department, on the other hand, remained staunchly committed to the line adumbrated in its earlier papers. This latter point was confirmed when, at the height of the storm created by Molotov's rude telegrams, Warner submitted a long minute commenting on a letter from the Canadian Ambassador, Dana Wilgress, in Moscow.¹⁰ This letter contained a detailed appraisal of the policies likely to be followed by the USSR after the war; and, if Warner's comments were anything to go by, fitted well with the Northern Department's reading of the situation.

Wilgress's paper certainly complemented earlier Northern Department predictions. "From now on," he claimed, "we may expect the Soviet Union to act as any other national state concerned chiefly with looking after its own interests rather than being concerned with spreading its own ideology by means of a Marxian crusade":-

This does not mean that the Soviet Union may not attempt to bring about the establishment of communist regimes in other countries if this would further its own interests, but a strong case can be made out for the view that this would be contrary to the interests of the Soviet Union in the post-war period... The Soviet Union will require a long period of peace and security and this will only be possible if the communist bogey is allayed and other countries are satisfied that the Soviet Government is not interested in interfering in their internal affairs.

The inter-war period had demonstrated how the fear of communist expansion could lead to the establishment of anti-Communist blocs and anti-Communist regimes, "all of which is antagonistic to peace and security." The securing of these twin impostors would, Wilgress felt, be at the top of Stalin's priorities. As he pointed out, "it is reasonable to assume that the Soviet Government will concentrate on a pacific policy of internal development and will take care to avoid any action in the external sphere which might disturb the system of peace and security which will be so necessary to the Soviet Union."

However, and as Wilgress appreciated, all this would ultimately depend upon the extent to which other Soviet desiderata were met. As he himself conceded, his thesis assumed "that a satisfactory and workable system of general security will be established after the war." It also assumed that "the Soviet Government will not be frustrated in the attainment of what she considers to be her just minimum demands."¹¹ If these demands were met, Wilgress felt, "the Soviet Union may be expected to co-operate wholeheartedly in a system of collective security":-

The Soviet Government may also be expected to avoid scrupulously interference in the internal affairs of democratic countries and especially the appearance of supporting communist parties... because to do so would immediately align other countries against the Soviet Union and disturb the system of security she so badly needs for internal reasons.

This did not, of course, mean that the Soviet Government would remain indifferent to the sorts of regime being set up in liberated territories across Europe: far from it. They would continue to press for the establishment of broad based and popular governments as the best antidote to the fascist legacy; and, in countries adjacent to the USSR, work against the establishment of overtly anti-Soviet administrations:-

This, however, is not the same as endeavouring to establish communist regimes in other countries... The Soviet Government would be embarrassed if the communists should come to power in any European country. This would justify Hitler's ominous predictions of the Bolshevik menace and would align other countries against the Soviet Union to the prejudice of the system of general security.

Warner was happy with Wilgress's conclusions, which, as he minuted on 5th May, were "broadly in line with our views." He was not altogether convinced by the Ambassador's optimism, fearing that Wilgress might have underestimated or overlooked certain factors. Although the argument about it not being in Russia's interest to work for communist regimes in foreign countries was "a good one", Warner felt that Wilgress had ignored another possibility. As he pointed out, "he does not deal with what seems to me to be a very likely Soviet policy *viz.* that they will encourage left-wing regimes which

will escape the disadvantages of the Communist label, but in which in fact ex-Communists will be the most active elements." Warner also doubted whether the abolition of the Comintern - to which had Wilgress referred - was as important as the Ambassador implied. This move had undoubtedly had an important psychological impact by "pointing away from the old accepted ideology." It had also made "the conduct of policy as regards foreign communist parties" the responsibility of the Kremlin, and not, as hitherto, revolutionary "specialists of the old school." It had not, however, made any significant practical difference; for as Warner pointed out, "the links with foreign communist parties are by no means necessarily broken and they can still be used as nuclei of pro-Russian influence inside foreign countries."¹² Warner also felt that, by asserting that a Soviet Government intent exclusively on internal development would have to take care to "avoid being a disturbing element in foreign affairs", Wilgress had neglected the probable post-war situation in the rest of Europe. He therefore sounded a warning note:-

Most European countries are likely to find themselves... naturally [in a] disturbed state.... after the war. The Soviet Government will, I fear, if they wish, be able to do a lot of monkeying about without unduly disturbing their primary concentration on internal development.

These qualifications aside, however, it was evident that Warner retained his faith in his department's earlier assessments. He certainly said nothing to indicate that he felt that policy towards the Soviet Union should undergo radical change.

Eden, who saw Wilgress's despatch on 7th May, was less impressed.¹³ It was, he suggested "rather over-optimistic, on a hasty reading." Molotov's telegrams, and Churchill's eruption, had clearly had an effect on the Foreign Secretary. His earlier faith in the Northern Department's advice had been shaken; it remained to be seen whether these doubts would precipitate a change in policy. With Eden now uncertain, a battle for what amounted to the soul of foreign policy was now joined between the political departments. The

production of "Soviet Policy in the Balkans" was therefore particularly important.

* * *

"Soviet Policy in the Balkans" was produced by the Southern Department under Sargent's supervision. The first draft of the paper was circulated by Sargent on 16th May, and attracted comments from a variety of sources.¹⁴ Warner, in particular, was interested in its conclusions, and a lively debate ensued in which the contrasting attitudes of the Northern and Southern Departments were put clearly into focus.¹⁵

From the outset, the Southern Department were careful to distinguish between "the communisation of the Balkans" (to which Churchill had referred) and the spread of Russian influence in the region. There was, it was felt, little evidence to substantiate the PM's fears:-

It is doubtful whether in actual fact there is any deliberate "communising" of the Balkans at the present moment. It is true that the leaders of the Partisans and EAM... are Communists and as such spread their ideological theories in the districts under their control; but this is very different to a systematic attempt on the part of some central organisation to "communist" the whole peninsula. Nor can any accusation be levelled against the Russians of organising the spread of communism in the Balkans.

The "spread of Russian influence" was, however, an entirely different matter. The Southern Department harboured few illusions on this score. In their opinion, the illusion of "communisation" was in fact a symptom of a far more significant development:-

The Russians are, generally speaking, out for a predominant position in South East Europe, and are using the [indigenous] communist movements as a means to an end, but not necessarily as an end in itself. The Soviet Government's support of the Communist elements... is not so much based on ideological grounds as on the fact that *by supporting such elements they will be increasing their own influence.*¹⁶

Eden had already warned Churchill that if anyone was to blame for the current predominance of EAM and the Partisans, it was the British themselves. The paper latched onto this argument, which it was felt might help explain recent Soviet behaviour. "The Russians," it argued, "have merely sat back and watched us doing their work for them... It is only when we have shown signs of putting a brake on these movements that they have come more into the open and shown where their interests lay." The Southern Department now indulged in what amounted to a bout of 'we told you so'. They had been warning for some time that by supporting communist resistance groups in the Balkans, HMG would be risking long term interests for short term advantages: that "we should inevitably produce the very situation with which we are now faced." In the meantime, the only constructive suggestion made by HMG regarding the future of the Balkans - "the formation of a confederation of these states" - had been rejected by the Russians, "on the grounds that such a confederation would represent a *cordon sanitaire* against them."¹⁷ By taking this line, "Soviet Policy in the Balkans" implicitly echoed the conclusion reached in Eden's minute to Churchill of 9th May: namely, that as a result of the decisions taken at the Moscow Conference in 1943, HMG had been left without a long term Balkan policy.

In view of Russia's historical interest in the region, this was particularly unfortunate. This interest had "always manifested itself in a determination that no other great power shall dominate the Balkans as this would constitute a strategical threat to Russia." Subsequent comments suggest that, for once at least, the lessons of history had not been over-looked in Whitehall:-

Under the influence of victory the Soviet Government are reviving Russia's traditional policy... it is only natural that they should start again to strive for a predominant influence in the Balkans - and they are no doubt still hoping to achieve it by the same means i.e. by ***probing weak spots and*** working for the formation of governments who will be subservient to Russia, ***and this in practice means left wing dictatorships imbued with Communist ideology.***¹⁸

In the past, the British had been able to rely upon the balance of power (and, in particular, the counterweight of Austria-Hungary) to offset Russian designs in the Balkans. The current situation was somewhat different, for, as the Southern Department appreciated only too well, "there is no one on whom we can count to support us this time."

The paper went on to review - "as far as we can judge" - Russia's aims for each of the Balkan states. Roumania would be stripped of the territories to which Russia had already laid claim, and the Soviets would probably insist upon the installation of "a friendly government over which they will have a considerable measure of control." The future of Yugoslavia would be left to Tito to decide, though whether through his own (British-supported) efforts or as a result of Red Army intervention on his behalf remained to be seen. Bulgaria, like Roumania, would probably have to accept a pro-Russian regime, and possibly the cession of bases; but in general the FO were unclear about Moscow's long term intentions. Greece was another matter altogether. Up to the beginning of April 1944, the Soviet Government had expressed little if any interest in events in Greece. Then, suddenly, they had started to criticise British policy. The memorandum dwelt at length on the significance of this development:-

This caused us some concern, not only on account of the short term difficulties which open Russian support for EAM would cause us in our Greek policy, but also in account of the long term danger of a linking up of the *Communist* movements in Yugoslavia... and Greece.¹⁹

The agreement which Eden and Gusev had subsequently reached over the handling of Greek and Roumanian affairs, and the success of the Lebanon Conference (which had agreed that EAM and the Greek Communist Party should be absorbed into a new all-party government, and ELAS absorbed in a new national Greek Army), had removed these immediate causes of concern.²⁰ All the same, the Southern Department remained concerned about the longer term implications of the earlier shift in Soviet behaviour:-

We should not be lulled into a state of false optimism by these satisfactory developments. The national army may not materialise, EAM may *yet cause trouble [break loose again]*, and the Soviet Government may yet fish in troubled waters. We should therefore make the most of the present favourable atmosphere to *strengthen and consolidate the pro-British elements [organise some]* counterweight to the force of attraction which *[no matter what happens to EAM]* Russia is still likely to exercise in post-war Greece.²¹

The paper went on to consider what amounted to the sixty-four thousand dollar question:-

Apart from what has been done in the case of Greece, are there any general measures which we could take to prevent the spread of Russian influence in the Balkans? The following seem to be the alternative policies which it is open to us to adopt *subject always to the caveat that we must not on present showing exaggerate the extent of the threat to our interests and ought not therefore to resort prematurely to measures which might precipitate a head-on conflict with the Soviet Government.*²²

According to Southern Department, there were four alternatives: each was considered in turn. The first of these envisaged Britain dropping its support for the Communist-led movements, and turning instead to more moderate elements. This, in current circumstances, was clearly impractical:-

The suggestion that we should drop our support of Tito now or at any foreseeable future date is out of the question... Nor as things now are can we contemplate any longer in Greece the boycotting of EAM and ELAS, for to do so in present circumstances would be to repudiate the agreement reached after so many efforts whereby EAM and ELAS have been reconciled with the Greek Government, and force them once more into opposition and isolation before the sincerity of their present submission had been put to the test.

The second alternative - in fact the opposite of the first - suggested giving full support to the Communist groups so as to increase HMG's influence and thereby "take the wind out of the Russian sails." This course would inevitably lead to the abandonment of the Greek and Yugoslav Kings, and their respective governments-in-exile; moves which the Southern Department were loath to contemplate. As the paper pointed out, such a policy "might be

possible but extremely difficult in the case of Yugoslavia, but wholly distasteful in the case of Greece":-

The advantage of giving full support to Tito would be that we should be backing a probable winner and make it less necessary for him to look to Russia for support. But the disadvantages are obvious. Nor would it be probable in present circumstances to give exclusive support to EAM now that the Greek Prime Minister has agreed to receive its representatives into the government and to incorporate ELAS into the National Army.

The third suggestion effectively resurrected an old idea: that of the "self-denying ordinance." Under this proposal, HMG would approach the Soviet Government "with the idea of reaching a mutual agreement not to dabble in Balkan politics." The paper did not refer to the débâcle at Moscow which had led to the abandonment of this policy at the end of 1943. It did not have to. The idea was clearly incompatible with both the short term policies already in operation and the longer term interests which the FO were anxious to uphold; for, as the memorandum explained:-

We ourselves are taking a pretty active part in Yugoslav and Greek internal politics and would be reluctant to give it up. Also we shall wish no doubt to have our say as regards Bulgaria when the time comes.

There was in any case the question of the Anglo-Soviet Agreement "whereby we follow the Russian lead in Roumania and they follow ours in Greece" to consider. The references to this deal (which at the time of writing was thought to be nearing completion) are most revealing:-

This is only intended to apply to war conditions, and it is hardly likely that either of us will wish to continue it when it comes to the Peace Settlement and post-war period, *or to extend it to other Balkan countries* in view of the important interests both of us will have in shaping the future of the Balkans as a whole.²³

The Southern Department's final opus envisaged a two-pronged approach:-

[We should] concentrate on consolidating our position in Greece and Turkey with a view to the establishment of an Anglo-Greek-Turkish bloc as a counterweight to Russian

influence in the rest of the Balkans; and while avoiding any direct challenge to Russian influence in Yugoslavia, Albania, Roumania and Bulgaria avail ourselves of every opportunity to spread British influence in these countries.²⁴

In their opinion, this would probably involve HMG in a combination of his first and second proposals - i.e. repudiating some communist groups whilst simultaneously offering full support for others "according to circumstances prevailing in particular countries." It was also the only feasible course, given both the present circumstances and those likely to prevail after the war. The paper admitted that the policy of "building up British influence" in those countries most likely to fall under Soviet domination "would need careful handling and would not produce immediate results."²⁵ It would, however, preserve the hope that in the longer term some degree of British influence might be maintained. As the paper explained, "there are elements in all these countries which will be frightened of Russian domination and anxious to reinsure with Great Britain. This indeed probably applies to General Tito himself."

The consolidation of Britain's position in Greece and Turkey - which would involve "the building up of an Anglo-Greek-Turkish *bloc*" - would be equally difficult, raising as it did issues "of a directly political character."²⁶ These difficulties were adumbrated in the following paragraphs. "As regards Greece," the paper suggested, "we should have to set about building up a regime which after the war would definitely look to Great Britain for support against Russian influence." The success of the Lebanon Conference was a positive step in this direction. As the memorandum pointed out, "if the new all-party National Government which owes its existence largely to our encouragement establishes itself so securely as to be able to take over the administration of the country on the liberation of Greece" HMG's task would "be rendered easier." Policy towards Turkey presented a more difficult conundrum. HMG had been trying to force Turkey into the war on the Allied side by threatening her with the prospect of post-war isolation - "to stew in her own juice." Under the new plan, this policy would have to be dropped. Turkey

would be allowed to maintain her war-time neutrality in the hope that as a result she would be better placed to assist the Greeks in resisting the spread of Soviet influence after the war. This would of course lead to difficulties with the Soviets; for, as the paper conceded, and in spite of Moscow's self-proclaimed lack of interest in Turkey's war-time policy, the Russians would inevitably look askance at a sea-change of this sort:-

They have never liked the Anglo-Turkish alliance, and... cannot be expected to relish the prospect of a renewed Anglo-Turkish "get-together", more especially when they appreciated, as they soon would, the policy behind it.

All in all, therefore, it was clear that the policy of fostering some form of Anglo-Greek-Turkish association would be "bound to involve us in various difficulties." However, in the circumstances - and given the problems inherent in the other policy alternatives outlined - there seemed to be little choice. The paper had been based upon the premise that the future of the Balkans, and in particular the probable spread of Soviet influence in the region, presented HMG with a serious political headache. One thing was certain: "difficulties" of one sort or another would inevitably arise as the end of the war drew nearer. The trick was to resolve as many of these "difficulties" as possible - or, if they proved impossible to resolve, to insure that the threat to Britain's longer term interests in the region were minimised. As far as the Southern Department was concerned, there was only one way to achieve this second - and unquestionably more important - goal:-

A re-orientation in the sense [outlined]... seems to represent the only feasible and constructive method by which we can hope to counter the spread of Soviet influence in the Balkans, if we really think it necessary that we should take special measures to do so.²⁷

* * *

Cadogan submitted his views on the Southern Department's paper on 22nd May.²⁸ As he pointed out, certain developments had occurred in the intervening period "that would seem to necessitate redrafting some passages":-

These have been, on the one hand, the admission by the Russians (if one can rely on it) that they are content to leave us to take the lead in Greece, and on the other (if one can have any confidence in its durability) the result of the Conference in the Lebanon.

In Cadogan's opinion, these developments were sufficiently important to merit the preparation of an alternative draft. He had, all the same, been won over by many of the paper's arguments; and, in particular, by the conclusion that the time had come to plan for the preservation of British interests in the Balkans (so far as this could be done). "It seems to me," he minuted, "that our main card of entry into the Balkans is our vital interest in the Eastern Mediterranean. We have perfect justification for taking a hand in this." He was also inclined to endorse the main recommendation to this effect; namely, the creation (or as Cadogan put it, recreation) of the Greco-Turkish Entente. As far as he could remember, this had been "the basis of the Balkan Entente": as such, it provided an historical precedent for the sort of pro-British post-war Balkan organisation that the Southern Department seemed to envisage. Cadogan was clearly enamoured with the idea, if his concluding comments were anything to go by. "It might," he suggested, "be as well for us to be thinking now how we can foster good Greek-Turkish relations as a contribution to such an essential bloc." Eden shared the Permanent Under-Secretary's views. "I agree," he minuted on 23rd May.²⁹ "I should like to see the paper again when amended." Four days later he minuted his satisfaction with the results of the initial redraft:-

I like this paper which is well done... [but] I am not sure what circulation [the] paper should have. Very restricted, not more than members of the War Cabinet and perhaps Chiefs of Staff, but I am doubtful if latter need see.³⁰

"Soviet Policy in the Balkans" had found favour with the FO's highest officials. It did not find favour with the head of the Northern Department. On 31st May, Warner submitted a long critique of the paper. He was particularly worried by the penchant for speculation which it displayed, and by the pronounced anti-Soviet bias that seemed to run through it:-

I wonder if it is wise that this paper should assume, as it appears to do, that there is no way of reconciling Russian and British interests in the Balkans and that we must necessarily follow a directly antagonistic policy. I regret, too, that it assumes so certain a knowledge of Russian motives and plans for the future.³¹

Warner was prepared to concede that many of the Southern Department's conjectures might well be correct. He was, however, unhappy that so much stock was apparently being placed in unsubstantiated speculation - and not the expert opinion of the Northern Department (which was after all supposed to be responsible for handling Anglo-Soviet affairs). He now intervened to correct this state of affairs:-

Northern Department's impression is that the Soviet Government is not, in foreign affairs, acting on a series of cut and dried long term plans, but is first and foremost thinking in terms of the war and relieving the burden on themselves; and, secondly, is keeping a relatively open mind as to the possibility of co-operation with this country and the USA, and is, therefore, in general adopting *ad hoc* policies which it will be possible to adapt post-war either to co-operation or the opposite.

Recent Soviet activity in the Balkans was by no means incompatible with this assessment. Their support of left-wing elements was "natural", especially when - as in Yugoslavia - "their friends are the most energetic in fighting the Germans." As he pointed out, "purely from the point of view of getting on with the war, they are thoroughly justified in supporting Tito and would naturally oppose Mihailović on purely practical and not necessarily on ideological grounds."³² Warner's case was also strengthened by developments in Greece. The recent Soviet promise to "drop exclusive support" for EAM was entirely consonant with the Northern Department's assessments. "It is

conceivable," he argued "that as a result of our representations, they are prepared to reconsider their previous assumption that their friends were entirely in the right and everybody else in the wrong (as [EAM] no doubt represented themselves to be)."

Warner was also unhappy with the Southern Department's recourse to historical allegory. In his opinion, the foreign policy of Imperial Russia had not been motivated exclusively by a desire for aggrandisement (as the paper seemed to imply). The Tsars had been genuinely interested in the Straits Question, and understandably anxious to prevent the domination of the Balkans by "other and potentially antagonistic Great Powers." Furthermore, and as Warner argued, there were pronounced differences between Tsarist and Soviet policies - differences which the Southern Department seemed to overlook:-

The policy of the Tsarist regime... was not by any means always... based on a careful and realistic estimate of Russian interests... as the policy of the Soviet Government seems to be... It is rash, I think, to assume that the Soviet Government will necessarily adopt the Tsarist policy in regard to the Balkans.

Warner admitted that the paper's proposals were not without merit. "I do not disagree with the general line," he minuted. He was, however, alarmed by the psychology which lay behind the proposals; and, in particular, by "the mental approach" which was "implied by talk of building up and 'Anglo-Greek-Turkish bloc' suggests that we are laying the basis for a conflict." This, he feared, could lead to the sort of scenario that the FO were so anxious to avoid. "It will become obvious to the Russians what we are doing," he warned his peers, "and they will make preparations on their side. It seems to me they will hold the higher cards."

However, before proposing a different course, Warner postulated a question of his own. "Has consideration been given to the possibility of finding a solution with the Russians on the lines of a mutual recognition of each other's interests in connection with the Straits and the Eastern Mediterranean?" he asked. Cadogan had argued that the idea of an Anglo-Greek-Turkish should be

presented as something of a *fait accompli*, and justified on the grounds that Britain had special interests at stake in the Eastern Mediterranean (which the bloc would seek to uphold). Warner suggested a different approach:-

Would it be possible, instead of... only asserting our interests in the Eastern Mediterranean... to offer to discuss matters with the Russians on the basis of British interests in special relations with Greece and Turkey... coupled with satisfaction of Russian interests in the Straits?

He went on to highlight other problems with the Southern Department proposals. On the one hand, they had proposed the tacit recognition of short term Soviet predominance over Roumania and Bulgaria. On the other, they had suggested that HMG should attempt to "build up our political influence" in those countries as an alternative to Soviet domination in the longer term. In essence, therefore, the Southern Department had proposed the adoption of contradictory policies: and Warner, for one, had no doubt where this would lead. Such a policy would be "bound to fail and would only irritate and provoke the Russians." Once again, he suggested a more realistic approach. HMG should certainly offer assistance to Roumania and Bulgaria in the post-war period; but, as Warner pointed out, "we could try to do so in agreement with the Russians and not with the confessed purpose of building up our own interests in conflict with theirs." He also called for similar restraint where future policy towards Yugoslavia was concerned. Here, of course, HMG's chances for maintaining some degree of political influence in the longer term were "much better"; but this did not change the basic thrust of Warner's argument:-

I should hope that we should take the line of standing up for ourselves and justifying ourselves to the Russians rather than (in the Russian manner) go about clandestinely to build up British influence against the Russians - at any rate until we feel more certain... that there must be a direct clash of interests there.

"To sum up", Warner went on, "it is the underlying case in this paper that disturbs me":-

I think in many ways co-operation with Russia has progressed quite a lot during the past year... We should guard ourselves

against the natural tendency [that] in our irritation over specific instances of bad co-operation on the part of the Russians [we] let these loom too large. After all, it is only in the past twelve months that we have attempted general political co-operation in the sense of political consultation with the Russians on major political matters... [and] we ourselves have slipped up on one or two occasions.³³

There was also evidence from the Soviet Press to consider. Recent reports in **Pravda** and **Izvestia** suggested that the Soviet Government were committed to making a success of the policy of co-operation. According to Warner, "these lay down more emphatically and indeed enthusiastically than I could have possibly expected the line that co-operation with us after the war is a corner-stone of Soviet policy. They definitely go much further than anything before."³⁴ In his opinion, therefore, there was every reason to feel optimistic about the general trend of Soviet policy, and, concomitantly, about the prospects for continued collaboration in the longer term. Specific instances of recidivism were relatively unimportant. The real danger was that by blowing these out of proportion, the FO - and subsequently HMG - would undermine the progress of the previous twelve months. The recent spat over Balkans was a case in point. As Warner pointed out, this could not be dismissed simply as a product of Soviet malfeasance. It could just as easily be attributed to a general breakdown in communication - in which case the British would be no less culpable than the Soviets:-

There was, I believe, no consultation... as regards the Balkans... until comparatively recently and by tacit mutual consent it has since then only been piecemeal. I would therefore urge that we should hold our hand before assuming that there must be a direct and irreconcilable clash of interests there.

This point was particularly well made. The Southern Department had ignored the fact that the Russians - like the British - might be pursuing an *ad hoc* and essentially short term approach to foreign policy. The piecemeal approach which Warner alluded to had led the Southern Department to make a series of assumptions about Russia's long term policy. It could just as easily have led to similar speculation *vis-à-vis* British policy in Soviet circles. The piecemeal approach had fudged the question of general and long term policy;

deepened suspicion on both sides; and therefore made some sort of misunderstanding almost inevitable. Initially, at least, it had been the Russians who had over-reacted: now, however, the malaise had been caught by elements in the FO (if "Soviet Policy in the Balkans" was any indication). Warner was therefore keen to check what was an undoubtedly dangerous trend before it undermined the prospects for future collaboration altogether; or worse, before it made some form Anglo-Soviet conflict a long term inevitability.

The main problem with the draft paper was its assumption that conflict with Russia was inevitable. Intentional or not, this was psychological poison where the Anglo-Soviet relationship was concerned. The approach outlined for contingency-making (i.e. the decision to advocate bloc-building) reflected this, a fact that was not lost upon Warner:-

If [we] start on this course in the Balkans, the Russians may start upon it in Western Europe. If the matter is presented in this light to the Cabinet, will the FO be able to control our attempts to build up an Anglo-Greek-Turkish bloc and our influence in the Balkans in such a way as not to make our direct opposition quite obvious to the Russians? I very much doubt it.

"At the least," he concluded, "we should insert some reference to the possibility of avoiding a clash of interests with the Russians and reaching a basis of understanding in course of time. It would be a very great improvement if some of the anti-Russian tone could be taken out."³⁵

* * *

Warner's intervention had the desired effect. As Clutton minuted on 3rd June, Sargent had subsequently "trimmed up" the Southern Department paper. The Northern Department's suggestions had been incorporated into the text; and the amended version now avoided "the impression that the FO regard a head on clash with the Russians inevitable in the Balkans." Submitting the memorandum for final approval, Clutton also clarified what, precisely, it was supposed to be. "The FO paper," he claimed, "is to be regarded not as a

statement of policy but as the diagnosis of the situation by the Foreign Secretary's expert advisors." This point, coupled with the closing sentence of the original draft, is particularly important. "Soviet Policy in the Balkans" was not a statement of policy. It was, rather, a feasibility study; an attempt to consider how the British might seek to counter the spread of Soviet influence in the Balkans, if HMG eventually decided that it was desirable to do so. Sargent's involvement in the production of this paper was particularly significant. His comments of 1st April should not be over-looked. As we have seen, he had warned that "the US Government may be able to afford the luxury of abandoning the policy of co-operation with Russia if it proves troublesome to work, but it would be disastrous for this country if we were to do so unless absolutely forced to."³⁶ This was the policy to which HMG - and Sargent himself - subscribed. "Soviet Policy in the Balkans" must therefore be seen for what it was: an attempt to lay plans for the worst case scenario which Sargent had alluded to two months before. It must not be taken as an indication that the FO regarded this scenario as inevitable at this stage. Warner, for one, had balked at this conclusion - and as the final draft indicates, the influence he was able to exert was considerable.

Eden endorsed the amended paper on 7th June, and presented it to the War Cabinet the same day.³⁷ A covering note was attached to the memorandum, clarifying its terms of reference:-

In recent months I have become disturbed by developments which seem to indicate the Soviet Government's intention to acquire a dominating influence in the Balkans. I accordingly asked my Department to assemble for me the evidence in their possession of this Soviet intention, and the manner in which the Soviet Government appeared to be carrying it out. I also asked them for their views as to whether Soviet policy in this direction should influence our own policy and our military plans in the later phases of the war and if so in what manner.

His concluding remarks indicate that in spite of the Southern Department's anti-Soviet hyperbole, the views of the Northern Department continued to carry greater weight:-

We should of course guard against the assumption that it is inevitable that... there should be a direct clash of interests and sooner or later a conflict. If we make it clear that we think there is an irreconcilable clash of interests between the two Powers in the Balkans, the Russians, who hold so many cards there, will work on the same assumption. We should not hesitate to make our special interests... clear to the Russians: but in any steps we take to build up our influence, we must be most careful to avoid giving them the impression of a direct challenge.

All in all, therefore, and in spite of the May Crisis, British policy remained fundamentally unaltered. The preservation of the Anglo-Soviet *modus vivendi* remained the *sine qua non* of British thinking. The policy-makers accepted the Southern Department's argument that a more dynamic approach would have to be adopted in certain instances, and agreed that certain contingency plans should be laid to this effect. However, where practical diplomacy was concerned, "Soviet Policy in the Balkans" advocated a mixture of "business as usual" and "wait and see."

The decision to concentrate upon the Greco-Turkish axis was consistent with the conclusions reached by the PHP and ACA Committees.³⁸ To the British, the ability to exercise an influence over the southern littoral of the peninsula - and to prevent anybody else from doing so - remained a key strategic objective. The fate of the Balkan States which were not adjacent to the Aegean was clearly of lesser importance. The Southern Department were not prepared to renounce all interest in these States, a position which the Northern Department accepted. Both appreciated that HMG could not abandon certain "rights and responsibilities" without compromising Britain's Great Power status. The Southern Department were, however, forced to accept that HMG could not commit itself to active involvement in the affairs of the non-Aegean states - other interests of greater importance were at stake.

The fate of Greece and Turkey was deemed sufficiently important to justify an attempt to reconcile local strategic requirements with the wider interest of continued Great Power co-operation. Even here, however, it was accepted that the latter would have to remain the principal determinant of

policy, at least for the time being. Warner had reminded his colleagues that the Soviets had their own desiderata in the Balkans - desiderata that the British would be foolish to ignore or dismiss out of hand. Nor could they presume too much in their contingency-making. The Soviet Government had already killed off one attempt at promoting confederations in post-war Europe: they could hardly be expected to acquiesce in the creation of an Anglo-Greek-Turkish bloc which would inevitably resurrect the spectre of the *cordon sanitaire*. They would, similarly, regard attempts at building up interests in the non-Aegean countries as unduly provocative - and react accordingly. Warner had therefore suggested a policy of reciprocal interest-recognition (as opposed to antagonistic bloc-building). The British, he argued, should defer to the Soviets where their claims were reasonable - for instance, on the question of the Straits. In return, the Soviets should be encouraged to recognise that the British had sound reasons for wanting to safeguard interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, and in particular her "special relations" with Greece and Turkey.

Warner's intervention ensured that the policy-makers took due notice of the more important issue of future Great Power relations when considering future policy in the Balkans. He did not dispute the Southern Department's contention that in view of recent developments a change was necessary, that contingency-making should begin in earnest. He did, however, react against plans which assumed as their starting point that conflict with Russia was unavoidable, and ensured that the policy of co-operation with Russia was left substantially unaltered. Nevertheless, the importance of this paper should not be overlooked. It marked a sea-change in attitudes towards longer term policy-making. The senior policy-makers began to favour a more hands-on, dynamic approach; to consider the post-war implications of foreign policy; and to identify and defend (as far as they could) vital long term interests. The mantra of problem avoidance - which had continued to blight inter-Allied diplomacy in the months after the Moscow Conferences - was gradually being replaced. Of course, the unfolding military drama certainly militated towards

"problem confrontation" - the British, at least, had always appreciated that political problems would accompany military success, and that it would be impossible ignore these problems as the transitional post-hostilities phase developed. However, the timing of the shift in emphasis cannot be dismissed as inevitable. The May Crisis convinced the FO that a change in approach was in order - that a "turning point" had been reached. "Soviet Policy in the Balkans" reflected this, and, as a result of its Cabinet circulation, ensured that the message reached the highest levels of the government.

* * *

At the beginning of July, the FO considered Wilgress's despatch of 9th March afresh. Warner, unsurprisingly, remained committed to the policy of collaboration: the consequences of failure would, he suggested, prove highly unpalatable in the political sphere:-

Even if Russian suspicions, which are almost pathologically acute, can be allayed... the Kremlin is by nature and tradition "anti-right-wing", and Soviet Russia has an attraction for the more radical left-wing elements in most countries. They will almost inevitably favour such elements in any country where this is no good *raison d'état* for refraining.³⁹

He was, however, alive to the possible difficulties that lay ahead:-

Unless the Kremlin becomes a good deal more sensitive to feeling in this country and the USA than they are at present and find in collaboration... sufficient reason for conducting themselves very carefully in this matter, their support of the more extreme left-wing elements... will arouse suspicion... among moderates and right-wingers here and in the USA. This will make any real degree of collaboration difficult.⁴⁰

Cadogan shared Warner's views.⁴¹ "There are," he admitted, "many difficulties in the way of wholehearted collaboration between the Soviet and the countries of the West, not all of them of the latter's making." He was, nevertheless adamant on the central point. "There is no doubt," he argued, "that our own policy must be directed to co-operation: if it fails, it must not be through our fault." Eden agreed:-

It is all very difficult, but at least we are convinced that we are trying to operate the right policy. The Russians may make it impossible. If we fail it should not be through our fault, nor through an undue display of weakness on our part towards Russia.⁴²

Chapter VI: American Objections to the Spheres of Activity Arrangement of May 1944 as seen from the British Perspective

At their meeting on 18th May, Ambassador Gusev had told Anthony Eden that the Soviet Government agreed to the latter's "proposals" of 5th May.¹ He had, however, qualified this acceptance by stating that "before giving any final answer" the Soviet Government wanted to know whether HMG had consulted the US Government, "and whether the latter also agreed to this arrangement." The Foreign Secretary had replied that, as far as he was aware, the Americans had not been consulted. He was, however, ready to inform them of the proposals; and assured Gusev that there was little prospect that the United States Government would "in any way dissent." "After all," he said, "the matter was really related to the military operations of our respective forces."

Subsequent developments were to prove Eden quite wrong.

* * *

The implications of Eden's meeting with Gusev on 18th May were considered by the officials of the Southern Department during the following week.² The Foreign Secretary recorded the substance of his discussions with the Soviet Ambassador, and then submitted them to the Department for comment, in the form of a draft telegram to Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, the British Ambassador in Moscow. In doing so, he indicated that they should "consider how to handle this with the Americans." Denis Laskey agreed that the American Government would have to be consulted before the arrangement could receive final approval. He therefore submitted a draft telegram to Ambassador Halifax in Washington on 22nd May, as well as a revised draft of Eden's telegram to Clark Kerr. These were approved by Douglas Howard (on 23rd May) and Sir Orme Sargent (on 24th May); and the telegrams were duly despatched.³

Halifax, who had been supplied with a copy of the telegram to Clark Kerr, was directed to ask the US Government "whether they would agree to our informing the Soviet Government that they approve of the arrangement suggested." He was ordered to stress that the agreement was only a limited expedient intended to re-align British and Soviet policies, and to play down any suggestion that it might prejudice the eventual peace settlement or seek to limit American involvement in the affairs of that region.⁴ The British Embassy in Washington, upon receiving these instructions, took steps to sound out their State Department colleagues. On the evening of Saturday, 27th May, Michael Wright, First Secretary at the British Embassy, discussed the recent Anglo-Soviet difficulties with Freeman Matthews, of the State Department's Office of European Affairs.⁵ Robert Smith, in his comprehensive study of American reactions to the Anglo-Soviet negotiations on the Balkans of 1944, describes this meeting in some detail:-

Wright emphasised that although the British could do little to influence events in Roumania, in Greece Britain had important political interests which would have to be protected. The British Government, Wright said, therefore *proposes to tell* the Soviet Government that they should 'take the lead' in Roumania. In Greece, Britain would exercise preponderant influence. Wright then asked Matthews how the United States would regard such an understanding. Would the American Government consider such an agreement as a "routine matter" or as one affecting "high policy"?

Wright implied that the FO did not expect the US Government to adhere to the arrangement as a contracting power, but hoped that the State Department would raise no objections to it as a purely Anglo-Soviet affair. Matthews refused to be drawn on the proposal, saying that it was a matter which Secretary of State Cordell Hull would have to consider. He did, however, recognise its significance, and suggested that Halifax should outline the proposal to Hull in person. Wright promised to advise Halifax accordingly; and a meeting between the Ambassador and the Secretary of State was subsequently arranged for 30th May.

Wright had given Matthews the impression that Anglo-Soviet discussions had yet to take place. This was, of course, misleading. Eden had not only discussed the arrangement for spheres of activity in Greece and Roumania with Gusev: he had received the Soviet Government's response. Aware that the Americans harboured deep-seated reservations about spheres of influence and old-style European diplomacy, Wright had hoped to sound out the State Department before putting his cards on the table. His question about whether the Americans would regard the proposals as a "routine matter" or an issue of "high policy" was obviously couched with this in mind. This chicanery would have been concealed from the Americans, had events not subsequently taken an unfortunate turn.

Halifax saw Cordell Hull on the morning of 30th May. Following this meeting, he sent a telegram to Whitehall, outlining the position.⁶ He had started by handing the Secretary of State an explanatory note, based, "discreetly", on the telegrams he (Halifax) had received five days earlier. According to Halifax's account, Hull had responded cautiously:-

Mr. Hull said that he fully appreciated the purposes that you had in mind and would endeavour to be as helpful as possible. He was however nervous about any action that might appear to savour of creation or acceptance of idea of spheres of influence, feeling this would come back at us later.

Halifax, following the instructions that Eden had sent on 25th May, had sought to reassure Hull on this point:-

I told him that you were just as conscious as he was of this danger and in your proposal would propose to treat both case of Roumania and that of Greece as arising mainly on military considerations and geography. Moreover, any such arrangements as you had in mind, dictated by military convenience, would in no way prejudice the general interest of Russia, United States and ourselves in the post-war settlement.

The Ambassador warned Eden that he believed that he had enjoyed only limited success in persuading Hull on these points. He had, nevertheless, promised to "think it all over in the light of what I had said." Hull had agreed

that Soviet policy in the Balkans might in future create problems for the Western Powers, and that steps could be taken to prevent this. He was, however, doubtful as to whether the current proposals would deliver the hoped-for results.⁷ In fact, the American record of this meeting suggests that Halifax had a far rougher ride than his telegram indicated.⁸ Hull had apparently been warned of Halifax's likely topic of conversation by Matthews on 29th May, after the State Department received information from the White House indicating that some sort of Anglo-Soviet deal was in the offing.

The State Department minutes of the meeting corroborate Halifax's claim that he had followed Eden's instructions. The Ambassador had apprised Hull of the recent Anglo-Soviet difficulties, delivered an official "Note of Conversation" explaining the proposals that Eden wanted to make, and attempted to assuage American fears about spheres of influence. However, the American account suggests that Hull had been more than merely "nervous" that the actions proposed by Eden smacked of spheres of influence. Smith summarises Hull's response as follows:-

Hull told Halifax that he had serious misgivings about the proposed agreement. Such an arrangement, he said, would in fact represent an abandonment of the principles upon which American policy was based. Recalling the Atlantic Charter and the Four Power Declaration to the Ambassador, Hull said that if these principles were abandoned "then neither of the two countries party to such an act will have any precedent to stand on, or any stable rules by which to be governed."

The Secretary of State had, admittedly, promised to examine the British proposal in detail. However, in making it clear that no official reply would be forthcoming until this examination had been completed, he did little to encourage Halifax in the belief that the US Government would support it.⁹

Both the US and British versions agree on one key point, however. Halifax had put Eden's case to the Secretary of State, but, like Wright, had decided not to tell his American colleague that Eden had already spoken to the Russians about an arrangement. He told the Foreign Secretary that he had

"represented your suggestions as the fruit of your own independent reflection." Halifax, who had taken this decision on his own recognisance, had no reason to believe that it would come back to haunt him. As he subsequently told Eden, he had "thought that we were more likely to get the Americans along with us" if his conversations with Gusev were left undisclosed. In fact, the Americans had already been alerted that something was afoot by their most reliable source in London, Winston Churchill.

