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**BRITISH
FOREIGN POLICY
DURING
WORLD WAR II
1939-1945**



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ВНЕШНЯЯ ПОЛИТИКА АНГЛИИ 1939—1945

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

It is scarcely possible to name a subject that embroils historians in such sharp clashes of opinion as the Second World War. In the interpretation of the history of that war the widest divergences exist between Marxist and Western historians. Even within these two large groups of scholars opinion is divided on many questions.

The author of this book, first published in the Soviet Union in the Russian language in 1965 and now available in the English and French languages, has made an attempt to give a Marxist view of British foreign policy during the Second World War on the basis of published documents (for reasons that will be appreciated the author has had no access to British archives), memoirs by many prominent politicians and military leaders and the works of historians. The war-time documents of the British Government have not been published, and the author has therefore had to make use of approved British histories of the war whose authors had drawn upon those documents. It was much easier to reconstruct Anglo-Soviet relations, which form the main substance of this book, because many of the most important war-time documents of the Soviet Government have been published. These include the full correspondence of J. V. Stalin with Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt (which has not been published either in Britain or in the USA), diplomatic documents covering Soviet-French relations, and the verbatim reports of the Teheran, Crimea

and Berlin conferences. Moreover, where the author's assessments differ from his Western, mainly British, colleagues', he has reinforced his arguments with facts and materials published in Britain and other Western countries or with the views of Western authors. He feels that this will make his arguments more understandable to the foreign reader.

The English and French translations faithfully reproduce the Russian edition, except in cases where for the reader's convenience the book has been somewhat abridged.

INTRODUCTION

Wars are capitalism's greatest crime against humanity. This is particularly true of the Second World War, which cost mankind countless lives and brought it enormous suffering.

The British ruling classes bear a responsibility for this war because in the 1920s and 1930s their policy facilitated the preparations for the war and enabled Germany, Italy and Japan to start it. That, perhaps, is the reason why many doctored views regarding the events leading up to the war have been current in Britain for more than a quarter of a century. From time to time these views somewhat vary, but their substance remains unchanged: their authors assert that Britain never wanted the war.

In these assertions truth rubs shoulders with untruth. The truth is that the overwhelming majority of people in Britain never really wanted war. But the ruling classes had other ideas. They did not want a war in which Britain would fight Germany, much less on the side of the Soviet Union; they wanted a war between Germany and the Soviet Union. This was their objective throughout the two decades between the two world wars. Any assertion that Britain did not want the Second World War is thus a piece of classic humbug.

On the eve of the war British policy was determined by the contradictions in operation in the world, the prime contradiction being that between capitalism and socialism. After the Great October Socialist Revolution the main process

determining world history has been the struggle between these two opposing social systems. The antagonism between moribund capitalism and nascent communism is a class contradiction operating in international politics. In the British socio-economic system the class antagonism between the working people and the bourgeoisie embraced and influenced both home and foreign policy. The contradiction between socialism and capitalism objectively pushed Britain towards unity with other imperialist states for a struggle against the socialist Soviet Union, against the revolutionary movement throughout the world.

Besides there were contradictions between the imperialists. They had been in existence before the October Revolution, but they grew more acute with the general crisis of capitalism, which started as a result of the October Revolution. In their turn they greatly exacerbated the class contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the working people of Britain in home and foreign policy.

At different periods these contradictions influenced British foreign policy in one way or another. Aggravation of the antagonism between socialism and capitalism blunted the inter-imperialist contradictions and then sharpened them again. These changes in the degree of exacerbation of various contradictions were observed before and during the Second World War.

The Second World War was most closely linked up with the nature of imperialism. The law of the uneven development of capitalist countries in the epoch of imperialism swells the economic and political contradictions within the world capitalist system and inevitably gives rise to the requisites for war. That is what led to the outbreak of both world wars, in which Britain played an active part. Moreover, the uneven development of capitalism, in view of its general crisis, was much more pronounced than at the beginning of the 20th century.

Subjective factors, too, played a role in giving rise to the Second World War—the actions of individual governments and political parties influencing world developments and determining the alignment of forces in war. The main responsibility for unleashing the Second World War devolves on Germany and her allies—Italy and Japan. These were aggressive states with fascist and militarist regimes which were out to win world domination. However, a very large

measure of this responsibility reposes in Britain, France and the USA, which likewise fought for a dominating position in the world and were bent on removing the opposition of their rivals to their imperialist designs.

In the complicated conditions in which the various contradictions interacted, the British ruling classes charted a policy which they hoped would kill two birds with one stone: destroy or, at least, undermine socialism and seriously shake the position of their imperialist adversaries. British statesmen felt this could be achieved by instigating Germany and Japan to go to war against the Soviet Union. To this end, Britain, France and the USA took the enormous risk, in contravention of the Versailles Treaty, of allowing and helping their imperialist adversaries to arm and seize important strategic positions, from which Germany, Italy and Japan could threaten not only the Soviet Union but also the Western Powers.

The Soviet Union saw through this policy, time and again warning Britain, France and the USA that as a result of their manoeuvres the aggressive forces of Germany, Italy and Japan, which they were doing their best to prepare for an anti-Soviet crusade, would ultimately start a war against them. That is what happened. Germany and Italy at first attacked Britain and France, and started a war against the Soviet Union only after they had seized nearly all of continental Western Europe.

The Soviet Government felt it was necessary and possible to curb the aggressive powers and prevent them from unleashing a war. This could be done by creating a powerful peace front of all nations desiring to avert war. The Soviet Union pressed for an anti-aggression alliance with Britain, France and other states threatened by Germany, Italy and Japan, justifiably believing that such an alliance could cut short the policy of international brigandage and, at the time, avert another world war. However, obsessed by hatred of the socialist state and doing their best to precipitate an attack on it by Germany and Japan, the Western Powers wrecked all of the Soviet Union's efforts to set up a peace front.

The designs of the politicians steering towards an anti-Soviet war might have been frustrated and they might have been forced to conclude an alliance with the Soviet Union in defence of peace through the joint efforts of the Soviet Union and other countries pursuing a peace policy and also

through the efforts of the working class and the democratic forces of different countries. Such an alliance would have blocked the road to nazi aggression and averted the Second World War. But this opportunity was lost chiefly as a result of the treachery of the opportunist labour leaders in the West.

Inasmuch as in those years the British Labour Party played a leading role in the world Social-Democratic movement and carried extensive weight among the British working class, which gave it the possibility of influencing the policy of the country's ruling classes, its responsibility for the failure to set up a peace front in the 1930s is particularly great. This is admitted by leaders of the British Labour Party. One of them, Ernest Bevin, said at the end of the war: "If anyone asks me who was responsible for the British policy leading up to the war, I should, as a Labour man myself, make a confession and say 'all of us'."*

In connection with the 25th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War, British historians and propaganda propounded the thesis that Britain, France and the Soviet Union were equally responsible for allowing Germany and her allies to start the war. All had committed gross mistakes: Britain and France had made their mistake by striking the Munich deal with Hitler; the Soviet Union's mistake was in signing the pact with Germany in 1939. All had atoned for these errors: Britain by Dunkirk, and the Soviet Union by its contribution to the defeat of Germany.

This argument is used to dispute the fact that in pre-war international relations there were two lines—the Soviet line of consistently advocating steps to rule out a world war, and the line pursued by Britain and some other countries which were out to kindle war between Germany and the Soviet Union.

Marxist and other historians have accumulated a vast body of facts which leave not the slightest doubt that the governments of Britain and some other imperialist powers went to all ends in their efforts to spark a war between Germany and the USSR and thereby fomented the Second World War. Evidence of this is also to be found in published official documents from the diplomatic archives of Britain, Germany and the USA, and in the memoirs of many statesmen and politicians of different countries. For instance,

* *Daily Notes*, June 26, 1945.

a study of the diplomatic archives of the US State Department, including communications from the US Ambassador in London, brought the American historians William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason round to the conclusion that Neville Chamberlain, British Prime Minister in 1937-40, believed a conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union would be of "great benefit to the whole Western world".*

Sir Stafford Cripps, who was closely connected with British Government circles and, consequently, well-informed, gave the following explanation why Chamberlain and other representatives of the British ruling classes felt the interests of the bourgeois world would be furthered by a war between Germany and the USSR. "When the change of Government came in Great Britain in 1931," he said in February 1940, "a new train of very important international events began.