Halifax - and the FO - were under the impression that the Americans knew nothing about the Eden-Gusev proposals. In fact, the US Government had been tipped off within twenty four hours of Gusev's meeting with Eden on 18th May. Churchill had sent a telegram to Roosevelt on 19th May which inadvertently let the cat out of the bag. The Prime Minister had been furious with the Russians - and in particular Molotov - for several weeks. Now, however, there were signs that the Russians were improving their behaviour (in deed if not in word) and he informed Roosevelt accordingly.¹⁰ In doing so, he alluded, albeit obliquely, to the "spheres of activity" proposals. "Although Molotov was most insulting about Roumania," he telegraphed, "they have today told us they accept the broad principle that they take the lead in the Roumanian business and give us the lead in Greece. I am content with this." This telegram was sent directly to the President's Map Room in the White House basement, and was not brought to the attention of the State Department for several days. Roosevelt replied to the message on 19th May, but made no reference to the proposed arrangement concerning Greece and Roumania.¹¹

The dangerous blend of ignorance and incomplete information which these events had created now conspired to cause confusion in both London and Washington. Churchill had received no indication that his message had provoked misgivings in the American capital. Halifax had no idea that the Prime Minister's message had been sent, and neither, apparently, had the FO or the State Department (at least, for a day or so). Indeed, Churchill himself rapidly lost track of the situation. When shown a copy of the telegram to Clark

Kerr of 25th May, he minuted "I should like to telegraph to President about this. He would like the idea especially as we should keep in close touch with him."¹² He had in fact already done so. With so many of the key players unaware of what the others were up to, it is hardly surprising that matters soon descended into farce.

When did the State Department learn of Churchill's telegram of 19th May? A paraphrase of the telegram was sent to the State Department, and Hull was informed of its contents on 29th May, but some doubt exists as to whether the full message was ever forwarded. It is nevertheless clear that the paraphrase, in combination with Wright's comments on 27th May, persuaded Matthews that the British were up to no good. In a memorandum dated 29th May, he warned Hull that, although Wright had been careful to avoid using the term "spheres of influence", the proposals that the First Secretary had alluded to would in substance lead to their creation.¹³ Matthews pointed out that Churchill's telegram had referred to a similar arrangement, and had inferred that talks with the Soviets had already taken place. Putting two and two together, Matthews warned Hull that the British might already have discussed spheres of influence with the Russians, and that Ambassador Halifax might have requested the meeting with Hull in order to persuade the Americans to support the British initiative. Matthews advised Hull that as the matter raised issues of vital importance, it should be considered most carefully before any decisions were taken. As matters stood, however, he was fundamentally opposed to arrangements of this sort. Given these circumstances, therefore, it was hardly surprising that the Secretary of State reacted "nervously" when Halifax presented him with Eden's "independent reflections."

Matthews was not the only State Department official to advise that the US Government should oppose the British proposal. Hickerson, of the Office of European Affairs, minuted tersely that the British were "attempting to serve informal notice" on the State Department that they intended "to continue a strong policy in the Eastern Mediterranean, even if it means standing up to or

making deals with the Russians."¹⁴ Wright's informal approach now looked like part of an elaborate plot to hoodwink the State Department into accepting the proposals. By associating the US with the arrangement, the British would with one stroke increase their leverage over Russia and strengthen their regional position. Furthermore, if the situation subsequently deteriorated, partial responsibility for any problems could be devolved onto the American Government.¹⁵ In other words, if their efforts succeeded, the British might improve their position, but only at the expense of the Americans, who would find themselves saddled with unlooked-for responsibilities in an area in which their interests were arguably peripheral.

Nor were these opinions confined to the State Department. Admiral Leahy, Roosevelt's Chief of Staff, had sent a memorandum to Hull on 16th May, warning the Secretary of State of the dangers of a possible conflict between Britain and the Soviet Union, and in particular of the impact this would have on the United States.¹⁶ Leahy prophesied that in any future world struggle, the Soviet Union and Great Britain would probably find themselves on opposite sides. He believed that the "phenomenal development" of the Soviet Union's military and economic capacity would place Britain at serious disadvantage in such a conflict; and that the US might consequently find herself drawn - unwillingly - into the conflict, in order to prevent a British collapse. Leahy warned Hull that a military victory over the Soviet Union might be beyond the United States. The US Government should therefore strive to prevent the development of Anglo-Soviet rivalry in Europe, and consequently reduce the likelihood of future conflict. With this in mind, Leahy told Hull that it was the opinion of the American JCOS that the establishment of spheres of influence in Europe would increase the possibility of an Anglo-Soviet clash.¹⁷ The military establishment in Washington was therefore keen to see spheres of influence kept off the agenda.

Leahy was, of course, pushing at an open door. Hull had already served notice on the British and the Russians that he opposed the concept of spheres

of influence or balances of power. At the Moscow Conference the previous year, he had argued that the establishment of an international system providing collective security for all nations would be the best guarantee for peace in the long term. "Spheres" and "balances" would only serve to undermine Great Power consensus, upon which collective security would depend. His views remained constant in this respect.¹⁸ With opinion in Washington hostile to the concept of spheres of influence (and anything suggestive of them), the opposition of the State Department to the arrangement was hardly surprising.

The British, of course, had no reason to anticipate the depth of feeling that had been generated in Washington. As we have seen, Churchill had minuted on 24th May that he wanted to send a telegram to Roosevelt informing him of the substance of the Eden-Gusev arrangement. Eden replied on 30th May. He now reminded Churchill that Halifax had already been instructed to approach the American Government on this issue, but told the Prime Minister that he had no objection to his sending a carefully prepared message to Roosevelt.¹⁹ Circumstances now conspired against the Foreign Secretary. He did not know that Halifax had acted on his own initiative, deliberately concealing from Hull the fact that Eden had already spoken with Gusev; or that the Americans had been tipped off by Churchill's telegram of 19th May. The draft that he now supplied to Churchill, and which the Prime Minister sent to Roosevelt on 31st May, was therefore unwittingly naive.

"There have recently been disquieting signs of a possible divergence of policy between ourselves and the Russians in regard to the Balkan countries and in particular towards Greece," Churchill warned Roosevelt.²⁰ It had therefore been imperative to remedy the situation:-

We therefore suggested to the Soviet Ambassador here that we should agree to ourselves as a practical matter that the Soviet Government would take the lead in Roumanian affairs, while we would take the lead in Greece, each government giving the other help in the respective countries.

The Prime Minister reprised the theme which Eden had used in explaining his proposal to Clark Kerr, and which had been stressed in the instructions sent to Halifax. "Such an arrangement," he insisted, "would be a natural development of the existing military situation, since Roumania falls within the sphere of the Russian armies and Greece within the Allied command under General Wilson in the Mediterranean." He continued by briefing the President on the Eden-Gusev meeting of 18th May, and the substance of the understanding that had been reached. In reassuring Roosevelt that the arrangement would not establish spheres of influence or prejudice future political developments, the Prime Minister followed the instructions sent to Halifax on 25th May almost word for word. The political principles set out in the Four Power Declaration remained the governing consideration upon which all policy was predicated; and the arrangement would be subject to the existing machinery of Anglo-American collaboration *vis-à-vis* "the formulation and execution of Allied policy." Churchill hoped, therefore, that the President would feel able to give this proposal his blessing. He concluded the telegram by stressing that the arrangement, would be "a useful device" for preventing a divergence in policy in the Balkans. His postscript must have seemed anything but controversial. "Ambassador Halifax," he told Roosevelt, "has been asked to raise this matter with the State Department on the above lines."

In fact, it played right into the hands of those in Washington who, convinced that the British harboured designs incompatible with their own high principles, were apt to mistake diplomatic incompetence for unscrupulous behaviour. To a certain extent, Churchill and Eden were unlucky. Roosevelt took the "unusual step" of sending a paraphrase of the Prime Minister's telegram to Hull post-haste, asking for the State Department both to consider its implications and propose a reply.²¹ This had the effect of emphasising the degree of variance between the Halifax and Churchill accounts. It certainly prompted the State Department to jump to conclusions, and to move to block what was in fact a diplomatic chimera. The Russians did not enjoy a monopoly in the "mare's nest" department²².

The State Department immediately set about drafting replies to Halifax and Churchill.²³ The Division of Near Eastern Affairs, represented by Messrs. Foy Kohler, Wallace Murray and Paul Alling, argued that the State Department should decline to support the British proposal, making it clear that they were not merely disassociating themselves from it, but rejecting it outright. In their view, both the FO and the British Prime Minister should be informed of their opposition. Hickerson, representing the Office of European Affairs, disagreed. In an apparent change of heart, he now advised that the State Department should support the plan, on the grounds that as the United States would not be committing significant forces to the Balkans, they could hardly veto an agreement between the two Powers who would. The arrangement was, after all, related primarily to military affairs. Smith, noting that Hickerson was apparently prepared to discount the very serious political implications of the arrangement, offers no explanation for this *volte-face*. One thing, however, was clear - opinion in the State Department was now divided.

Kohler responded to Hickerson's views in a memorandum to Cavendish Cannon, of the Division of Southern European Affairs, on 6th June. Kohler criticised Hickerson's argument, the acceptance of which he thought would be a "serious mistake." Instead, he championed Murray's thesis. Smith has paraphrased Kohler's paper:-

Murray believed that the British proposal had important political implications. It was Murray's opinion that had the proposal related only to military affairs, it would not have been brought to the attention of the State Department. The fact that the British Government had raised the matter through diplomatic channels indicated that the agreement would not be limited only to military affairs in Greece and Roumania. Murray was also disturbed by the fact that the FO had discussed the question with the Soviet Government before advising the State Department about the nature of the proposed agreement. If the Russians had not inquired about the attitude of the State Department... the United States would have been faced with a *fait accompli*.

Kohler therefore argued that the State Department should not only refuse to support the arrangement, but indicate its "surprise" at having only been consulted as an afterthought.

In the meantime, the Office of European Affairs had completed a draft reply to Churchill, which they sent to Stettinius, the Under-Secretary of State, for approval. He subsequently passed this on to his colleague, Under-Secretary of State Breckenridge Long. According to Long, Stettinius was troubled by the differing opinions of the various offices, and wanted advice before reaching a decision. Long replied on the morning of 7th June. He advised Stettinius to direct the US Government's response through Roosevelt, on the grounds that Churchill's telegram to the President was the most important document on record, and therefore demanded an early answer. The State Department could follow this up with a formal reply to Halifax at a later stage. Roosevelt's opposition to the arrangement was to be couched in the following terms: it "differed from the theory upon which we have based our policy and have fought the war" and could "only lead to future difficulties and might easily - probably would - develop into a sphere of some kind of influence which would not be military and could not pass with the war." Long also thought that Roosevelt should emphasise that "continued co-operation was essential if efforts to create a post-war system of collective security were to succeed."

On the same day, 7th June, the State Department's Policy Planning Committee met to resolve their internal dispute. Hickerson repeated his views: the arrangement was confined to military affairs; and the United States, which had not undertaken significant military operations in the Balkans Theatre, could not expect to interfere in Anglo-Soviet negotiations aimed at improving military cohesion. Murray disagreed. He argued that it would be dangerous to encourage either of the other Great Powers to believe that they could decide upon matters affecting high policy without first consulting Washington. In that connection, whether or not the British proposals were concerned with military or political arrangements was irrelevant. Responding to Hickerson's comments

about the lack of American involvement in Balkan operations, he reminded the Committee that although the Soviets had no forces in Italy, they were regularly consulted about Italian affairs. In the end, Murray's (and in effect Long's) views prevailed, and Stettinius ended the argument by ordering Hickerson to redraft the replies to Churchill and Halifax.

Two days later, the Office of European Affairs submitted revised drafts to Stettinius, along with a memorandum from Matthews. Matthews pointed out that these drafts now followed the Long-Murray thesis. However, he disagreed with Long's recommendation that the Roosevelt telegram should deliver the US Government's answer (as opposed to the State Department's formal reply to Halifax). Matthews argued that the President's personal message to Churchill, which would not be placed in the permanent file and become part of the official record, could not be regarded as the official response of the US Government. He advised Stettinius that it would be prudent to have proof on record that the Americans had not colluded in improper diplomacy.²⁴ Stettinius showed the drafts to Long, who approved them (smugly, if his diary entry for 9th June is any indication).²⁵ He then despatched them to Roosevelt, along with a covering note, on 10th June. This explained that the response to Halifax's inquiry of 30th May had been delayed while the Prime Minister's telegram of 31st May was under consideration. If the President approved the draft reply to the British Ambassador now submitted, it would be delivered post-haste. Stettinius was careful to draw Roosevelt's attention to what he regarded as the "serious political implications" of the agreement. "However adroitly the proposed arrangement is presented," he warned, "it seems really to amount to the establishment of spheres of influence, and an attempt to obtain American approval for such a policy." Roosevelt approved both drafts, and his telegram to Churchill was despatched on 10th June.

The British had by this stage received some inkling of what lay ahead. Halifax had soon realised that his (and Wright's) "softly softly" approach had

been upset by Churchill's telegram of 31st May, and that a diplomatic *faux pas* had been committed. On 4th June he telegraphed accordingly to London:-

Your telegram no. 4829 which crossed my telegram no. 2860 has put me in slight difficulties. As you will have seen from my telegram, in speaking to Mr. Hull I purposely did not disclose the fact that you had already taken the matter up with the Russians, because I thought we were more likely to get the Americans along with us in that way.²⁶

Halifax was not prepared to admit that he was at fault. The Ambassador felt that the executive in London should not have interfered in an area which fell under his prerogative. He also wanted to make it clear that, if anything now went awry, they - not he - would have to accept the blame:-

Subject to what you and the Prime Minister may feel and to obvious necessities of urgency that may arise, it would seem wise, when you have instructed me to take up something with Mr. Hull, to defer action through the higher channel of the President until I have been able to report progress with Mr. Hull, and any further action which you wish to take can then be taken with the knowledge of what has passed at lower level. Otherwise we risk confusion and embarrassment.

This of course raised an interesting issue. Halifax obviously felt that he should have been allowed the time - and the freedom of action - to achieve the results that Eden desired. The Ambassador was certainly better placed to gauge the prevailing mood in Washington than his masters in London. He was afraid that the State Department might misconstrue Eden's proposals, and think that they were indicative of a hidden agenda for the establishment of spheres of influence. He had reasoned that such suspicions would deepen if the Americans learnt that some form of Anglo-Soviet understanding had already been established. The Ambassador had acted on his own initiative, hoping to improve the chances of Hull agreeing to the arrangement. Eden, however, could not have known this. As far as he was concerned, Halifax had received clear instructions on how to handle the State Department. These had not gone as far as authorising him to be 'liberal with the *actualité*'. Churchill's telegram had been sent to complement Halifax's approaches, and had contained nothing which contradicted the earlier telegram to Halifax. The questions that arise are

therefore: how much personal initiative was an Ambassador permitted in the execution of his duties; and, concomitantly, what degree of freedom ought the FO have allowed Halifax in this instance?

Given the circumstances, one is tempted in this case to side more with the authorities in London, for reasons that Halifax alluded to in his telegram of 4th June. Certain "obvious necessities of urgency" had been identified and acted upon by London; in the circumstances, the use of the "higher channel" was justified. Halifax had complicated matters by interpreting his instructions with undue creativity. The appointment of a former Foreign Secretary to an Ambassadorial position was perhaps bound to increase the risk that he would act beyond instructions. In different circumstances, Halifax's actions might have delivered the hoped-for results. In this instance, they caused unfortunate complications.

Halifax's worst fears were soon realised. The Ambassador spoke with Stettinius on 7th June, and immediately afterwards telegraphed to London.²⁷ Referring to his telegrams of 30th May and 4th June, he reported the substance of the conversation back to Eden:-

Stettinius tells me he is in a great difficulty over the question of Greece and Roumania as raised in your tel. no. 4829 which has been passed to the State Department by the President. He was worried over the whole question but particularly at the matter having been discussed with the Russians before being consulted, and at this being on record. The US Government are accordingly embarrassed how to reply. He thought the best way would be for the President to send a message to the PM, and this is now being drafted.²⁸ He was unable to indicate what lines it would take, but promised to give me a copy when it was sent.

Halifax's telegram was received with a mixture of disappointment and consternation in Whitehall. Laskey thought the Americans were taking the proposals "rather unnecessarily hard", but was unable to suggest how to persuade them to support the agreement. "We must await their reply," he minuted on 8th June.²⁹ Dew was less inclined to accept the US Government's "embarrassment" at face value. Reviewing the Eden-Gusev exchanges on 8th

June, he argued that there was nothing in them to which the State Department could reasonably object.³⁰ He was, however, prepared to concede that Halifax's conduct had provoked the Americans into a fit of pique, and that some measures to remedy the situation might now be in order:-

Some of the present embarrassment must be accredited to the fact that Lord Halifax when raising the matter with Mr. Hull concealed the fact that the question had been discussed with the Russians and represented as a possible course which we *might* follow. I do not know whether it would be worth while for a message to be sent to Mr. Hull, placing the matter in its proper light, or whether we should await the President's reply to the PM and if the tone is aggrieved to reply only then.

Dew, after reviewing the available evidence, had concluded that the Americans had overreacted to the British proposals (although not, admittedly, without some justification). He did not, however, appreciate that the State Department remained ignorant of the circumstances of the Eden-Gusev meetings, and therefore had no way of knowing that the proposals had arisen in "an informal manner." All the Americans had to go on were Halifax's report to Hull, and Churchill's telegrams to Roosevelt. The Ambassador had deliberately concealed the fact that meetings had been held with Gusev, and his version had therefore done little to enlighten the State Department. Churchill's contributions had also been misleading. His earlier telegram had alluded enigmatically to the arrangement, without providing detailed information about it. The telegram of 31st May had informed Roosevelt of the substance of the arrangement, but implied that HMG had presented official terms to the Soviet Ambassador - which of course was not what had happened at all. Dew seems to have assumed that the Americans had been kept abreast of developments, and drawn the wrong conclusions from the information supplied to them. Officials in the State Department had, in fact, jumped to erroneous conclusions; but this had at least as much to do with the fact that they had been supplied with half truths and misleading information as with their own shortcomings.

Churchill had in the meantime reacted to Halifax's earlier telegrams, sending a reply on 8th June.³¹ He was adamant that nothing untoward had been attempted:-

There is no question of spheres of influence. We all have to act together, but someone must play the hand. It seems reasonable that the Russians should deal with the Roumanians and Bulgarians, upon whom their armies are impinging, and that we should deal with the Greeks, who are in our assigned theatre, who are our old Allies and for whom we sacrificed 40,000 men in 1941. I have reason to believe that the President is in entire agreement with the line I am taking about Greece. The same is true of Yugoslavia. I keep him constantly informed, but on the whole we are playing the hand and have to be very careful to play it agreeably with the Russians. No fate could be worse for any country than to be subjected in these times to decisions reached by triangular or quadrangular telegraphing. By the time you have got one thing settled, three others have gone astray. Moreover, events move very rapidly in these countries... By all means show this to Mr. Hull, or anyone else you think wise, if you think it worth while.

Churchill's intentions were clear. He was concerned about the operational efficacy of the Alliance, not about post-war spheres of influence. The dispute with Moscow over policy in Greece and Roumania had persuaded Churchill that some effort had to be made to establish a clearer understanding of the respective, operational responsibilities of the Great Powers. The proposed arrangement took into account both the prevailing military situation and historical precedents for involvement in the liberation of certain countries; and was therefore above reproach. He wanted to "stiffen" Halifax, in the hope that, armed with the Prime Minister's views, the Ambassador would return to the fray and persuade the State Department to accept the arrangement. As we shall see, his efforts in this instance were to backfire disastrously.³²

The Prime Minister's telegram to Halifax of 8th June is interesting, because it provides insight into both his thinking and his grasp of the situation. It was not a statement of Government policy, but, rather, an outline of Churchill's opinions, and an attempt to justify them. He did not confine himself to arguments in line with agreed policy. The Prime Minister undoubtedly went

further than the FO would have liked by inferring that the agreement could eventually be extended to cover Bulgaria.³³ This was not, however, particularly significant at this stage. Russia was not at war with Bulgaria; and, in any case, Roumania remained undefeated. Roumania's removal from the war would have to precede the opening of Russian operations against Bulgaria, a fact which seemed to afford plenty of time for agreement with the Soviets.

Churchill had indeed kept in close communication with the President about Greek and Yugoslav affairs, most notably during the Greek Political Crisis and Mutinies, and on the protracted negotiations involving Tito and the Royal Yugoslav Government. The President had, for the most part, supported Churchill's handling of these affairs (or, at least, had refrained from criticising it). This had reinforced the Prime Minister's belief in his "special relationship" with Roosevelt, which he regarded as an invaluable diplomatic asset. He was not, however, blind to the dangers which the misuse of this channel threatened. The Prime Minister's comments about the perils of "triangular telegraphing", which he used to justify the arrangement on Greece and Roumania, were particularly apposite, for as we have seen, the confusion that could arise in telegraphic diplomacy was almost limitless.

The Prime Minister's telegram found favour with Sargent; but, and as the Deputy Under-Secretary pointed out, it did not really answer Halifax's message of 7th June. Sargent had discussed that telegram with Dew on 8th June, and subsequently despatched a reply to Washington along the lines advocated in Dew's minute:-

The Soviet Government's proposal given in FO tel. no. 1560 to Moscow arose out of a chance remark by the Secretary of State recorded in paragraph 7 of FO tel. no. 1377 to Moscow. There was thus no opportunity of discussing the proposal at its inception with the Americans. But as soon as the Soviet Government took up this chance remark and converted it into a formal proposal we consulted the US Government as indeed the Soviet Government suggested we should do.³⁴

Sargent had at last briefed Halifax *et al.* on where, how, and when the arrangement had come into being. Whereas Eden and Churchill had previously played up their role in securing agreement with Moscow, Sargent now admitted that the proposals had stemmed from an informal suggestion - "a chance remark" - and that this had only assumed real importance because the Soviet Government had chosen to invest it with as much. This should have been made clear to Halifax - and certainly to the State Department - at the earliest convenient moment. Had this happened, the Ambassador might not have decided to conceal the Eden-Gusev discussions from Hull, and the later embarrassments might consequently have been avoided. Sargent had now, belatedly, referred Halifax to the telegram Eden had sent to Clark Kerr on 5th May, following his earlier meeting with Gusev.³⁵ This offered a far clearer picture than that provided by the telegram of 25th May; but it was the later message, and its inaccuracies, that had persuaded Halifax to adopt a less than honest approach with Hull.³⁶ Attempting to claim responsibility for what they believed was a diplomatic *coup*, Eden (and Churchill) had inadvertently sent out misleading signals - signals that persuaded their agents in Washington to indulge in a bout of unnecessary (and ultimately damaging) intrigue, and convinced the Americans that there was more to the proposed arrangement than they claimed. Seen in this light, Sargent's telegram reads like an attempt to recover a situation where nemesis and hubris had played out their traditional struggle.

Attitudes in Whitehall continued to fluctuate as exasperation with the Americans mingled with a growing awareness that the British had mishandled affairs. Sir Alexander Cadogan complained on 9th June that "the Americans have an astonishing phobia about spheres of influence." He evidently felt that this "phobia", which bordered on obsession, had seriously impaired the State Department's judgement. He did not, however, comment on the shortcomings of British diplomacy.³⁷ Sir Neville Butler, Head of the North American Department, was far less inclined to paint the Americans in the role of villains. He was happy with the Prime Minister's telegram to Halifax of 8th June, which

he thought should be shown to Hull. He was not, however, satisfied that it dealt with the real problem:-

It bypasses one of the principal points, which is that though our Middle Eastern Command and recognised leadership is to some extent an Anglo-American trusteeship, we put the idea as from ourselves to Mr. Gusev and he raised the question whether the Americans concurred. I am sure that if we are to carry the Americans along with us smoothly we must acquire the habit of either consulting or at least informing them as to the circumstances of the case. We resent it when the United States Government take action in Latin America without consulting or informing us and are having some success in weaning them from that practice.

Butler was worried that elements in London were beginning to take Britain's American Allies for granted. This could, he feared, have disastrous consequences.³⁸ Sir David Scott, Assistant Under-Secretary of State, agreed. In what was evidently intended as oblique criticism of Halifax's decision not to play straight with Hull, Scott argued that continuing good relations with the US would depend upon the quality of treatment that the Americans felt the British were according them.³⁹ The final word was left to Denis Laskey, who argued along the same lines as Sargent's telegram to Washington of 8th June:-

I think we were probably remiss in not consulting with the United States Government at an earlier stage, but it will be seen from the Secretary of State's record of his interview with Mr. Gusev on May 5th that we did not then suggest any such hard and fast arrangement as that now proposed. The Secretary of State linked up the positions in Greece and Roumania but the main purpose of our representations about Greece was to get the Russians to give full and open support to M. Papandreou. Mr. Gusev's reply on May 18th did not refer to this specific request but dealt with the more general issue.⁴⁰

The arrangement, which had originated with Eden's "chance remark" on 5th May, had been transformed by Gusev's reply on 18th May. The problems with Washington which had followed had been caused by Halifax's failure to inform the State Department of this chain of events, and Churchill's misleading allusion to them. This was in part the fault of the FO, which had failed to refer the Ambassador to the earlier Eden-Gusev meeting when instructing him to

approach Hull, and therefore sown the seeds of its own misfortune. Matters had by now taken another turn, however; the Americans had responded to the British proposals. On 10th June, following his meeting with Stettinius, Roosevelt sent his telegram to Churchill.⁴¹

* * *

As we have seen, the President's message had been drafted by the State Department under the supervision of Stettinius, and reflected the conclusions reached in the discussions of the previous week. The telegram did not refer to the discrepancies of the British accounts - and in particular the Prime Minister's telegram of 31st May and Halifax's conversation with Hull of the previous day. It *did*, however, imply that the US Government regarded the Halifax-Hull conversation as a formal exchange, and that its response was based upon the discussion of 30th May. This indirect allusion to the inconsistency between the Halifax and Churchill narratives may have been included as a warning to Churchill - to the effect that, if the British did not drop the proposals, the US Government might pursue the matter of Halifax's apparent impropriety. The Prime Minister was certainly left with little doubt about Washington's attitude to the scheme. Roosevelt told Churchill that Halifax had been supplied with the State Department's views:-

This Government is unwilling to approve the proposed arrangement. Briefly, we acknowledge that the militarily responsible Government in any given territory will inevitably make decisions required by military developments but are convinced that the natural tendency for such decisions to extend to other than military fields would be strengthened by an agreement of the type suggested. In our opinion, this would certainly result in the persistence of differences between you and the Soviets and in the division of the Balkan region into spheres of influence despite the declared intention to limit the arrangement to military matters.

The telegram ended with a counter-proposal. In the President's (or State Department's) view, "efforts should preferably be made to establish

consultative machinery to dispel misunderstandings and restrain the tendency toward the development of exclusive spheres."

Roosevelt's (or, rather, Stettinius's) telegram was received with disappointment by the FO. In a long minute of 13th June, Laskey reviewed the options open to the British, now that Americans had stated their opposition to the proposed arrangement. His conclusions were gloomy:-

It would clearly be useless to go back to the Americans in the hope of getting them to reverse their decision. We must, therefore, inform the Russians that the US Government do not feel able to accept the arrangement. We need only say that that, while the US Government recognise that military decisions may have to be taken by the Government responsible for operations in the area, arrangements on the lines proposed would lead to similar procedure being adopted for political decisions which in turn might result in the Balkans being divided into spheres of influence. *We should point out that any such result was far from our intention* but that in deference to the views of the US Government we do not wish to press the proposal.⁴²

Laskey's claim that a spheres of influence deal was "far from our intention" can be interpreted in one of two ways. If one assumes that Laskey was dealing exclusively with the immediate point at issue - i.e. how to tell the Russians, without losing face, that the arrangement was a non-starter - his point about spheres of influence being "far from our intention" does not need to be taken at face value. He could have been suggesting that, in order to conceal the damage which the American *démarche* had done to the policy of establishing spheres, the British should save face with the Russians by claiming disingenuously that as a long term spheres of influence deal had never been the British intention, nothing important had been lost. This hypothesis, however, is unconvincing. It is far more likely that Laskey was echoing Sargent's claim that the establishment of spheres of influence was *not* part of the British agenda.⁴³ The FO was keen to establish a *modus operandi* with the Russians. They wanted to ensure that forthcoming developments in the politico-military field were regulated in a manner that would strengthen the principle of Anglo-Soviet collaboration (and the prospects for close relations in the post-war period)

without compromising the longer term political settlement of Balkan questions. They were, of course, motivated by the desire to defend British interests in the region, which a premature *fait accompli* or *ad hoc* settlement might undermine. However, this *dictated* that a policy of co-operation should be pursued at every stage. The strategic and political situation facing Britain in the region - and especially the ever-increasing strength of the Soviet position - meant that haggling over certain exclusive rights was a luxury which the British could ill afford.

Laskey's conclusions were in any case premature, as he himself admitted on 14th June.⁴⁴ He may have felt that it was "useless to go back to the Americans in the hope of getting them to change their decision" - but Churchill disagreed. The Prime Minister responded immediately to Roosevelt's telegram, drafting and sending a reply without consulting the FO.⁴⁵ He now gave full vent to his feelings:-

I am much concerned to receive your no. 557. Action is paralysed if everybody is to consult everybody else about everything before it is taken. The events will always outstrip the changing situations in the Balkan regions. Somebody must have the power to plan and act. A consultative committee would be a mere obstruction, always overridden in any case of emergency by direct interchanges between you and me, or either of us and Stalin.

Churchill followed this opening salvo with a detailed (if somewhat idiosyncratic) review of the recent Greek mutiny in Egypt and concomitant Greek political crisis⁴⁶, and of the coincidental political upheavals which had threatened to destabilise Egypt itself.⁴⁷ In both instances, he argued, the crises had been rapidly and successfully defused - but only because he had been "in a position to give the necessary orders without having to consult with anybody."⁴⁸ Having "demonstrated" that freedom of action could deliver results in the most difficult of circumstances, Churchill turned his attention to the Eden-Gusev proposals and the problems of Roumania and Greece. In the case of the former, the Prime Minister argued for a policy of pragmatism:-

It seems to me, considering the Russians are about to invade Roumania in great force and are going to help Roumania recapture part of Transylvania from Hungary, provided the Roumanians play, which they may, considering all that, it would be a good thing to follow the same leadership considering neither you nor we have any troops there at all and that they will probably do what they like anyhow. Moreover, I thought their armistice terms, apart from indemnity, very sensible and even generous. The Roumanian Army has inflicted many injuries upon the Soviets and went into the war against Russia with glee.

For a whole variety of reasons, therefore, it made sense to permit the Soviets to have their head in dealing with the Roumanians. Churchill doubted whether the Western Powers would be able to influence the situation in Roumania. They had scant justification for intervening in an area where the Soviets were conducting legitimate military operations, where they appeared to be tailoring their policies to fit the high rhetoric of the Four Power Declaration and Atlantic Charter, and where the Western Allies could not hope to commit themselves militarily. The Prime Minister was careful to avoid giving Roosevelt the impression that he was ready concede *carte-blanche* to the Russians in Roumania. He sought to reassure the President that the arrangement would in no way compromise the Western Powers' long term rights and responsibilities, telling him that "I see no difficulty whatever in our addressing the Russians at any time on any subject." For practical reasons, therefore, it was expedient to agree to the plan.

Churchill tried to argue along similar lines to justify the British claim to a predominant role in supervising the politico-military situation *vis-à-vis* Greece:-

We are an old ally of Greece. We had 40,000 casualties in trying to defend Greece against Hitler... The Greek King and the Greek Government have placed themselves under our protection... Not only did we lose the 40,000 men above mentioned in helping Greece, but a vast mass of shipping and warships, and by denuding Cyrenaica to help Greece, we also lost the whole of Wavell's conquests in Cyrenaica.

In fact, the Prime Minister knew that he was on shaky ground when trying to equate the strategic situation in Greece with that of Roumania.⁴⁹ He therefore concentrated upon the legitimacy of Britain's case, and the political advantages that might accrue should the arrangement be approved; and, once again, attempted to utilise the "special relationship" to persuade Roosevelt to agree to his prodding:-

Your telegrams to me in the recent crisis worked wonders. We were entirely agreed, and the result is entirely satisfactory. Why is all this effective direction to be broken up into a committee of mediocre officials such as we are littering about the world? Why can you and I not keep this in our own hands considering how we see eye to eye about so much of it?

Churchill concluded his telegram by suggesting a compromise which, he hoped, would allay the worst American fears. The arrangement, he suggested, should have a three month trial, after which it should be reviewed by the three powers.

The Prime Minister also sought to enlist the support of the American Ambassador, Gilbert Winant, in his attempt to win Roosevelt round. Winant informed the President on 13th June that Churchill had shown him a copy of his latest telegram (no. 700), and had asked the Ambassador to intercede on his behalf in support of the three month trial. Churchill, who distinguished between long term and short term policy in the Balkans, felt strongly that the alternative arrangement which Roosevelt had suggested on June 11 was unrealistic and would only further complicate the situation in the Balkans.⁵⁰ Winant subsequently told Roosevelt that he saw no problem with Churchill's telegram.⁵¹ Roosevelt evidently agreed with Winant. Even before his Ambassador had reported the outcome of his conversation with the Prime Minister, the President had notified Churchill that he accepted his compromise. He was, however, careful to qualify this support by warning that "we must be careful to make it clear that we are not establishing any post war spheres of influence."⁵²

The British now had every right to believe that they had won the backing of the US Government; and the Prime Minister telegraphed his thanks to Roosevelt on 14th June. In doing so, he informed the President that HMG were proceeding in full accordance with his wishes.⁵³ Churchill had already communicated Roosevelt's acceptance of the three month trial to senior ministers at a session of the War Cabinet on 13th June. On the strength of this, Eden had been "invited" to contact the Soviet Government.⁵⁴ The FO set about preparing a communiqué to this effect. Laskey submitted a minute, which after vetting by Dew, Sargent, Cadogan and Eden, was sent to Ambassador Gusev on 19th June.⁵⁵ Gusev replied on 22nd June, promising that "as soon as I receive my Government's reply in regard to the matter, I will let you know at once."⁵⁶

* * *

Further developments in Washington now conspired to create new difficulties. In his telegram to Lord Halifax of 8th June, Churchill had referred not only to Greece and Roumania, but also to Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. He had also agreed that Halifax could, if he thought it would help, show this message to Hull. With Hull absent, the Ambassador had immediately passed the Prime Minister's telegram (and Sargent's telegram to Campbell of 8th June) to Stettinius. Far from helping the situation, however, Churchill's message only served to deepen the suspicions of the State Department, which was in the process of drafting its response to Halifax's approach. Smith has no doubt as to the impact of this telegram. "This new information," he argues, "convinced Stettinius and his colleagues that Eden's suggestion to the Soviet Government was, in fact, a proposal to divide the Balkans into Anglo-Russian spheres of influence, and not related solely to Roumania and Greece."⁵⁷ Crucially, however, the "new information" arrived too late to find its way into the memorandum which Stettinius passed to Roosevelt on 10th June, along with the draft telegram to Churchill (which the President subsequently despatched as

his no. R557). This was the prelude to a further comedy of errors in Washington.

Roosevelt sent the telegram of 10th June, which was in effect Stettinius's draft, without amendment. His subsequent telegram of 12th June was another matter altogether. Not only was this all his own work, it was also sent without the knowledge of the State Department. Churchill's impassioned plea of 11th June had clearly struck a chord with Roosevelt, for he now accepted the Prime Minister's suggestion for a three month trial. Meanwhile, the State Department continued to operate under the impression that Roosevelt had told Churchill that the United States Government was *unable* to adhere to the arrangement. Stettinius had decided to delay forwarding the Department's *aide-mémoire* to the British Embassy (the "official" rejection advocated by Matthews on 9th June) until Hull returned to Washington.⁵⁸ In the end, the *aide-mémoire* was despatched on the very day that Roosevelt informed Churchill of his willingness to approve the agreement (12th June). Washington therefore gave the impression of running a twin track policy, with each track heading in opposite directions!

On 14th June, Cavendish Cannon sent a note to Foy Kohler pointing out that the Department had not as yet briefed Roosevelt on the Churchill telegram of 8th June. Cannon told Kohler that the telegram had "broadened the scope of the proposed agreement by referring to both Bulgaria and Yugoslavia."⁵⁹ Roosevelt ought to be informed of this, he argued - otherwise someone "might infer that by design we kept back something which should have been mentioned" to the President. Cannon therefore recommended that a draft letter to the President, briefing Roosevelt on Churchill's message to Halifax of 8th June, should imply that additional information relating to the British proposal had only come to the attention of the State Department after Stettinius had sent his letter of 10th June to the White House. The State Department was now covering up the fact that it had been dilatory in supplying the President with up to date information. At the time, of course, Cannon had

no reason to suspect that this was of any great importance: he could not have known that the President had reversed the decision to oppose the agreement after reading Churchill's telegram of 11th June.⁶⁰

On 17th June, Hull sent Roosevelt the letter referred to by Cannon; and Churchill's telegram to Halifax of 8th June was mentioned.⁶¹ Hull complained - not unreasonably - that the FO and the Prime Minister had been remiss in failing to inform the State Department of its proposals before it had discussed them with the Russians. He went on to paint a grim picture of the situation that would have developed had Gusev not requested clarification of Washington's attitude. "This Government," he maintained, "would have been faced with a concluded spheres of influence agreement between Britain and Russia." The Secretary of State advised Roosevelt that he should inform Churchill that the State Department "regretted" that they had not been consulted about the proposed agreement prior to discussions between the Soviet and British Governments. He supplied the President with a draft telegram to the Prime Minister to this effect. This was eventually sent on 22nd June.

The President had been let down by the State Department, which had been tardy in passing on this information, but he himself was not above reproach. The State Department remained in the dark about his telegram of 12th June, and his acceptance of a three month trial. As a result of this breakdown in communication, the US Government had now sent conflicting messages to London. The Americans may not have started this catalogue of confusion, but they certainly helped to drag it out.

Halifax informed Eden of the State Department's "rejection" of the Eden-Gusev agreement on 15th June, pointing out that it contradicted the President's telegram of 12th June.⁶² The FO was initially unconcerned, assuming that the State Department had despatched their *aide-mémoire* to the British Embassy before Roosevelt had had time to inform Hull of his change of heart.⁶³ As far as they were concerned, the President had officially accepted the

agreement, subject to the three month trial period. Eden sent further instructions to Halifax which reflected this assumption.⁶⁴ Roosevelt's subsequent communication to Churchill therefore came as a nasty surprise.

* * *

The opening passages of Roosevelt's telegram of 22nd June should have warned Churchill that something had gone seriously wrong with the foreign affairs process in Washington. The telegram quite properly referred the Prime Minister to his previous communication on the subject (no.R560). However, it also attempted to resurrect Churchill's tel. no.C687 of 31st May - without referring to the Prime Minister's later messages.⁶⁵ There was no attempt to retract the agreement to a three month trial, but in all other respects the telegram constituted a stinging attack on recent British behaviour:-

Regarding matters in the Balkans, I am a bit worried and so is the State Department. I think I should tell you frankly that we were disturbed that your people took this matter up with us only after it had been put to the Russians and they had inquired whether we were agreeable. Your FO apparently sensed this and has now explained that the proposal "arose out of a chance remark" which was converted by the Soviet Government into a formal proposal. However, I hope matters of this importance can be prevented from developing in such a manner in the future.

Churchill was having none of this. He straightaway drafted a reply to Roosevelt which covered far more than the immediate circumstances of the Eden-Gusev arrangement. This time, he consulted Eden prior to despatch, and the Foreign Secretary's comments were included in the version eventually sent to Washington.⁶⁶

Churchill wasted no time on diplomatic niceties, and got straight to the point. He dealt with the Roumanian situation first, claiming that pragmatism (and the relatively judicious diplomacy of the Soviet Government) had determined the line he had followed.⁶⁷ The arguments relating to Greece⁶⁸ - "where the burden rests almost entirely with us" - and Turkey⁶⁹ were a different

matter. Churchill was incensed that the President had seen fit to reprove him about recent British diplomacy, and told him so:-

We have always consulted you on policy and I think we have been agreed on the line to be followed... [This] temporary working arrangement for the better conduct of the war was only a proposal and had to be referred to you for your agreement... I cannot admit that I have done anything wrong in this matter. It would not be possible for three people in different parts of the world to work together effectively if no one of them may make a suggestion to either of the others without simultaneously keeping the third informed.