"The new National Government ... was in fact overwhelmingly controlled by conservative and imperialist forces. The leaders were known to be extremely hostile to Russia and to be unsympathetic to the tendency towards socialism and communism in Germany and other European countries. The Conservatives for some years after 1917 had regarded the Russian Revolution as something unstable and which must inevitably fall within a few years; but when it had stood through years of difficulties and was obviously becoming more and more stable they became extremely alarmed at the prospect of the spread of the ideology of communism through Germany and France to Great Britain itself. They were, therefore, prepared to do almost anything to build up protection for British capitalism and imperialism against the spread of this, to them, dangerous disease, which had already gained a considerable hold amongst the British working class. That basic attitude has been the determining factor in all British foreign policy since 1931 and up to September last year, and even to a large extent since that date....

"The great enemy to British capitalism was thus the ideology of the Russian Revolution permanently embodied in the successful Government of Soviet Russia. To fight this ideology must mean hostility to Russia....

"It will thus be seen that throughout this period the major factor in European politics was the successive utilisation by

* William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *The Challenge to Isolation, 1937-1940*, New York, 1952, p. 76.

Great Britain and to some extent by France as well, though largely as the result of Great Britain's lead, of various fascist governments to check the power and danger of the rise of communism or socialism. . . . Japan was tacitly encouraged in the east, Germany on the west of Russia and fascism was reinforced in Italy and Spain. . . . All this despite the evident and growing danger to British imperialism. . . . It was then the failure of Britain to conclude a pact with Russia that made the Russo-German pact and war inevitable."*

Such was Sir Stafford Cripps' generally correct assessment of British foreign policy on the eve of the war and of Britain's responsibility for the war. He cannot be suspected of being sympathetic to communism if only because he was British Ambassador in the USSR in 1940-42 and then a member of Churchill's War Cabinet. He was, consequently, a reliable executor of the will and protector of the interests of British imperialist circles.

John L. Snell, a well-known American bourgeois historian, writes that many of the British Conservatives "admired Hitler or feared Communism so greatly that they would not resist Germany's resurgence", while Chamberlain regarded Germany as a "strong bulwark against Russia".**

The allegation, made by British historians and propaganda, that Britain and the USSR share the responsibility for the Second World War is evidence that even the apologists of British foreign policy feel the policy of appeasing aggressors pursued by the British Government in the 1930s cannot be justified. This is indirect admission of the fact that this policy led to the Second World War.

Many British authors, among them Colin Reith Coote writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, say this policy was a mistake, and in order to save the Munichmen from being regarded as having deliberately engineered the war they go so far as to call them not very clever people.

Similarly, English bourgeois historiography refuses to recognise that Soviet actions on the eve of the war were justified, that there were grounds for them and that they had the safeguarding of peace as their aim. Therefore, in spite of facts, attempts are made to "divide the responsibility" for

* Eric Estorick, *Stafford Cripps: Master Statesman*, New York, 1949, pp. 215, 216, 217, 219.

** John L. Snell, *Illusion and Necessity. The Diplomacy of Global War, 1939-1945*, Boston, 1963, pp. 11-12.

the war between the USSR and the imperialist powers. To this end English historiography unscrupulously presents the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Treaty as an instrument that paved the way to war even though this is belied by the treaty's very name.

These authors are not in the least disturbed by the fact that they contradict not only history but also themselves. In every more or less reputable work on the history of pre-war international relations one finds approximately what, for example, W. N. Medlicott writes: "We must at least bear in mind throughout that the decision to go to war was taken by Hitler before the end of 1937."* This corresponds to the truth and is borne out by German archival documents. Obviously there is no connection between this decision and the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Treaty, which was signed in 1939. Nobody will venture to assert that in deciding, in 1937, to go to war in the near future Hitler made this decision conditional on the conclusion of a non-aggression treaty with the USSR two years later. But it is unquestionable that in adopting his decision he took the stand of the Munich appeasers into account. History confirmed that his calculations were correct—a year later Chamberlain and Daladier went to Munich, and the deal they made with Hitler was the prelude to the Second World War.

Another fact, in this connection, which cannot be ignored is that in March 1939 Britain gave her notorious "guarantees" to Poland. Why? Because it was felt Germany was jockeying into a position to attack Poland. Thus, as early as March 1939 the British Government's point of departure was that Germany would soon start a world war. It will be noted that all this took place before the talks on a Soviet-German Non-Aggression Treaty were started on German initiative and was in no way linked with that treaty.

The arguments of some British historians drip with melancholy and regret over the failure of the Munich policy. Candid admissions on this score have lately become more and more frequent in Britain. By attacking the policy pursued by the Soviet Union in 1939, British and other historians defend the abortive Munich policy which history has condemned.

* W. N. Medlicott, *The Economic Blockade*, Vol. II, London, 1959, p. 3.

What kind of Soviet foreign policy would have suited British historians? Here, for instance, is what Medlicott says: "How much stronger the Soviet case would be if Russia and not the Western Powers had gone to war in September 1939!"...* An interesting thought. In other words, had the Soviet Union yielded to the provocation of the Chamberlain Cabinet and gone to war against Germany singlehanded in 1939, thereby according Britain the role of a jubilant onlooker, Medlicott would have approved Soviet policy. No serious scholar can condemn the Soviet Government for not having pursued an obviously mad policy and for evading the trap set for it by British and other politicians.

The outbreak of war between Britain and Germany in September 1939 and, in particular, the military defeat suffered by Britain and France in the summer of 1940 signified the collapse of the foreign policy which Britain had pursued in the 1920s and 1930s. In face of this catastrophic setback, the British ruling classes had temporarily to change their course and steer towards an alliance with the USSR in order to have its assistance against their imperialist adversaries. They were forced to take this step by circumstances and by the will of the British people, who rightly considered that Britain's national independence could not be upheld without an alliance with the Soviet Union. However, this did not imply a radical and final rupture with the old policy. Such a rupture could not take place because Britain's foreign policy was determined by the long-term class interests of the British bourgeoisie and by the contradictions operating in international politics; these contradictions could not disappear or radically change.

Although Britain was a member of the anti-fascist coalition, her policy in 1939-45 was, naturally, a continuation of her policy of the 1920s and 1930s under the new conditions and with due account for these new conditions. For that reason, the policy which the British ruling classes and their imperialist allies pursued during the Second World War had two closely intertwining objectives: the first was to defeat their imperialist rivals with Soviet assistance, and the second was to weaken the Soviet Union, which was their Ally. These two objectives made British foreign policy complicated and contradictory.

* *The Times*, March 17, 1964, p. 11.

Chapter One

MUNICH LIVED ON IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING

(September 1939-April 1940)

Britain Declares War

No matter how hard British bourgeois politicians, publicists and historians have tried to persuade people to believe the contrary, Britain did not enter the war because of Poland. The fulfilment by Britain of the guarantees* given to Poland is the official version doggedly underlined by those who desire to conceal the truth. Facts, however, indicate that in its eagerness to reach agreement with Germany, the British Government was prepared, in the summer of 1939, to scrap these guarantees and betray Poland to Germany, naturally, on terms that would benefit Britain. Hitler was well aware of this and prepared a military attack on Poland, planning to crush and conquer her and decide her destiny at his own discretion, without asking the British Government for advice.

He was confident the British Government, which had left Austria and Czechoslovakia to his tender mercies and

* On March 31, 1939, the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain told Parliament that in the event of an action which clearly threatened Polish independence and which the Polish Government accordingly thought was vital to resist with their national forces, the British Government "would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support in their power" (*Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons*, Vol. 345, col. 2415). These unilateral guarantees soon became mutual, as recorded in the Anglo-Polish communiqué of April 6, 1939 (*The Times*, April 6, 1939). An Anglo-Polish Treaty turning these guarantees into a formal mutual assistance pact was signed in London on August 25, 1939 (*The Times*, August 26, 1939).