As Churchill pointed out, the President had failed to live up to his own high standards in his recent handling of the Russo-Polish situation; but he (Churchill) had not complained about this lapse.⁷⁰ Yugoslavia had not been specifically referred to by Roosevelt, but Churchill chose to mention the recent Tito-Šubašić negotiations all the same.⁷¹ Equating the Yugoslav situation with the Greek, the Prime Minister reiterated his earlier contention:-

I am struggling to bring order out of chaos in both cases and concentrate all efforts against the common foe. I am keeping you constantly informed: and I hope to have your confidence and help within the sphere of action which assigned to us.

Churchill ended his message on a more positive note. After praising the performance of the American troops fighting in Europe, he resorted to flattery in what was evidently an attempt to reassure Roosevelt that their "special relationship" remained unsullied.⁷² He was, however, careful not to let Roosevelt off the hook, for even this praise was put into perspective. The situation in certain European countries was, he warned, both complicated and dangerous. In Greece and Yugoslavia, the political differences of the local resistance movements were threatening to escalate into civil war. Problems of this sort would have to be tackled, principally by the leaders of the Big Three. Great Power unity was essential: indeed, the success of forthcoming military operations would depend upon it. Allied attempts at promoting unity - and preventing civil war - would test their collective resolve and, in particular, their ability to act in concert. As Churchill reminded Roosevelt, "we have immense tasks ahead of us. I cannot think of any moment when the burden of war has

laid more heavily upon me or when I have felt so unequal to its ever-more entangled problems." The Prime Minister's inference was clear: adherence to the ideals of the "special relationship", to trust and co-operation - and, in this specific instance, to commitments made in good faith - was essential if the aspirations of both Britain and America were to be realised, and the cohesion of the Alliance maintained.

Churchill had stated his case, appealing for - indeed, almost demanding - the support that Roosevelt had promised in his previous message (no.R560). As Martin Gilbert points out, the Prime Minister had resorted to "strong words" in order to get his message across.⁷³ His efforts were not wasted. Roosevelt replied on 26th June, and retracted his accusations of 22nd June:-

It appears that both of us have inadvertently taken unilateral action in a direction that we both now agree to have been expedient for the time being. It is essential that we should always be in agreement in matters bearing on our Allied war effort.⁷⁴

This satisfied Churchill, who sent a brief response on 27th June.⁷⁵ With this, the correspondence between the two leaders subsided, their personal dispute apparently concluded. Unfortunately, however, the fate of the Eden-Gusev agreement was not resolved so easily.

The telegrams exchanged by Churchill and Roosevelt between 22nd and 27th June did as much to confuse the position as they did to clarify it. The President's telegram no.R565 (in effect the draft supplied to him by Hull on 17th June) did not actually discuss the *substance* of the Eden-Gusev deal. Instead, it concentrated upon the *procedural* questions that the affair had raised.⁷⁶ Churchill (and the FO) had assumed that Roosevelt's telegram no. R560 of 12th June had constituted his official - if conditional - acceptance of the agreement. The State Department *aide-mémoire* that had been handed to Halifax on the same day had been ignored - the British thought it had been rendered obsolete by the President's telegram. The Prime Minister was therefore surprised - and angered - by Roosevelt's telegram of 22nd June. The

President's new message made little sense, given the tone of his no.R560. It seemed unnecessarily churlish. It now looked as though the State Department, embarrassed at having been overruled, had persuaded Roosevelt to pursue a different line of attack in order to recover face. The Prime Minister could not have known that the offending telegram had been written by Hull, and intended to complement the (Stettinius) telegram that Roosevelt had sent on 10th June - which Hull thought had been the last word on the subject. It had concentrated on procedural questions, not because they provided a chance for petulant diplomatic point-scoring, but because Hull believed that the argument against the principle of spheres of influence had already been concluded (in his favour). He had hoped to reinforce this by tackling the practical questions that the affair had raised, and to serve notice on Britain that further attempts to conclude bilateral political deals would also be opposed by Washington. However, by accepting Churchill's compromise on 12th June without informing Hull, Roosevelt altered everything. Hull's telegram - Roosevelt's telegram no.R565 - was dangerously out of context with this decision. It was supposed to augment the telegram of 10th June - but the policy which that telegram had suggested had now been superseded. Therefore, while Churchill may have thought that the argument about spheres of influence had been concluded, Hull continued to pursue it for all he was worth.⁷⁷

One question in particular should be considered in this context. How would Churchill have responded had he read Roosevelt's message as a further attempt to repudiate the spheres of activity proposals? The answer is clear. He would have identified the (probable) causes for such back-sliding - which would almost certainly have been seen in London as the fears about spheres of influence - and then argued that these were without foundation. He did not do this in his telegram of 23rd June. Instead, he attempted to counter the accusations of procedural impropriety by reviewing recent events and possible areas of divergence on a point-by-point and country-by-country basis. He did not attempt to wrestle with the metaphysical problem of post-war spheres of influence because he, too, felt that this argument had already been resolved.

When, therefore, Roosevelt sent his apologetic telegram on 26th June, Churchill had every reason to assume that the affair had been concluded to everybody's satisfaction. Such optimism was misplaced. Churchill did not know that the President's telegrams were out of context with one another, or that Roosevelt and the State Department entertained very different ideas about what American policy actually was. Until the White House and State Department established a common understanding on policy, the position of the US Government *vis-à-vis* the Eden-Gusev deal - and therefore the deal itself - remained in limbo. The Prime Minister did not seem to appreciate this, or understand that his battle was not with the President, but with the foreign policy system in Washington. He had concluded his argument with Roosevelt, and assumed that this meant that the whole of the US Government had been won round. In fact, because the State Department remained ignorant of the Churchill-Roosevelt dialogue, it continued to oppose the deal both in principle and in practice.

Left to their own devices, the State Department followed its own instincts. It disseminated its views amongst diplomatic representatives stationed overseas, and established a culture of opposition to the agreement, based on its own (flawed) reading of it. This had several consequences. In the immediate term, and until the President directed the State Department to accept his compromise with Churchill, it meant that the State Department continued to operate against the Eden-Gusev proposals as a sort of fifth column. It also meant that, even after the deal was accepted, it was regarded with suspicion in American circles, and was never really understood for what it was.

* * *

The State Department eventually learned of the President's acceptance of the three month trial on 26th June, when information arrived from - of all places - Cairo. The American Ambassador to the Greek Government-in-Exile, Lincoln MacVeagh, had known since the beginning of the month that some

kind of Anglo-Soviet deal had been reached on Greece and Roumania - Leeper had told him about it on 1st June⁷⁸ - and had written to Roosevelt, telling him that, as far as he was concerned, such an agreement would be advantageous.⁷⁹ MacVeagh and Leeper subsequently discussed the Eden-Gusev arrangement on 24th June.⁸⁰ At MacVeagh's request, the British Ambassador sent his American colleague a letter paraphrasing the situation - at least as far as the British understood it.⁸¹ On the same day, a State Department information telegram on the subject was sent to MacVeagh. After some delay, MacVeagh received the full text of this telegram on 26th June.⁸² He immediately realised that something had gone wrong, as the following diary entry reveals:-

Got the text of the Department's information telegram... From this, dated 22nd June, several days after the telegram from London to Moscow which Leeper read me, it appears that Churchill and FDR have had exchanges on the subject, and that, based on a long memorandum from the Department, the President did not agree!⁸³

MacVeagh immediately contacted Leeper, and read him the message. The British Ambassador said that he had received no further information on the subject from London, and could not explain the contradiction between State Department telegram and recent communications from London. He also told MacVeagh that he was going to see Novikov that evening, and promised to ask the Soviet representative "if he has had anything from Moscow" on the subject. In the meantime, MacVeagh recorded his own - remarkably accurate - opinion about likely cause of the confusion in his diary:-

The Department's argument is that fundamentally the proposal is one for the formulation of spheres of influence, despite its careful limitation to the war conditions of the moment. I wonder whether perhaps a further exchange between FDR and WC may not have taken place after the Department's telegram was drafted, in which the three months trial period was proposed and accepted.

MacVeagh did not wait for the result of Leeper's meeting with Novikov, sending off an immediate inquiry to the State Department about "the contradiction between the British Embassy's present information and ours."⁸⁴

The State Department - at long last - received some indication that Roosevelt had concluded an agreement with Churchill.

MacVeagh's inquiry arrived in Washington at about the same time that the Department learned of the Roosevelt-Churchill telegrams to which they had not been privy. On 26th June, Cavendish Cannon sent James Dunn (the Director of the State Department's Office of European Affairs) a memorandum outlining the contents of Churchill's telegrams of 11th June (no. C700, containing the proposal for the three month trial) and 14th June (no. C703, thanking Roosevelt for accepting it). Although the State department had not received a copy the President's telegram of 13th June (no. R560), Cannon had been able to deduce that the President had in fact agreed to the Prime Minister's proposal; and Dunn immediately passed this information on to Hull.⁸⁵ This new information was discussed at a meeting of the State Department Policy Committee on 28th June. After the meeting, Murray asked Cannon to supply the committee with copies of documents relating to the amended British proposals.⁸⁶ These were duly provided, and the Committee subsequently advised Hull to approach Roosevelt directly on the matter. They agreed that MacVeagh's inquiry of 26th June should be referred to the President, and that he should be asked to clarify American policy in relation to the arrangement.⁸⁷

Hull wrote to Roosevelt on 29th June. The Secretary of State told the President that the State Department had learned of Churchill's proposal for a three month trial, but were unclear as to whether this had been accepted. Hull then referred Roosevelt to MacVeagh's telegram. This implied that some kind of agreement had been reached, without confirming what it might be. As he now told Roosevelt, "it would appear that some change has been made in our position, although I have not been informed of your views on this aspect of the question." The Secretary of State ended by requesting further information from the President, so that American diplomats in the field might be briefed on the policy situation.⁸⁸

Roosevelt sent only a "brief reply" to Hull's inquiry, merely forwarding paraphrased copies of his correspondence with Churchill (including the telegrams that the State Department had not been consulted about). He made no attempt to explain his decision to approve the Prime Minister's proposal for a three month trial. Nor did he say why he had not informed the Secretary of State, or the State Department, of his decision.⁸⁹ Hull responded with a brief acknowledgement on 8th July.⁹⁰ He did not, apparently, comment on the President's decisive telegram of 12th June, which had in effect overruled the State Department's *aide-mémoire* to Halifax. He did, however, tell Roosevelt that Eden had had further exchanges with the Soviet Government; and that, as a result of these, the Soviet Ambassador in Washington, Andrei Gromyko, had now approached the State Department with a request for clarification of the US Government's attitude to the arrangement. However, he said nothing to suggest that his reply would depart from the line agreed to between the President and Prime Minister. This letter marked the end of the dichotomy in American policy over the Eden-Gusev deal. It was not quite the end of American involvement in the pre-percentages affair, however - and it came too late to repair the damage that their 'twin track' approach had done to the Eden-Gusev initiative.

* * *

While all this was going on in Washington, the British marked time, waiting for the Soviet Government to reply to Eden's message of 19th June. The FO used this opportunity to brief Ambassadors Halifax, Clark Kerr and Leeper on developments, and received a brief acknowledgement from Gusev that Eden's letter had arrived on 22nd June. Eden subsequently helped Churchill during his *tête-à-tête* with Roosevelt; but, as we have seen, their exchanges of 22nd - 27th June did not change the position established by Roosevelt's telegram of 12th June.

In the meantime, another mini-crisis broke out in Cairo. On 20th June, the British Minister Resident in Cairo, Lord Moyne, informed Whitehall that the British authorities had censored an article written for the **New York Times** by the American journalist, Cyrus Sulzberger. This had been "very well informed" on certain outstanding political questions - including the proposed Anglo-Soviet arrangement on Greece and Roumania - and concluded by claiming that a crystallisation of Balkan zones of influence was imminent.⁹¹ The FO was forced to conclude that information had been leaked by somebody in Cairo, and hoped that the Americans would agree to the article's withdrawal.⁹² Moyne telegraphed again on 22nd June: Sulzberger had now revealed that the leak was none other than MacVeagh.⁹³ Halifax, who had received a copy of Moyne's telegram of 20th June, now told Whitehall that the State Department were aware of the article, and advised Eden to involve Washington in any response.⁹⁴ Churchill, who learned of the article on 23rd June, asked Eden if he should intervene in the matter.⁹⁵ The Foreign Secretary advised against this, fearing that the Prime Minister's involvement might provide further ammunition for Sulzberger.⁹⁶ Instead, he ordered Halifax to inform the State Department that MacVeagh was the source of the leak, and ask them to take steps to remedy the situation.⁹⁷ Moyne now telegraphed with the news that Sulzberger had agreed to a further redraft, and that all sensitive references had now been removed.⁹⁸

The situation now improved. The State Department, responding to Halifax's approach, contacted MacVeagh; the Ambassador met Sulzberger⁹⁹; and the journalist saw Lord Moyne, who subsequently reported back to Whitehall on 28th June. Moyne informed London that the Americans had apparently put their house in order. As a result, he felt that the matter should be dropped, and the State Department informed that the matter was now closed.¹⁰⁰ Halifax was subsequently sent instructions to this effect,¹⁰¹ and the affair ended.

Why did the British go to such lengths to suppress Sulzberger's article? Simple pique, prompted by the journalist's lack of discretion, is insufficient an

explanation, especially when it is remembered that the matter was discussed at the highest levels of government. A telegram from Clark Kerr sent on 27th June hints at the reason. The British Ambassador in Moscow had been kept abreast of the situation in Cairo, and now shared his views with London. He was worried about the impact that Sulzberger's article might have if it came to be read in certain quarters. As he explained, "a leak from British sources of such confidential information including subject matter of correspondence between the Prime Minister and Marshal Stalin could not fail to make a bad impression here."¹⁰² Clark Kerr's observations augmented those set down by Churchill in a draft message he had prepared for Sulzberger (of 23rd June).¹⁰³ The British were afraid that Sulzberger's revelations would undermine their credibility, damage relations with the Soviet Union, and have an adverse affect on various on-going policy initiatives in the Balkans. The Eden-Gusev arrangement would have been but one of many potential casualties. The suppression of the article (or at least its radical alteration) had therefore been imperative.

The successful conclusion of the Sulzberger crisis could not conceal the fact that the wider question of the Eden-Gusev arrangement had yet to be resolved. The Russians had still not replied to Eden's letter of 19th June. On 28th June, Leeper raised the matter with Novikov in Cairo. As he subsequently told Eden, "I asked M. Novikov today whether he had yet received any instructions from Moscow. He replied that he had heard a few days ago that his Government was still awaiting HMG's reply. He promised to keep me informed of anything he heard." Eden was annoyed by this. Novikov was out of touch with the state of negotiations, which suggested that the Soviet Government was dragging its heels. The Foreign Secretary thought the time had come to push Gusev for an answer to his earlier enquiry, as he indicated on the margin of Leeper's telegram.¹⁰⁴

Gusev pre-empted this by handing the Soviet Government's reply to Eden on 30th June. After reviewing their conversation of 18th May,¹⁰⁵ Gusev dealt with the substance of Eden's letter of 19th June:-

Inasmuch as you have now informed me that... both the US and British Governments start from the premise that the British proposal must refer only to war conditions, and that the US Government express certain apprehensions lest this plan should go beyond present circumstances and lead to a partition of the Balkan countries into spheres of influence, and moreover that it is proposed to establish a trial period, the Soviet Government consider it necessary to give this question further consideration. It is all the more necessary to do so in order to ascertain whether the realisation of such a proposal would introduce any new element into the *de facto* situation thus created.¹⁰⁶ Further, the Soviet Government deem it advisable to make a direct approach to the US Government in order to obtain more detailed information as to their attitude to this question, seeing that the latter has not so far been discussed between the Soviet and US Governments.

The FO reacted with qualified disappointment. The Soviets had not rejected the idea of a three month trial, but they had not accepted it either. They had also intimated that the hooah about spheres of influence had introduced a new element into the equation - one which might lead the Soviet Government to temper its earlier enthusiasm for the proposal. Laskey, minuting on 6th July, attempted to put on as brave a face as possible:-

I do not think that it can be suggested that the Soviet Government want the proposed arrangement to result in the division of the Balkans into spheres of influence, but it appears that they would like the arrangement to be a permanent one and not restricted to wartime conditions. I doubt whether we can press them further for the moment and I think we must await their considered views after they have been in touch with the US Government.¹⁰⁷

Dew, however, was pessimistic. While sharing Laskey's view that the initiative had now passed out of Britain's hands (commenting that "it will be interesting to see what the Russians say to the Americans") he held out little hope for the arrangement, and made plain who he thought was to blame:-

The Russians have evidently been put off by the American hesitations and are drawing in their horns. This is particularly unfortunate in connection with the handling of Greek affairs at the moment. The Russian failure to accept the trial period of three months certainly seems to indicate that they were angling for a permanent arrangement and that their suspicions are likely to have been aroused by the way in which the Americans hedged.¹⁰⁸

Sargent went even further in pointing the finger at Washington, minuting that "I fear that the suspicious attitude which President Roosevelt has adopted towards this promising arrangement has frightened the Russians off altogether. If so, it will be us and not the Americans who will feel the effects - in Greece."¹⁰⁹

Copies of Gusev's *aide-mémoire* were forwarded to Moscow and Washington on Friday, 7th July.¹¹⁰ After the weekend, Eden went before the War Cabinet again. He now informed his colleagues that the arrangement "had broken down":-

The Soviet Government, on being informed of the conditions being attached by the US to their acceptance of that proposal, had indicated that they considered it necessary to give it further consideration and to make a direct approach to the US Government. Failure to obtain this understanding could only add to the difficulties of dealing with a rapidly changing situation.¹¹¹

Churchill was furious. He had thought the matter closed following the telegram from Roosevelt on 26th June. He had seen a copy of the telegram to Clark Kerr dated 7th July, and on the strength of this had penned a minute to Eden on 9th July.¹¹² He had held his fire until after the Cabinet meeting - in order to hear Eden's explanation - but now he exploded:-

Does this mean that all we had settled with the Russians now goes down through the pedantic interference of the US, and that Roumania and Greece are to be condemned to a regime of triangular telegrams in which the US and ourselves are to interfere with the Russian treatment of Roumania, and the Russians are to boost up EAM while the President pursues a personal pro-King policy in regard to Greece, and we have to try to make all things go sweet? If so, it will be a great disaster.

We could produce for the President exactly the results he wants in Greece, and the Russians will take all they want in Roumania whatever we may say.¹¹³

Eden did not reply directly to this minute. However, his terse comments which can be found on the margin of Churchill's minute (which were written for the attention of the FO) speak volumes. "I fear that it is just what it does mean," he minuted. "Also that work FO had done was unhappily imperilled by direct message to President. Let us have a word about it all. I don't see how we can set matters straight." ¹¹⁴

The Prime Minister, however, again refused to give up so easily. The normal diplomatic channels had failed to deliver the hoped-for results, so Churchill reverted to type and initiated another bout of personal diplomacy. On 12th July he sent a telegram to Stalin. "Some weeks ago," he reminded the Marshal, "it was suggested by Eden to your Ambassador that the Soviet Government should take the lead in Roumania and the British Government should do the same in Greece":-

This was only a working arrangement to avoid as much as possible the awful business of triangular telegrams, which paralyses action. Molotov then suggested very properly that I should tell the US, which I did and always meant to, and after some discussion the President agreed to a three months' trial being made. These may be three very important months, Marshal Stalin, July, August and September. Now however I see that you find some difficulties in this. I would ask whether you should not tell us that the plan should be allowed to have its chance for three months. *No one can say that it affects the future of Europe or divides it into spheres. But we can get a clear-headed policy in each theatre, and we will all report to the others what we are doing.* However, if you tell me it is hopeless, I shall not take it amiss.¹¹⁵

Stalin replied on 15th July with what amounted to an unequivocal snub:-

As regards the question of Roumania and Greece, it is not necessary to repeat here what is already known to you from the correspondence between our Ambassador in London and Mr. Eden. One thing is clear to me: it is that the American Government have some doubts regarding this question, and that

it would be better to revert to this matter when we receive the American reply to our enquiry. As soon as the observations of the American Government are known, I shall not fail to write to you further on this question.¹¹⁶

Churchill's approach had failed; and, as far as Laskey was concerned, that was the end of the matter. "I don't think there is anything more we can do," he minuted sadly.¹¹⁷

The FO every reason to feel pessimistic. By this time, they had received further evidence which suggested that a White House-State Department dichotomy had undermined the arrangement. On 11th July, Roger Makins, FO advisor to Harold Macmillan (British Minister Resident in the Mediterranean), sent Sir Orme Sargent a letter in which he enclosed a copy of a memorandum by Robert Murphy, the American Political Representative at Allied Forces Headquarters, Mediterranean Theatre (AFHQ). Entitled "Proposed Agreement between the British and Soviet Governments regarding Roumania and Greece" and dated 6th July, this paper paraphrased the State Department memorandum handed to Halifax on 12th June. Makins was confused, because, as he pointed out to Sargent, the State Department opinion expressed in this memo appeared to contradict the FO's earlier telegrams on the subject. "We should be very grateful if you could clear up the discrepancy," he told Sargent.¹¹⁸

Dew replied for the absent Sargent on 21st July. "When we first put this scheme to the State Department," he advised Makins, "they received it with no enthusiasm at all, and their reply was on similar lines to the memo by Murphy":-

While Halifax was discussing the matter with the State Department, there was, however, a considerable exchange of messages between the Prime Minister and the President. To overcome American reluctance, the Prime Minister suggested that the arrangement might be given a three months' trial, after which it would be reviewed by the three Governments. The President agreed to this, probably without consulting the State Department, on the day after the State Department replied to Halifax expressing disapproval of the whole scheme. This is the explanation of our tel. no.1853 to Moscow.

Dew, reflecting the mood in Whitehall, warned Makins that these events had placed the agreement in jeopardy:-

You will have seen that the American hesitation has caused the Russians to have second thoughts. For your own personal information, the Prime Minister has since tried to get the Russians to accept the arrangement on the basis proposed, but Stalin has replied that they must first discuss the matter with the Americans. I fear, therefore, that the scheme will probably fall through.¹¹⁹

Events occurring simultaneously in Washington suggest that Dew's pessimism was well-founded.

* * *

Stalin had told Churchill that the Soviet Government would have to study the views of the US Government before he could comment further on the Eden-Gusev arrangement. He did not, however, inform the Prime Minister that Ambassador Gromyko had delivered an *aide-mémoire* on the proposed arrangement to the State Department on 1st July.¹²⁰ Gromyko's paper briefed the State Department on the earlier Eden-Gusev conversations, and said that, in view of Eden's admission that the US Government was opposed to anything suggestive of spheres of influence, the Soviet Government "wished to be advised of the official position of the United States." The Ambassador implied Eden's letter to Gusev of 19th June had given the arrangement a new outline. The proposals were now more limited: the arrangement would be restricted to cover only the "military conditions" existing in Greece and Roumania, and would not apply to the post-war period. As a result of these changes, the Soviet Government had decided to review its position; but, before informing the British of any decisions, Molotov wanted to "ascertain the attitude of the US on this question."

This *aide-mémoire* was somewhat unfair to Eden. True, the Foreign Secretary had not specified that the proposals were limited to "military conditions" on 18th May; but he had told Gusev that "as the matter was really

related to the military operations of our respective forces", he could see no reason to anticipate American objections to them.¹²¹ The Soviets had therefore been given a clear hint as to how far the proposals went. Nevertheless, Eden might have done more to clarify the position. Moscow should have been disabused of any notion that spheres of influence were on offer. As we have seen, Sargent had advised Eden on 24th May that the Soviets needed to be told that the deal "only applies to war conditions and does not affect the rights and responsibilities of the three Great Powers in regard to the whole of Europe at the peace settlement." These qualifications subsequently found their way into the Anglo-American dialogue. However, Sargent's advice about informing the Soviet Government was not acted upon until Eden sent Gusev his letter on 19th June. This delay was most unfortunate.

By 1st July, the State Department had only just received confirmation that the President had agreed to the three month trial. Hull, writing to Roosevelt on 8th July, had not commented on the President's decision to accept Churchill's compromise. However, both he and the State Department continued to harbour deep-seated reservations about the arrangement. MacVeagh, who was by this time back in Washington, saw Hull on 11th July. Their conversation, which MacVeagh summarised in his diary, included references to the Eden-Gusev deal:-

Mr. Hull asked me about the Anglo-Russian exchange of initiatives in Roumania and Greece, and I told him of its genesis in the Russian suspicion of British secret operations in Roumania and British resentment of Russian criticism in connection with the Greek mutinies. He said the Department had been against this exchange as leading to the establishment of zones of influence, and when I said I understood that it had now been accepted for a three months' period, he said "Yes, but that wasn't our fault, it came from across the street," - with a gesture over his shoulder [towards the White House].¹²²

Hull was evidently less than amused at the turn of events. He was not prepared to confront Roosevelt about policy, however. In the event, he did not need to.

Gromyko's *aide-mémoire* had stated that the Soviet Government wanted to know the views of the US Government before coming to any final decision on the arrangement. The State Department replied with an *aide-mémoire* of its own on 15th July, which, after reviewing the Ambassador's memorandum, set out the US Government's position in the clearest possible terms:-

It is correct that Government of the United States assented to the agreement, for a trial period of three months, this assent being given in consideration of present war strategy. Except for this overriding consideration, this Government would wish to make known its apprehension lest the proposed agreement might, by the natural tendency of such arrangements, lead to the division, in fact, of the Balkan region into spheres of influence. It would be unfortunate, in view of decisions of Moscow Conference, if any temporary arrangement should be so conceived as to be a departure from the principle adopted by the three Governments at Moscow, in definite rejection of the spheres of influence idea. Consequently this Government hopes that no projected measures will be allowed to prejudice efforts towards direction of policies of the Allied Governments along lines of collaboration rather than independent action, since any arrangement suggestive of spheres of influence cannot but militate against establishment and effective functioning of a broader system of general security in which all countries will have their part. It is supposed that the three month trial period will enable the British and Soviet Governments to determine whether such an arrangement is practical and efficacious as applicable only to war conditions and essentially related to military operations of their respective forces without in any way affecting the rights and responsibilities which each of the three principal Allies will have to exercise during the period of re-establishment of peace and afterwards in regard to the whole of Europe. Finally, this Government assumes that the arrangement would have neither direct nor indirect validity as affecting interests of this Government, or of other Governments associated with the three principal Allies.¹²³

There was nothing in this *aide-mémoire* to contradict the substance of Roosevelt's telegrams to Churchill.¹²⁴ The State Department adhered strictly to the letter of the President's decision. The manner in which it did so, however, ensured that the arrangement was dead in the water. Indeed, it is hard to conceive of an official "notification of acceptance" couched in more hostile

terms. The *aide-mémoire* did not just 'inform' the Soviet Government of American views: it lectured Moscow about the various principles and responsibilities which the Soviet Government had (allegedly) promised to respect, but which (in their opinion) the arrangement now threatened to compromise. Nothing could have been more likely to provoke a negative response from Moscow than an axiomatic polemic of this sort.¹²⁵

In any case, the memorandum went far beyond metaphysical hectoring. The Soviets had been concerned at the "new outline" proposed by Eden on 19th June, because they feared that it restricted the scope of the proposed agreement. The State Department's assent - "given in consideration of present war strategy" - now subjected the proposals to so many conditions that it effectively stripped the deal of practical value. According to Eden, the deal would only apply to war conditions. As far as the State Department was concerned, this meant that it was limited exclusively to on-going military operations, and that it had nothing to do with other post-hostilities questions - especially those impinging upon long term political issues. Moreover, the *aide-mémoire* made it clear that, as far as the US Government was concerned, the arrangement was a purely Anglo-Soviet affair: it had no competence when it came to the "interests" of other Allied countries *vis-à-vis* Greece and Roumania. In other words, the US Government reserved the right to say and do what it liked in respect of these countries, irrespective of any agreement that Russia and Great Britain had reached on the matter. If the US Government continued to insist upon (and exercise) its right to an unfettered say in the affairs of that country, the British Government's promise to follow Moscow's lead lost much of its practical value.¹²⁶ In the circumstances, it is hard to see what attraction the amended proposals could have had for the Russians.

The FO learned of the *aide-mémoire* on 25th July. Laskey, who minuted on 31st July, was not too despondent at this turn of events. "We had better await the Soviet Government's views," he minuted. "The Americans still agree, although grudgingly, to give the arrangement a three month trial."¹²⁷

Dew thought that "it will be interesting to see what the Russians now do." Their optimism was not shared by Clutton, who regarded the *aide-mémoire* as "something of a douche of cold water."¹²⁸ He was evidently less than enthusiastic about Moscow's probable response. Events in Greece suggested that he was right. Sargent, who minuted after Dew, noted that the Russians had already responded - "by sending a mission into Greece without consulting us!"¹²⁹

Churchill, who had lapsed into silence following Stalin's telegram of 15th July, now sent Eden a further despairing minute. "Does this mean that the Americans have agreed to the three months' trial," he asked, "or is it all thrown in the pool again?" Eden was now at loss, if his scribbled notes in the margin of the Prime Minister's minute are any indication. "I don't know," he minuted. "What do you say? Should we return to the charge at Moscow?"¹³⁰ The Foreign Secretary was briefed by Laskey on 6th August. The Southern Department official was now rather more realistic in his appraisal:-

I think the State Department's memo shows that they would still accept the proposed arrangement over Greece and Roumania on a three months' trial, but it is quite clear that they would much prefer the scheme not to come into effect. It is now for the Soviet Government to say whether they agree to the proposed arrangement. The prospects of their agreeing are not favourable, to judge by their despatch of their mission to ELAS without prior consultation with us. I doubt whether it is worth pressing them further over the general arrangement as regards Greece and Roumania until we have their reply to our representations about the despatch of the mission to ELAS. If their reply is at all conciliatory we may still hope that they may recognise our predominant position in Greece. If on the other hand they reject our protest there is little prospect that they would commit themselves to accept our lead in Greece.¹³¹

Eden, having digested this advice, replied to the Prime Minister's query of 1st August:-

As I understand it, the State Department's memo means that the Americans would still agree to a three months' trial, but it is obvious also that they would much prefer that the Russians should turn the whole scheme down. As for the Soviet

Government's attitude, the unheralded despatch of their mission to ELAS speaks for itself. I have, as you know, taken this up strongly with Gusev and I think we might await his reply before pressing the Soviet Government further about the general arrangement over Greece and Roumania. If the Russians reply about their mission to ELAS is at all conciliatory there might still be a chance of getting them to recognise our predominant position in Greece, but otherwise I fear not.¹³²

The Russian response, when it arrived, was far from conciliatory. Clark Kerr saw Molotov on 21st August. Molotov now played down the whole affair, arguing that there had never been any Anglo-Soviet agreement about prior consultation and no agreement about Greece. The despatch of the Soviet mission to Greece was, he claimed, "so trifling a matter" that it hardly called for an explanation.¹³³ The Eden-Gusev deal was now effectively dead. The Soviet Government had indicated as much, initially through its deeds and now through its words. The US Government (or rather the State Department) *aide-mémoire* of 15th July had evidently persuaded Moscow that the arrangement would be of no practical value to the Soviet Union. The British now followed Laskey's advice, and let the matter rest. Molotov had refused to acknowledge that any understanding had been reached concerning Greece, and that, apparently, was that. The Pre-Percentages affair was at an end.¹³⁴

Conclusions

What conclusions should be reached about the Pre-Percentages arrangement? It has long been assumed in some quarters that the British Government, desperate to salvage something from the wreck of its regional policies, attempted to reach a political understanding with Moscow on the future of the Balkans. In true Macchiavellian fashion, Churchill and Eden decided to offer the Soviets a secret deal predicated on classical spheres of influence - hence the proposed Eden-Gusev arrangement. There are serious flaws in this interpretation. The minutes produced in Whitehall in the period between 5th May and 20th June show that the spheres of activity arrangement was not really a British initiative at all, but a Russian hybrid which, though based upon Eden's informal suggestions, went far beyond the Foreign Secretary's original intentions. They do not indicate that the British were drifting towards a classical spheres of influence policy. In fact, available evidence suggests that senior figures in the FO - and in particular Sir Orme Sargent - were actively opposed to such a policy, for reasons very similar to those of the State Department in Washington.

Some years later, when writing his memoirs, Anthony Eden attempted to explain himself, and clarify what he had hoped to achieve in his negotiations with Gusev. He was particularly downbeat about the arrangement which they concluded; which, he claimed, he had proposed. "My suggestion," he wrote, "was a limited one, intended to confine as far as possible the conflicts which were already developing between the Russian policies in the Balkans and our own." The agreement, he maintained, was intended to function for the duration of the war, and no longer. He gave no indication that he had been seeking a long term, political accommodation. He did, however, attempt to put the whole affair into perspective. In a recapitulation of his minute to Churchill of 9th May, the ex-Foreign Secretary implied that the crisis in relations with Russia had come about as a corollary of the decision to effectively suspend foreign policy for the duration of hostilities:-

We were in fact partly responsible... the Foreign Office had often warned of the clash between our short and long term interests and had forecast the situation which now faced us as a result of our deliberate choice. Military needs had overpowered political forebodings.¹

The spheres of activity proposal started off as an informal suggestion. Eden was hoping to avoid further disputes with Moscow of the kind of those over Greece and Roumania. He believed these had been caused by a breakdown in communication between the Allies, and not by an insurmountable conflict of interest between Russia and Britain. Eden hoped that by establishing clearer guidelines for future politico-military activity, he would not only repair relations with Russia, but also reinforce the commitment to the principle of collaboration. Both Allies had subscribed to this in public declarations, and British policy had been formulated on the assumption that Anglo-Soviet co-operation would last beyond the war. By agreeing to a division of military responsibility, and consequently improving the efficacy of on-going operations, Eden hoped to establish a precedent. Success in this instance could be cited at a later date, and used to combat the political problems which were anticipated for the post-hostilities period. The success of collaboration during the war could be used to promote collaboration after the war, and therefore to uphold interests that might otherwise come under threat from former Allies.

As Eden pointed out, policy had for some time concentrated on delivering military results, regardless of longer term political implications. Unfortunately, "the conflicts which were already developing" with Russia now meant that the separation of political and military issues, and the policy of abstention which had been followed in regard to the former, could no longer be pursued with equanimity. In the past, "military needs had overpowered political forebodings." Now, however, both military *and* political needs overpowered longer term forebodings. Eden claimed that his aim had been to repair the schism in Anglo-Soviet relations by promoting a short term, operationally orientated agreement - but in reaching this agreement, he risked creating further problems.

The Eden-Gusev arrangement suffered from two fundamental and complementary weaknesses. The first of these concerned its terms of reference, or, to put it another way, its lack of definition. As the recent crises involving Greece and Roumania had shown, it was almost impossible to divorce military operations from political activities. Eden wanted to avoid arguments about political initiatives which were designed to complement military operations. Up to now, British policy had dictated that, where an apparent conflict of interest between military and political (and short and long term) considerations arose, the higher priority - military (short term) results - should be allowed to prevail. The Eden-Gusev arrangement now proposed to extend this principle to cover Anglo-Soviet involvement in Greece and Roumania. Hoping to stabilise relations with Moscow, Eden had argued that, in the interests of military efficacy, it was expedient for Britain and Russia to agree to a voluntary and reciprocal abandonment of prerogative for the duration of hostilities. The arrangement conceded executive predominance to the responsible Power in each sphere of activity, but only for the duration of and (theoretically) only over matters relating to military operations. It had no bearing on political issues affecting the longer term: these would come under the jurisdiction of the peace conference.

The problem with this *modus operandi* was its reliance upon chronology as a limiting factor. Recent events had shown that it was almost impossible to determine whether political initiatives were genuinely intended to complement military operations, or inspired by less noble motives. Expediency therefore encouraged Eden to hedge when it came to fleshing out his informal proposal. He was careful to avoid giving the impression that the arrangement would restrict the Soviets in their handling of Roumanian affairs. He did not attempt to set out a code of conduct which responsible Powers would have to adhere to. He chose instead to affect ambivalence, claiming that the agreement was meant to function for the duration of "military operations" - thereby clearly implying that it would not prejudice the post-war settlement. The result was an arrangement lacking in definition, but to which both parties could agree. Eden

may have thought that the existing declarations of intent to which the Soviets had subscribed - the Atlantic Charter, the Moscow Four Power Declaration, etc. - were sufficient to guarantee Soviet behaviour in Roumania. This is, however, unlikely, especially when it is remembered that the FO had only recently advised Churchill against invoking the Atlantic Charter.² The most likely explanation is that Eden, aware that the Soviets harboured political demands which the Western Powers would find it difficult to accept, remained anxious to avoid premature discussion of political affairs. The British were intent upon securing lasting co-operation with Soviet Russia, and they believed that only successful collaboration leading to an Allied victory could deliver this. No initiatives prejudicial to that end could be entertained. The last thing that Eden wanted was to provoke the Russians into pursuing a unilateral policy in the Balkans. Recent developments in Greece and Roumania had demonstrated that some sort of understanding on operational questions was now needed; but wider policy considerations continued to preclude the discussion of longer term political questions. In the event, an agreement on spheres of activity, which conveniently left interpretation of its terms of reference and therefore its operation to the responsible Power in each sphere, but which would only function for a defined period, looked like a satisfactory expedient. In other words, anything that the Russians did in the short term, under the auspices of the spheres of activity agreement, could be reviewed, and if necessary changed, at the peace conference.

Unfortunately, this played into the hands of the second weakness of the agreement. Eden summarised this in his memoirs in the following terms:-

It is obviously difficult in war to take account of political presages for the future world at peace, or to decide how far the attempt should be made, and at what cost. We can declare that any policy which would result in a better peace should be carried through if the price... be not too high. But the nicety is in the calculation, for it is not true, as is sometimes said, that wars do not by their duration decide anything.³

The terms of reference laid down, under which the spheres of activity arrangement was to operate, were deliberately vague. The only factor limiting

Soviet activity in Roumania (and concomitantly British activity in Greece) was the time frame established for the agreement. By sacrificing influence in the short term, Eden hoped to safeguard interests in the longer term. In principle, this was fine. In practice, it was a high risk strategy.

It was already appreciated that the pattern of military developments across the continent would prejudice the eventual political settlement. The advancing Red Army was already establishing, *de facto*, political predominance for the Soviets across South Eastern Europe. Their bargaining position at the peace conference, and their ability to insist upon the satisfaction of their aims, would reflect this situation. This was of course a natural corollary of a strategic position which by this stage the British could do little to change. The spheres of activity arrangement did not create Soviet predominance in Roumania - it merely paid lip service to it.

The problem with the Eden-Gusev agreement was not, therefore, that it conceded relative predominance, because that had already been established. It was, rather, that it threatened to legitimise this predominance, and therefore prejudice political developments in the longer term. The agreement was flawed, because it failed to commit the contracting Powers to definite responsibilities - for example, to a code of conduct for the administration of their spheres. It left interpretation up to the Powers themselves and therefore gave the Russians, in the case of Roumania, *carte blanche* to implement the arrangement as they saw fit. As long as they could provide operational justifications for their behaviour, they would be able to take whatever steps they felt necessary to consolidate their position in that country, all the while claiming probity because they would be operating under the auspices of an inter-Allied agreement. Eden's calculation had been that, by legitimising the Soviet position in Roumania (recognising her as the predominant Power but limiting this to the duration of the war) he would improve Anglo-Soviet relations, strengthen the principle of collaboration, and perhaps even improve the longer term prospects facing Roumania. He would also, simultaneously, strengthen Britain's short term position in Greece. In

other words, he was gambling that a policy of concession in the short term might provide dividends in the long term. If Eden is to be criticised, it should not be for having proposed an arrangement which, recognising an existing and unpalatable distribution of power, sought to salvage some advantage from it. The weakness of his agreement with Gusev lay in its failure to establish safeguards against misinterpretation and, consequently, misapplication, both of which could prejudice future political developments.

* * *

It has been suggested that the Soviets, aware that the Americans were deeply sceptical about spheres of influence, shaped their reply to Eden's 'fly' so as to test the strength of the Anglo-American 'special relationship'. Some commentators have even seen Moscow's actions in this period as an attempt to drive a wedge between the Atlantic Powers. There are, however, problems with this hypothesis. The Russians could not have anticipated the diplomatic blunders committed by the British in their initial communications with the US Government, and it was these that provoked the majority of the subsequent difficulties between London and Washington. Admittedly, even if Halifax *et al.* had kept the Americans fully informed from the outset, and the proposals been put into their proper context, the Americans would probably still have objected to them. However, the amount of suspicion, not to mention recrimination, that Halifax's *faux pas* generated would have been reduced, if not avoided altogether. In the circumstances, therefore, it seems far more likely that the Soviet Government, which was keen to limit the interest of the Western Powers in Roumania (of which there had been increasing evidence in recent months), had seen in Eden's "practical suggestion" an opportunity to establish their predominance in Roumanian affairs with a legitimate, military-orientated understanding. If the agreement had been implemented in its raw, 18th May form, the Russians would have been left with a relatively free hand in Roumania. Moscow would have been able to realise whatever local political objectives it harboured with relative impunity. When, however, they received

Eden's letter of 19th June and the State Department's *aide-mémoire* of 15th July, the Soviets realised that the arrangement fell considerably short of expectations, and they lost interest in it.

It cannot be denied that the arrangement, if it had been implemented, would have established a *de facto* Soviet sphere of influence in Roumania. This would seem to add weight to the State Department's arguments against it. These arguments, however, ignored the facts of the existing military situation. It had been clear for some time that the Red Army would be able to establish an effective Russian stranglehold in Roumania, covering both military and political affairs, if that was Moscow's wish. The British had long appreciated this, and were worried that the Russians might harbour ambitions beyond Roumania which would undermine British interests in the region. They were also afraid that, by failing to agree on the delineation of military responsibilities in the short term, the Allies might by default pursue increasingly divergent initiatives in the Balkans; and that this could, ultimately, prejudice both future Great Power co-operation and the establishment of collective peace and security in the longer term. The British had realised that they could not forestall the establishment of *de facto* spheres, but they were hopeful that, by reaching an understanding in the short term, they might limit them, and also prevent clashes between the Powers in the operational field which would upset plans for the future. They also hoped that by co-operating in the short term, they might persuade the Russians to limit their post-war demands, and prevent short term spheres from developing into more permanent political fixtures. By adopting this rationale, the British took a definite risk: by concluding such agreements with the Soviets, they left themselves vulnerable to future claims that they had already agreed to Russian predominance in these areas. Even so, this was a gamble worth taking, for (as the proverb states) possession is nine-tenths ownership; and the Russians were (or soon would be) in possession of the territories concerned. The British were only being rational; they would be conceding nothing that "force and facts" had not already compromised (or would soon be compromising). In return, they would preserve their position in

Greece. They also hoped to maintain - and indeed improve - the prospects for cordial Anglo-Soviet relations and co-operation in the longer term. This was the logic behind - and justification for - the pre-percentages arrangement.

It was therefore unfortunate that elements in the US Government failed to grasp (or refused to accept) this line of reasoning. The sundry Anglo-American blunders that helped convince the Secretary of State and others that there was more to the proposals than in truth there was were not just unfortunate, however: they were inexcusable. American opposition to the arrangement was of course by no means uniform. Gilbert Winant supported Churchill's appeals to Roosevelt, and Linclon MacVeagh told the President that as the arrangement offered the prospect of improved Anglo-Soviet relations in general, he was in favour of it. Hickerson's arguments at the Policy Planning Committee on 7th June (and those of the Office of European Affairs which he was representing) should also be remembered. Indeed, Roosevelt's behaviour seemed to indicate that he shared his Ambassador's views, over and above those of the State Department. Once Churchill had reassured the President that spheres of influence were not in the offing, Roosevelt accepted the arrangement as a practical interim solution. No evidence has surfaced to indicate that Roosevelt ever read (or learned of the contents of) the State Department's *aide-mémoire* of 15th July; or, indeed, that he realised that the arrangement was never formally accepted. Is it therefore possible that the State Department, which remained largely ignorant of the President's views, misconstrued his actions; and, basing the *aide-mémoire* principally on their own anti-agreement rationale (which they thought Roosevelt had accepted), upset an initiative of which the President had in fact approved? If so, then much of the blame must rest with the President himself (or, alternatively, the staff in and around the White House Map Room). The failure to disseminate vital information amongst the various interested departments in Washington (and by association the relevant American personnel overseas) was inexcusable. As a direct result of this oversight, the efficacy of the entire US foreign affairs apparatus was seriously compromised. Policy became confused, and misleading

and contradictory signals were sent to foreign governments. And, perhaps most important of all, various unfortunate (some might say dangerous) notions harboured by certain American officials were left unchecked.

Sir Alexander Cadogan complained on 9th June that "the Americans have an astonishing phobia about spheres of influence." This was only part of the problem. Elements in the State Department seem to have suffered less from a phobia as from a surfeit of idealism. In the murky world of wartime power politics, the rigid adherence to principle was always likely to lead to problems. Hull *et al.* were admittedly given every reason to regard British motives with suspicion in this case; but there is little doubt that elements in Washington had resolved to oppose any deal of this sort, irrespective of circumstance. Hull never really understood what it was that the British were up to. He was too wrapped up with his own ideas. The Secretary of State believed that the British saw the world in terms of spheres of influence and balances of power, and that was that. He was implacably opposed to what he regarded as a peculiarly European malaise; a fact that he subsequently confirmed in his memoirs:-

During the First World War, I had made an intensive study of the system of spheres of influence and balance of power, and I was grounded to the taproots in their iniquitous consequences. The conclusions I then formed in total opposition to this system stayed with me.⁴

This adherence to principle was, of course, fine - as far as it went. However, when (as in this case) Hull and fellow devotees of Wilsonian universalism misread the intentions of the British (and for that matter the President), the consequences could be disastrous. His post-war conclusions about the whole affair are particularly interesting in this context. "Had we made a determined fight against the Anglo-Russian agreement," he claimed, "it is possible that some of our later difficulties in the Balkans might not have arisen."⁵ It is difficult to see how the State Department could have put up much *more* of a fight against the agreement: after all, it was their *aide-mémoire* of 15th July that effectively wrecked it. It is also hard to see how the "later difficulties" that Hull alluded to could have arisen from this affair - unless it

was as a consequence of the holier-than-thou attitude adopted by the State Department. By posing as a sort of unofficial conscience for the Allies, and by lecturing Moscow about the Atlantic Charter and Moscow Declaration (in a manner that Cadogan, for one, had warned against), the State Department did nothing to encourage the Soviet Union to associate itself with the American vision of the post-war world, or to co-operate more fully with her Western Allies. Self-righteousness has never been a particularly effective weapon in international diplomacy.

The State Department's failure to understand (or, alternatively, refusal to accept) the British rationale for a spheres of activity agreement in the Balkans imperilled British attempts to salvage something from what was already threatening to become an intractable mess. When, therefore, Churchill subsequently tried to reach an understanding with Stalin face to face - at the **TOLSTOY** Conference - he was slightly more circumspect when it came to involving the Americans. As a result, American perceptions of those negotiations, like the May-June negotiations before them, were flawed. Assumptions were made - mostly about spheres of influence and British foreign policy - which in fact do not hold up under closer scrutiny. The official records of the US Government, and the private papers of certain senior officials, reflected the perceptions of the time - which were not necessarily accurate (or, indeed, fair to the British). These perceptions have, however, found their way into historiographical discourse, and helped to create a historical myth about the whole affair that has persisted for over fifty years.

No single government, department, or individual was completely to blame for the fiasco of the pre-percentages agreement. The whole affair should, instead, be regarded as an example of collective irresponsibility - or, perhaps, as proof that in wartime diplomacy, as in war itself, there are inherent "frictions" which conspire to thwart the great conceptions of the protagonists.⁶ If a final word is required, it is perhaps to Colville's musings of 21st March 1944 that one should turn:-

This war would be much easier to conduct without Allies. I wonder if we shall ever reach a form of international organisation which will not be made a mockery by the fact that national policies are always self-interested and thus conflicting.⁷

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Endnotes:- Introduction

¹ See in particular: Albert Resis, 'The Churchill-Stalin Secret "Percentages" Agreement on the Balkans, Moscow, October 1944', in The American Historical Review, Vol. 83 (1978), pp.68-87; Robert Garson, 'Churchill's "Spheres of Influence": Roumania and Bulgaria', in Survey, Vol. 24 (1979), pp.143-58; Joseph M. Siracusa, 'The Night Stalin and Churchill Divided Europe: the View from Washington', in The Review of Politics, Vol. 43 (1981), pp.381-409; Panos Tsakolayanis, 'The Moscow Puzzle', in The Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 21 (1986), pp.37-55; P.G.H. Holdich, 'A Policy of Percentages? British Policy and the Balkans after the Moscow Conference of October 1944', in The International History Review, Vol. 9 (1987), pp.28-47; K.G.M. Ross, 'The Moscow Conference of October 1944 (TOLSTOY)', in Deakin, Barker and Chadwick (eds.), British Political and Military Strategy in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe in 1944 (London 1988), pp.67-77; Maurice Pearton, 'Puzzles about the Percentages', Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Europeennes, Vol.33 (1995), pp.279-84.

² See Elisabeth Barker, 'Problems of the Alliance: Misconceptions and Misunderstandings' in Deakin, Barker and Chadwick (eds.), British Political and Military Strategy in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe in 1944 (London 1988), pp.40-42 for a warning to historians about interpreting documents and the vagaries of British foreign policy. As she points out, "ideas and plans and enthusiasms and dreams, were not the same thing as British policy. British policy was the outcome of the contact or conflict between the political and military advisers... the Foreign Office and the Chiefs of Staff."

³ FO371/43636/7380 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/323, 9th May 1944.

⁴ See in this connection Lord Gladwyn, Memoirs (London 1972), Chapters 8 and 9 *passim*; and Sir Llewellyn Woodward, British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, Vol. V (London 1976), Chapter LXI.

⁵ See, for example: PREM 4 30/1 *passim* for Churchill's reaction to an FO attempt to initiate discussions of long term political questions with the Soviets in February-March 1943; and PREM 3 172/1 *passim* for his subsequent doubts about the desirability of early tripartite discussions in the summer and autumn of that year.

⁶ Lord Gladwyn, Memoirs, p.134, writes that "it was undoubtedly the success of the Moscow Conference of October 1943 that led to real progress being made in post-war planning." At Moscow, the Allied Great Powers considered political questions *à trois* for the first time. As Jebb intimates in his memoirs, the results of this meeting were more significant for the post-war planners than those of the subsequent Tehran Conference. The latter, while touching upon a variety of political issues, concentrated on more immediate - and strategic - questions. The former, however, saw the Allies exchange views on a wide range of political questions; and laid the foundations for future collaboration in the political sphere - by (apparently) committing the Great Powers to a set of principles (adumbrated in the Four Power Declaration) - and by setting up a machinery for consultation (the European Advisory

Commission). These developments helped establish a basis for the long term political planners that had not existed prior to the Moscow Conference; and which the Tehran Conference subsequently complemented but did not fundamentally alter.

The official British record of this conference is filed in FO371/37031/6921. Documents relating to the conference can be found in FO371/37028-31; FO371/36956-7; FO371/36992; PREM 3 171/1-3; and PREM 4 30/5. See also Keith Sainsbury, The Turning Point: Roosevelt, Stalin, Churchill and Chiang Kai Shek, 1943 - The Moscow, Cairo and Tehran Conferences (Oxford 1986), for the background to and a day by day account of both the Moscow and Tehran Conferences. For a cross section of contemporary reactions to the Moscow Conference, see: FO371/30730/6647 FO tel. no.7519 to Washington, 4th November (Cadogan to Lord Halifax); FO371/37031/6575 Moscow tel. no. 1252 to FO, 5th November; FO371/37031/6685 Moscow tel. no.1284 to FO, 9th November; PREM 3 172/3 Eden to Churchill, tel. SPACE no.158, 2nd November; PREM 3 172/3 undated Warner memorandum, "The Final Results of the Moscow Conference; David Dilks (ed.), The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan 1939-1945 (London 1971), p.572; John Harvey (ed.), The War Diaries of Oliver Harvey (London 1978), pp.314-5. See also Lord Strang, Home and Abroad (London 1956), p.200; and Eden, The Reckoning (London 1965), p.417-8.

⁷This view is sustained by a number of developments in this period. Among the most obvious are the decisions taken in respect of the Yugoslav and Greek resistance movements. See in this connection documents contained in PREM 3 510/10 and 511/2, 10 and 11 (for Yugoslavia); and PREM 3 211/9, 10 and 16 (for Greece). The decision to repudiate General Mihailović and to offer full support to Tito's Partisans in the former, and the policies adopted towards EAM/ELAS and EDES in the latter, were based upon military factors - and cut right across the political desiderata which the FO were anxious to uphold.

⁸This idea had been a recurring theme in FO appreciations produced throughout 1943. See, for example, the arguments contained in: WP(43)31 Eden paper, "The United Nations Plan", 16th January; PREM 4 30/1 Eden despatch no.56 to Clark Kerr, 4th February; WP(43)217 Eden paper, "Armistices and Related Problems", 25th May; FO954/25B Eden to Churchill, 12th July; FO800/301 Wilson letter to Clark Kerr, 8th August; FO371/36992/4531 Lockhart paper, "Russia and the Allied Governments", 9th August; FO800/301 Warner letter to Clark Kerr, 28th September. See also PREM 4 30/3, *passim*.

⁹See FO371/40741A/6254 Jebb minute, 21st June 1944.

¹⁰Or, as Roosevelt later told Churchill in connection with the Warsaw Uprising of August-September 1944, "letting the problem solve itself by delaying action." See Warren F. Kimball, Churchill and Roosevelt: the

Complete Correspondence, Vol. III - Alliance Declining (Princeton 1984), p.312, reproducing Roosevelt tel. no. R619 to Churchill, 5th September 1944.

¹¹ D.W. Sweet, from Sweet and R.T.B. Langhorne, 'Great Britain and Russia 1907-1914', in F.H. Hinsley (ed.), British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey (Cambridge 1977).

¹² FO371/43304/2128 Churchill to Eden, M.338/4, 1st April 1944. Churchill advised Eden about Soviet methodology in this field. "You may take it that they will take every conceivable advantage of their position," he warned. "Force and facts are their only realities."

¹³ See in this connection PREM 3 79/1 General Maitland Wilson to COS, tel. MEDCOS no.44, 28th February; and Churchill minute in the margin. Wilson, the SACMED, was worried that, although Roumania and Bulgaria were theoretically the responsibility of the Mediterranean Command, the developing military situation would mean that "the Russians alone could take action" against them in the foreseeable future. In his opinion, therefore, the time had come to reach "a clear understanding with the Russians as to the policy to be adopted in regard to those countries." Upon reading this, Churchill minuted to Eden that "surely he will receive direction from here about Roumania and Bulgaria." The Prime Minister was clearly unhappy at the prospect of ceding the initiative to the Russians, and regarded the idea of approaching Moscow with proposals for a new delineation of responsibility as precipitate. However, and as subsequent events would soon show, this policy of prevarication could not last forever - the need to confront the realities of the developing politico-military situation would become increasingly irresistible.

¹⁴ For documents connected with this issue, see PREM 3 399/6 *passim*.

¹⁵ For a detailed review of the negotiations on Italy before and during the Moscow Conference, see Keith Sainsbury, The Turning Point (Oxford 1986), pp.17-18, 21, 26, 29-30, 32, 69-72, 76-80, 92-3, 99-100, 120. See also Herbert Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin - the War they Fought and the Peace they Sought (Princeton 1957), pp.158-176. For a most interesting article on this subject, see Bruno Arcidiacono, 'The "Dress Rehearsal": The Foreign Office and the Control of Italy, 1943-1944' in The Historical Journal, Vol. 28, 2 (1985), pp. 417-27.

¹⁶ See Elisabeth Barker, British Policy in South-East Europe in the Second World War (London 1977), pp.134-7.

Endnotes:- Chapter I

¹ Elisabeth Barker, 'Problems of the Alliance: Misconceptions and Misunderstandings' in Deakin, Barker and Chadwick (eds.) British Political and Military Strategy in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe in 1944 (London 1988), pp.40-42.

² See Hew Strachan, European Armies and the Conduct of War (London 1983), Ch.7 on the writings of Carl von Clausewitz.

³ FO371/43384/1120 Wilson minute, 19th March 1944.

⁴ See the Introduction for the importance of the Moscow Conference, as seen from contemporary British sources.

⁵ FO371/43304/2128 Churchill to Eden, 1st April 1944, M338/4.

⁶ Barker, 'Problems of the Alliance' in Deakin, Barker and Chadwick (eds.), British Political and Military Strategy, p.45.

⁷ CAB 87/83 ACA(43)1, 5th August 1943, note by E.E. Bridges entitled "Composition, Terms of Reference and Secretarial Arrangements." Bridges cites Churchill's earlier minute. The regular members of the ACA Committee were to be: the Deputy PM (chairman), Foreign Secretary, and the Secretary of State for War. The Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Service Ministers were to attend at the chairman's discretion.

⁸ WP(44)222 19th April, 1944.

⁹ CAB 81/41 PHP(43)1, 9th August 1943, "Directive to the PHP sub-Committee of the COS Committee." See also Gladwyn, Memoirs, pp.131-2 for the background to the decision to set up the PHP Committee. Jebb, an FO official and therefore a civilian, was appointed as the head of the PHP Committee, ostensibly a Services body.

¹⁰ See John Cantwell, The Second World War: a Guide to the Documents in the PRO (London 1993), p.83, summarising the position of the FO during the war:-

The pursuit of policy by other means... inevitably lessened the importance of many of the traditional activities of the FO, yet at the same time it created new prospects in international relations to which the Office devoted much attention... Such prospects appeared mainly in connection with post-war planning... While political considerations, in the diplomatic sense of that word, often had to take second place to military requirements, it was the responsibility of the Office to see that such considerations were not completely overlooked.

The organisation of the FO, and the responsibilities of the various political departments, is discussed in PRO Handbook No.13: The Records of the Foreign Office (London 1975), pp.12-5.

¹¹ See Cantwell, PRO Guide, pp.17-18, for a useful diagram entitled "The Central Executive Government", showing how information and advice reached the War Cabinet from various ministries, departments, committees and sub-committees.

¹² FO371/36992/6007 Hollis to Sargent, 23rd September 1943.

¹³ *ibid.*, Warner minute, 14th September 1943. The Northern Department was responsible for the day-to-day handling of Anglo-Soviet relations.

¹⁴ *ibid.* This did not put him off the idea, however. Warner agreed that Hollis's suggestions regarding the study's terms of reference should be adopted, and asked Jebb to keep the Northern Department fully informed on developments.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, Strang to Hollis, 2nd October 1943.

¹⁶ FO371/43335/1008 Warner minute, 4th January 1944, outlining PHP request; Sargent minute, 31st January 1944; Warner memorandum, 10th February 1944; Warner minute, 25th February 1944.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, Warner minute, 28th February 1944; FO371/43384/1120 Wilson minutes, 21st and 23rd March 1944; FO371/43384/2292 Ward minute, 25th March 1944; Wilson minute, 28th March 1944; Sargent minute, 9th April 1944.

¹⁸ FO371/43335/1008 Sargent minute, 6th April 1944; Cadogan minute, 8th April 1944; printed memorandum, 29th April 1944. Citations from the paper are from this source unless otherwise stated.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, Sargent minute, 6th April 1944; Cadogan minute, 8th April 1944.

²⁰ FO371/43335/2832 Eden minute, 7th May 1944; Eden to Churchill, PM/44/320, 8th May 1944. There is no evidence that Churchill actually read Warner's paper.

²¹ FO371/43336/5415 Balfour letter to Warner, 17th July 1944.

²² FO371/43335/3742 Warner to O'Malley, 16th June 1944. It is hard to agree with Warner: his paper could not fail to suggest a policy, whether he wanted it to or not.

²³ FO371/43384/1120 PHP(43)1(O), preliminary draft, 17th February 1944; Warner minute, 25th February 1944.

²⁴ The Central Department was responsible for, amongst other things, relations with Poland and Czechoslovakia; and, as a result, Roberts was both well versed and interested in the "Soviet imponderable" and its implications for HMG's foreign policy.

²⁵ For the background to the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty of December 1943 and the question of the Anglo-Soviet Self-Denying Ordinance (to which it was inextricably linked), see: Sir Llewellyn Woodward, British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, Vol.II (London 1972), pp.595-9; and Victor Rothwell, Britain and the Cold War 1941-1947 (London 1982), pp.98-9, 105-7, 182-92. For greater insight into the Self-Denying Ordinance, see: K. St. Pavlowitch, 'Yugoslav-Soviet Relations 1939-1943 as seen in British Sources' in SEER, Vol.56 No.3 (1978), pp.411-26; Stevan K. Pavlowitch, 'Momcilo Nincic and the European Policy of the Yugoslav Government-in-Exile, 1941-1943, Part I' in SEER, Vol.62 No.3 (1984); Mark Wheeler, Britain and the War for Yugoslavia 1940-1943 (New York 1943), pp.160-1; K.G.M. Ross, The FO and the Kremlin: British Documents on Anglo-Soviet Relations 1941-1945 (Cambridge 1984), pp.24-5, 39.

²⁶ FO371/43384/1120 Ward minute, 19th March 1944; Wilson minute, 19th March 1944; Roberts minute, 21st March 1944; Wilson minute, 21st March 1944; Ward minute, 28th March 1944.

²⁷ The progress of this paper can be traced as follows: FO371/43384/1120 PHP(43)1(O) Preliminary Draft, 17th February 1944; Second Preliminary Draft, 8th March 1944: FO371/43384/2513 draft, 13th April 1944, considered by PHP Committee on 21st April 1944 (after the FO had completed its revision of the earlier drafts): FO371/43335/2883 Final Draft. At the COS meeting on 25th May 1944 (COS(44)172(O)), it was decided that the paper should undergo further revisions so as to take greater account of the importance of air power. This was done, and the paper was eventually resubmitted - and accepted - as PHP(44)13(O) on 6th June 1944.

²⁸ FO371/40733/3322 ACA(44)23, 14th April 1944.

²⁹ FO371/40733/1386 PHP(43)36 Final, presented 10th February 1944. The paper had been commissioned under the following terms of reference:-

This paper is a study of the lines on which Bulgaria, Roumania, Hungary and Austria should be occupied after hostilities cease. We also consider the requirements of Allied forces for certain limited tasks in Greece, Yugoslavia and Albania.

³⁰ FO371/40733/491 Jebb note for COS, 31st January 1944. See also CAB81/41 minutes of PHP 4th meeting, 31st January 1944. The minutes of the PHP meeting record that Jebb had been instructed to draw "attention to the great difficulty in forming any definite opinion as to how the situation in the Balkans would develop." There was no concrete evidence upon which to base any firm hypothesis as to future Soviet interest in the region. It was, however,

feared that Russia might submit claims against not only Roumania, but also Bulgaria (with whom she was not actually at war, but to whom she had strong traditional ties).

³¹ FO371/40733/1386 Strang minute, 28th February 1944; Jebb comments; PHP(43)36, 10th February 1944.

³² FO371/40733/2080 PHP(43)36A, "Military Occupation in South-East Europe: New Factors", 7th March 1944.

³³ The paper stated that troops should be provided to maintain order and stability in occupied territories, and to aid reconstruction and relief efforts. Deployments were therefore anticipated for liberated as well as conquered enemy areas.

³⁴ FO371/40733/2766 ACA(44)16, minutes of meeting, 14th March 1944. These minutes refer to the decision of the COS taken at their meeting on 9th March 1944.

³⁵ See in this connection Barker, 'Problems of the Alliance' in Deakin, Barker and Chadwick (eds.), British Political and Military Strategy, p.44. Barker clarifies the attitude of Sir Alan Brooke (Chief of the Imperial General Staff) on this point.

³⁶ CAB87/86 ACA(44)3, minutes of meeting, 17th March 1944.

³⁷ FO371/40733/2768 Law to Jebb, 17th March 1944. Law expanded on the minutes of the ACA meeting for Jebb.

³⁸ *ibid.*, Ward minute, 19th March 1944. Ward also offered "tentative comments on the question of priorities" in lieu of the putative meeting. These reviewed the position as affecting, respectively: Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Albania, Greece, Bulgaria, Roumania and the Dodecanese.

³⁹ *ibid.*, Hood minute, 19th March 1944.

⁴⁰ See in particular Rothwell, Britain and the Cold War 1941-1947, p.194 citing Dixon minute, 31st October 1942. According to Dixon, "these countries will have to be lopped or stretched to fit the bed in which we decide, after taking into account their interests also." The Southern Department was responsible for policy towards the Balkan states.

⁴¹ FO371/40733/2768 Ward minute, 25th March 1944.

⁴² FO371/40733/2769 Falla minute on meeting, 28th March 1944; Ward minute, enclosing paper, 1st April 1944.

⁴³ *ibid.*, Jebb to Sargent, 2nd April 1944; Ward minute, enclosing second draft, 3rd April 1944; Jebb to Sargent, 6th April 1944; Sargent to Jebb, 8th April 1944; Jebb minute, 10th April 1944; Law minute, 11th April 1944; Cadogan minute, 12th April 1944: FO371/40733/3322 ACA(44)23, 14th April 1944. Jebb, who had been unable to attend the meeting, made several suggestions to Sargent, and the latter redrafted the paper (which was re-circulated on 3rd April). Jebb was still unhappy with its conclusions, however, and a running argument with Sargent ensued. This was finally resolved by Cadogan and Law, who, upon reading the various minutes, agreed with Jebb.

⁴⁴ FO371/40733/2769 Falla minute, 28th March 1944. The quantity of historical material produced on British involvement in Yugoslavia during the war is extensive. Much of it would seem to contradict Falla's statement in this regard. However, it should be remembered that British policy during the war - as opposed to the "ideas and dreams" of certain key individuals - was essentially short-term in orientation, and motivated by almost exclusively military considerations. Churchill's attempt to intervene to uphold King Peter's position and reconcile this with the realities of Tito's position did not necessarily constitute the basis of coherent long term strategy - it was, rather, a combination of short-termism (getting the resistance factions united in the task of killing Germans) and the personal "ideas and enthusiasms" of the Prime Minister regarding the future of Yugoslavia.

⁴⁵ FO371/40733/3322 ACA(44)23, 14th April 1944. Subsequent citations are from this source unless otherwise stated.

⁴⁶ I would like to thank Professor Maurice Pearton, formerly of the S.S.E.E.S., London University, for his comments in this connection.

⁴⁷ See in this connection WP(44)433 Eden memorandum "Despatch of British Forces to Greece", 8th August 1944.

⁴⁸ For the background to this, see in particular: CAB81/41 PHP(43)5 "Strategic Requirements in Turkey and the Dardanelles", 16th August 1943: FO371/40733/2768 Hood minute, 19th March 1944; Jebb minute, 21st March 1944. Hood argued that by concentrating too heavily on the Straits, the British would risk conceding control of the Adriatic to the Soviets. Jebb responded by pointing out that, firstly, the real issue was not the Straits but the threat of the Soviets dominating Turkey (an eventuality which would have had disastrous implications for Britain's strategic position in the Mediterranean); and, secondly, that control of the Adriatic would not be conceded so long as Italy remained free of Soviet control. The PHP had already recommended that the international Convention governing the Straits should be revised to satisfy reasonable Soviet demands, and therefore (hopefully) encourage Russia to continue the policy of co-operating with the Western Powers. Nor was this all. Jebb's observation that the establishment of Soviet bases in Bulgaria would enable Russia to dominate Turkey worked equally well for Greece. The spectre of Soviet hegemony in the Balkans, possibly through the creation of a

Soviet-controlled bloc to the north of the southern Balkan States, had worried the FO for some time - a development of this sort would inevitably undermine Britain's strategic position in the Mediterranean. See Barker, British Policy in South East Europe During the Second World War (London 1976), pp.198-9, for the threat which the possible establishment of a communist-inspired South Slav Macedonian Federation was thought to pose.

See also WP(44)186 Eden memorandum "Policy Towards Turkey", 4th April 1944. In this paper (which shows clearly how policy could become distorted during war-time), Eden considered the question of policy towards Turkey with at least one eye on the future. As he told his Cabinet colleagues, "close Anglo-Turkish friendship will serve as an important make-weight if British policy is to make itself felt in the Balkans."

⁴⁹ This consent did not always translate into approval or support for what the British got up to. See in this connection Robert Frazier, Anglo-American Relations with Greece: the Coming of the Cold War 1941-47 (London 1991), Chs. 1-4; and in particular chapter 3 on Roosevelt's intervention in Greek affairs at the Cairo Conference in December 1943.

⁵⁰ At least, that is what the British believed; and was therefore the premise upon which they operated. This changed with the Crisis of May 1944, which is discussed in a subsequent chapter.

⁵¹ See CAB87/84 ACA(44)16, minutes of meeting on 20th April 1944. The ACA Committee, discussing the FO paper, decided that as the COS were revising their own man-power estimates, Strang should be told not to raise the matter at the EAC. Strang confirmed that the matter was not in any case due to be discussed. Lyttleton was disappointed that the paper did not define commitments more thoroughly. He also complained that it failed to offer sufficient information about interests, and therefore fell short of what had been requested. Nevertheless, the COS were directed to consider all the commitments outlined by the paper in their deliberations about future man-power requirements.

See also CAB87/66 APW(44)14, minutes of meeting on 23rd August 1944; APW(44)15, minutes of meeting on 31st August 1944. When the question resurfaced in August, this time in the APW Committee, the argument for a large force for Bulgaria was thrown out. Attlee doubted both its necessity, and the contention that the Soviets would agree to it. Eden was forced to agree, not least because the draft armistice terms for Bulgaria (which were at that stage being considered by the Great Powers) did not envisage such a force. The Russians were now party to these discussions, and the FO's appreciation of the Russian attitude towards Bulgaria was therefore clearer than hitherto. Of course, by that time, the situation in the Balkans (and British planning) had been thrown into turmoil: by the crisis in Anglo-Soviet relations of May 1944; and by the Roumanian *coup d'état* of 23rd August 1944, which shifted the politico-military balance of power in South Eastern Europe almost completely in Russia's favour.

⁵² FO371/43304/776 Warner minute, 25th January 1944.

⁵³ See in this connection FO371/43304/1908 Wilson minute, 28th March 1944. Wilson responded to Sargent's comments by producing a long minute expanding on an earlier Clark Kerr observation that Soviet behaviour reflected their years as a pariah nation, and suggesting various ways in which HMG might try to counter this. In this long review of Soviet behaviour, Wilson made several telling comments about the situation in the Balkans, as affecting Anglo-Soviet relations. "They never vouchsafe us much information about Bulgaria," he noted, "but on the other hand they have never tried to put a spoke into anything we wanted to do. They are being a good deal more co-operative than we expected about Roumania, and they have assured us that they will not take unilateral action in Yugoslavia (though the temptation to do so must be great)."

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, Sargent minute, 1st April 1944.

⁵⁵ See in this connection FO371/43305/3554 Wilson minute, 19th April 1944; Cadogan minute, 14th May 1944; Eden minute, 15th May 1944. Sargent's comments encouraged Wilson to produce a long minute in which he expanded on the argument that Soviet behaviour was a result of their years in the diplomatic wilderness, and suggested various methods by which HMG might try to counter this. "We have to deal with them on the basis of what they think and not what they ought to think," Wilson warned. "We have to take for granted Moscow and Tehran no more removed their underlying suspicions of us than they did our suspicions of them." Eden was impressed by Wilson's paper, but decided that in view of the fuss caused by Molotov's telegrams of 28th and 29th April 1944, it would be wiser not to show it to Churchill.

⁵⁶ FO371/43304/1908 Eden minute, 3rd April 1944.

Endnotes:- Chapter II

¹ PREM 3 399/6 Churchill to Eden, M(S) 31/4, 16th January 1944; Eden to Churchill, PM/44/21, 25th January 1944.

² See Lars Baerentzen, 'British Strategy towards Greece in 1944', in Deakin, Barker and Chadwick (eds.), British Political and Military Strategy in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe in 1944 (London 1988), p.130. On 18th September 1944 Hitler talked about the Alliance in the following terms: "Dieser Interessenkonflikt wurde unter allen Umständen eintreten, da die Weltgeschichte kein unnatürliches Bundes kenne als die Koalition zwischen England, Amerika und Russland."

³ See in this connection WP(43)217 Eden memorandum "Armistices and Related Problems", 25th May 1943. Eden had warned the War Cabinet that "unless we can harmonise the policies of the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and the United States... no settlement of any kind is possible. In that case we should have very shortly after the conclusion of this war to set about preparing for the next."

⁴ For perhaps the single best example of this in respect of the Balkans, see FO371/37173/6753 E.M. Rose minute, 6th August 1943. Rose, minuting on the future of the Balkans, complained that HMG at present had "no settled post-war policy and only the very remotest ideas of what we want to see in that area." He had been concerned about what this might lead to. "Waiting on events is likely to prove fatal," he warned. "Our only hope of getting anything done in the Balkans is to know in advance exactly what we want so that we can seize any opportunity which offers at any moment. Otherwise we may be certain that events will not wait for us to make up our mind."

⁵ PREM 3 485/8 Cadogan memorandum "The Atlantic Charter", forwarded with Cadogan minute to Churchill PM/44/256, 17th April 1944.

⁶ See in particular PREM 4 30/5, tel. CONCRETE no. 477 to Eden, 22nd August 1943 (Law comments on Four Power Declaration); FO371/37031/6879 Wilson minute, 20th November 1943.

⁷ FO371/37030/6447 FO tel. no. 7519 to Washington, 4th November 1943, (Cadogan to Halifax).

⁸ See in this connection: FO371/40733/3321 Churchill to Eden, M.329/4, 31st March 1944; Jebb minute, 6th April 1944; Strang minute, 6th April 1944; Cadogan to Churchill, PM/44/234, 11th April 1944; Ward minute, 25th April 1944; Jebb minute, 4th May 1944. See also Woodward, British Foreign Policy, Vol.V., pp.251-5; FO371/43305/3554 Cadogan minute, 14th May 1944. See appendix after the footnotes to Chapter II for further details.

⁹ PREM 3 485/8 Churchill to Eden, M.322/4, 31st March 1944.

¹⁰ See in this connection FO371/40733/3321 *passim*, and in particular Churchill to Eden, M.329/4, 31st March 1944; Cadogan to Churchill, PM/44/234, 11th April 1944.

¹¹ PREM 3 485/4 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/184, 26th March 1944.

¹² The Soviet Government recalled Maisky to Moscow in July 1943, replacing him with Feodor Gusev. See K.G.M. Ross, The Foreign Office and the Kremlin: British Documents on Anglo-Soviet Relations 1941-1945 (Cambridge 1984), pp.130-3 for a selection of documents outlining the British reaction to this development.

¹³ PREM 3 485/8 Churchill to Eden, M.336/4, 1st April 1944.

¹⁴ The Molotov-Ribbentrop Agreement referred to here is the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 22nd August 1939. For a brief discussion of this arrangement, and its significance for Eastern Europe, see Barbara Jelavich, History of the Balkans: Vol.II - Twentieth Century (Cambridge 1983), pp.221-3.

¹⁵ See PREM 3 399/6 Churchill to Eden, M.647/3, 6th October 1943. Churchill had warned Eden prior to the Foreign Secretaries' Conference at Moscow in October 1943 not to commit himself on the question of territorial adjustments. "It should be remembered," he had minuted, "that the reason why we sheered off making agreement about the western frontiers of Russia and substituting the Twenty Years Treaty was the perfectly clear menace of very considerable division of opinion in the House of Commons. I know of no reason for supposing that this same opposition might not manifest itself again, perhaps in even stronger form. *The opponents would have the advantage of invoking very large principles against us.*" This last passage is particularly revealing.

¹⁶ See Martin Gilbert, Road to Victory (London 1986), pp. 701-2, 704, citing: Churchill to Stalin, tel. no.T.624/4, 21st March 1944; Churchill to Stalin, tel. no.T473/4, 7th March 1944. In the earlier telegram, Churchill had attempted to persuade Stalin to accept a negotiated compromise. "Force can achieve much," he had argued, "but force supported by the goodwill of the world can achieve more."

¹⁷ See Warren F. Kimball, Churchill and Roosevelt: the Complete Correspondence. Vol.III - Alliance Declining (Princeton 1984), pp.69-71, reproducing Stalin to Churchill, 23rd March 1944.

¹⁸ FO371/43304/2128 Churchill to FO, M.338/4, 1st April 1944

¹⁹ See in this connection FO371/43304/1908 Washington tel. no.1557 to FO, 28th March 1944; and FO371/43304/2128 Churchill to FO, M.338/4, 1st April 1944. Churchill's minute had been prompted by a telegram from Ambassador Halifax, reporting on a conversation with Cordell Hull, the US Secretary of State. Hull had complained that the Soviets, who had been

criticising US policy, were jeopardising the 'mood' established by the Conferences of late 1943. This, he pointed out, was potentially disastrous: public opinion in Britain and the US would be adversely affected by any split in the Alliance. Hull, who was still convinced that a close relationship with Russia was possible, argued that Roosevelt and Churchill should initiate a bout of "plain-speaking" with Stalin. If they could persuade the Soviet leader that the current Russian tendency towards unilateralism would be less fruitful than the policy of collaboration, the position established at Tehran might be saved. In any case, in view of the fact that various public statements on post-hostilities issues would have to be made sooner rather than later, some improvement in tripartite collaboration was essential.

Hull was clearly concerned with his vision of post-war security, and keen to shore up the Alliance against the stresses and strains caused by the approach of victory. Churchill, while agreeing with Hull's assessment, was more concerned with the short term situation. Stalin's Polish snub had brought on another bout of "black dog" depression. "I cannot feel the slightest trust or confidence in the communist leadership," he minuted. "Their feeling is we must flatter and kow-tow to them." The launching of **OVERLORD** would, he feared, merely strengthen the Soviets' hand. "Once we get onto the continent with a large commitment," he warned, "they will have the means of blackmail, which they have not at the present... of tipping the wink to the Germans that they can move more troops into the west." Churchill was inclined to agree with Hull's suggestion that he and the President should concert their efforts and persuade Stalin to adopt a more reasonable attitude. In his opinion, however, this should involve the suspension of Anglo-Soviet contacts and a retreat into "moody silence" while every effort was made to reach complete understanding with the US on future policy. He was, nevertheless, realistic about the prospects for a "showdown" with Stalin. His bitterness and mistrust notwithstanding, Churchill was a pragmatist. He appreciated that private fears should not be allowed to prejudice policy, and qualified his earlier statements accordingly. "I write the above without the slightest wish to go back on our desire to establish friendly relationships with Russia," he told the FO, "but our and especially my personal approaches have had a bad effect. That is why I take this line."

²⁰ See in this connection: FO371/43304/1908 Sargent minute, 1st April 1944; Eden minute, 3rd April 1944; FO371/43304/2128 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/207, 5th April 1944. Eden appreciated this point, even if the Prime Minister did not. "Won't this lead to further argumentative correspondence?" he asked on 5th April, before advising against Hull's idea of a "plain-speaking" offensive. Eden went on to tell Churchill that, "exasperating as recent Russian behaviour has been", a policy of confrontation would be premature. "I feel we ought not to jump to the conclusion that they have decided to go back on the policy of co-operation," he minuted. "There have been not a few cases of on the credit side... I would be inclined to let matters drift a little longer before considering a showdown with Stalin."

The Foreign Secretary was in fact following the advice of his senior advisors, in spite of having deep personal reservations of his own. Sir Orme Sargent, Deputy Under Secretary of State at the FO, had already challenged Hull's advice along the following lines:-

The US Government may be able to afford the luxury of abandoning the policy of co-operation with Russia... but it would be disastrous for this country if we were to do so unless absolutely forced to... The Russians have subscribed to a policy of co-operation of which I think they still want to make a success... By forming a sort of Anglo-American front we might provoke Russian reactions which we might subsequently have cause bitterly to regret.

As we have already seen, Eden thought that Sargent's thesis was "reassuring", but admitted to retaining strong personal misgivings. "I should dearly like to accept his summing up, as I share entirely his valuation of Anglo-Soviet understanding," he had minuted, "but I confess to growing apprehension that Russia has vast aims, and that these may include the domination of Eastern Europe and the 'communisation' of much that remains." These comments speak volumes about a prescience which many scholars have overlooked when assessing Eden's performance as Foreign Secretary in this period.