demonstrated its readiness to settle the "Polish problem" in Germany's interests, would also swallow his seizure of Poland. The British Government had itself convinced him of this. Medlicott writes that Dr. Wohlthat's discussions in London with Sir Horace Wilson and R. S. Hudson on July 18-21 had taken place on British initiative. The mere fact that in these discussions the British offered a blanket agreement on economic and colonial questions "evidently convinced Ribbentrop that the British were desperately seeking to escape from their Polish entanglement".* In order to make this unpleasant operation easier for the British, Hitler, on August 25, 1939, offered Britain through her Ambassador in Berlin Neville Henderson a broad agreement which "would not only guarantee the existence of the British Empire in all circumstances as far as Germany is concerned, but also if necessary give an assurance to the British Empire of German assistance regardless of where such assistance should be necessary".** He made the reservation that this offer could be implemented "only after the German-Polish problem was settled", implying that Germany would settle this "problem" by force. The British Government was prepared to start talks on a broad agreement with Germany, but insisted that Germany reach a peaceful settlement with Poland. The substance of the divergences was that Hitler wanted first to seize Poland and then talk with Britain, while Chamberlain was prepared to let him have Poland on condition this would be part of a general Anglo-German agreement. Hitler expected Chamberlain would in the end yield and that matters would not go to the extent of war between Germany and Britain. "It is likely," writes the American publicist William L. Shirer, "that his experience with Chamberlain at Munich led him to believe that the Prime Minister again would capitulate if a way out could be concocted."*** Hitler's offer of August 25 was that way out.

The Italian dictator Mussolini, who dreaded being drawn into a war prematurely, notified Hitler that Italy could not support Germany in a war over the impending German in-

* W. N. Medlicott, *The Coming of War in 1939*, London, 1963, p. 28.

** *The British Blue Book. Documents Concerning German-Polish Relations and the Outbreak of Hostilities Between Great Britain and Germany on September 3, 1939*, 6106, London, 1939, p. 121.

*** William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich. A History of Nazi Germany*, New York, 1960, p. 557.

vasion of Poland, and actively engaged in organising another Munich, this time for the dissolution of Poland. The Dala-dier Government in France displayed readiness to strike such a bargain. The British Government was likewise prepared to go to another Munich in the hope it would lead to a broad agreement with Germany.

This added fuel to Hitler's adventurism and aggressiveness. He was becoming convinced that Germany's seizure of Poland would not lead to war with Britain and France. In the evening of August 31, only hours before the invasion of Poland, General Franz Halder, Chief of the German General Staff, wrote in his diary: "Fuehrer calm ... he expects France and England will not take action."** The immediate future did not justify these hopes. Hitler miscalculated. Nevertheless he had had weighty grounds for his expectations.

From the letter and spirit of the British guarantees to Poland it followed that if Britain intended to honour her pledge she had to declare war on Germany as soon as Germany attacked Poland at dawn on September 1, 1939. This applied to France in equal measure. However, neither Britain nor France took this step either on September 1 or 2. "Under the terms of the Mutual Assistance Agreement of August 25, Britain was pledged to act 'at once', with 'all the support and assistance in its power'. She did not. If Hitler calculated that it was possible once more to make gains in Eastern Europe without British interference, it was a shrewd calculation. Those who were responsible for British foreign policy *were* unwilling to honour their Polish Pact simply because Polish territory had been attacked... With that onslaught, and with the bombing of cities and the encroachment of armies, the British willingness for negotiations remained... The clear terms of a treaty signed five days earlier were ignored."**

Instead of discharging their obligations to Poland, the British and French governments looked feverishly for a possibility to avoid declaring war on Germany and reach agreement with her at the expense of Poland's freedom and independence. The British Cabinet met to discuss the crisis

* Ibid., pp. 595-96.

** Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, *The Appeasers*, Boston, 1963, p. 301.

at midday on September 1, and by 13:25 hours the situation had become clear. The British Government decided not to regard the German invasion of Poland as a *casus belli*, and to try to work towards a settlement of the issue through negotiation. "The idea of a solution 'without war' once war had begun was a strange one," Gilbert and Gott note.* This strange idea was behind the actions of the British Government in the course of two days after the German invasion of Poland.