²¹ PREM 3 485/8 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/201, 5th April 1944 (replying to M.336/4).

²² *ibid.*, Churchill to FO, M.424/4, 16th April 1944.

²³ FO371/40733/3385 Hull speech of 9th April 1944, reproduced as an annex to an Economic and Reconstruction Department brief for Sargent dated 14th April 1944. It is worth noting that this was the second time that the views of Cordell Hull had led to Churchill to place faith in what in other circumstances he would have criticised as a "mare's nest" - an apparent foreign policy commitment by the US Government, made by Hull, and not by Roosevelt.

²⁴ PREM 3 485/8 Cadogan to Churchill, PM/44/266, 20th April 1944.

²⁵ *ibid.*, Cadogan to Churchill, PM/44/256, 17th April 1944. Edward Stettinius, US Under-Secretary of State, was at this time heading a delegation of State Department officials in London for discussions with their FO counterparts.

²⁶ See David Dilks (ed.), The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938-1945 (London 1971), p.617, diary entry dated 10th April 1944. Cadogan was unhappy at what the future threatened to hold. "Shall have an awful fortnight with PM in charge," he noted, "complicated by Stettinius."

²⁷For a particularly good example of this, see Dilks (ed.), Cadogan Diaries, p.637, diary entry date 9th June 1944. According to Cadogan, Churchill, "baffled in his attempts to go to the front... mucks up foreign affairs instead. He blackguards FO conduct of foreign policy, which is improper and embarrassing."

²⁸PREM 3 485/8 Cadogan to Churchill, PM/44/256, 17th April 1944.

²⁹See Dilks (ed.), Cadogan Diaries, pp.612, 621-2. After a meeting of the War Cabinet on 19th April 1944, Cadogan recorded his growing concern about the Prime Minister's health and stamina. "PM is, I fear, breaking down," he noted. "He rambles without pause, and we really got nowhere... I am really fussed about the PM. He is not the man he was twelve months ago, and I really don't know whether he can carry on." As Dilks notes, "the reader of tartly worded entries should bear this in mind."

³⁰PREM 3 485/8 Undated memorandum, "The Atlantic Charter", enclosed with PM/44/256. Subsequent references are to this paper, unless otherwise stated.

³¹Cadogan went on to point out that it would be impossible to draw frontiers on a purely ethnographic basis. "Minorities in some regions must be ignored or transferred," he argued. "The governing consideration must be the security and independence of the main body." What price British opposition to "ethnic cleansing" *circa* 1944?

³²Martin Wight, Power Politics (London 1971), p.184.

³³For some examples of this, see: Dilks (ed.), Cadogan Diaries, pp.572, 586-7; Lord Gladwyn, Memoirs (London 1972), p.134; Lord Strang, At Home and Abroad (London 1956), p.199; John Harvey (ed.), The War Diaries of Oliver Harvey (London 1978), pp.314-5. Quite apart from the success of the Moscow Conference, Cadogan had been most enthusiastic about the progress which had been made at Tehran - as the following extracts from a letter to Ambassador Halifax indicate:-

You will have seen such official accounts as there are. I can only add that the personal relationships were, I think, excellent, and that we are entitled to expect good concrete results from the convivial junketings and rambling talk. The latter is very useful: if Winston is stimulated... into airing his views on all topics under the sun, it gives Stalin some insight into his character. Roosevelt probably knows all about that already, but if he, in turn, tells anecdotes about himself and his ancestors, that also gives Uncle Joe material which he is able to turn to good - and quite possibly beneficial - use... Winston, when properly started off, has very few reticences: Uncle Joe is shrewd enough to spot that, and must, I think, have satisfied himself that there was no

concealment or duplicity and that he could have faith. And I believe that has done something to improve... relations.

³⁴ See in this connection PREM 3 399/6 Churchill to Eden, M.647/3, 6th October 1943. Churchill, writing about frontier adjustments, had reminded Eden (who was about to travel to the Moscow Conference) that longer term political questions should be left to the peace conference. "At a Peace Conference," he argued, "the position can be viewed as a whole, and adjustments made in one direction balanced by those in another. There is therefore the greatest need to reserve such questions for the general settlement."

³⁵ PREM 3 485/8 Undated Cadogan memorandum, "The Atlantic Charter."

³⁶ Warren F. Kimball, Churchill and Roosevelt: the Complete Correspondence, Vol. II - Alliance Forged (Princeton 1984), p.709, Roosevelt to Churchill, tel. no. R463, 7th February. See also Kimball, Complete Correspondence, Vol. III, p.147, Roosevelt to Churchill, tel. no. R545, 27th May; Complete Correspondence, Vol. III, p.221; Gilbert, Road to Victory, p.827, citing Roosevelt to Churchill, tel. no. R579, 29th June 1944. Roosevelt's reluctance to commit American troops to operations in the Balkans - OSS missions aside - was based on both strategic and political considerations. On 29th June, he told Churchill that "I should never survive even a slight setback in **OVERLORD** if it were known that fairly large forces had been diverted to the Balkans." He had already warned the Prime Minister on 27th May that, as far as post-hostilities planning was concerned, "the Balkans will not be included in an American zone of responsibility." Kimball, Roosevelt's biographer, argues that these views "were consonant with the President's long held position that eastern Europe, unlike western Europe, was beyond America's sphere of influence." The US Government's reluctance to pledge themselves to any long term commitment in the Balkans - military or political - was made abundantly clear in the diplomatic correspondence passing between Washington, London, and interested parties in the Mediterranean. The reasons for this disinclination - and the historical debate that attends it - are complicated and interesting; not least because they raise important questions about the "special relationship" and, in view of recent revisionist work, the efficacy of Churchill's "Anglo-American" conception. However, for the purposes of this study, it is necessary to avoid a digression into the metaphysics of American policy, and, instead, important to concentrate upon its immediate consequences - and in particular the impression it created amongst the British policymakers.

³⁷ FO371/40733/3385 FO tel. CITIZEN no.95 to Washington, 15th March 1944 (responding to Washington tel. no.1002 to FO, 2nd March 1944).

³⁸ *ibid.*, Washington tel. CITIZEN no.72 to FO, 19th March 1944.

³⁹ PREM 3 485/8 Cadogan to Churchill, PM/44/256, 17th April 1944.

⁴⁰ FO371/40733/3385 Hood minute, 14th April 1944, and memorandum entitled "Questions for discussion with Mr. Stettinius." Subsequent references are from this paper unless otherwise stated.

⁴¹ See FO371/40733/3322 ACA(44)23, memorandum entitled "British Interests in South Eastern Europe", 14th April 1944. As we have already, this paper was presented to the Armistice and Civil Administration Committee, and approved as ACA(44)23 on 20th April 1944. See also PREM 3 66/6 unsigned minute by official in the PM's Private Office, dated 18th April 1944. Churchill was not involved in the production of the ACA paper, but he was sent a copy with an explanatory minute on 18th April. According to this, the paper referred "to the commitments which we shall have there after the war." There is nothing to indicate that Churchill read either the minute of the paper, but it seems safe to assume that he was aware of its general thesis - his periodic interventions into this field exposed him to the arguments it put forward. Indeed, the fact that he did not comment upon it may indicate that, broadly speaking, he agreed with its conclusions.

⁴² FO371/40733/3385 Hood minute, 14th April 1944.

⁴³ See Keith Sainsbury, The Turning Point: Roosevelt, Stalin, Churchill and Chiang-Kai-Shek, 1943. The Moscow, Cairo and Tehran Conferences (Oxford 1986), p.315, for a verbatim reproduction of this document.

⁴⁴ Sainsbury, Turning Point, pp.66-8, 104-5, 315.

⁴⁵ FO371/40733/3385 Record of meeting at FO, 18th April 1944. Further citations are from this source unless otherwise stated.

⁴⁶ See, for example, the difficulties that had arisen *vis-à-vis* the EAC; and in particular its failure to tackle various political issues in quite the way that the British had hoped. This has been discussed above.

⁴⁷ See in this connection Lloyd C. Gardner and Warren F. Kimball, 'The United States: Democratic Diplomacy' in David Reynolds *et al.*, Allies at War: the Soviet, American and British Experience 1939-1945 (London 1994), pp.387-8.

⁴⁸ See Martin Wight, Power Politics (London 1971), p.127. Wight refers to a "curious tendency which has shown itself throughout international history" - that "a former dominant power tends to sink into dependence upon its supplanter."

⁴⁹ See PREM 3 66/6 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/452, 21st June 1944; see also FO371/43655 *passim*. The question of Lord Moyne's Balkan Affairs Committee soon developed into a first class row between the Americans and the British on the one hand, and the Cairo and AFHQ Mediterranean establishments on the other. As Eden explained to Churchill on 21st June:-

When the Middle East was a purely British Command the Minister Resident, Middle East, had under his supervision a number of advisory bodies to give the C-in-C political advice on the countries concerned. With the unification of command, it was necessary that these should become combined Anglo-American institutions, and Lord Moyne [British Minister Resident, Middle East] set about changing their names and obtaining American representation. Owing to what appears to be a misunderstanding of the functions of these advisory bodies, the Americans took violent exception to what Lord Moyne was doing and protested... Macmillan [Minister Resident, AFHQ] then undertook to sort matters out with Murphy [US Political Representative, AFHQ] and General Wilson [SACMED], and the result of their discussions is a proposal for a radical alteration in the handling of Balkan affairs.

The radical alteration which Macmillan had proposed was, in Eden's opinion, unacceptable. He was concerned because, at this stage, Allied activity in the Balkans was in his opinion "preponderantly political." He also resented what he saw as the nascent attempts of AFHQ - and in particular Macmillan - to sequester control of foreign policy towards the region - especially as much of the Balkans lay outside AFHQ's "effective sphere of military operations." Eden was adamant: Macmillan's presumption should be rejected out of hand. As he told Churchill, "decisions on policy must be taken by you and me here, and not at Wilson's HQ."

It is interesting to compare Eden's jealous defence of his ministerial prerogative with the American complaints that Moyne was attempting to initiate a unilateral reform of what was supposed to be inter-Allied politico-military machinery in Cairo. In both cases, the arguments developed a slightly surreal air, especially when the military realities affecting the political situation in the Balkans are taken into account. What is clear, however, is that the infrastructure of politico-military organisation was flawed - a patchwork of bodged compromises unequal to the task of overseeing, never mind shaping, a post-war settlement. As with the Atlantic Charter, the Four Power Declaration, and the EAC, this Anglo-American propensity to argue - unnecessarily - over principle threatened to undermine the apparatus of bipartite co-operation; and certainly did nothing to help solve the real problem - which was how to get the Russians involved on a tripartite basis. In the end, of course, the Russians effectively resolved the problem through "force and facts." The Red Army's advance into the Balkans - and concomitant change in the politico-military situation - rendered Anglo-American squabbles of this sort obsolete.

⁵⁰FO371/40733/3385 Record of meeting, 18th April 1944. Sargent rejected the idea of such an approach. As he pointed out, Bulgaria was already aware that the evacuation of occupied territory was a prerequisite to negotiation, and, in any case, "judging from past experience the Soviet Government were not disposed to exert influence in Sofia on our behalf." What he did *not* say, however, was that as far as the British were aware, the Russians

had little interest in the affairs of Greece - at least at this stage. The internal situation in that country was, nevertheless, causing some concern: with EAM (the Communist-dominated National Liberation Front) threatening a communist *démarché* after the Germans evacuated, the British were anxious to see Soviet disinterest continue. Hood's brief of 14th April was particularly revealing on this score: for all its rhetoric about the need to secure an American commitment, it made no mention of this in the context of Greece.

⁵¹ *ibid.* Sargent clearly harboured few illusions where the future of Yugoslavia was concerned. As he pointed out, "it was impossible to define our commitments here as the problem would either resolve itself or it would become a vast one calling for united action by the great powers."

⁵² See in this connection Victor Rothwell, Britain and the Cold War 1941-1947 (London 1982), p.9. Neville Butler, Head of the North American Department of the FO, argued on 18th May 1944 that time and experience would eventually persuade the Americans that a continuing association with Britain would be essential, but that in the meantime it would be dangerous to expect them to support any policy aimed at resisting Soviet expansionism. As he pointed out. "The United States will soon find out that they cannot run the show without us, and that we understand a lot more than they about the running." It would, he felt, be very unsafe to assume that the United States would "associate herself in helping resistance to a Russian attempt to dominate the Continent." He therefore warned his colleagues that while "there are powerful forces in the United States that dislike and mistrust Russia... there are also forces of attraction between the United States and the Soviet Union, and they, coupled with the traditional sentiment of isolationism, would almost certainly make it impossible for a US administration to entangle itself in [any Anglo-Russian conflict]."

⁵³ See in particular: John Charmley, Churchill: the End of Glory (London 1993); _____, Churchill's Grand Alliance (London 1995). Allan Clark has argued along similar lines, questioning the wisdom of Britain's continuing the conflict with Nazi Germany after 1941, in BBC 2's Myths and Mysteries of the Second World War, 17th June 1995.

⁵⁴ Barker, 'Problems of the Alliance', in Deakin, Barker and Chadwick (eds.), British Political and Military Strategy, pp.40-42.

⁵⁵ FO371/43636/9092 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/373, 9th May 1944.

⁵⁶ PREM 3 485/8 Cadogan to Churchill, PM/44/256, 17th April 1944.

⁵⁷ See G.M. Scrase, 'Sir Edward Grey, the Parliamentary Radicals, and the Struggle for Control of British Foreign Policy 1911-12' (M.A. thesis, Durham University 1993), pp.1-26.

⁵⁸ Charmley, End of Glory, p.468.

⁵⁹ See in this connection Lord Moran, Winston Churchill 1940-1965 (London 1966), pp.183, 206. It is always dangerous to use Churchillian outbursts as evidence of a particular view or sentiment. Like all great men afflicted with bouts of depression and uncertainty, the Prime Minister's words often said more about the immediate context and less about the "big picture." Having said this, his comments to Lord Moran, his personal physician, on 20th September 1944 (following the **OCTAGON** Conference at Quebec) were poignant and revealing. "I have a very strong feeling that my work is done," he told Moran. "I have no message. I had a message. Now I only say 'fight the damned socialists'. I do not believe in this brave new world." This should not, however, be taken as an indication that Churchill had abandoned all hope of influencing future developments. As Moran himself wrote, Churchill "was ready to act when he could." According to Moran, his actions read "like the story of a fighting retreat." "If he appeared to haver," Moran claims, "it was because he was not strong enough to act." If Moran is correct, Churchill's approach to foreign policy was essentially reactive, as opposed to dynamic. He was anxious to salvage some right to a say in the settlement of international problems, all the more so because he appreciated that he could not hope to resolve them himself.

⁶⁰ Piers Dixon (ed.), Double Diploma: the Life of Pierson Dixon (London 1968), p.78; Dixon diary entry dated 11th August 1944.

⁶¹ FO371/43999/6988 and 6882 Molotov to Churchill, 28th and 29th April 1944.

⁶² PREM 3 485/8 Colville to Dixon, 3rd May 1944.

⁶³ John Colville, The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries 1939-1955 (London 1985), p.479, diary entry dated 21st March 1944.

Appendix - The Fate of the EAC, March - June 1944

The efficacy of the EAC was called into question at the end of March 1944 when, after learning of a Soviet proposal dealing with the future administration of liberated territory in France, Churchill asked the FO to consider the possibility of demanding the creation of a Commission to oversee the administration of liberated territory in Eastern Europe. Cadogan felt that Churchill's suggestion was impracticable. It fell foul of the vexatious frontiers question, a running sore which Cadogan felt was best left alone at this stage. It would also cut across the terms of reference of the EAC. As Cadogan explained:-

Always supposing other Governments concerned would agree, there would be every advantage in the EAC considering any civil affairs questions relating to Europe west of the 1940 frontiers of the Soviet Union. I... recall that the Soviet Government have definitely demanded that the question of civil

affairs in liberated French territory should be referred to the EAC. It is by using this existing machinery... that we may in practice get our say in "the treatment to be meted out to liberated Poland." But it is also evident that the Russians will not grant this unless they in their turn have some say... in Western Europe.

Cadogan was adamant that the EAC remained an important forum for tripartite collaboration, and argued that HMG should impress this fact upon Britain's Great Power allies:-

The right course is, in fact, for us to press here and now for the EAC machinery to be used both in regard to eastern and in regard to western Europe. Indeed I would go further and say that it is only by getting some kind of procedure such as this going that we are ever likely to make any progress at all... The EAC needs some kind of impetus at the moment and if you yourself were prepared to impart this... it would be all to the good.

Cadogan's minute had been produced after consultations with Jebb and Strang. Jebb, in particular, had been incensed by what he regarded as deliberate attempts by the US Government to undermine the EAC. "It is hardly the case that the EAC is 'getting clogged'," he minuted:-

On the contrary, the position is that the pipe, far from being "clogged", is as yet hardly being used... It was definitely agreed at Moscow that the civil affairs questions connected with all liberated European countries should fall for examination by the EAC. It is the Americans who have been standing out against this all the time because of their silly feud between the War Department and the State Department.

As a result of this "silly feud", the US had suggested that such questions should be dealt with through normal diplomatic channels - a proposal that Jebb, for one, regarded as a retrograde step. Strang agreed wholeheartedly. As he noted on 6th April, "the Commission is not so much clogged as at deadlock on certain questions of principle."

Unfortunately for the British, the Russians chose to break the deadlock by agreeing to the US proposal. Faced with what amounted to a US-Soviet *fait accompli*, Strang and Cadogan agreed to give way. On 25th April, Ward summarised their decision in the following manner:-

We shall try to clear all the civil affairs agreements through the diplomatic channel... This does not mean of course that the EAC will not still be able to consider any specific questions concerning liberated territories which (in accordance with the Commission's terms of reference) the three Governments may agree to refer to it. But it does modify the line taken up to now.

Jebb drew his own conclusions from this sorry state of affairs. "It seems to be all a great pity," he minuted. "If we had each of us stuck to the Moscow line all would have been well. As it is we have all of us changed our views at different intervals. Now there seems nothing more to be done but let nature take its course."

* * *

Other events confirmed Jebb's worst fears. On 8th April, Strang submitted a paper to Eden on the efficacy of the EAC. He hoped that Eden would use it as the basis for a discussion with Stettinius (who was visiting the UK). As he explained, "the Commission had not developed on the lines which we had hoped. It had not made satisfactory progress even in dealing with the one question it had seriously discussed, i.e. the terms of surrender for Germany." In Strang's opinion, the Soviet and American Governments shared fairly equal responsibility for this. The British had hoped that the Commission would function as a general clearing house for three Power discussions on the terms of surrender for the Axis Powers, the machinery of control, and the policy to be adopted in liberated countries - the Moscow Conference had referred all these questions to the Commission - and that it would also consider other European problems connected with the termination of hostilities." Unfortunately, these hopes had soon been dashed, for as Strang now explained, "even on the question of terms of surrender for Germany the US War Department had insisted upon the rigid adherence of the American delegation to terms which were ill-conceived and ill-drafted." The Commission was unable to deal with the question of the occupation of Germany, which the British and Soviet delegations had been ready to discuss for some weeks past, because the American delegation was not ready to tackle it *à trois*.

The Soviets, for their part, had hardly helped matters: they had argued that the Commission should deal with the terms of surrender before discussing other matters. They had therefore refused out the consideration of matters such as the dismemberment of Germany, the terms of surrender for the Axis satellites, and the question of consulting the European Allies about the terms of surrender for Germany. Strang suggested that the Soviets' refusal to discuss the terms of surrender for the satellites States could have been prompted by the American refusal to deal with the administration of liberated territories. He also felt that the Soviet delegation was handicapped by the inadequacy of its staff, poor communications with Moscow, and "the backward state of Soviet studies of some of the questions" under discussion. As he explained:-

The Soviet tactics... had not made much progress since they, like the Americans, had submitted proposals in regard to which they appeared to have little latitude. They had also taken the characteristic Soviet attitude of saying that detailed discussions were useless until all the broad principles were settled, whereas

in fact much useful work could be done by subordinate advisers while leaving certain points of principle in suspense.

Eden raised the matter with Stettinius on 24th April. Stettinius was most sympathetic, and agreed that the current US position was "not in keeping with the original terms of reference" agreed at Moscow. He did not, however, promise that the US Government would change its policy. Instead, he gave Eden a letter from Mr. Hull, which effectively ruled out the possibility of the EAC tackling additional issues - at least for the time being. Hull claimed that as matters stood, it would be impractical to expand the EAC's remit. There was still a large amount of work to be done, both on the Instrument of Surrender for Germany, and on the other immense tasks to which had been assigned to it - namely, the setting up of policies and controls for the post-hostilities period in Germany and the satellite States. Furthermore, the military establishment in the US were opposed to the Commission tackling matters which might impinge on military operations in the pre-surrender period. Eden responded by telling Stettinius that Hull's letter flatly contradicted the Moscow agreement, and that claimed that the Americans were attempting to "whittle down the activities of the Commission" - a fact that the Russians, for one, appreciated all too well. Stettinius was forced to agree that the Soviets were "now regarding the Commission as less authoritative." He also agreed that the War Department in Washington were largely responsible for the American policy, and promised "to send a 'strong telegram' to Washington on the general status and functions of the Commission." Nothing seems to have come from this, however; and on 14th May Cadogan minuted, somewhat sadly, that the "constant consultation" which the EAC had been designed to facilitate had failed to materialise. "The EAC is the ultimate result of proposals we made for a central body where intimate contact could be maintained," he noted, "but I'm afraid it hasn't quite worked out that way."

Cadogan's fears were confirmed a week later when Stettinius told Ambassador Halifax that "the US Administration had undoubtedly gone back on the arrangements in Moscow concerning the EAC." According to Halifax, Stettinius thought that the President was afraid that, since the US Government could only be represented on the Commission on an 'expert' level, the UK would take too much of a lead, "get through solutions which the President might not particularly like, and generally organise Europe on lines of UK policy. The UK might thus figure in the eyes of European countries and the world as leaders in Europe of the Anglo-Saxon countries, something which he supposed the President might not wholly relish." Halifax felt that Stettinius' comments were "not wholly without interest." Eden clearly agreed, and on 13th June decided to share Stettinius's comments with Churchill and the War Cabinet. He considered that, in general, Stettinius's "frank explanation was probably right, and that the President was inclined to see himself as a great liberal leader and as a second and more realistic Woodrow Wilson":-

The President did not understand that British public opinion, remembering the consequences of accepting an American lead in 1919, would be very cautious about doing so again... Moreover,

American public opinion, though it would be gratified by the spectacle of America assuming the leadership, would be uneasy if the President took too prominent a part in the affairs of Europe. At the same time, the President and Mr. Hull might well think that, in an election year, they could not easily persuade their fellow countrymen to take part in world affairs if the UK were too obviously settling the affairs of Europe, and particularly if the settlement seemed to consist of restoring dubious monarchies or retaining dictators.

However, Churchill did not respond to Eden's brief; nor did he take the matter any further with Roosevelt.

Endnotes:- Chapter III

¹ For documents relating to this episode, see WP(44)247, Churchill paper "The Greek Crisis: 1st - 25th April", 8th May, 1944. See also PREM 3 211/11 and 13 *passim*. An extensive amount of work has been produced on Greek history in this period. For a cross-section of material see: Sir Llewellyn Woodward, British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, Vol. III (London 1972), Chapter XLIII; Phyllis Auty and Richard Clogg (eds.), British Policy towards Wartime Resistance in Yugoslavia and Greece (London 1975); Marion Sarafis (ed.), Greece: from Resistance to Civil War (Nottingham 1980); John O. Iatrides (ed.), Greece in the 1940's: A Nation in Crisis (London 1981); George M. Alexander, The Prelude to the Truman Doctrine: British Policy in Greece 1944-1947 (Oxford 1982); Procopis Papastratis, British Policy towards Greece during the Second World War 1941-1944 (Cambridge 1984); Lars Baerentzen, John Iatrides and Ole Smith (eds.), Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War (Copenhagen 1987); Robert Frazier, Anglo-American Relations with Greece: the Coming of the Cold War (London 1991); David Close (ed.), The Greek Civil War 1943-1950: Studies of Polarisation (London 1993).

² FO371/43729/6133 FO tel. no. 1130 to Moscow, 14th April 1944 (Churchill to Molotov). This read as follows:-

I am sending you a short account of events... which I have personally been trying to steer during the last 10 days. We cannot have mutineers of flotillas and brigades making political decisions under our command in the Mediterranean. I am sure you will see that nothing but anarchy lies that way. On the eve of great events there must be discipline in the Armed Forces. They must leave politics to the politicians and to the broad decisions of the leaders of the great Allies. I hope you will back me up on this at least and we can leave details for further discussion between us while presenting a stiff front to outsiders.

³ FO371/43685/5856 Laskey minute, 14th April 1944.

⁴ FO371/43729/5926 Moscow tel. no. 978 to FO, 13th April 1944.

⁵ FO371/43729/6133 Cadogan minute to Churchill, PM/44/248, 14th April 1944, paraphrasing and commenting on Leeper's tels. nos, 239 and 245.

⁶ *ibid.*, Churchill to Cadogan, M.425/4, 16th April 1944.

⁷ *ibid.*, FO tel. no. 1150 to Moscow, 16th April 1944.

⁸ See WP(44)247 Churchill memorandum "The Greek Crisis", 8th May 1944; in particular pp.31-2, 34 (copies of Churchill to Roosevelt, tel. no. C648, 16th April 1944; Roosevelt to Churchill, tel. no. R523, 18th April 1944).

⁹ FO371/43729/6133 FO tel. no.1149 to Moscow (Churchill to Molotov), 16th April 1944.

¹⁰ See Procopis Papastratis, 'The Papandreou Government and the Lebanon Conference', in J.O. Iatrides (ed.), A Nation in Crisis, pp.119-30, for the background to and the results of the Lebanon Conference of May 1944. This was sponsored by the British as part of their ongoing attempts to bring the warring Greek factions together by forming a government of national unity under Papandreou. A selection of British documents pertaining to this can be found in PREM 3 211/16.

¹¹ FO371/43685/6048 Leeper tel. no. 256 to FO, 15th April 1944; and minutes by Laskey (18th April 1944), and Howard and Sargent (19th April 1944). Officials in Whitehall treated Leeper's suggestion with scepticism. Denis Laskey agreed that a Three Power Declaration would certainly improve the prospects for an agreement at the Lebanon Conference, but felt that it would be precipitous to approach the US and Soviet Governments with any proposals before the mutinies in Egypt had been cleared up. He was worried about the impression that recent events would have created in Moscow. "The Russians may agree, particularly after the PM's message to Molotov to let us handle the Greek forces without interfering," he minuted, "but I fear that they will only do so grudgingly, and they may continue to suspect that our motives are as much political as military." Douglas Howard agreed with Laskey's prescription, minuting that "it would be better to postpone approaching the US and Soviet Governments until the present disturbances are settled, and until it is known that the representatives of EAM are on their way to Cairo." Sir Orme Sargent, however, was less enthusiastic:-

I agree with Mr. Howard except that I don't think that even when the meetings have been started there will be the least prospect of our being able to get the Russians and Americans to agree to a joint declaration and I doubt whether it would be wise even to make the attempt.

¹² *ibid.*, Churchill to Leeper, P.M.'s Personal tel. no.856/4, 17th April 1944. It is important to note that the Prime Minister responded to Leeper's telegram before the FO minutes were produced, and was therefore acting on his own recognisance in this matter.

¹³ FO371/43686/6672 Molotov to Churchill, 22nd April 1944.

¹⁴ FO371/43686/6530 Moscow tel. no. 1046 to FO, 23rd April 1944; and Laskey and Sargent minutes, 24th April 1944. See also in this connection John Iatrides (ed.), Ambassador MacVeagh Reports: Greece 1933-1947 (Princeton 1980), p.510. When the American Ambassador to the Greek Government in Cairo, Lincoln MacVeagh, learned of this telegram, he ridiculed the suggestion that Moscow remained "uninformed about Greek affairs." Writing in his diary on 1st May 1944, he put quite a different complexion on matters. "The Russian FO is very well informed on Greek affairs," he wrote, "and Novikov has shown me recently that he considers that he, at least, is quite an expert as regards them!"

¹⁵ FO371/43686/6672 Churchill to Molotov, P.M.'s Personal tel. no.938/4, 23rd April 1944. Again, it should be noted that Churchill's reply was despatched before he received the views of the FO on Molotov's telegram.

¹⁶ See, for example, the FO brief prepared for Eden on 8th March 1943 in readiness for his visit to Washington, cited by P.D. Quinlan, British and American Policies towards Romania: 1938-1947 (Los Angeles 1977), p.84). Eden was told that "our policy towards Roumania is subordinated to our relations with the Soviet Union and we are... unwilling to accept any commitments or to take any action except with the full cognisance and consent of the Soviet Government."

¹⁷ For a cross section see: Quinlan, British and American Policies; Barker, British Policy in South East Europe in the Second World War (London 1976), Ch.18; Ivor Porter, Operation Autonomous: With SOE in Wartime Roumania (London 1989); Keith Hitchins, Roumania 1866-1947 (Oxford 1994), pp. 494-5.

¹⁸ Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, pp.226-7. Shortly before the Foreign Secretaries' Conference at Moscow, the British authorities received a message from Maniu, in which he suggested that he should travel to Cairo and open direct negotiations with the British. The FO, however, decided that local political contacts of this sort could not be sanctioned without prior consultation with the Soviet Government. Nichols (of the Southern Department) informed Pearson (of SOE) of this decision on 16th October 1943. "We are proposing to try to work out some common policy with the Russians and Americans," Nichols had minuted. "If we were suddenly to produce Maniu like a rabbit from a hat, the Russians would probably think we were double-crossing them, and any chance of reaching an agreement would be correspondingly reduced."

¹⁹ *ibid.*, pp.227-8; FO371/37031/6921 "Record of the Proceedings of the Foreign Minister's Conference held in Moscow from 19th October to 30th October": 7th Meeting, 25th October 1943.

²⁰ FO371/44000/7829 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/341, 14th May 1944. This is discussed more fully below.

²¹ See Quinlan, British and American Policies, p. 87; Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, pp.226-7.

²² See Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p.228. According to Barker, Warner described Molotov's attitude as "rather unsatisfactory."

²³ Quinlan, British and American Policies, p.87, citing Maniu message of 10th November 1943. This reached the FO through the SOE office in Cairo.

²⁴ Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p.228, citing Nichols minute of 11th November 1943.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 228, citing Moscow tel. no. 1362 to FO, 19th November 1943.

²⁶ Barker and Quinlan both provide summaries of the history of this mission. For a first rate account by one of the participants, see Porter, Operation Autonomous, *passim*.

²⁷ FO371/44000/7829 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/341, 14th May 1944.

²⁸ *ibid.* Eden stated that SOE had intended the mission "to organise disruption of enemy communications and to work for the overthrow of the Antonescu regime, and its replacement by a government ready to make unconditional surrender to the three principal Allies." See also Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p. 229. According to Barker, SOE suggested that de Chastellain's brief should be extended after receiving Maniu's latest approach. Pearson, who manned SOE London's Cairo desk, wrote to Howard on 19th November 1943 proposing that **AUTONOMOUS** should contact Maniu and advise him that he must accept the principle of unconditional surrender. Howard replied on 22nd November 1943, agreeing to the proposal but insisting that "it must be stressed that all approaches must be addressed to the Russians and Americans as well as the British."

²⁹ Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p.230.

³⁰ FO371/44000/7829 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/341, 14th May 1944.

³¹ Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p.230 citing Steel to Nichols, 28th December 1943; and Cairo tel. no.18 to FO, 4th January 1944.

³² FO371/44000/7829 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/341, 14th May 1944. The **Pravda** article accused the British of conducting secret negotiations in Lisbon. The FO decided that this was a response to a Turkish press report of 16th January, based loosely upon the **AUTONOMOUS** episode. As Eden told Churchill some months later, the Turks had seized upon "an Axis fabrication" designed to damage relations between the Allies. The violence of the subsequent **Pravda** story was, he claimed, "due much less to our having sent in de Chastellain without consulting them than to press reports that the mission had with it a Photostat copy of a text of a treaty which Germany had proposed to the Soviet Union, naturally at the expense of Roumania."

³³ See in this connection PREM 3 396/11 *passim*. In fact, the British Embassy in Moscow had sent the FO copies of several unhelpful Soviet Press articles. (Moscow tel. no.138 to FO of 20th January 1944, and tels. nos.172 and 173 to FO of 21st January 1944). As well as the article about Roumania and **AUTONOMOUS**, the Soviet Press had also directed veiled criticisms against British policy in both Greece and Italy. Churchill was annoyed by these articles, which, as he complained to Eden on 24th January, were "inconsistent with collaboration." Lord Beaverbrook subsequently drew the Prime Minister's attention to recent articles in the British Press that had referred to Russo-German peace-feelers. These, he pointed out in a letter of 24th January,

showed "a reason for the Russian version without excusing it." Beaverbrook accepted that the Russian retaliation to these articles had been "exaggerated", but he was reluctant to read too much into them. "It would be a mistake to view the incident in the light of a setback to the improving development of Anglo-Soviet relations," he argued. "We should not look on it as involving any departure from the spirit of Tehran." Eden, writing in the margin of this letter on 28th January, agreed with Beaverbrook. "I think there is force in what Lord B writes," he noted. "Incidentally his view is now confirmed by M. Sobolev, Soviet Minister here, whom I believe to be friendly."

Churchill subsequently exchanged telegrams with Stalin on the subject, which apparently cleared up the matter. Stalin did not retract the **Pravda** accusations, or apologise for the behaviour of the Soviet Press. "Our magazines," he claimed, "are loyal to the fundamental principle - closer friendship with the Allies - which does not preclude but presupposes friendly criticism as well." He did, however, claim that the "significance" of the articles "should not be over-rated", and agreed with the Prime Minister about the significance of Tehran. "Like you," he wrote, "I was favourably impressed by our meetings... and our joint work." Churchill drafted a brief note in reply. "Thank you for your telegram," he began. "I agree that we had better leave the past to history. *but remember if I live long enough I may be one of the historians.*" The Prime Minister had second thoughts about this message, and crossed out the highlighted passage. In the event, however, even this watered down version was not sent; for Eden intervened to stop it. "I like it," he minuted, "but I don't know how it will go in Russian, or how the strange animal will understand it. He seems to lack humour on paper."

³⁴ Quinlan, British and American Policies, pp.87-8, citing a minute by E.M. Rose of the Southern Department, dated 7th January 1944.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p.88, citing an FO tel. to Washington dated 14th January 1944.

³⁶ See PREM 3 399/6 Churchill to Eden, M.31/4, 16th January 1944. The Prime Minister added weight to this view when he sent Eden his memorandum concerning the western frontiers of the Soviet Union. Churchill recognised that the military success of the Red Army was establishing a *de facto* position in Eastern Europe which the Western Powers would find almost impossible to overturn, at least as far as force of arms was concerned. For good political reasons, therefore, it would be expedient to accept reasonable Soviet demands. Churchill was convinced that, where Roumania was concerned, the cession of Bessarabia and Bukovina was an acceptable price to pay for future Russian goodwill.

³⁷ Quinlan, British and American Policies, p.89

³⁸ *ibid.*, p.89, citing State Department aide-mémoire, FRUS 1944, IV, 147.

³⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 89-90, citing FRUS 1944, IV, 172, State Department memo on forces for occupation and formulation of joint surrender terms; and FRUS 1944, IV, 143-4, State Department memo on the future of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina; FRUS, 1944, IV, 149, FO response to US proposals.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, pp.88-9 citing a British aide-mémoire dated 17th January to the State Department.

⁴¹ See Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, pp.230-1. Maniu was hoping to find out from the British what the intentions of the Soviet Government were towards Roumania, and "whether the Allies were thinking of by-passing him and doing a deal with Antonescu." He also wanted to know "whether the British wanted him to co-operate with the small and weak Roumanian Communist Party." Maniu told the British that he had been contacted by Communist representatives at the end of 1943 and presented with a ten point programme outlining the basis of a united front. He had initially turned this down, because the Communists seemed to accept the Russian claims over Bessarabia and Bukovina. He was now, however, reconsidering their proposals.

⁴² *ibid.*, p.231 citing FO tel. no. 188 to Cairo, 9th February 1944. As Barker points out, this meant that Maniu was left without guidance about the Roumanian Communists. See also CAB79/70 COS(44)59(O), 24th February 1944. The COS were also anxious to put pressure on Maniu. They were keen to draw German attention away from Western Europe and the preparations for **OVERLORD**, and saw the Cairo negotiations as a way to achieve this.

⁴³ PREM 3 374/13A Moscow tel. no. 411 to FO, 15th February 1944. The Cairo negotiations were not mentioned specifically in this communication, despite recent communications from London to Moscow on the subject.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, Churchill to Eden, M.124/4, 16th February 1944.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, Eden to Churchill, PM/44/77, 16th February 1944.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, Eden to Churchill, PM/44/148, 13th March 1944. The Prime Minister agreed to the instructions, "subject to some queries." Churchill questioned Eden's choice of Moyne as the man to receive Stirbey. He had sent a telegram to General Wilson (Allied Commander in Chief, Mediterranean) on 7th March 1944, outlining his views about how - and with whom - the negotiations should proceed. As he told Wilson, Moyne would "vet the emissaries in the first instance," but, if he decided that there was "any business worth doing", the negotiations should pass over to Macmillan, who would "handle the... business himself under your general authority as Allied C-in-C." The Prime Minister was evidently keen to harmonise the direction of military and political affairs as far as possible, and, to this end, wanted to concentrate authority in one command (i.e. not divide it between Cairo and AFHQ). Churchill had also been keen to clarify a few points prior to Stirbey's arrival. He wanted to leave the Roumanians with no illusions about their options. If

they wanted to join the Allied camp and "work their passage home", they would have to accept that a German occupation was inevitable. They could not expect to avoid this by delaying their defection until the Germans were already defeated, and retain complete immunity from Allied reprisals later on. On the other hand, he was anxious to reassure the Roumanians that their national identity was not in question, and therefore directed Eden to expand references to Roumanian independence to include the phrase "as a sovereign state." Finally, he had also raised the question of Transylvania and frontier adjustments, on which he wanted to avoid any commitment at this stage.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, FO tel. no.807 to Cairo, 15th March 1944 (Eden's instructions to Moyne); Eden to Churchill, PM/44/159, 16th March 1944. In this latter minute, Eden defended his decision to forward these instructions without first clarifying Churchill's queries on PM/44/148:-

I was particularly anxious to get the telegram off as Stirbey was due to arrive in Cairo either yesterday or today. I therefore despatched it, with amendments to meet your queries... I feel quite happy to let Moyne start the ball rolling in these discussions. His instructions are to sit and listen to what Stirbey has to say and to let us know if there is any basis on which actual discussions could take place... [and then, as you say,] the matter will pass into the hands of General Wilson and Macmillan... As regards Transylvania, I think that the last paragraph which I added to the telegram to Moyne meets your point.

Churchill was satisfied with this explanation - and Eden's telegram to Moyne - minuting "good" against this on 17th March 1944.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, FO tel. no.807 to Cairo, 15th March 1944. These were outlined to Moyne as follows:-

1) Once Roumania has surrendered she will, in the Prime Minister's phrase, be in a position to "work her passage home," i.e. we shall judge by results and the nature of the peace terms ultimately imposed on Roumania will be largely determined by the extent to which she contributes towards the defeat of Germany. 2) Meanwhile, if Roumania withdraws from the war at once and turns her arms against Germany, the Allies for their part will give an immediate guarantee to maintain and respect the independence of Roumania after the war as a sovereign state.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, FO tel. no. 807 to Cairo, 15th March.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, Eden to Churchill, PM/44/159, 16th March.

⁵¹ See in this connection Quinlan, British and American Policies, p.91, citing Sargent minute of 18th March 1944. "I suspect the Russians do not wish

to commit themselves until their armies are actually on the Roumanian frontier and in a position to invade," he minuted, "and because they resent our having any say as to the terms which might be offered."

⁵² Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, pp.463-5, diary entries for 7th and 10th March 1944. MacVeagh had discussed the forthcoming meeting with Novikov on 7th March:-

He is suspicious regarding Prince Stirbey's mission... Novikov sees him as rather the agent of Antonescu than of Maniu... and he thinks he may be coming out not really to arrange terms for unconditional surrender but simply to find out from our reactions how the land lies and what the Allies are planning. In this connection, one should remember that the Germans probably as yet are not at all sure that we may not be intending to make a Balkan offensive, and that if Antonescu could find out definitely whether this is so or not he would have information of incalculable value to Germany. Novikov may be wrong in his suspicions... But nevertheless it behoves us to be careful.

According to a subsequent diary entry of 10th March, both he and Novikov had been instructed "only to listen to what Stirbey may have to say, and report to our Governments accordingly":-

It will be interesting to see the Roumanian brought face to face with the Russian - an old rabbit and a young snake! Department... says the talks are to be "exploratory", but how much will the Roumanian be able to talk when he sees Novikov in front of him? If, as supposed, he wishes to "explore" how far the British and Americans can be counted on to save Roumania from the Russians... it may be too much for him.

⁵³ See Quinlan, British and American Policies, p.90, for a summary of this meeting.

⁵⁴ Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p.231, citing FO tel. no. 756 to Moscow, dated 18th March 1944. See also Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, pp.469-70, MacVeagh diary entry for 17th March 1944. MacVeagh recorded the immediate reaction of the Allied representatives to Stirbey's presentation. "When he had left the room the Russian expressed the view that all that he had to say amounts to very little, but Steel and I said he had gone further than we expected."

⁵⁵ Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p.231, citing Cairo tel. no.614 to FO, 17th March 1944. See also Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, pp.469-71, diary entries for 17th, 18th and 20th March 1944. As these indicate, the feeling in Cairo was that Stirbey's comments boded well for the future. According to MacVeagh, Lord Moyne had been particularly up-beat:-

He thinks we need not worry about the emissary's lack of credentials, and that if we sent word back that should the Roumanians "work their passage", their independence will be all right, though we can't talk boundaries now, this might lead to Antonescu's getting out "to save his skin" after turning over the government to Maniu for the purposes of the required *volte-face*.

According to MacVeagh, the British felt that Stirbey had gone "somewhat further towards meeting us than Maniu is really willing to go, to judge from their reports from their agents." Barker suggests that Stirbey had been briefed prior to the meeting by SOE's Col. E.C. Masterson on what the Allied representatives wanted to hear.

⁵⁶ Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, p. 471, diary entries for 18th and March 1944. The American had an informal discussion with Novikov on 20th March, which he recorded in his diary:-

He said he thinks the thing lacks practicality - Stirbey has no credentials even as regards Maniu, and his connection with Antonescu is even more tenuous. Furthermore, Stirbey admitted that a *coup d'état* would be speedily quelled by the Germans. Therefore it seems that only an approach on Antonescu's part could really mean anything.

Novikov had also ridiculed the suggestion that the Soviet's might launch landings at Constanta; the logistics of such an operation were far too difficult. According to MacVeagh, the British in Cairo were none too impressed by Novikov's attitude. One official had expressed "a good deal of annoyance with the Russians," and gone on to explain his feelings:-

If they would only put forward some terms of capitulation, or armistice, or what not... the Allies could make use of them in breaking down the whole Balkan set-up, but as it is they are blocking developments.

MacVeagh reported the substance of the conversations with Stirbey in a telegram to Washington on 20th March. As he explained in his diary:-

My own views... were rather more like Lord Moyne's than Novikov's. It seems to me that there may be a chance, at least, of our capitalising on the present defection in Roumania - and this must be pretty strong to bring together such "strange bedfellows" (Lord Moyne's expression) as Maniu, the Peasant Leader, Stirbey, the liberal, and Antonescu, the reactionary. In any case... our conversations so far had elicited two facts, that defection is common to all parties, and that a *coup d'état* does not promise anything like equal results with a reversal of the government (on the Badoglio model). This would appear to be

something gained, even if it is decided not to pursue the matter further here.

⁵⁷Quinlan, British and American Policies, pp. 90-1, citing Clark Kerr tel. to FO, 23rd March 1944; Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p.231. His conclusions were entirely negative. "It is doubtful," he said, "whether these conversations can lead to a satisfactory result."

⁵⁸Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, pp.231-2, citing Cairo tel. no. 566 to FO, 22nd March 1944. Mihai Antonescu was desperate, if this message was anything to go by. "I must know at once the impression made by recent events in Hungary," he had written. "It is necessary to know upon what eventual political and military help we can count." 'Conducator' was Marshal Antonescu's title; literally "leader"; the Roumanian equivalent of "Duce", "Fuhrer."

⁵⁹Quinlan, British and American Policy, p. 91, incl. footnote; Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p.231. According to Quinlan, not even London was consulted prior to its despatch. See also Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, p.478, diary entry for 24th March 1944. MacVeagh accepted the British argument that the time factor had forced the pace of events, although he still regarded the lack of consultation as "rather queer." Novikov was apparently less understanding; he was angry that proper procedures had not been followed, and argued that because the Roumanian front was in the Eastern and not Mediterranean theatre, Wilson had no business sending any reply to Antonescu (an argument which MacVeagh thought had something in it).

⁶⁰Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p.232, citing Molotov letter of 25th March 1944; Quinlan, British and American Policies, pp. 91-2, citing FRUS, 1944, IV, 159; Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, pp.478-9. Quinlan claims that Wilson's message "upset the Soviets", and provoked them into issuing new, more stringent demands. "Fearing that a sudden surrender by Antonescu to all three Allies could weaken their own position to dictate terms to the Roumanians," he writes, "the Soviets notified London that they wished to make three additional proposals." According to one worried State Department official noted, this "would leave the matter of the Roumanian surrender exclusively in Russian hands."

⁶¹Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, pp. 478-80, diary entry for 27th March 1944. The Soviet diplomat was, according to MacVeagh, particularly annoyed by this, the more so because he had received no word from Moscow and had had to discover his Government's policy from the British!

⁶²Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p.232, citing Molotov letter to FO; Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, p. 480, diary entry for 28th March 1944. It was just as well that Molotov agreed to his previous message being forwarded, as Moyne and Steel had already done so!

⁶³Hitchins, Roumania, pp. 494-5.

⁶⁴ CAB79/70 COS(44)59(O), 24th February 1944.

⁶⁵ Quinlan, British and American Policies, p. 92, citing FRUS 1944, IV, 161. The JCOS informed the State Department that "the detachment of Roumania and other Balkan satellites from the Axis is militarily of the highest importance... In view of this, the JCOS are of the opinion that no restrictive political considerations should be advanced that would militate against the early surrender of the Roumanian forces." It was, moreover, "only natural" that the terms of this surrender would be the concern of the Russians, who had the only Allied troops in the vicinity. The situation was in their opinion "analogous" to the Italian surrender.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.92. As this suggests, The FO were keen to get the Soviets to include some form of political guarantee to the Roumanians in their armistice terms so as to secure their surrender.

⁶⁷ FO371/43984/5268 FO tel. no.1067 to Cairo, 2nd April 1944 (copy of Molotov's declaration); Churchill note on declaration, 2nd April 1944.

⁶⁸ FO371/43984/5445 Sargent minute, 5th April 1944. Pragmatism made acceptance of the Soviet *fait accompli* expedient, if not palatable; and as Sargent pointed out somewhat phlegmatically, "M. Molotov's declaration is perhaps as good a way as any of regularising the position."

⁶⁹ PREM 3 399/6 Eden to Churchill, 25th January 1944, PM/44/21. Eden had informed Churchill that "I am convinced that we should agree to all these claims... I do not think anybody will mind about Roumania."

⁷⁰ Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, pp. 483-4, diary entry for 3rd April 1944. MacVeagh noted that the British had sent Antonescu a message that evening, urging him to act and referring him to Molotov's statement as an answer to Roumania's desire for territorial assurances:-

The message referred to "a clear and generous" statement of Molotov, but when Steel asked me I asked to have the "generous" taken out. I think in the circumstances it is generous, but I gather from a long background telegram that the State Department wants very much to avoid commitments on territorial questions, if this at all possible at this time, and to praise the Soviet statement, which presumes that Bessarabia and Bukovina will become Russian again for good and all after this war, would be in a sense to give assent to a territorial settlement in advance... So I got Steel to say he'd leave it out.

⁷¹ Quinlan, British and American Policies, pp. 92-3, citing FRUS 1944, IV, 169-70. In 1940, Hitler had awarded Hungary control over large tracts of Transylvania - at Roumania's expense - in what became known as the Vienna Award. For this episode, and its significance for Roumania, see Hitchins, Roumania, pp.449-50.

⁷² Quinlan, British and American Policies, p. 93.

⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 93, citing FRUS 1944, IV, 172-3. According to the State Department, "the terms are essentially Russian, not allied or tripartite; they are frankly based on the practical premise that the war with Roumania is Russia's own business." Roosevelt, somewhat hypocritically, told Hull that "he wanted to retain the idea of unconditional surrender in principle, but was willing to see it ignored in specific cases from time to time!"

⁷⁴ See Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, pp.493-4. MacVeagh saw a copy of Churchill's telegram to Molotov on 10th April, and paraphrased it in his diary that evening:-

HMG agrees [to the Russian terms], but suggests that as regard Transylvania's being restored, there should be a qualifying clause about the approval of the Peace Conference, and also adds that we presume that the Russians will allow the British and Americans to have political representatives in Roumania during the Armistice period, just as the Russians are allowed to do now in Italy. In conclusion, it expresses complete confidence that Russia will act in the interests of all the Allies, and says go ahead metaphorically, and God bless you.

In his report to the War Cabinet, Churchill did not dwell upon the realities of the Italian situation, and the limited influence which the Russians role on the ACC for that country permitted them. See in this connection Bruno Arcidiacono, "The Dress Rehearsal", HJ 28 (1985), pp.417-27.

⁷⁵ See Quinlan, British and American Policies, p.106, Molotov to Churchill, 10th April 1944. See also Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, p. 496. Novikov told MacVeagh on 11th April that he had heard from Moscow that "the British suggestions are acceptable."

⁷⁶ WM(44)47, 11th April 1944. See also PREM 3 374/13A Churchill to Cadogan, M.398/4, 12th April 1944; Cadogan to Churchill, PM/44/244, 14th April 1944. Churchill subsequently took up the matter of reparations with the FO, suggesting that it too should be subject to final revision at the Peace Conference. Cadogan told him that as the Soviets had not as yet specified any sum, there should be no difficulty in approaching them on this point and instructions were sent to Clark Kerr to raise the matter.

⁷⁷ Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, p. 490, diary entry for 6th April 1944.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p.496, diary entry for 12th April 1944. MacVeagh had received State Department authorisation to agree to the Soviet terms on 12th April, and told Novikov accordingly. The Soviet official had, however, taken a leaf from the British book, and already told Stirbey that Anglo-American approval had been communicated.

⁷⁹ See PREM 3 374/13A Cairo tel. no. 55 to Angora, 13th April 1944. The terms had been communicated to Stirbey in Cairo on 12th April. Copies had also been prepared for despatch to Maniu and Antonescu. These were to be sent via the Roumanian Minister in Ankara (or, as Churchill insisted on calling the Turkish capital, Angora). Novikov had apparently "made a lot of fuss about text of this message"; he seemed "concerned to insist on predominant role of his government in this matter." Moyne therefore instructed the British Embassy in Angora to alter the text of the communiqué to placate Novikov.

⁸⁰ Quinlan, British and American Policies, p.94. Maniu now asked that two Anglo-American airborne divisions be sent to Roumania, and that no other foreign troops should enter the country without an "express request" from the Roumanian Government. The FO reaction was, predictably, caustic; as one official minuted on 18th April, "it is high time that Maniu realised that Roumania is a defeated nation and in no position to dictate terms." See also Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, p.499. MacVeagh recorded in his diary on 17th April that Lord Moyne wanted to send stern replies to both Maniu and Antonescu, "calling their attention to the Russian armistice terms and demanding a prompt reply. He thinks it time these people realised where they stand."

⁸¹ See Quinlan, British and American Policies, p.94, citing FO minute about Maniu's proposals dated 22nd April 1944. See also Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, p.504, diary entry for 21st April 1944; Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p.233. MacVeagh thought that Maniu was being perverse. He now despaired of anything constructive coming from the negotiations. "What can you do with such people?", he asked. According to Barker, Maniu claimed that Antonescu "wished to continue the war at the side of Germany", and that he (Maniu), who accepted Molotov's assurances, would move against Antonescu with the backing of the King - but only once he was certain that the Marshal could not be budged.

⁸² Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p.234, citing Cairo tel. no. 1036 to FO, 22nd April 1944.

⁸³ See Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, pp.504 and 506. According to MacVeagh, he received notification from Washington approving Moyne's proposal about sending "prodding" telegrams to both Maniu and Antonescu on 21st April 1944. The State Department, however, balked at the suggestion that Antonescu should be threatened with denunciation as a war criminal if he prevaricated further. On 24th April 1944, Novikov told MacVeagh that the Soviets agreed to the "prodding" proposals.

⁸⁴ Quinlan, British and American Policies, p.94.

⁸⁵ See Hitchins, Roumania, p.497. Antonescu eventually rejected the Allied terms on 15th May 1944.

⁸⁶ Quinlan, British and American Policies, pp.94-5, citing a Cairo tel. to FO, 3rd May. Quinlan concludes that, for all their frustration with him and their criticism of his behaviour, the British now "decided that in the future they would have to rely on Maniu." See also Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, p.510. On 2nd May, MacVeagh had attended a conference with Moyne and Novikov about the state of the negotiations with Stirbey. According to his diary entry (recorded later that evening), "we agreed that there is nothing more to do as regards Antonescu, whose 72 hours have expired, and that as regards Maniu's new emissary, all that we can hope for is that he can give us some idea of conditions in the country; the terms to Maniu have been clearly stated... Steel said he thought it evident that Maniu can do nothing in Roumania now."

⁸⁷ See Quinlan, British and American Policies, pp. 94-8; Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, pp.236-9; also F.C. Nano, "The First Soviet Double Cross" in The Journal of Central European Affairs, no.12 (1952), pp.236-58. We now know that Antonescu was still negotiating with the Soviets through their respective legations in Stockholm. The Roumanian Minister in Stockholm, Frederick Nano, was apparently approached by Soviet agents on 11th April and told that they would prefer to negotiate with the Antonescu regime and not Maniu's emissary. The following day, Nano was given a copy of the terms presented to Stirbey in Cairo. According to Quinlan, this persuaded Antonescu that better terms might be obtained through exclusive, bilateral negotiations with Moscow. When these negotiations resumed on 22nd May, it initially appeared that this assumption was well-founded. On 31st May, the Soviets made several concessions. According to Quinlan, these included a promise that if the Germans evacuated Roumania within 15 days of her leaving the Axis camp, she could remain neutral; and an agreement that Roumania could establish a region to which foreign troops would have no access.

The British did not learn of these negotiations until the end of May, when Maniu's second emissary, Constantin Visioanu, arrived in Cairo; and they did not receive details of the Soviet proposals to Antonescu until July. When Visioanu arrived in Cairo in May, he informed the British that Maniu accepted the Soviet armistice proposals in principle, but in the light of the "better terms" being offered by the Soviets to Antonescu through the Stockholm channel, he wished to negotiate further. According to Quinlan, Steel thought that Maniu was "out of touch with realities"; and Moyne concluded that "nothing could illustrate better... the impossibility of obtaining any practical results through Maniu." However, the British had not learned of the substance of the Stockholm conversations - and did not do so until early July. On 8th July, the authorities in Cairo reported that they had received a copy of the Soviet proposals. These were: an unconditional promise to restore Transylvania to Roumania; the concession of "free areas" in which the Roumanian Government could continue to govern independently, and from which foreign troops would be excluded; leniency over reparations; and a 15 day gap between the signing of an armistice and a Roumanian declaration of war against Germany. These, of course, were quite different from the tripartite (Cairo) terms; but the FO decided to do nothing about what amounted to an obvious example of bad faith on Moscow's part. The Eden-Gusev "spheres of activity" arrangement was still

in the melting pot, and Whitehall therefore thought it expedient not to raise the matter.

⁸⁸FO371/43729/6133 FO tel. no. 1130 to Moscow, 14th April 1944 (Churchill to Molotov). Churchill now told Molotov that he was "expecting the Soviet Government to take the lead about Roumania on the terms we have agreed." He had not yet heard from the Americans, but as the Soviet Government had "probably already [been] informed direct from Washington" was not particularly worried by this. In fact, he even went so far as to offer Molotov support, should the Soviets require it. "Let me know whether there is anything you want me to do to help," he told the Commissar.

⁸⁹ibid., FO tel. no. 1149 to Moscow, 16th April 1944 (Churchill to Molotov).

⁹⁰FO371/43999/6674 Molotov to Churchill, 22nd April 1944.

⁹¹FO371/43686/6672 Churchill to Molotov, P.M.'s Personal tel. no.938/4, 23rd April 1944.

⁹²See Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, pp. 210-1, citing discussions of March 1944. Steel, in Cairo, had sparked debate in the FO on 4th March by proposing that the FO should consider a strategy for encouraging Hungary, Roumania and Bulgaria to defect from the Axis. Steel argued that "all three satellites were squeezed between the dominant fears of Russia and Germany and all see their principal hope of survival as independent states in some kind of relations with the Anglo-Saxon powers." According to Rose, of the Southern Department, this left HMG with a choice. Minuting on 8th March, he argued that "we can either continue to deal with them piecemeal, to carry on desultory and inconclusive contacts and to bomb them when we happen to have a few planes spare; or we can consider the Balkan problem as a whole, in relation to our general strategy, and make a determined effort by co-ordinating our policy towards all three countries with a military plan for bombing and possible invasion to get all three countries out of the war." Cavendish-Bentinck, the FO representative on the JIC (Joint Intelligence Committee), disagreed. On 10th March, he submitted a blunt, military-orientated appraisal of the situation, which effectively killed Steel's idea stone dead. "We have not forces available to carry out operations in the Balkans in the face of any organised German opposition," he warned, "and there is no hope of persuading the US Chiefs of Staff to agree to a large 'pre-arranged plan'. I do not think it is much good asking for an 'overall military policy for the Balkans' if there is not the wherewithal to carry it out." Cadogan was even more dismissive. "Mr. Steel seems to share the delusion of some of the satellites that we can stage a 'Balkan Expedition'," he minuted on 11th March. "We can't. We could tell Mr. Steel this. We can't tell the satellites." As he subsequently told Sargent on 23rd March, "it isn't so much a policy we want as an expeditionary force, and I'm afraid that's not forthcoming."

⁹³ See in this connection the arguments contained in FO371/43646/9092 Warner minute, 31st May 1944. This is discussed more fully in a subsequent chapter.

⁹⁴ Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p.234.

⁹⁵ See John Colville, The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries 1939-1955 (London 1985), pp. 486-7. In his diary entry of 30th April 1944, Colville recounted the impact that the Molotov second telegram made on Churchill when it arrived at Chequers (where he was staying):-

The evening was finally marred by the arrival of an offensive telegram from Molotov, who quite unjustifiably claimed we were intriguing behind the back of the Russians in Roumania. This set the P.M. off on his gloomy forebodings about the future tendencies of Russia.

⁹⁶ FO371/43999/6988 Molotov to Churchill, 28th April 1944. Molotov's complaints *vis-à-vis* Greece ran as follows:-

New changes have occurred in the Greek Government which hardly signify that a stable situation has been reached or that the legitimate desires of those Greeks, who are the representatives of the Greek National Movement, have been taken into consideration. From your messages it is apparent that the British Government controls Greek affairs and the Greek Government in a most direct manner. On the other hand, you, of course, understand that the Soviet Government cannot accept any responsibility for Greek affairs or for the measures taken by the British Government.

He was no less damning where Roumania was concerned. "I have already transmitted to you the wishes of the Soviet Government with regard to greater pressure being exercised on the Roumanians," he complained. "You have not yet communicated what steps the British Government intends to take in this connection. For their part, the Soviet troops are doing everything possible to increase the pressure on the Roumanian front."

⁹⁷ FO371/43999/6882 Molotov to Churchill, 29th April 1944. Molotov's accusation, which was based on the **AUTONOMOUS** party, was couched in the following terms:-

As is known, at the end of 1943 the British authorities sent to Roumania several British subjects who since that time have maintained connection with Marshal Antonescu... Although these persons are, it seems, considered to be prisoners of war of the Roumanian Government, they are in fact in the position of a semi-official British mission with the Antonescu Government... The lively political correspondence which is conducted with the help of the British group between Bucharest and Cairo bears

witness to the fact that the Antonescu Government co-operates with it in this activity. Such a position could not exist otherwise than as a result of a definite agreement between the British Government and the government of Roumania. I consider it necessary to draw your attention to the fact that the Soviet Government has not been informed officially by the British Government either about such an agreement or about the presence in Roumania of the British mission with Marshal Antonescu, just as it has not been informed about the tasks and aims of this British mission. The Soviet Government expects an explanation from the Government of Great Britain on this question.

⁹⁸Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p. 234, gives details of the plan for further SOE/OSS missions to Roumania, and the attempt to involve the Soviets.

⁹⁹FO371/43999/6882 Clutton minute, 30th April 1944, and draft tel. to Moscow.

¹⁰⁰FO371/43730/6897 Dew minute, 1st May 1944.

¹⁰¹Marshal Tito was the leader of the communist-dominated People's Liberation Movement (NOP) in Yugoslavia, usually referred to as the Partisans. EAM - the National Liberation Front - was the political wing of the communist-dominated resistance movement in Greece. ELAS - the Greek Popular Liberation Army - was its military wing.

¹⁰²See Alexander, Prelude to the Truman Doctrine, p.13; Papastratis, British Policy towards Greece, pp.163-5 for a review of developments in Greece in this period. The "government in the mountains" - known as the PEEA - to which Dew refers here was set up by EAM in March 1944 as an alternative to the Greek Government-in-Exile.

See Mark Wheeler, 'Crowning the Revolution: the British King Peter, and the Path to Tito's Cave' in R.T.B. Langhorne (ed.), Diplomacy and Intelligence during the Second World War: Essays in Honour of F.H. Hinsley (London 1985), for a narrative account of British involvement in Yugoslavia in this period. See also Victor Rothwell, Britain and the Cold War, p.499, footnote no.102 for a valid criticism of Wheeler's treatment of British policy towards Yugoslavia in this period. For evidence of increased Soviet involvement in Yugoslav affairs - and the British response - see PREM 3 511/9 FO tel. no.735 to Moscow, 17th March 1944; HM Chargé d'Affaires to YGE tel. no.272 to FO, 22nd March 1944 (including Churchill minute); Eden to Churchill, PM/44/181, 24th March 1944 (including draft tel. to Clark Kerr). See also PREM 3 511/3 *passim* for Churchill's subsequent correspondence with Molotov on the subject. As Eden explained to Churchill on 24th March 1944, the Soviet Press had launched a propaganda offensive against the Yugoslav Government-in-Exile - a move that seemed to presage a public repudiation of

the YGE by the Soviet Government and their declaration of support for Tito. The British, who still harboured some hopes of brokering an agreement between King Peter and Tito, were afraid that this would condemn their initiative to failure; and Eden had directed Clark Kerr to ask Molotov to hold fire on further attacks. He was also told to promise that HMG would keep Moscow fully informed of developments. Churchill's subsequent telegrams to Molotov (of 14th and 23rd April 1944) briefed the Soviet Foreign Minister on the state of play.

¹⁰³ FO371/43730/6897 Howard minute, 1st May 1944. Eden noted rather dryly against this that "I am always a little doubtful." He had been unhappy about the frequency of Leeper's communications with Novikov for some time, and had instructed him on several occasions to brief his Soviet colleague more regularly.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, Sargent minute, 1st May 1944. In his opinion, little would be gained by attempting to answer Molotov's last message. "I hope," he minuted, "that we shall now be able to let this correspondence die."

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, Eden minute, 1st May 1944. The Foreign Secretary ended his minute by instructing Sargent to see Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, head of PWE (the Political Warfare Executive, responsible for war-time propaganda), "in next 48 hours." Eden was adamant: "our propaganda to Balkans must cease boosting Russians." See in this connection Kenneth Young (ed.), The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart: Vol. II 1939-1965 (London 1980), pp.302-5 and 309. Sargent sent a letter on the subject to Lockhart on 3rd May 1944. The head of PWE, responding the next day, took strong exception to the Foreign Secretary's 'stories'. "We do not 'boost' the Russians in our propaganda to the Balkans," he insisted. "Obviously, when the Russian army advances, it makes propaganda for the Russians. When it advances into or towards Roumania, it makes Russian propaganda both in Roumania and in the Balkans. Conversely, when there is a lull on the Russian front as at present, there is little or no Russian news in our Balkan bulletins." According to Lockhart, the FO was particularly put out by PWE's handling of propaganda towards Bulgaria, and that Eden's latest outburst had been provoked by a "one-sided paper by Frank Roberts who minuted that 'for months past British propaganda had done little else but Russian propaganda!'" Lockhart subsequently met Eden and Sargent in the Foreign Secretary's office at the FO on 11th May, at which the problem was apparently resolved.

¹⁰⁷ Indeed, and as we shall see, this minute led to the production of the FO paper WP(44)304 "Soviet Policy in the Balkans", 7th June 1944 by the Southern Department. See Chapter V below for the production of this paper.

¹⁰⁸ FO371/43999/7016 Churchill draft telegram to Molotov, 1st May 1944.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.* He was adamant on this point, writing that "you are absolutely mad if you suppose we are in any intrigue with Roumania or anyone in Roumania, or any evil interest in Roumania to the detriment of your operations and of the common cause."

¹¹⁰ See, in this connection, FO371/43304/2128 Churchill minute to Eden, M.338/4, 1st April 1944. "Once we get onto the continent with a large commitment," he had warned, "the Russians will have the means of blackmail, which they have not at the present, by refusing to advance beyond a certain point, or even tipping the wink to the Germans that they can move troops into the West."

¹¹¹ Martin Wight, Power Politics, p.97.

¹¹² FO371/43999/7016 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/301, 1st May 1944.

¹¹³ *ibid.* Indeed, according to Eden, they were "utterly baseless."

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, contains the final form of Churchill's response (FO tel. no. 1328, 2nd May 1944, P.M.'s Personal tel. no.1026/4).

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, FO tel. no.1329 to Moscow, 2nd May 1944.

¹¹⁶ FO371/43999/6988 Rose minute, 2nd May 1944.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, Howard minute, 2nd May 1944.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, Sargent minute, 3rd May 1944; Eden minute, 6th May 1944.

¹¹⁹ PREM 3 66/8 FO tel. no. 1261 to Moscow, 26th April 1944.

¹²⁰ See in this connection Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, pp. 214-20; and PREM 3 79/1 *passim* for documents to this effect. See also PREM 3 66/8 FO tel. no. 1261 to Moscow, 26th April 1944, referring to Moscow tel. no.913 to FO, 5th April 1944. Although the Soviet Government had been operating an active propaganda campaign against the Bulgarian regime for some time, they had consistently resisted British attempts to get her to declare war on - or even to co-ordinate policies towards - Bulgaria. The British nevertheless persisted in their efforts to enlist Soviet help against Sofia. Learning that the Soviets were planning to return their Minister to Sofia, the British had decided to sound out Moscow again. Early in April, Clark Kerr had approached Vyshinsky, and asked him about any "plans the Soviet Government might have for exploiting the situation in Bulgaria." The FO now wanted to know whether an answer had been forthcoming to this inquiry. "If not," they felt, "it seems odd since we understand the Minister has now returned to his post."

¹²¹ PREM 3 66/8 FO tel. no. 1261 to Moscow, 26th April 1944. As the FO now warned Clark Kerr, recent evidence from Moyne in Cairo "seems to show

that the Russians are preserving an impartial attitude to Bulgaria's claim to Greek territory."

¹²²ibid. According to available information, Tito's programme for political reconstruction included a proposal for the establishment of an autonomous Macedonia. In the FO's opinion, "if such a state were to come into existence and were to coalesce with Bulgaria, as would be quite natural, this would represent a large acquisition of territory to Bulgaria at the expense of Yugoslavia." EAM, for their part, had already negotiations with Bulgarian Communists in which they had apparently agreed to the retention by Bulgaria of Greek territory.

¹²³ibid. Clark Kerr was left with few illusions on this score. He was informed that "as for the idea of an autonomous Macedonia, His Majesty's Government do not wish to commit themselves on this matter until the peace settlement and then only in agreement with fully representative Yugoslavian and Greek Governments." In other words, the tried and tested policy - or non-policy - of avoiding long term political commitments was to be applied in the case of Macedonia.

¹²⁴ibid., Moscow tel. no. 1117 to FO, 30th April 1944. Clark Kerr sent copies of the Soviet-Bulgarian exchanges in Moscow tel. no. 1118 to FO, 1st May 1944.

¹²⁵ibid. Clark Kerr speculated at some length on what lay behind Tito's ideas here:-

As regards the inclusion of an autonomous Macedonia in Marshal Tito's programme: can it be that his staff is using the idea as a means of encouraging Bulgaria at some appropriate time to enter into a greater Yugoslavia which would include both their own country and Macedonia as autonomous units? i.e. something in the nature of the integral Yugoslav concept which before the war found such widespread favour both in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.

He said nothing to suggest that the Soviets had any great enthusiasm for the idea.

¹²⁶ibid., Moscow tel. no. 1137 to FO, 2nd May 1944 (copy of **Red Star** article, 30th April 1944).

¹²⁷ibid., Moscow tel. no. 1139 to FO, 2nd May 1944.

¹²⁸ibid. He told the FO that, "when speaking about the Balkan situation, I shall draw attention to the unfortunate impression **Trud's** article conveys at the time we are bending our efforts towards restoration of Greek unity."

¹²⁹ibid., Moscow tel. no. 1140 to FO, 2nd May 1944.

¹³⁰ *ibid.* "Until reading the press report," he complained, "I was unaware of the full scope of Tito's programme."

¹³¹ *ibid.*, A copy of this article was enclosed with Moscow tel. no. 1141 to FO.

¹³² *ibid.*, Moscow tel. no. 1141 to FO, 2nd May 1944.

¹³³ See in this connection FO371/37173 *passim*. It is interesting to compare and contrast these arguments with those advanced over a year earlier by Sir George Rendel, the former British Ambassador to the YGE. Rendel had believed the shape of the post-war settlement in south eastern Europe would be determined by the resolution of what he described as the Bulgarian Question. He had argued that Bulgaria would have to be brought into a general scheme for Balkan reconstruction, because her exclusion from any such scheme - as a punishment for her adherence to the Axis camp - would seriously undermine the post-war regional peace and security that the FO were working towards (through their advocacy of the policy of confederation). He was particularly concerned that, unless his warnings were heeded, by excluding Bulgaria, the other Balkan states (and by association Great Britain) would drive her into the open arms of the Soviet Union. A defeated Bulgaria would, Rendel feared, be particularly susceptible to Russian influence in the post-war period. The Bulgarian nation had close historical and ethnic links to Mother Russia; and, if treated as a pariah in the post-war period, would turn to their traditional Great Power patron for succour. This process might follow a variety of paths: the Bulgarians might fall prey to an indigenous communist take-over, which would undoubtedly be sustained by natural pro-Russian sentiments; or, alternatively, they might appeal for Russian aid along more traditional, pan-Slav, lines. The Russians, for their part, would be most unlikely to ignore such an appeal. Their own undoubted interest in the Balkans aside, they would be unable to ignore calls for assistance - whether from political "co-religionists" or ethnic cousins - for fear of compromising their great power status. They would therefore be drawn inexorably into the affairs of the peninsula - a possibility that the British, who also had interests in the region, regarded with dread.

Rendel also believed that the greatest danger lay with the threat of indigenous communist foment; which, spreading from a Bulgarian base, would sweep the Balkans and force Russia to intervene (whether Stalin wanted to or not). In order to forestall this, he had argued that HMG should support the idea of South-Slav federation as an answer to the Bulgarian - and therefore the Balkan - question. By incorporating Bulgaria into a Balkan super-state - firstly by means of a union with Yugoslavia, and subsequently by expanding this to include Greece and Turkey - the threat of her turning to Russia would be diminished; and the prospect of Russia dominating the region in the post-war period would be reduced. These arguments had, however, fallen foul of prevailing FO wisdom; and, in particular, the views of Sir Orme Sargent. They had also lost much of their significance when the British proposals for confederation-building were rejected by the Russians at the Moscow Conference. (See below, footnote no. 140). However, in the end, his predictions

about the danger of an indigenous communist take-over were to prove remarkably accurate. Bulgaria was not, of course, the centre of communist contagion - Tito's Partisan movement, and to a lesser extent EAM, were the most significant instruments of communist foment in the Balkans - but in other respects Rendel's thesis was vindicated. It was arguably the *internal* communist dynamic that forced the Balkan Question onto the political agenda in the spring of 1944. The interests which Great Britain and Soviet Russia had in the region - and the manner in which the activities of the indigenous communist movements cut across these - forced those Great Powers to tackle political issues in a way that they would arguably have preferred to avoid. Even at this stage, therefore, it is tempting to argue that the tyranny of the weak exercised a very real influence over the policies of the powerful.

¹³⁴ See PREM 3 66/8 Churchill to FO, M.495/4 and M.499/4, 4th May 1944. The first of these minutes was prompted by Churchill's interest in the Yugoslav resistance, and his on-going effort to reconcile Tito with King Peter. He was due to meet with Fitzroy MacLean and other British officers involved with the resistance in Yugoslavia on the following Saturday, and the Macedonian question was evidently one of the issues which he hoped to raise at this meeting. "Let me have a note of not more than one page on the Macedonian issues," he instructed, "illustrated by a map. Comment, please, upon the question of 'an autonomous Macedonia'." Churchill attached great importance to MacLean's role as his representative with Tito in Yugoslavia, as he indicated in this minute to the FO by commenting that "I presume that Brigadier MacLean is being kept in full touch with all such telegrams affecting Yugoslavia." The second minute reinforced the first, with Churchill now asking the Foreign Office to explain the importance of the **Red Star** article. "Please explain the articulation of all this," he asked, "Bulgaria, Macedonia, Tito's proclamation etc. - in simple terms on one page."

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, Churchill to Cadogan, M.502/4, 5th May 1944.

¹³⁶ There is an extensive literature about British involvement in Yugoslavia in this period. For a useful cross-section, see: Sir Llewellyn Woodward, British Foreign Policy, Vol. III, Chapter XLI; Elisabeth Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, Chapter 13; _____, 'Some Factors in British Decision-making over Yugoslavia 1941-44' in Auty and Clogg (eds.), British Policy towards Wartime Resistance; Mark Wheeler, Britain and the War for Yugoslavia (Boulder 1980); _____, 'Crowning the Revolution' in Langhorne (ed.), Diplomacy and Intelligence; Heather Williams, 'The Special Operations Executive and Yugoslavia, 1941-1945' (PhD thesis, Southampton University 1994); Stevan K. Pavlowitch, 'Out of Context - The Yugoslav Government-in-Exile in London 1941-1945' in the Journal of Contemporary History, Vol.16 (1981); _____, 'London-Moscow Through the Fog of Yugoslavia's Wartime Drama' in Storia Delle Relazioni Internazionali, Vol.III (1987) and Vol.IV (1988). For a useful cross-sections of documents on British policy towards Yugoslavia in general - and the decision to support Tito and repudiate General Mihailović in particular - see PREM 3 510/10 and 13; and PREM 3 511/2, 9, 10 and 12, *passim*.

¹³⁷ PREM 3 66/8 Churchill to Eden, M. 510/4, 7th May 1944.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, Eden to Churchill, PM/44/334, 12th May 1944.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, Eden to Churchill, PM/44/336, 12th May 1944.

¹⁴⁰ See in this connection Sainsbury, Turning Point, Chapter IV and appendices, for a narrative account of the discussions at Moscow, and documents relating to the confederation proposals. See also Sir Llewellyn Woodward, British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, Vol.III (London 1972), pp.591-2. The official minutes of the conference are filed in FO371/37031/6921. For a subsequent Southern Department reaction to the decision to abandon the proposals, see FO371/37173/13912 Howard minute, 20th November 1943.

¹⁴¹ FO371/42677/4373 Smuts tel. no.320 to Churchill and Eden, 20th March 1944. Smuts had written in the following vein:-

There is already much in present Russian action which is obscure and disquieting, and with the immense power which Russia is likely to wield in the post-war world, the whole field of her foreign policy has to be surveyed with great circumspection. There are here involved the interests and future of the British Empire, including India, as well as those of the Middle East and South Eastern Europe... I consider it necessary that the conference should have before it an objective survey of the historical data on the whole set of problems as a starting point and ground work for its discussions.

¹⁴² FO371/42677/5911 Colville to Lawford, 13th April 1944:-

Mr. Churchill considers that a paper on past Russian policy should certainly be prepared, as General Smuts suggests, the objects being not to assemble all the arguments for and against this expansive topic, but to put down two or three salient conclusions. The matter can then be discussed with General Smuts when he arrives.

¹⁴³ Martin Gilbert, Road to Victory, pp.756-7, citing CAB 99/28 Meeting of Prime Ministers, PMM (44) 2nd Meeting. For a summary of British military strategy in 1944 - and the question of the Mediterranean strategy and the possibility of Balkan operations - see: David Hunt, 'British Military Planning and Aims in 1944' in Deakin, Barker and Chawick (eds.), British Political and Military Strategy, pp.1-20; Alex Danchev, 'Great Britain: the Indirect Strategy' in D. Reynolds, W. Kimball and O. Chubarian (eds.), Allies at War: the Soviet, American and British Experience 1939-45 (London 1994), pp.1-26.

¹⁴⁴ Gilbert, Road to Victory, pp. 767-8, citing CAB 99/28 Meeting of Prime Ministers, PMM (44) 4th Meeting.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, pp.755-6, citing CAB 99/28 Meeting of Prime Ministers, PMM (44) 6th Meeting.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.* The Australian Prime Minister had strong views about how HMG should approach this. "We should aim at establishing as early as possible some kind of stable Government in the countries which had been over-run," he argued. However, and as Curtin himself appreciated, this would not necessarily be easy. As Gilbert points out, "he did not overlook the difficulties, and he fully accepted that in countries such as Yugoslavia or Greece, those who fought the enemy must, whatever their party allegiance, receive our support during the war, and might thereby consolidate their local political position for the post-war period."

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 768, citing CAB 99/28 Meeting of Prime Ministers, PMM (44) 7th Meeting.

¹⁴⁸ FO371/43730/6897 Eden minute, 1st May 1944.

¹⁴⁹ FO371/43999/7078 Moscow tel. no. 1142 to FO, 2nd May 1944.

¹⁵⁰ FO371/43686/7029 Washington tel. no. 2236 to FO, 29th April 1944.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, FO tel. no. 4229 to Washington, 13th May 1944. Indeed, the reply that was eventually despatched upholds this view: Halifax was told to avoid further discussions of this sort, as the matter was already in hand and required no undue complication. He was informed that "the whole question of the Soviet Government's policy both towards Greece and towards other Balkan States and of the action we ourselves should take is now under urgent consideration."

¹⁵² FO371/43686/7008 Leeper tel. no. 296 to FO, 1st May 1944.

¹⁵³ This was merely speculation on Leeper's part; and largely irrelevant at that. If Molotov *had* ordered Novikov to lie low, he could have done so for several reasons. He might have been complying with Churchill's request for assistance (as opposed to ideological warfare) in bringing stability to Greek affairs. He might, alternatively, have been ordering a localised diplomatic cease-fire in order to concentrate his efforts on other fronts.

¹⁵⁴ FO371/43686/7008 FO tel. no.198 to Leeper, 2nd May 1944. As we have already seen, Novikov's portfolio was not restricted to Greece. As the senior Soviet official in Cairo, he had a variety of responsibilities. Particularly important in this connection is the fact that he represented the Soviets in matters involving Roumania - and there, too, (as we have seen) he had suffered somewhat high-handed treatment from the British. All of this begs the question: had Molotov's outburst been prompted by a breakdown in communication at Cairo? Had the Soviets, unfurnished with up-to-date information, misread British policy, and therefore retaliated (as Churchill claimed) against a "mare's nest"? The FO could not rule out this possibility, and

Eden had certainly felt strongly enough to write directly to Leeper about it, trying to make sure that Leeper kept in contact with Novikov.

See also in this connection FO371/43686/7008 FO tel. no.209 to Leeper of 9th May 1944. Eden, following his conversation with Gusev on 5th May, instructed Leeper to approach his Soviet colleague. "I have emphasised the position to the Soviet Ambassador here and have asked him to press the Soviet Government to give us their collaboration and support," he telegraphed. "I think there might be advantage in your speaking to Novikov with equal frankness."

¹⁵⁵ FO371/43686/7101, Leeper tel. no. 299 to FO, 3rd May 1944.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*, Laskey minute, 4th May 1944. As Laskey now pointed out, "if we could be reasonably sure that the Soviet Government would work legally with us there might be distinct advantages in allowing them to send officers to join the allied liaison mission in Greece":-

It would put an end to Soviet excuses that they know nothing about the country and it might result in their taking a more realistic view of the situation. With EAM "distance lends enchantment" and it may be noted that a number of Russian prisoners of war, both officers and men, who have escaped... have the utmost distaste and contempt for ELAS but are most anxious to work with our missions.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, Howard minute, 5th May 1944. Eden subsequently noted (in an undated minute) that Gusev had mentioned "rather meaningfully during our talk that we had missions in Greece whereas the Russians had not." The Foreign Secretary had remained unmoved by this, for, as he told the Department, "I did not rise to what may have been a fly."

¹⁵⁸ Gilbert, Road to Victory, p.754, citing Churchill to Eden, M.483/4, 2nd May 1944.

¹⁵⁹ FO371/43686/7479 Churchill to Eden, M.493/4, 4th May 1944.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*, Howard minute, 5th May 1944.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.* Howard was adamant on this point. "We all agree, I think, that we should not yield to the Russians in Greece," he minuted. "The Secretary of State spoke to M. Gusev this morning about Russian co-operation with us regarding our policy in Greece, and we shall not I presume help the Russians to send a mission to EAM. We are going to discuss with Brigadier MacLean the question of contact between Tito and EAM."

¹⁶² PREM 3 374/13A, Cairo tel. no. 1123 to FO, 2nd May 1944.

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, Churchill to Eden, M.492/4, 4th May 1944. The Prime Minister told Eden to inform Moyne of his approval. "It would be wise to let the Russians have their way in imposing the ban," he minuted. "When the Press get angry and Questions are asked in the House of Commons, you will be able to say that we are deferring to Russian wishes in the matter. At present the pretence is being kept up by the crackpot journalists that Russia is the foundation of all liberty of the press."

¹⁶⁴ FO371/43636/7380 Churchill to Eden, M.497/4, 4th May 1944.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, Churchill to Eden, M.498/4, 4th May 1944.

Endnotes:- Chapter IV

¹ FO371/43686/7102 Moscow tel. no. 1139 to FO, 2nd May 1944; Eden minute, undated.

² *ibid.*, Laskey minute, 4th May 1944, and brief for Eden.

³ In the circumstances, this assessment seems to have been very mild. Laskey certainly showed no inclination to speculate about hidden Soviet agendas at this juncture. However, it should be remembered that he was supposed to be offering tactical advice for a meeting at which co-operation, not confrontation, was to be the order of the day. In the circumstances, therefore, his omission of speculative (and unsubstantiable) assessments of Soviet motives probably reflected not so much naiveté on his part as a desire to avoid unnecessary and unhelpful digression. In any case, and as we have already seen, the wider question of Soviet policy in the Balkans was being considered elsewhere.

⁴ FO371/43686/7102 Laskey minute, 4th May 1944. As Laskey pointed out, "the statements need only endorse the purpose for which the conference has been called and exhort the representatives who will be taking part in it to reach agreement on a Government which will be fully representative of Greek opinion."

⁵ *ibid.*, FO brief, 4th May 1944. The brief was clear on this point. "We trust that the Soviet Government will feel able to assist us in this matter," it argued, "since the establishment of unity in Greece, in addition to its long term results, might have considerable effect on military developments in the immediate future."

⁶ FO371/43686/7214 Eden draft telegram to Clark Kerr, 5th May 1944.

⁷ *ibid.* As Eden told Clark Kerr:-

I referred briefly to our project to drop a further party of eighteen men in Roumania, *to which the Soviet Government had agreed*, though I thought without much enthusiasm. In view of the necessity for avoiding any further misunderstanding, we had decided to postpone the despatch of these men, and if we should decide later to send them we would not do so without prior consultation with the Soviet Government.

⁸ FO371/43636/7380 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/323, 9th May 1944. Subsequent extracts are from this paper unless otherwise stated.

⁹ Eden was unhappy about this idea. As he explained, "although this might not be a bad thing as far as the Russians are concerned, the general interpretation would be that there were serious differences of opinion between the Russians on the one hand and ourselves on the other, either on the opening of the Second Front, or over general policy."

¹⁰ See Chapter V on the FO memorandum "Soviet Policy in the Balkans." The following quote is worth repeating at this juncture:-

It will not be easy to show that they have embarked on a policy of communising the Balkans even if we suspect that this is their long term objective. It is true that they are supporting Tito and give signs of doing the same with EAM but they can argue that they are only following in our footsteps and for the same reason as ours, namely to help the common war effort by mobilising the forces of resistance... It is we ourselves who have built up Tito and his Partisan communist organisation... it was SOE who originally launched and supported EAM. In both cases we backed them for immediate operational reasons in spite of their being communist movements. It is an unfortunate fact that communists seem to make the best guerrilla leaders.

¹¹ This explains the following remarks (referred to in Chapter V, in connection with the FO memorandum "Soviet Policy in the Balkans"):-

I agree with you that the time has come for us to consider from the long term view what is going to be the after-war effect of these developments instead of confining ourselves as hitherto to the short term view of what will give us the best dividends during the war and for the war.

¹² As he now told Churchill, "the Soviet Government have not yet shown their hand except to declare through the mouth of Molotov that they do not intend to 'alter the social structure of Roumania as it exists at present'."

¹³ As Eden pointed out by way of a conclusion, "I have the whole problem under examination and until we have reached some conclusion I feel it would be wiser not to take any decision."

¹⁴ Gilbert, Road to Victory, p.761, citing Churchill to Eden, M.537/4, 8th May 1944. The Prime Minister had been writing about Soviet radio attacks on the Polish resistance. He had been particularly sanguine about the future, writing that "I fear that very great evil may come upon the world. This time at any rate we and the Americans will be heavily armed."

¹⁵ FO371/43636/7380 Churchill note on PM/44/323, 21st May 1944.

¹⁶ FO371/43999/6988 Sargent minute, 3rd May; Eden minute, 6th May 1944.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, FO tel. no. 1438 to Moscow, 12th May 1944. This was drafted by Rose on 10th May, and approved by Sargent on 11th May.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, FO minute of 14th May 1944. The signature of the minuting official is difficult to identify. The deleted passage was as follows:-

If Molotov reverts to Roumanian question and asks what steps we are taking you should explain that we are doing all we can at present by following the Russian lead in political negotiations... and in maintaining our bombing attacks on Roumanian targets. If the Soviet Government want us to do anything more they have only to suggest what it should be. You should make it absolutely clear that expect the Russians to give the lead.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, Rose minute, 17th May 1944. As Rose explained, "I had discussed this with Mr. Howard and we still think we should say something to the Russians about this, otherwise they will only come back at us later and say that we have been unco-operative and refused to help in their Roumanian policy."

²⁰ *ibid.*, FO tel. no. 1517 to Moscow, 20th May 1944.

²¹ FO371/43999/7016 Eden to Churchill, PM/33/301, 1st May 1944.

²² FO371/43999/7287 Moscow tel. no. 1185 to FO, 6th May 1944, and Eden note on margin.

²³ FO371/44000/7756 Churchill to Eden, M.513/4, 7th May 1944.

²⁴ FO371/43999/7287 Howard minute, 10th May 1944.

²⁵ FO371/44000/7556 Molotov to Churchill, 10th May 1944.

²⁶ *ibid.*, Eden minute, 11th May 1944.

²⁷ *ibid.*, Dixon minute, 11th May 1944.

²⁸ CAB65/46 WM(44)63 Confidential Annex, 11th May 1944. Subsequent citations are from this source unless otherwise stated.

²⁹ As we have seen, he did not acknowledge it until 21st May.

³⁰ FO371/43999/7016 PM/44/301, 1st May 1944. Eden had told Churchill that the mission had been sent with the object of "re-establishing of contact with Maniu, with whom SOE had previously been in touch":-

The party was intended to be purely operational and to discuss questions of sabotage, etc. It was also to try to convince Maniu that the only possible course for Roumania to take was unconditional surrender to the three principal Allies. It was made perfectly clear that the party was not in any way to undertake political negotiations.

³¹ Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, pp.228-9, citing Moscow tel. no.1362 to FO, 19th November 1943; Quinlan, British and American Policies, pp.87-8, citing a Rose minute of 7th January 1944.

³² FO371/37031/6921 Record of Moscow Conference: 7th Meeting, 25th October 1943.

³³ FO371/44000/7829 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/341, 14th May 1944.

³⁴ FO371/43999/7287 Eden minute, 12th May 1944. Eden told his secretary that "I should like a word with Mr. Howard about this when he has seen Cabinet minutes."

³⁵ FO371/44000/7829 Howard minute, 12th May 1944.

³⁶ *ibid.*, Eden to Churchill, PM/44/341, 14th May 1944. See also FO371/43999/7287 Rose minute, 9th May 1944. In fact, the "detailed account" was effectively the same as an earlier Rose minute of 9th May, written after the FO had received Clark Kerr's report of his interview with Molotov on 6th May 1944.

³⁷ FO371/44000/7756 Rose draft minute responding to M.513/4, 10th May 1944; Rose minute, 12th May 1944.

³⁸ FO371/44000/7829 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/341, 14th May 1944. This explained the situation as follows:-

The first and fourth of these messages contained rude passages about Russia and it looks as if Molotov's second outburst about de Chastellain was again due not so much to his actual presence in Roumania but to his having been the channel for communicating messages offensive to Soviet *amour propre*. These messages were passed on to the Russians because it has been our policy through the Stirbey negotiations to keep nothing from them.

³⁹ *ibid.* Eden informed Churchill of the line which he now favoured:-

I submit a draft telegram to Clark Kerr saying that you will be sending no reply to Molotov's latest effort and telling him to repeat and supplement his previous explanations. I have already asked Moyne to see that instructions are at once sent to de Chastellain to make no further use of his cypher, and to send out no more messages.

⁴⁰ FO371/44000/7756 Rose draft minute responding to M.513/4, 10th May 1944.

⁴¹ See Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p.140, and pp.236-7, for this episode.

⁴² FO371/44000/7829 Churchill to Eden, 15th May; Dixon note, 15th May.

⁴³ Kimball, Complete Correspondence - Vol. III, pp.136-7, Churchill tel. no.678 to Roosevelt, 19th May 1944.

⁴⁴ Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, p.235, citing Churchill to Eden, M.647/4, 28th May 1944, including Eden note in margin.

⁴⁵ FO371/44000/7719 Howard minute, 16th May 1944.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, Sargent minute, 16th May 1944; Eden minute, 18th May 1944.

⁴⁷ See PREM 3 374/13A Eden to Churchill, PM/44/321, 9th May 1944. Eden had told Churchill that the Russian demand for a Press blackout where Stirbey's mission was concerned should be accepted. "I agree that it is best to let the Russians have their way in this," he had minuted. "I doubt if we shall have trouble in the House and the Press are not as interested in Roumania as they are in Greek and Yugoslavian affairs."

⁴⁸ FO371/43999/7078 Moscow tel. no. 1142 to FO, 2nd May 1944 (Clark Kerr to Eden).

⁴⁹ FO371/43686/7332 Leeper tel. no. 309 to FO, 8th May 1944.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, Laskey minute, 9th May 1944. According to Laskey, "if the Soviet radio has stopped boosting EAM it looks as though our representations to M. Molotov must have had some effect. M. Novikov's attitude has evidently not changed: he may be acting on his own initiative or his previous instructions may not have been amended."

⁵¹ *ibid.*, Howard minute, 9th May 1944.

⁵² *ibid.*, Eden minute, 12th May 1944.

⁵³ FO371/43636/7903 Eden draft tel. to Clark Kerr, 18th May 1944.

⁵⁴ FO371/43686/7214 Eden draft tel. to Clark Kerr, 5th May 1944.

⁵⁵ CAB 65/42 WM(44)65, 18th May 1944.

⁵⁶ FO371/43636/7903 Eden note on draft tel. to Clark Kerr, 18th May 1944.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, Laskey minute, 22nd May 1944.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, Howard minute, 23rd May 1944.

⁵⁹ Elisabeth Barker, 'Problems of the Alliance', in Deakin, Barker and Chadwick (eds.), British Political and Military Strategy, p. 52, (citing Michael Charlton, The Eagle and the Small Birds (London 1984)).

⁶⁰ See FO371/37029/6006 Eden to Gusev, 10th October 1943 for details of the draft declaration that Eden submitted to the Conference; and FO371/37031/6921 for the discussions in Moscow. For the fate of this declaration, see Keith Sainsbury, The Turning Point, Chapter IV.

⁶¹ FO371/43636/7903 Sargent minute, 24th May 1944.

⁶² FO371/43646/8130 Knatchbull-Hugesson letter to Sargent, 15th May 1944.

⁶³ FO371/43646/8130 Clutton minute, 25th May 1944.

⁶⁴ FO371/43646/8130 Sargent letter to Knatchbull-Hugesson, 2nd June 1944 (my emphasis).

Endnotes:- Chapter V

¹ See in this connection Chapter II, and PREM 3 485/8 *passim*. This strict adherence to principle was somewhat unfortunate; for, as we have seen, the practical value of that document was already being called into question by Churchill, and, in particular, by Cadogan.

² See above, Chapters III and IV.

³ FO371/43335/1008 Warner paper, "Probable Post-War Tendencies in Soviet Foreign Policy", 28th February 1944.

⁴ FO371/43636/7380 Churchill to Eden, M.497/4, 4th May 1944.

⁵ See above Chapter III, pp.29-30; FO371/43730/6897 Eden minute, 1st May 1944; FO371/43636/7380 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/323, 9th May 1944. An extract from the earlier minute headed the first draft of "Soviet Policy in the Balkans", circulated on 16th May (see below), but was omitted from the final paper.

⁶ FO371/43636/7380 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/323, 9th May 1944.

⁷ FO371/37173/6753 Rose minute, 6th August 1943. See also FO371/37173/13912 Howard minute, 20th November 1943.

⁸ FO371/43646/9092 first draft of "Soviet Policy in the Balkans", 16th May 1944, makes this point, especially in relation to Greece. In an appendix detailing the respective positions of Russia and Great Britain regarding each Balkan country, the situation in Greece was explained in the following terms:-

At the Moscow Conference M. Stalin let it be understood that the Soviet Government had very little information about the position in Greece and were not particularly interested in that country. It was reasonable to assume from this that they would let us take the lead in dealing with Greek affairs. For some time this assumption seemed to be correct, but the Soviet Government's attitude has markedly changed within the last month.

As previous papers on policy towards Greece reveal, this assumption of Soviet disinterest had encouraged the British to treat Greece as a special case - in other words, to follow a relatively unilateral line in dealing with Greek political issues, and, in particular, the indigenous resistance movements. The importance of the country to Britain's long-term strategic interests (as defined by the various planning committees and the FO) can only have exacerbated this tendency.

⁹ See in this connection FO371/43305/3554 Wilson minute, 19th April 1944.

¹⁰ FO371/43335/2652 Warner minute, 5th May 1944 (on Canadian Embassy despatch no.74 to Ottawa, 9th March 1944).

¹¹ *ibid.* According to Wilgress, these were: recognition of the incorporation of the Baltic States into the USSR; the establishment of a Russo-Polish frontier "ethnographically just and strategically satisfactory" to the Soviet way of thinking; the securing of adequate reparations from Germany; the disarmament of Germany, and suppression of future aggressive tendencies on Germany's part; and the avoidance of anything akin to an Anglo-Saxon-German rapprochement "that appears aimed against the Soviet Union."

¹² *ibid.* Eden noted "they can indeed" against this point in Warner's minute.

¹³ *ibid.*, Eden minute, 7th May 1944.

¹⁴ FO371/43646/9092 first draft of "Soviet Policy in the Balkans", 16th May 1944.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, Warner minute, 31st May 1944. Warner made extensive alterations to the text of Sargent's draft - it is these that are highlighted in subsequent footnotes.

¹⁶ Warner objected to this wording, and suggested an alternative: namely, that "...such elements are most responsive to their own influence and are the most vigorous in resisting the Axis." This was ultimately accepted in favour of the original.

¹⁷ Sargent had of course been a major advocate of the policy of confederation, which may help explain the somewhat bitter tone of this section of the memorandum.

¹⁸ Warner objected to the highlighted passages. The first was, he felt, unclear; the second, he objected to in substance. "I think it a rash assumption," he minuted, "and I think the word 'Communist' is probably being used inaccurately." Both passages were subsequently omitted.

¹⁹ At Warner's suggestion, this was subsequently replaced by "pro-Russian."

²⁰ See above, Chapter IV.

²¹ The first draft contained the underlined passages; the bracketed phrases were included in the final version at Warner's request.

²² Sargent subsequently inserted the underlined passage, after discussing the paper with Warner.

²³The underlined passage was inserted at Warner's request. These comments are particularly interesting in view of the subsequent American reaction to the proposals, and the argument which ensued between Churchill and Roosevelt. This is discussed below in Chapter VI.

²⁴This passage was subsequently amended by Warner, who suggested that HMG should "focus our influence in the Balkans by consolidating our position in Greece and Turkey and... bring about and utilise Turco-Greek friendship as a fundamental factor in South East Europe and the Mediterranean."

²⁵Warner clarified this point. In his opinion, care would have to be taken "in order to avoid an open contest with the Russians."

²⁶Warner objected to "bloc", and it was subsequently replaced by "association." See also FO371/43646/9092 Cadogan insertion, 25th May 1944. Cadogan was afraid that even after softening the proposal in this way, it would still cause problems. "Such an association," he warned, "might be regarded with suspicion by the Soviet Government." He was, however, in agreement with the general thrust of Sargent's thesis, and therefore submitted a possible way out of the mire. "We should try to allay these suspicions," he minuted, "and justify ourselves by invoking our own interests in the Eastern Mediterranean."

²⁷Sargent also submitted an appendix in which he reviewed the present situation in each of the Balkan countries, the Russian policy towards each of those countries (as far as could be judged from available evidence), and "the extent to which Soviet policy is prejudicial to our interests." Often overlooked by historians (it was omitted from the final War Cabinet paper), this appendix provides both a detailed summary on a point by point basis, and, in the marginal notes attached, further insight into the internal FO debate on policy which attended it. Warner, in particular, made several comments upon it. He continued to criticise various "assumptions" which the paper made regarding Soviet policy. He dismissed the suggestion that the Soviets would attempt to set up Communist regimes in the Balkan countries, minuting that this was "very doubtful - they are far too practical" to do this. He also challenged the view that the Russians intended to establish "a Balkan federation of Soviet republics after the war." "I'm prepared to bet any money you like against this," he wrote. Warner's final comment on the draft paper was particularly cutting. Confronted with yet another assumption - this time that the Soviets had "all along been determined to promote the establishment of a pro-Russian and if possible Communist regime in Greece after the war" - he reacted with a mixture of frustration and incredulity. "Is there any foundation for this?" he asked. "The paper is full of 'probablys'."

²⁸FO371/43646/9092 Cadogan minute, 22nd May 1944.

²⁹ibid., Eden minute, 23rd May 1944.

³⁰ *ibid.*, Eden minute, 27th May 1944.

³¹ *ibid.*, Warner minute, 31st May 1944. Subsequent citations are from this source unless otherwise stated.

³² Warner had clearly been taken in by the pro-Tito and anti-Mihailović propaganda which had emerged from Yugoslavia over the previous twelve months. The relative military value of the respective Yugoslav resistance organisations remains an issue of some controversy, as does British policy towards them. For a recent study in this field, see Heather Williams, 'The Special Operations Executive and Yugoslavia 1941-1945' (PhD Thesis, Southampton University 1994), Chs. XIII and IX, *passim*. The important point here is that Warner, having *accepted* the pro-Tito line, felt that the Soviets were thoroughly justified in offering him exclusive support. Their decision was right militarily, and could not therefore be criticised - especially as accusations of ideological bias could not be proven.

³³ As an example of this, Warner referred to the "CCOS set-up", which meant in practice that "we handle many matters concerning Western Europe, Italy, etc., as primarily Anglo-American concerns." The decisions taken over "Armistices and Related Problems" - and in particular the Italian administrative machinery - in 1943 were clearly beginning to haunt the FO.

³⁴ See in this connection documents filed in FO371/43305/3757 and 3758 *passim*; and also PREM 3 396/14 Churchill to Eden, M.748/4, 23rd June 1944; Eden to Churchill, PM/44/467, 26th June 1944; FO371/43306/5152 Moscow tel. no.2232 to FO, 24th August 1944. The Northern Department were excited by this turn of events. According to Wilson, who minuted on 9th June 1944, the friendlier attitude adopted by the Soviet Press towards HMG was due principally to the imminent launching of the Second Front. This, he suggested, could well lead to "a fairly violent honeymoon period" in Anglo-Soviet relations - an opportunity which the FO might want to exploit:-

It may be as well to take stock and see if there are any outstanding questions that we might be able to take up with success while this period lasts. The moment is probably more propitious than it has been for a long time and than it may be in the future when some of the novelty has worn off.

The other political departments were asked to submit their opinions; and it was subsequently decided that, while no major political issues could be broached, a variety of lesser points should be raised in Moscow. A telegram to this effect was sent to Clark Kerr on 15th June (as FO tel. no.1805 to Moscow). Churchill, however, was far from happy with this initiative. "Is it not a pity to take payment in poor copper coins for the immense events that are in progress?" he asked Eden on 16th June. "I would not ask for these trifles... cashing in on these petty chits is quite unworthy of the situation." Eden's subsequent attempts to win Churchill over fell on deaf ears. The Foreign Secretary did win a grudging concession that he should decide how to proceed;

but failed to change the Prime Minister's views about the validity of such an approach. Clark Kerr subsequently advised the FO that the "honeymoon mood" had rapidly dissipated, and that he had been unable to make significant progress on outstanding questions.

³⁵ Warner added a highly critical postscript, complaining about the way in which "Communist" was used in the memorandum. "There are places in the paper where it seems to be used in the German propaganda sense rather than to denote those who profess themselves Communist," he complained. He was also reluctant to accept the contention that the Soviet Government would "always back Communist regimes." "If Communism will not be popular," he argued, "the Russians won't back it."

See in this connection FO371/43335/3441 Wilson minute, 11th June; Warner minute, 19th June; Sargent minute 22nd June. According to Wilson, the Northern Department had "long held the view that the Russians would favour broad-based popular front Governments in those countries where they were in a position to exert any influence." Warner, without contradicting Wilson, approached the matter from a different angle. "From the British point of view," he argued, "the most important point is whether the Soviet Government is going to favour a dictatorial regime in foreign countries or something nearer to the Western form of democracy." Sargent, however, remained obdurate. He clearly had little time for Wilson's penchant for political jargon. "I wish I knew what was meant by 'broad-based popular front Governments'," he minuted. "If it means governments based on a parliamentary system composed of flabby, doctrinaire socialists, and generally speaking resembling the Blum Government in France before the war and the later Republican Government in Spain, then Heaven help us! It will simply mean corruption, inefficiency and civil war." He was also dismissive of Warner's point about the installation of Communist regimes, which he felt had missed the point:-

The fact that Stalin does not want a Communist regime does not mean that he will allow a liberal parliamentary regime to be established which would give full play to the vagaries of public opinion on questions affecting Russian interests. What he requires is a strong autocratic government administering a system of State socialism and following a pro-Russian policy irrespective of the whims and prejudices of the population.

³⁶ FO371/43304/1908 Sargent minute, 1st April 1944.

³⁷ WP(44)304 "Soviet Policy in the Balkans", 7th June 1944.

³⁸ See in particular: FO371/43335/2883 PHP(44)13(O), 6th June 1944; and FO371/40733/3322 ACA(44)23, 14th April 1944.

³⁹ K.G.M. Ross, The Foreign Office and the Kremlin: British Documents on Anglo-Soviet Relations 1941-5 (Cambridge 1984) pp.146-7, reproducing FO371/43143 Warner minute, 2nd July 1944.

⁴⁰ *ibid.* Ross also reproduces a further Warner minute, dated 29th July 1944, in which he expanded upon this theme. "It is pretty clear," he warned, "that, while taking account of our close relations with the USA, they are suspicious of a British-American line-up against them. Particularly where Europe is concerned, they are at pains that they are everywhere... entitled to be consulted and apt to resent too great a tendency for HMG and the USG to settle matters in principle between themselves and then inform or consult the Soviet Government after - more or less as a matter of form." This tendency would assume more dangerous significance if, as Warner assumed they would, the US decided to "pull out" of Europe once hostilities ended. As he pointed out, "the Russians would then, I think, consider that they and we should principally collaborate on European affairs and would be apt to react badly if we still make the US Government our principal consultants on Europe."

⁴¹ *ibid.*, pp.146-7 reproducing FO371/43143 Cadogan minute, 4th July 1944.

⁴² *ibid.*, pp.146-7 reproducing FO371/43143 Eden minute, 6th July 1944.

Endnotes:- Chapter VI

¹FO371/43636/7903 Eden draft tel. to Clark Kerr, 18th May 1944 (record of conversation with Gusev).

²ibid., Eden draft telegram, 18th May 1944, including note in margin; Laskey minute, 22nd May 1944; Howard minute, 23rd May 1944; Sargent minute, 24th May 1944. Sargent, upon reading Howard's comment that the agreement seemed to be "the thin end of the wedge towards spheres of influence", indicated that the Russians should be warned that the arrangement "only applies to war conditions and does not affect the rights and responsibilities of the three Great Powers in regard to the whole of Europe at the peace settlement." As he pointed out, "a sentence to this effect is embodied in the draft telegram to Washington." Both messages were duly despatched on 25th May.

³ibid., FO tel. no. 1560 to Moscow, 25th May 1944; FO tels. nos. 4637 (copy of no. 1560 to Moscow) and 4638 to Washington, 25th May 1944.

⁴ibid., FO tel. no. 4638 to Washington, 25th May 1944. His instructions read as follows:-

You should emphasise that we have no desire to carve up the Balkans into spheres of influence and still less to exclude the United States Government from the formulation or execution of Allied policy towards these countries. In agreeing to this arrangement I would make it clear that it applied only to war conditions and did not affect the rights and responsibilities which each of the three Great Powers will have to exercise at the peace settlement and afterwards in regard to the whole of Europe. Meanwhile, however, we feel that the arrangement now proposed is a useful device for preventing any divergence of policy in the Balkans between ourselves and the Soviet Government, of which disquieting signs were beginning to develop.

⁵R.J. Smith, 'The United States and the Anglo-Soviet Balkan Agreement of October 1944 : a Study in Wartime Diplomacy' (Doctoral Thesis, Clark University, 1973), pp. 150-1.

⁶PREM 3 66/7 Washington tel. no. 2860 to FO, 30th May 1944.

⁷ibid. According to Halifax, "Mr. Hull said that we might well anticipate difficulties from Russia in the Balkans which indeed we might well be able to prevent. The important thing seemed to him to be that we should perpetually peg away at them about the necessity of co-operation and be careful in no way to prejudice this interpretation of the case."

⁸Smith, 'Balkan Agreement', pp. 152-3, citing FRUS, 1944, V, 112-3.

⁹Smith, 'Balkan Agreement', pp. 153-4. Smith has cast some doubt on Hull's performance on 30th May, and the accuracy of his record. He questions the depth of Secretary of State's understanding of the British proposals, and speculates that Hull might not in fact have read the "Note of Conversation" with which he had been supplied. Whatever the truth may be, it is clear that the Secretary of State and the Ambassador left the meeting with different views about what they had achieved.

¹⁰Kimball, Complete Correspondence - Vol.III, pp.136-7, Churchill tel. no.C678 to Roosevelt, 19th May 1944. As we have already seen, Churchill told the President that "I have found it practically impossible to continue correspondence with them, but I note that after each very rude message they send me, they have done pretty well what was asked." He had been encouraged by the latest developments in the long-running Polish saga, and by evidence which suggested that the Russians had persuaded EAM to co-operate with Papandreou in the establishment of an all-party Greek Government.

¹¹Smith, 'Balkan Agreement', p. 149; Kimball, Complete Correspondence - Vol.III, p. 138. Roosevelt tel. no. R 542 to Churchill, 19th May 1944.

¹²PREM 3 66/7 Churchill minute on FO tel. no. 4637 to Washington, dated 24th May 1944.

¹³Smith, 'Balkan Agreement', p.151. Matthews warned Hull that "the present situation seems to me, at least as far as the post-hostilities period is concerned, the equivalent of telling the Russians that they may have Roumania as their sphere of influence if they will give Greece to the British."

¹⁴ibid., pp. 151-2, citing Hickerson to Matthews, 30th May 1944.

¹⁵ibid. As Smith points out, it would mean that if the proposal had subsequently become a subject of controversy, the British Government would have been in a position to claim that the State Department had been advised about the agreement in advance and had not offered objections to it.

¹⁶ibid., pp. 157-8. See also Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, p.571. Leahy's document is reproduced in FRUS, 1945, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, pp.106-8. MacVeagh paraphrased the paper in his diary on 14th July, 1944. "This memo," he wrote, "seems to have sounded a warning that in the next war the US might possibly be able to save Britain from being conquered in her own islands. but that it will be out of the question to count on us for more than this."

¹⁷According to Leahy, "the greatest likelihood of eventual conflict between Britain and Russia would seem to grow out of either nation initiating attempts to build up its strength, by seeking to attract to herself parts of Europe to the disadvantage and possible danger of her potential adversary."

¹⁸ See in this connection Cordell Hull, Memoirs, (London 1948), Vol. II, pp.1452-3. As Hull noted in his memoirs, "I was not and am not a believer in the idea of the balance of power or spheres of influence as a means of keeping the peace."

¹⁹ PREM 3/66/7 Eden to Churchill, PM/44/386, 30th May 1944. "I do not anticipate that they are likely to make difficulties," he minuted, "but there might be advantages if you reinforced our representations to the State Department by a message from yourself to the President. I attach a draft for your consideration."

²⁰ Kimball, Complete Correspondence - Vol.III, pp. 153-4, Churchill tel. no. C687 to Roosevelt, 31st May 1944 (sent as FO tel. no. 4829 to Washington).

²¹ Smith, 'Balkan Agreement', p.156.

²² See FO371/ 43999/7016 Churchill to Molotov, 2nd May 1944. As we have seen, Churchill had replied to Molotov's accusatory telegram of 29th April (about the de Chastellain mission and Roumania) by telling the Soviet Foreign Minister that he had "got hold of a mare's nest." Use of such peculiar phraseology (in this instance an obscure Scottish metaphor) caused the diplomatic staff in Moscow no end of difficulty when attempting to translate Churchill's messages for the Soviets.

²³ See Smith, 'Balkan Agreement', pp. 158-63, for subsequent references to State Department deliberations. Smith identifies both the departments and officials to whom this task fell, and elucidates their views on the arrangement.

²⁴ As Matthews pointed out, "if the question of spheres of influence becomes a matter of acute public attention, it may some day be desirable to publish the document."

²⁵ See Smith, 'Balkan Agreement', p.163. Long noted in his diary on 10th June 1944 that the revised drafts had embodied "the point of view that I have maintained from the start but which I had considerable difficulty in having accepted."

²⁶ PREM 3 66/7 Washington tel. no. 2983 to FO, 4th June 1944. The tels. referred to by Halifax have been cited above.

²⁷ FO371/43646/8988 Washington tel. no. 3055 to FO, 7th June 1944 (received 8th June).

²⁸ Stettinius had not at this stage been persuaded by Matthews that the official reply should be passed to Halifax. He was still following Long's advice.

²⁹ FO371/43646/8988 Laskey minute, 8th June 1944.

³⁰ "I cannot really understand why the Americans are proving so difficult over this," he minuted. "It is clear that the whole matter arose in an informal manner and that there was no question of coming to a hard and fast agreement with the Russians without having told the Americans."

³¹ FO371/43646/8988 FO tel. no. 5186 to Washington, 8th June 1944; Washington tel. no. 3155 to FO, 10th June 1944. Halifax replied on 10th June, telling Eden that "in the absence of Mr. Hull I have informed Mr. Stettinius who will speak to the President. Stettinius says that the President will probably telegraph to you tonight."

³² See below.

³³ See in this connection PREM 3 79/2 and 3 *passim*. Churchill would subsequently have a protracted argument with the FO about this after the fall of the Antonescu regime and the change of sides by Roumania at the end of August 1944. The rapid advance of the Red Army and the subsequent collapse of Bulgaria raised difficult issues, most notably on the question of armistice terms, and led to differences between the Prime Minister and the FO which were not properly resolved until the **TOLSTOY** Conference, when the Percentages Deal changed the whole complexion of affairs.

³⁴ See FO371/43646/8988 Dew minute, 8th June 1944; FO tel. no. 5183 to Washington, 8th June 1944 (Sargent to Campbell).

³⁵ FO371/43686/7214 FO tel. no. 1377 to Moscow, 5th May 1944.

³⁶ FO371/43636/7903 FO tel. no. 1560 to Moscow, 25th May 1944 (tel. no. 4637 to Washington).

³⁷ FO371/43646/8988 Cadogan minute, 9th June 1944.

³⁸ *ibid.*, Butler minute, 10th June 1944. Butler ended this minute by reminding his colleagues of how a century or so earlier such presumption had wrecked another international coalition involving Britain. "One reason why Canning bust up the Concert of Europe," he warned, "was that the others did things without consulting us." Butler's grasp of history was not as strong as it might have been. He professed to being uncertain as to the name of the Alliance which Canning "bust up", confusing the Concert of Europe with the Holy Alliance. His meaning, however, was clear.

³⁹ *ibid.*, Scott minute, 11th June 1944. As he pointed out:-

I hope it is not unfair to suggest that as British diplomacy has been for so long preponderantly concerned with Europe we are apt to take rather for granted or neglect the American continent. As Mr. Butler observes, we ought to acquire the habit, wherever we are confronted with a European problem, of asking ourselves how the course of action we contemplate

reacts on the United States... I am sure it would be a mistake if we deliberately avoided bringing the Americans in at an early stage into these international questions because we think they will be tiresome. We should undoubtedly lose heavily in the long run.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, Laskey minute, 20th June 1944.

⁴¹ FO371/43646/9293 Roosevelt tel. no.R557 to Churchill, 10th June 1944 (received 11th June).

⁴² *ibid.*, Laskey minute, 13th June 1944. Laskey continued his minute by clarifying the thrust of current British policy (from which, it must be remembered, the Eden-Gusev proposals had stemmed), and sketching out alternative courses of action that might now be followed. If this minute is anything to go by, Laskey appreciated that the preservation of the Anglo-Soviet *modus vivendi* was of paramount importance. "We must try and devise some alternative to prevent any divergence of view between ourselves and the Russians," he minuted. "The only feasible alternative seems to be for close contact to be maintained between the representatives of all three countries in Cairo and for us to keep the Soviet Government as closely informed as possible about Greek affairs through their Ambassador here and through Sir Archibald Clark Kerr in Moscow." The idea of a Tripartite Ambassadorial Committee, based in Cairo, at which Greek matters could be discussed was mooted, but in the final analysis rejected as impractical. As Laskey pointed out, "Mr Leeper would be gravely embarrassed if he had to discuss everything with his colleagues and such an arrangement would lead to intolerable delays."

Laskey concluded that the absence of any specific agreement between the British and the Russians *apropos* of Greece "should not make a great deal of difference." Even if the Soviets reverted to a policy of "boosting EAM", the British would still be able to restrain the Russians in the time honoured fashion - "through representations here or in Moscow." This conclusion speaks volumes about the British ability to dictate the level of Russian involvement in Greek affairs. The "spheres of activity" proposals had been supported because diplomatic "representations" about respective Anglo-Soviet interests in Greece and Roumania had flared up into a full-blown diplomatic spat between London and Moscow. The suggestion that a reversion to the old formula for dealing with Greece was satisfactory reads like an exercise in self-delusion, the more so when it is remembered that the British had been forced to admit, albeit privately, that the Soviets would "take the lead" in Roumania whatever they may say. Interestingly, Laskey, having conceded that the agreement was a dead letter, did not refer to Roumania at all when sketching out possible policy alternatives.

⁴³ FO371/43646/8130 Sargent letter to Knatchbull-Hugesson (British Ambassador to Turkey), 2nd June 1944. "While it is true that it is part of our policy to endeavour to work hand in hand with the Russians in the Balkans,"

Sargent told Hugessen, "this in no way means that we are intending to divide up the area into spheres of influence. We have no such intention and have entered into no commitments on this subject with the Soviet Government or anyone else."

⁴⁴FO371/43646/9293 Laskey note, 14th June 1944.

⁴⁵FO371/43646/9472 Churchill tel. no.C700 to Roosevelt, 11th June. Subsequent citations are from this source unless otherwise stated.

⁴⁶Churchill attempted to convince Roosevelt that the events of April had shown that the future stability of Greece (and the realisation of the President's own aspirations for that country) depended upon Britain being allowed to broker a settlement between the Greeks free from outside interference:-

We were able to cope with the mutiny of the Greek forces entirely in accordance with your own views. This was because I was able to give constant orders to the military commanders, who at the beginning advocated conciliation, and above all no use or even threat of force. Very little life was lost. The Greek situation has been improved immensely, and, if firmness is maintained, will be rescued from confusion and disaster. The Russians are ready to let us take the lead in the Greek business, which means that EAM and all its malice can be controlled by the national forces of Greece. Otherwise, civil war and ruin to the land you care about so much.

The Soviets had shown themselves ready to co-operate; Churchill now appealed to the President and the "special relationship" to ensure that the Americans did not upset the apple-cart. "I always reported to you and I always will report to you," he told Roosevelt. "You shall see every telegram I send. I think you might trust me in this."

⁴⁷Churchill blamed this on King Farouk's wish "to sack Nahas and put in his court minister to rig elections", which, he explained, "might easily have led to wide-spread riots and disorder throughout Egypt."

⁴⁸This freedom of action had, in his opinion, been the decisive factor. "If in either of these two difficulties we had had to consult other powers and a set of triangular or quadrangular telegrams got started," he told Roosevelt, "the only result would have been chaos or impotence." At the time of the mutiny in Egypt, Churchill had been deputising for the infirm Eden. This had enabled him to co-ordinate military and political operations far more effectively than would otherwise have been possible. Moreover, as he told Roosevelt, he had been better placed to take note of the President's wishes in directing affairs:-

See, now, what happened when I had charge not only of the Foreign Office but of the Armed Forces. We were able to cope

with the mutiny of the Greek armed forces entirely in accordance with your own views.

The Prime Minister evidently hoped that the lesson of that period would not be lost on Roosevelt. By delineating the responsibility for operations in any given country between the Great Powers, the Allies might accrue greater advantages in furtherance of the common cause. That, therefore, justified the proposed deal over Greece and Roumania. The fact that Britain and Russia had particular interests in those countries was not seen as a problem, but, rather, as a further reason for implementing the arrangement. If a reciprocal recognition of special interests could be worked into the pattern of inter-Allied co-operation in such a way as to keep all parties happy, so much the better.

⁴⁹In simple terms: The Russians were preparing to launch a full-scale assault into Roumania, which would force her out of the war, and ultimately precipitate a German withdrawal from the Balkans. The British, meanwhile, were finding it difficult to prepare for even a limited entry into Greece once the Germans had departed, and were confining themselves to plans for maintaining order in Greece in the immediate post-hostilities period. See in this connection documents contained in PREM 3 210 *passim*.

⁵⁰Smith, 'Balkan Agreement', pp.168-9, paraphrasing Winant to Roosevelt, 13th June 1944.

⁵¹As Winant told Roosevelt on 13th June, "I made no objection to the content of this message as I understood from General Marshall that you wanted to be clear of Balkan entanglements." The influence which military considerations exercised over Roosevelt (to which Winant alluded when mentioning General Marshall) should not be overlooked in this context. The military hierarchy consistently opposed plans which would have committed American resources in the Balkans, and this seriously impaired the ability of the State Department when it tried to argue for more dynamic political initiatives.

⁵²FO371/43646/9472 Roosevelt tel. no.R560 to Churchill, 12th June 1944. The President's warning about making it clear that "we are not establishing spheres of influence" echoed the observations made by Howard (23rd May) and Sargent (24th May) after Gusev's reply to Eden on 18th May. See also Smith, 'Balkans Agreement', p.169. Roosevelt informed Winant on 13th June of his decision.

⁵³PREM 3 66/7 Churchill tel. no. C703 to Roosevelt, 14th June 1944. "I am deeply grateful to you for your reply to my no. 700," Churchill telegraphed. "I have asked the Foreign Secretary to convey the information to M. Molotov and to make it clear that the reason for the three months limit is in order that we should not prejudice the question of establishing post-war spheres of influence."

⁵⁴CAB 65/46 WM(44)76, 13th June 1944. The Soviets had asked for confirmation that the US Government had no objection to the proposal for a

"division of responsibility"; now that this had apparently been received, the Cabinet invited Eden to inform the Soviet Government "through the diplomatic channel" (i.e. Gusev). See also PREM 3 66/7 Churchill to Martin, 14th June 1944; Churchill to Private Office, 14th May 1944. A note from Churchill to one of his private secretaries, John Martin, makes it clear that the FO had not been privy to the telegrams exchanged with Roosevelt on 11th and 12th June. "I read both telegrams out to the Cabinet in Mr. Eden's presence," the Prime Minister told Martin. "He did not mind at all, but if you like to do a little bit of editing for the sake of the FO you are welcome to do so." The passages in tel. no.C700 about Churchill having "had charge" of the FO at the time of the Greek mutiny were tactfully removed from the copies prepared for Whitehall. Churchill also directed his Private Office to act in a similar vein on his no.C703 to Roosevelt, telling them that Mr. Eden should "see para.1 and communicate accordingly with M. Molotov."

⁵⁵FO371/43646/9472 Laskey minute, 14th June 1944; Dew and Sargent initials, 14th June 1944; Cadogan and Eden initials, 15th June 1944; Eden to Gusev, 19th June 1944. The 17th and 18th June fell on the weekend, hence the delay in delivery. Laskey's minute, which was incorporated verbatim into Eden's *aide-memoire* to Gusev, offered an accurate summary of the Churchill-Roosevelt correspondence. It is clear from this paper that, as far as the FO was concerned, the President had committed the US Government to accepting the arrangement. It also clarified HMG's understanding of the position established under its auspices:-

We have now consulted the US Government and... they agree with the arrangement proposed. They feel some anxiety, however, lest it should extend beyond the immediate circumstances for which it has been devised and should lead to the partition of the Balkan countries into spheres of influence. *We ourselves always intended that the arrangement should apply only to war conditions and should not affect the rights and responsibilities which each of the three Governments will have to exercise at the Peace Settlement and afterwards in regard to the whole of Europe.* In order to guard against the danger of the arrangement extending beyond the purpose for which it was devised, we have suggested to the US Government that it should be given a trial of three months, after which it would be reviewed by the three Powers. We hope that the Soviet Government will agree to its coming into force on this basis.

See also PREM 3 66/7 FO tel. no. 1853 to Moscow, 20th June 1944; FO371/43646/9514 FO tel. no. 1853 to Moscow, copy forwarded to Cairo, 20th June 1944. Clark Kerr was informed of the contents of this letter on 20th June, as was Leeper in Cairo. Halifax was also notified (see below).

⁵⁶FO371/43646/9472 Gusev to Eden, 22nd June 1944.

⁵⁷ Smith, 'Balkans Agreement', pp.162-3.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.169.

⁵⁹ It is hard to see how. The State Department had clearly found another "mare's nest." They read a great deal into a few casual references, even though in several cases they reflected an obvious misreading of situations by Churchill himself. True, the Prime Minister had suggested treating Bulgaria in the same manner as Roumania, arguing that "the Russians should deal with her as their armies are impinging on her"; but he had overlooked the fact that Bulgaria was not, at that stage, at war with the Soviet Union. It is difficult to see how the Eden-Gusev proposals, which were predicated upon operational situations, could possibly have been applied in the case of a country which one of the contracting parties was not involved in the fighting. As far as Yugoslavia was concerned, the State Department had taken Churchill's comments completely out of context. The Prime Minister had mentioned Yugoslavia only in passing, pointing out that he had always kept Roosevelt informed of the measures he was taking there. He had equated the Yugoslav situation with the Greek, but only as an example of a country where, operationally speaking, Britain was the most active of the Allied Great Powers. At no stage did he suggest that the arrangement be expanded to encompass Yugoslavia, or that Yugoslavia should be treated like Greece. At various stages of the war, British policy towards Yugoslavia was regarded with scepticism and mistrust by the US Government, and not always without justification. In this instance, and as far as a spheres of influence policy was concerned, they were way off the mark.

⁶⁰ Smith, 'Balkans Agreement', p.170.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, pp.170-1.

⁶² FO371/43646/9514 Washington tel. no.3218 to FO, 15th June 1944.

⁶³ *ibid.*, Laskey minute, 20th June 1944. Laskey, evidently unruffled by Halifax's telegram, minuted on 20th June that "I do not think we need tell anybody of the divergence of view between the President and the State Department. The qualms felt by the US Government are clearly expressed in our letter to M. Gusev." From this, it would seem that Laskey quite naturally assumed that the State Department's objections had been considered - and overridden - by the President prior to the despatch of his tel. no.R560. After all, it was evident from the President's telegram that the Department's worries about spheres of influence had had some impact on Roosevelt, and that as long as these were passed on to the Russians, there was no reason to assume that the Americans would raise further objections to the arrangement. Laskey was more concerned that Eden's letter to Gusev should receive the widest possible circulation amongst "interested parties" - including, ironically, the State Department - because "the form of words used is of some importance." This suggests that, if he anticipated further problems, these were likely to come from the Russians.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, FO tel. no.5583 to Washington, 20th June 1944. Eden now told Halifax that "unless State Department are still unaware of President's decision, you should inform them of my letter to the Soviet Ambassador." Halifax, like Leeper and Clark Kerr, had now been supplied with a copy of Eden's letter to Gusev.

⁶⁵ Hull, who had supplied the draft to Roosevelt, had not of course received copies of Churchill's tels. nos.C700 and C703 or Roosevelt's tel. no. 560, hence this glaring inconsistency. The reference to no. R560 must have been inserted by the White House. It was ironic that such attention to detail - keeping the sequence of the telegrams and their cross-referencing in order - did not extend to making sure that the contents of messages made sense.

⁶⁶ PREM 3 66/7 Churchill to Roosevelt, 23rd June 1944, draft; Private Office minute to Churchill, 23rd June 1944, including Eden's suggested amendments; Churchill to Roosevelt, tel. no.C712, 23rd June 1944. Subsequent citations are from this tel. unless otherwise stated.

⁶⁷ The Prime Minister restated his earlier arguments as follows:-

The Russians are the only power that can do anything in Roumania and I thought that it was agreed between you and me that on the basis of their reasonable armistice terms, excepting indemnities, they should try to give coherent direction to what happened there. *In point of fact, we have all three co-operated closely in handling in Cairo the recent Roumanian peace-feelers.*

The reference to the Cairo negotiations (highlighted) were inserted on Eden's suggestion.

⁶⁸ Churchill once again claimed that the 40,000 men Britain had lost in 1941 provided ample justification for his attempting to "take the lead" in respect of Greece. He also painted a grim picture of the position which would develop if the Eden-Gusev deal was not acted upon:-

It would be quite easy for me, on the general principle of slithering to the left, which is so popular in foreign policy, to let things rip when the King of Greece would probably be forced to abdicate and EAM would work a reign of terror in Greece forcing the villagers and many other classes to form security battalions under German auspices to prevent utter anarchy. The only way I can prevent this is by persuading the Russians to quit boosting EAM and ramming it forward with all their force.

It is of course possible to challenge the accuracy of Churchill's "crystal gazing" *vis-à-vis* Greece. These personal ruminations should not, however, be dismissed out of hand. If one accepts that Churchill believed that this was the situation facing Greece - and there is every reason to believe that it was - his appeal to Roosevelt cannot be dismissed as just another old-fashioned attempt

to pull the wool over the President's eyes in defence of Britain's imperial interests, or as a knee-jerk reaction prompted by deep-seated anti-Bolshevik prejudice. The arguments that he deployed, which after all were based on his understanding of the position *pro tem*, cannot be invalidated by recourse to certain "historical truths" which have subsequently come to light but of which he could have had no knowledge.

⁶⁹ Eden had indicated that Turkey should be mentioned in the telegram. As we have seen, the FO had recently produced its seminal paper "Soviet Policy in the Balkans", in which it had proposed that Britain, for strategic and political reasons, should endeavour to foster Graeco-Turkish co-operation as a means of maintaining Britain's influence in the politics of the region.

⁷⁰ As he told Roosevelt, "*I* know that we are working for the general theme and purposes, and I hope you will feel that has been so in *my* conduct." See in this connection Kimball, Complete Correspondence - Vol. III, pp.208-10, Roosevelt tel. no.R571 to Churchill, 26th June 1944. Roosevelt had sent Stalin a telegram on 17th June informing him of the substance of his conversations with a London Pole delegation, led by Prime Minister Mikolajczyk, that had visited Washington (5th-14th June). Although Churchill accepted that Roosevelt had acted "quite properly" in sending this message to the Soviet leader, the Prime Minister pointed out that "as yet, I have heard nothing from you on this matter." His following comment - "I am not complaining" - was somewhat disingenuous. He *was* complaining, not about Roosevelt's handling of the Polish question, but about American double standards when it came to trust and the supply of information. Roosevelt responded by supplying Churchill with a copy of his telegram to Stalin on 26th June.

⁷¹ Yugoslavia had not in fact been mentioned at all in the previous Churchill-Roosevelt correspondence on the "spheres of activity" arrangement; though, as we have seen, Churchill had alluded to it in his telegram to Halifax on 8th June. See in this connection Kimball, Complete Correspondence - Vol. III, p.191. Churchill had sent Roosevelt a copy of the communiqué which Tito and Šubašić had agreed to after their conversations on the Adriatic island of Vis (held between 14th and 17th June 1944) on 18th June; but his telegram of 23rd June was the first time that Yugoslavia was referred to in connection the wider "pre-percentages" affair. As far as Churchill was concerned, Britain had again acted properly in sponsoring the recent negotiations:-

I have... taken action to try to bring together a union of the Tito forces with those in Serbia and with all adhering to the Royal Yugoslav Government, which we have both recognised. You have been informed at every stage of how we are bearing this heavy burden which at present rests mainly on us. Here again, nothing would be easier than to throw the King and the Royal Yugoslav Government to the wolves and let a civil war break out in Yugoslavia to the joy of the Germans.

As in the case of Greece, Churchill's grasp of the "realities" of the Yugoslav situation can be questioned. His sincerity, however, which is the issue at stake here, should not be dismissed out of hand on account of various false premises, subsequently identified by historians, of which he was ignorant. For documents relating to the Tito-Šubašić negotiations, see PREM 3 511/10; PREM 3 512/5 and 7. See also Wheeler, 'Crowning the Revolution' in Langhorne (ed.), Diplomacy and Intelligence; Pavlowitch, 'London-Moscow through the Fog of Yugoslavia's Wartime Drama' in Storia delle Relazioni Internazionali, Vol.IV (1988), pp.201-5.

⁷² "I greatly admire the strength and courage with which you face your difficulties," he told Roosevelt.

⁷³ Gilbert, Road to Victory, p.834.

⁷⁴ PREM 3 66/7 Roosevelt tel. no.R570 to Churchill, 26th June 1944. Churchill's tel. no.C712 had been despatched on a Friday, hence the delay in reply.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, Churchill to Roosevelt, tel. no.C716, 27th June 1944. This read as follows: "Thank you very much for what you say. You may be very sure that I shall always be looking to our agreement in all matters."

⁷⁶ Hull and the State Department had sent the draft to Roosevelt believing that the proposed agreement had been rejected on 10th June 1944. The telegram, which was eventually sent on 22nd June, had consequently offered no substantial criticism of the agreement, although Hull's covering letter had. As far as they were concerned, the agreement was already "dead."

⁷⁷ Churchill's tel. no.C712 did not contain any reference to spheres of influence, or a denial of British interest in them. This is in itself revealing. The Prime Minister thought that he had allayed American suspicions about spheres of influence, having persuaded Roosevelt to accept the three months trial. Roosevelt's latest message did not indicate that the President had reversed this decision. This should be borne in mind when analysing Churchill's message of 23rd June. Churchill had, admittedly, argued that in acting as he had in respect of Yugoslavia he had been operating "within the sphere of action in which initiative is assigned to us." This, however, was a reference to the fact that military operations in Yugoslavia fell under the authority of the Mediterranean Command - and General H.M. Wilson - and was therefore under British jurisdiction. The Prime Minister had *not* suggested that this responsibility for operational matters should be extended to cover instances where overtly political and longer term questions were involved.

⁷⁸ Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh Reports, pp.533-4, diary entry for 1st June 1944:-

Leeper came in to tell me that the British and Russians have agreed that in Roumania the Russians shall be allowed the

"initiative", and in Greece, the British, to avoid divergences of action and policy. Each is to support the other in the other's field, though of course not abandoning its own legitimate interests. Molotov has insisted that American assent to this arrangement be secured, and Leeper asked me if I had any advice on the matter from Washington. The answer, of course, is "no", though I suppose I shall hear in due time.

MacVeagh's initial reaction to this information is interesting, given the attitude in Washington. As he wrote in his diary, "I think we shall want to agree on something which puts our allies in a good frame of mind toward each other, and may tend practically towards greater unity."

⁷⁹ibid., pp. 550-1, MacVeagh to Roosevelt, 23rd June 1944. This read as follows:-

I am informed that London and Moscow may come to an agreement to recognise each other's "initiative" in Greece and Roumania respectively, without of course abandoning their own legitimate interests in these countries. This kind of thing may be only patchwork to cover up the rifts of fundamental suspicion and distrust, but it is all to the good so far as it goes, and the easing of tension here for the moment is marked.

⁸⁰ibid., p.551, diary entry for 24th June 1944. According to MacVeagh, Leeper read him a copy of an FO telegram sent to Moscow on 19th June 1944 (presumably FO tel. no.1853 to Moscow).

⁸¹ibid., p.551-2. MacVeagh copied "the essential part" of this into his diary on 24th June 1944:-

Arrangement discussed between HMG and the Soviet Government was a purely practical wartime one, viz. that Roumanian affairs would be mainly the concern of the Soviet Government while Greek affairs mainly concern of HMG, each Government helping the other in respective countries. Matter was then referred by HMG to the US Government. It was pointed out that there was no question of dividing the Balkans into spheres of influence or excluding USG from formulation and execution of allied policy towards these countries. In no way did this arrangement affect the rights and responsibilities of the Three Great Powers at Peace Conference and afterwards in regard to Europe as a whole. Arrangement is purely to prevent differences with Soviet Government from developing during war period. After some delay USG agreed on condition that it should not extend beyond circumstances for which it was devised and should not lead to division of Balkans into spheres of influence. This has been agreed between the US and HMG and to make doubly sure it is agreed that arrangement should be subject to revision after three months. In this form proposal has

now been put to the Soviet Government. No reply has been received.

According to MacVeagh, "Leeper is very anxious that this proposal should go through, as he can then, perhaps, count on some support from Novikov in his efforts to bring EAM into the Greek national unity picture."

⁸² The State Department's message was sent to Cairo in several parts. These arrived over the space of a couple of days, and then had to be deciphered before being handed to MacVeagh. He himself referred to it rather disparagingly "as a circular."

⁸³ Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh, p.553, diary entry dated 26th June 1944.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, pp.556-62, covers subsequent developments events in Cairo. MacVeagh received instructions to return to Washington for consultation on 1st July 1944, and left Cairo on 5th July. He received no reply to his request for information before leaving. As he noted in his diary on 4th July, the whole affair "remains a mystery." Leeper, at least, kept MacVeagh supplied with information, telling him on 3rd July that he had received further confirmation of the agreement to a three month trial. Nevertheless, MacVeagh was both perplexed and annoyed at the lack of news from Washington. He was not the only one to be kept in the dark. Novikov told him on 4th July that he had received no new instructions from Moscow. See in this connection FO371/43636/10535 Leeper tel. no.484 to FO, 5th July 1944. Leeper informed the FO that MacVeagh was returning to Washington on 5th July. He was highly critical of Washington's failure to supply his American colleague with up-to-date information:-

He has no idea what is expected of him in connection with Yugoslav affairs nor has he been able to discover what the policy of his Government is towards Greece. For example, State Department have not yet told him of agreement between HMG and US Government about Greece and Roumania. The last telegram he received from State Department some time ago expressed opposition to the idea.

⁸⁵ Smith, 'Balkans Agreement', pp.173-4, citing Cannon to Dunn, 26th June 1944; and Dunn to Hull, 26th June 1944. Smith does not indicate where - or from whom - Cannon got hold of his information.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p.174.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.174, citing a memorandum from Dunn to Rothwell, 30th June 1944. According to Smith, "the Committee wished specifically to know whether the official position of the US, as defined in the official reply to Lord Halifax delivered to the British Embassy on 12th June, had been altered in later exchanges between the President and the Prime Minister."

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, pp.174-5 Hull to Roosevelt, 29th June 1944.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p.175 Roosevelt to Hull, 30th June 1944.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.175 Hull to Roosevelt, 8th July 1944.

⁹¹ FO371/43646/9810 Cairo tel. no.1485 to FO, 20th June 1944. According to Moyne, Sulzberger was at least partially aware of, amongst other things: the Eden-Gusev deal; Churchill's exchanges with Molotov about Soviet "boosting" of EAM; recent Soviet suspicion about the activities of British agents in Roumania; and the recent negotiations between Tito and Šubašić. Sulzberger may have been well-informed, but his conclusions about the "imminent crystallisation of zones of influence" were somewhat fanciful. He claimed that, after intervening in Yugoslavia, the British would establish a zone comprising that country, Albania, and Greece, with Roumania and Bulgaria falling to the Soviet Union.

⁹² *ibid.*, Laskey minute, 22nd June 1944; Dew minute, 22nd June 1944. Dew was convinced that the information had to have come from an official source, and wanted Cairo to launch an immediate investigation. He wanted Moyne to ask MacVeagh to "persuade" Sulzberger to withdraw his piece, or, failing that, to persuade the US Government to press the **New York Times** not to publish it.

⁹³ FO371/43646/9855 Cairo tel. no. 1509 to FO, 22nd June 1944. Sulzberger had now submitted a new article, which refrained from direct references to confidential Anglo-Soviet exchanges. Moyne thought that this was still too sensitive, however, and likely to "irritate" the Soviets. He was therefore hoping to persuade Sulzberger to go even further in redrafting his article, and therefore placate both the Russians (who would resent the release of any sensitive information) and the Americans (who were opposed to censorship on principle).

⁹⁴ FO371/43646/9934 Washington tel. no.3359 to FO, 22nd June 1944. Halifax suggested that Cairo tel. no.1485 should be passed to the State Department. He hoped that they would overcome their usual objections to censorship once they realised that Big Three relations might be adversely affected by its publication. Halifax was also keen to reassure the Americans that every effort was being made to trace the origin of the leak; he feared that it had come from a British source.

⁹⁵ FO371/43646/9933 Churchill to Eden, M. 749/4, including telegram to Moyne (P.M.'s personal tel. no.1343/4), 23rd June 1944. Churchill told Moyne that he could pass the following message to Sulzberger "if you think fit":-

As the grandson of a former owner of the **New York Times**, I think I may ask you to be very careful about the information you have obtained and to consult with Lord Moyne about its use at this juncture. I should have no difficulty in defending myself in

Parliament about the fullest disclosure of all telegrams that have passed. You are quite right in saying that I am "trying to unscramble Yugoslav puzzles." Also in Greece I am trying to persuade the Russians not to use EAM as a disruptive factor. But this is only a temporary arrangement to help drive the Germans out of the Balkans and there is no question of permanent spheres of influence. It would be very harmful if you stated that the Russians were getting the worst of [any deal] or anything like that. As a matter of fact, all is going well between them and us, unless you tell them the contrary.

Churchill's message should be treated with circumspection. He was, after all, only writing to a journalist (and a troublesome one at that). Even so, the question must be asked: would he have been so ready to commit himself against permanent spheres of influence in this fashion if he had in fact been contemplating them as a solution in the longer term?

⁹⁶ibid., Eden to Churchill, PM/44/462, 23rd June 1944. Eden did not think that the matter merited urgency on so high a level. He told Churchill that Cairo would be able to hold Sulzberger in check whilst Halifax persuaded the State Department to intervene.

⁹⁷ibid., FO tel. no.5677 to Washington, 23rd June 1944. See also FO371/43646/9935 Laskey minute, 26th June 1944. Laskey hoped that this would have a salutary effect and improve security amongst American staff in Cairo. "MacVeagh will get at least a stern rebuke," he minuted, "and will be more careful in future."

⁹⁸FO371/43646/9935 Cairo tel. no.1519 to FO, 23rd June 1944. Sulzberger had reached this agreement after a further meeting with "Kit" Steel, Moyne's FO advisor in Cairo. Moyne's comment on the whole affair was succinct. "Immediate trouble is therefore over," he noted, "but indiscreet US official here looks like remaining a most serious problem."

⁹⁹Iatrides (ed.), MacVeagh, pp.556-7, diary entry dated 27th June 1944. MacVeagh described background to the affair, and the meeting with Sulzberger, in some detail. He was obviously put out by Sulzberger's actions, but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the Ambassador had been naive in his handling of the Press. "I am always very frank with the pressman so that they may understand what they write about, and not mislead the public," he wrote. "But I expect them to respect my confidence, and while being guided by what I tell them, not to cite me in connection with it." Sulzberger denied that he had ever indicated that MacVeagh had been the source of his reports, and claimed that his information had come from a variety of sources. Satisfied with this explanation, MacVeagh asked Sulzberger to pass this information on to the British, and to get the **New York Times** to inform the State Department. MacVeagh, like Clark Kerr, appreciated the gravity of the Sulzberger affair, and the importance of respecting confidentiality:-

The Department doesn't appear to be angry in the matter, as it does not believe in political censorship, but I want to keep the record clear, and disabuse the British of any thoughts which might keep them in the future from passing information on to me.

Sulzberger subsequently claimed that MacVeagh had supplied him with his information. According to Sulzberger, the Ambassador had been "furious" to learn of the Eden-Gusev arrangement, and had "wanted the news of this private deal between London and Moscow, dividing up Eastern Europe, to be known." Iatrides has correctly challenged this version of events:-

There is no evidence that MacVeagh was opposed to the Anglo-Soviet agreement as reported to him; on the contrary, he appeared to welcome it as evidence of improved co-operation between the Allies.

¹⁹⁰ FO371/43646/10173 Cairo tel. no.1549 to FO, 28th June 1944; Laskey and Dew minutes, 29th June 1944. Sulzberger told Moyne that much of his information had come from Turkish sources. Moyne, who had been briefed on MacVeagh's conversation with Sulzberger by Steel, thought that this was unlikely, but he was prepared to let the matter drop in order to preserve good relations with the press. He was also keen to avoid upsetting Anglo-American co-operation in Cairo. Officials in Whitehall chose to dismiss Sulzberger's claims of a Turkish source. Laskey minuted on 29th June that the Turks "could not have passed on all this information since they would not have known it." Dew, who commented on the same day, was somewhat less credulous, minuting that "I certainly hope that Mr. Sulzberger did not obtain his information from Turkish sources as that would imply that the Turks are far too well informed." However, he too felt that Sulzberger's story was suspect, noting that "I imagine Mr. Sulzberger is merely wriggling out of a tight spot and has been asked by MacVeagh to put matters right."

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*, FO tel. no.5941 to Washington, 30th June 1944.

¹⁹² FO 371/43646/10115 Moscow tel. no.1706 to FO, 27th June 1944; FO tel. no. 1929 to Moscow, 28th June 1944. The FO replied on 28th June, advising Clark Kerr that MacVeagh had been responsible for the leak and informing him that Halifax was pursuing the matter in Washington. He was also sent a copy of Moyne's tel. no. 1509. The FO's reply could not conceal the fact that, even though the leak had not come from a British source, it would be Britain that the Soviets would blame for any adverse publicity. The fact that the leak had originated with the Americans would cut no ice in Moscow: the British were ultimately responsible for any confidential information supplied to them by the Soviet Government, and for its subsequent misuse by anyone they shared it with.

¹⁹³ See above, note [95].

¹⁰⁴ FO371/43646/9472 Leeper tel. no.450 to FO, 28th June 1944, and Eden note. "Surely we should take this up with Gusev," Eden minuted. "I wrote some time ago." Laskey subsequently drafted a short note for Gusev (on 3rd July), asking him whether he had received his Government's views. In the event, this was not sent, Gusev having replied before it could be despatched.

¹⁰⁵ FO371/43636/10483 Gusev to Eden, 30th June 1944. Gusev referred Eden to their earlier conversations in the first paragraph of his *aide-mémoire*. As usual, he offered a distinctly idiosyncratic version of those events:-

As you are aware, on May 18th last I informed you that the Soviet Government was, in principle, in agreement with the British Government's view that Greece should be a British sphere of activity and Roumania a Soviet sphere of activity, and that Great Britain and the USSR should support one another in the matter. Before returning a final reply on this question, however, the Soviet Government wished to know whether the US Government had been informed of the point of view of Great Britain and, if so, whether they had any objection to the British Government's proposal.

Gusev's latest version of earlier events followed the by now well established pattern of idiosyncratic interpretation. I have argued elsewhere that the origins of the Eden-Gusev proposals were soon obscured by a "mythology" that grew up around the meetings of 5th and 18th May. Eden's "chance remarks" of 5th May evolved into the "spheres of activity" proposal as first Moscow and then London began to see possible benefits that might accrue from such an arrangement. *Ad hoc* diplomacy of this sort was bound to cause problems, however - if only because, without an initial, formal proposal to refer to, the interested parties were always going to interpret such arrangements (its terms of reference and its history) from a partisan point of view.

¹⁰⁶ This passage is ambiguous, and open to several interpretations. The Soviets could have been acceding to the American viewpoint - that the current spheres of activity proposal was risky, because it implied that the arrangement portended the later partition of the Balkans into spheres of influence. It was feared that such an implication could become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Alternatively, the Russians could have been expressing reservations about the wisdom of limiting the arrangement to "war conditions", fearing that this might cause uncertainty and problems for the responsible powers in the immediate post-hostilities period.

¹⁰⁷ FO371/43636/10483 Laskey minute, 6th July 1944. Laskey strayed into the realms of wishful thinking here. His attempt to distinguish between spheres of influence and permanent spheres of activity was wholly unconvincing.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, Dew minute, 6th July 1944. In fact, both Laskey and Dew touch upon a technical problem that may shed light on the Soviets change of heart in this affair. According to Laskey, Gusev's letter had been poorly translated from

Russian, with the phrase "spheres of activity" (which occurred twice in paragraph 1) initially reading as "spheres of influence." Dew regarded this as a "blunder", and complained that the English translation "was badly worded in two other passages" (which he did not identify). Syntax was regarded as vital in Whitehall - spheres of activity and spheres of influence were after all perceived as very different concepts. This raises several questions. Did the Russians appreciate the distinction between spheres of activity and spheres of influence from the outset; and, if not, when did they realise that the British attached great importance to it? Also, given the problems experienced in London, was it possible that Eden's proposals of 5th and 18th May were misrepresented in Moscow as a result of "badly worded" translations?

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, Sargent minute, 6th July 1944, including Eden note of 7th July 1944. Eden agreed with Sargent, minuting "all too true" against his final sentence. Sargent's reference to Roosevelt's "suspicious attitude" was a further indication that the British did not appreciate the idiosyncrasies of the Washington foreign affairs set-up, and the occasional hiccups in "government" foreign policy that these caused. Sargent had evidently interpreted Roosevelt's telegrams *en bloc*, and drawn his own conclusions about US policy from them. In fact, and as we have seen, the White House and State Department were following different agendas at this stage. Elements of both had found their way into the President's telegrams, thereby confusing matters - and, evidently, Sargent.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, FO tel. no.2040 to Moscow, 7th July 1944 (copy of Gusev *aide-mémoire* of 30th June); FO tel. no.6167 to Washington, 7th July 1944.

¹¹¹ CAB 65/43 WM(44)89, 10th July 1944. Eden told the War Cabinet that he was particularly concerned with this turn of events, because the situation in Greece had deteriorated. The political negotiations between EAM and Papandreou now appeared to be on the verge of collapse. Papandreou had asked for "an assurance of support from HMG", which Eden was ready to provide (subject to Cabinet approval). As he pointed out, "it seemed clear that in existing conditions it was our duty to support M. Papandreou and his Government." The implication of all this was that, without the agreement to restrain them, the Soviets would begin to "boost" EAM again, and make EAM even less likely to compromise. The War Cabinet agreed with Eden.

¹¹² PREM 3 66/7 On 9th July 1944, John Martin retrieved FO tel. no.2040 to Moscow for the Prime Minister at the latter's request. The Prime Minister then prepared his minute to Eden, which was dated 9th July in the PREM files. The copy in the FO371 files is dated 10th July.

¹¹³ FO371/43636/10483 Churchill to Eden, M.813/4, 10th July 1944. Churchill's comment on Roosevelt's "personal pro-King policy" was a reference to the President's previous intervention in Greek affairs - at Cairo, December 1943. The British had been trying to persuade the King of Greece to issue a declaration about his future position (and, specifically, about his return to Greece after the liberation of his country), and thereby resolve one aspect of

the Greek political imbroglio. Roosevelt had wrecked the whole thing by telling the King not to let the British push him around.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, Eden note on margin of M.813/4, dated 10th July 1944. Was Eden now implying that Churchill had precipitated the crisis by sending an unsolicited telegram directly to Roosevelt? If he was, he was on shaky ground. The Foreign Secretary was naturally upset that the FO's hard work had (apparently) come to nothing. He surmised - correctly - that things had started to unravel after the Prime Minister informed Roosevelt about the proposals. However, the Foreign Secretary had conveniently forgotten that the Prime Minister's telegram of 31st May - to which he seems to have been referring here - had been sent with the FO's approval. Eden was therefore no less culpable than Churchill. True, Churchill's telegram to Roosevelt of 19th May had "let the cat out of the bag"; but the FO had not previously mentioned this message, and there is no reason to assume that Eden was doing so now. See also Cadogan minute, 11th July 1944 (same reference). Cadogan confirmed Eden's conclusion on 11th July, noting sadly that "there is nothing to be done at the moment."

¹¹⁵ FO371/43636/11010 FO tel. no.2079 to Moscow, 12th July 1944 (Churchill to Stalin). Churchill's telegram contained nothing new in the way of justification regarding the arrangement. It synthesised the substance of Eden's exchanges Gusev and his own telegrams with Roosevelt. Several points can be made about this message. The State Department had assumed that the British had been intending to conclude a secret, bilateral agreement with Russia. Churchill now denied this, and the events of the previous seven weeks suggested that he was justified in doing so. The Prime Minister claimed that he had always intended to tell the US Government about the arrangement. Indeed, the agreement had run into trouble because he had been too candid when informing the President. Moreover, Churchill's stringent denial of spheres of influence raises interesting questions about British policy. The FO were convinced that the Soviet Government had lost interest in the arrangement because they now realised that it was not intended to form the basis of a permanent settlement. Why, then, if the British Government were hell-bent on reaching a political accommodation with Stalin in South-Eastern Europe along the lines of spheres of influence, did Churchill now reinforce this message? The most logical answer is that a long term spheres of influence deal had never been on the British agenda, and that, as Churchill now told Stalin, London had been after a working arrangement which would allow the Allies to "get a clear-headed policy in each theatre."

¹¹⁶ FO371/43636/11212 Stalin to Churchill, PM's Personal telegram series no.T.1453/4, 15th July 1944. Stalin did not in fact "write further" after receiving the US Government's reply.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, Laskey minute, 18th July 1944.

¹¹⁸ FO371/43636/11276 Makins letter to Sargent, 11th July 1944, enclosing Murphy memo.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, Dew letter to Makins, 21st July 1944. Sargent was unable to respond personally because he was away on leave. This letter indicates that the British were still ignorant of the precise details of the Roosevelt-State Department schism, though they had guessed pretty accurately what had happened.

¹²⁰ Smith, 'Balkans Agreement', p.179, citing FRUS, 1944, V, 128-9.

¹²¹ FO371/43636/7903 Eden draft telegram to Clark Kerr, reporting on meeting with Gusev, 18th May 1944.

¹²² Iatrides (ed.), *MacVeagh Reports*, p.562, diary entry for 7th July 1944; and pp.567-8, diary entry for 11th July 1944. MacVeagh had already learned about the President's *volte-face* and accession to Churchill's way of thinking from Kohler and Murray on 7th July. From Hull's comments, it is clear that he was unhappy about this. MacVeagh also talked to Hull about longer-term questions, and in particular about future Great Power relations. The comments that the two exchanged helps put State Department thinking into perspective:-

I... told him of the fear, which is so obvious along the British Imperial Life-Line, of Russia as being now the only great continental power, against which no "balance" is possible in Europe - which means we may be called in to defend England unless by foresight we can get the British and the Russians to avoid the clashes of policy which little by little lead on to war. I told him that I thought that we should get the Russian in with us on the ground floor, together with the British, in connection with all our Near Eastern planning, just for this reason, though I doubt if they would be of any great practical assistance at this time. He asked me whether I saw any signs of growing trust between the Russians and the British, and I said that things seem [to be] improving but unfortunately it is almost impossible to get Britishers and Russians to meet as man to man in the way that the Russians and Americans can do.

See also in this connection Iatrides (ed.), *MacVeagh Reports*, p.571. MacVeagh was subsequently referred to Leahy's JCOS paper of 16th May (discussed above) by Wallace Murray. The Ambassador's diary entry for 14th July 1944 suggests that he sympathised with its conclusions, and approved of the influence it was having on policy thinking in Washington:-

It is encouraging that so many people in the Department - from the Secretary down - realise the Anglo-Russian danger. A third world war would about finish the Western World, and there is no place where it is more likely to start than in the Near and Middle East. But forewarned may be forearmed, and the diplomacy of the coming generation must somehow contrive to make the Lion lie down with the Bear, and the Eagle has his role to play in this likewise.

¹²³ FO371/43636/11761 Washington tel. no. 4028 to FO, 25th July 1944, copy of State Department *aide-mémoire* dated 15th July.

¹²⁴ See Smith, 'Balkans Agreement', p.175. Roosevelt may never have seen this *aide-mémoire*. Smith claims that Hull's letter of 8th July was the last communication the two had on the subject. When it came to the attention of the British, no-one suggested reopening the dialogue with Washington; it was felt that the initiative lay with the Russians. Churchill did not send any further messages on the subject to Roosevelt. All of which begs the question; how would the President have reacted to the *aide-mémoire*, given its implicit criticism of his decision to accept the arrangement, and its consequences?

¹²⁵ The British considered that arguments of this sort were too dangerous to pursue. As we have already seen, Churchill and the FO had exchanged a series of minutes about Soviet adherence to the Atlantic Charter and the Moscow Four Power Declaration during March and April 1944. The Prime Minister had hoped to use these declarations - and the Soviet Government's previous acceptance of them - to bring pressure on Stalin, but the FO had warned Churchill against such a course. This is discussed in Chapter II.

¹²⁶ In fact, it is hard to see how the State Department could have failed to anticipate Soviet objections to this, especially when one considers how on other occasions the British and Americans worried about "ganging up" against Russia. British and American interests (and policies) were often seen as synonymous by the Russians. Any divergence in policy between the two Western Powers was bound to be viewed with scepticism by Moscow, especially when the divergence was as convenient as it was in this instance. The arrangement set out by the State Department *aide-mémoire* would almost certainly have been interpreted by the Russians as an attempt by the Western Powers to restrict Soviet freedom of action in Roumania, whilst allowing the Western Allies freedom of action in Greece. The British would indeed acquiesce when it came to Roumanian affairs, safe in the knowledge that the Americans could defend Western (and therefore British) interests in that country. As a *quid pro quo*, the British would expect the Russians to accept their lead - and the suppression the Communist forces in Greece - while the Americans (who could have intervened) turned a blind eye.

¹²⁷ FO371/43636/11761 Laskey minute, 31st July 1944.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, Dew and Clutton minutes, 1st August 1944.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, Sargent minute, 1st August 1944. Barker, British Policy in SE Europe, pp.142-4, covers this episode. The Soviets had despatched a mission to EAM-ELAS under Lt-Col. Grigori Popov on the night of 25th-26th July, without informing London. The fact that this mission had arrived at an SOE landing ground merely made matters worse. The British were at this stage battling to get EAM to join Papandreou's coalition Government and to accept the compromise thrashed out at the Lebanon Conference. Cadogan, minuting on 1st August, felt that the presence of a Soviet mission at EAM-ELAS H.Q.

would "only encourage the latter to remain intransigent." Eden (who subsequently complained about this mission to Gusev) went even further on 3rd August, minuting that "on the face of it this may be a Russian attempt to complete Communist domination of the Balkans and I think that we should make it pretty plain that we are not standing for it in Greece." When a further Soviet mission was smuggled into the Balkans, this time into Albania, Eden's fears deepened. On 15th August, he warned Churchill (who was at this time in Italy) that the situation was apparently slipping away, telling him that the "unheralded despatch of this mission following on despatch of Soviet mission to ELAS smells of a Russian attempt to communise the Balkans under our noses." In fact, the arrival of Popov's mission at EAM-ELAS H.Q. coincided with that organisation's decision to accept the terms on offer and participate in Papandreou's Government. This suggests that, at this stage, the Soviets were playing fair in Greece and not seeking to undermine their British Allies. For an interesting article which lends credence to this view, see Michael Macrakis, 'Russian Mission on the Mountains of Greece, Summer 1944 (a View from the Ranks)' in *The Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.23 (1988), pp.387-408. See also Lars Baerentzen and David Close, 'The British Defeat of EAM, 1944-45', in Close (ed.), *The Greek Civil War 1943-50: Studies of Polarisation* (London 1993), p.77.

¹³⁰ PREM 3 66/7 Churchill to Eden, M.912/4, 1st August 1944, including Eden comments dated 3rd August 1944. The Foreign Secretary's questions were directed at the Southern Department.

¹³¹ FO371/43636/11761, Laskey minute, 6th August 1944.

¹³² *ibid.*, Eden to Churchill, PM/44/578, 8th August 1944.

¹³³ Barker, *British Policy in SE Europe*, p.142, citing Moscow tel. no.2206 to FO, 21st August 1944.

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, p.144. In fact, and as Barker shows, this was not quite the end of the Pre-Percentages affair. On 21st September 1944, Clark Kerr was told to inform the Soviet Government that a British force was about to be sent into Greece. He was told to stress that Britain had a special interest in Greece, and to say that HMG hoped that "the Soviet Government would not find it necessary to send Russian troops into any part of Greece except in agreement with HMG." Andrei Vyshinski, Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs, responded on 23rd September. He now "confirmed" that the Soviet Government adhered to the May arrangement, and consequently had no intention of sending any forces into Greece! However, and as Barker correctly points out, these developments, though interesting, do not fit comfortably into the context of the Pre-Percentages affair. By September 1944, the politico-military situation in Europe had altered radically from that of May-June, and the attitudes of the British, American and Soviet Governments had changed accordingly.

Endnotes:- Conclusion

¹ Anthony Eden, The Eden Memoirs: Vol. II - The Reckoning (London 1965), p. 457.

² See above, Chapter II.

³ Eden, The Reckoning, pp. 457-8.

⁴ Smith, Balkans Agreement, pp. 16-18.

⁵ Smith, Balkans Agreement, p.176.

⁶ See Hew Strachan, European Armies and the Conduct of War (London 1983), p. 95, citing Carl von Clausewitz, Vom Kriege, translated and edited by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton 1976).

⁷ Colville, Downing Street Diaries, p.427.

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