British diplomacy concentrated on talks with the governments of Germany, Italy, France and Poland with the purpose of convening another Munich-type conference. The British Government jumped at Mussolini's suggestion, made to Britain and France, of August 31, that a conference should be held on September 5 "for the revision of the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles which were the cause of the present great troubles in the life of Europe".** It sent the German Government a communication stating that by "attacking Poland the German Government had 'created conditions' calling for the implementation of the Anglo-French guarantee to Poland"***.

In this same communication it was pointed out that if the German Government did not recall its troops from Poland, the British Government would honour its commitments to Poland. It is extremely important to note that Neville Henderson was instructed to tell the German Government that this "communication was in the nature of a warning, and was not to be considered as an ultimatum"****.

Thus, in violation of her pledge to Poland, Britain did not declare war on Germany on September 1 despite the fact that according to the British communication Germany had "created conditions" calling for war. More than that, she did not even send Germany an ultimatum. Instead she started a correspondence with the aim of convening the conference suggested by Mussolini. In a message to the German Government on September 2, Mussolini said this conference would ensure "a settlement of the Polish-German dispute in favour of Germany".

* Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, *Op. cit.*, p. 305.

** Llewellyn Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, London, 1962, p. 2.

*** Ibid.

**** Ibid.

Matters were clearly moving towards another Munich, a fact confirmed even in approved British histories of the Second World War. "For the first twenty-four hours after the opening of the German attack there seemed to the Foreign Office a faint chance that . . . Hitler might agree to a resumption of negotiations on terms which the British, French and Polish governments could accept."* But Hitler left the communication of September 1 unanswered. He took his time, intending first to attain his military targets in Poland and then negotiate with her Allies. He was confident that neither Chamberlain nor Daladier would go so far as to declare war. However, he failed to take into consideration the forces which ultimately determined the actions of the British and French governments.

The fact that Poland would be the next victim of German piracy had been obvious long before September 1. After Germany seized Czechoslovakia in March 1939, and followed this up by raising the question of Danzig and the Polish corridor, the British Government had no doubts whatever as to which way the wind was blowing. We now know that during the secret talks with the Germans in the summer of 1939 the British Government was prepared to sacrifice Poland to the nazis for a broad agreement with them. London was positive that after seizing Poland, Germany would move farther east and finally start a war against the Soviet Union, a war so long-awaited and passionately desired by the Western ruling circles. Obsessed with these calculations the British and French governments obstructed an agreement with the USSR on ensuring peace in Europe, refused to accept its assistance in the struggle against German aggression and declined its offer to act jointly with them in defending Poland. They thereby doomed Poland to defeat and helped Germany to ignite the fuse of the Second World War.

The Treaty of Non-Aggression signed by Germany and the USSR on August 23, 1939 opened the eyes of many British statesmen to Germany's immediate plans. They saw that Germany had no intention, at least in the near future, of attacking the USSR. This meant she would threaten the West. This was appreciated in London, and in the British ruling circles the balance of forces changed in favour of

* Ibid., pp. 1-2.

those who felt, belatedly it is true, that Germany's bid for supremacy in Europe had to be opposed by force. True, Neville Chamberlain, who had long ago staked on an anti-Soviet deal with Hitler, did not catch this change in the mood of the ruling circles. Hence his desire to reach agreement with Hitler at Poland's expense even after September 1. Hitler, too, did not understand the changes that were taking place in Britain and went on hoping that the Chamberlain Cabinet would officially betray Poland.

But developments moved in the opposite direction. At 19:30 hours on September 2, when Chamberlain appeared in the House of Commons, the MPs believed he would inform them that the Government would declare war or, at least, present an ultimatum to Germany. But they heard nothing of the sort. Chamberlain said he was hoping negotiations were still possible. It was obvious to MPs that the Government was concocting another Munich, but they fundamentally disagreed with it in the question of whether another bargain was opportune and served Britain's interests. The Chamberlain statement, therefore, aroused profound indignation not only among the Labour and Liberal factions but also among the majority of the Conservatives. Hugh Dalton, a Labour leader, considered that if there had been a free vote in the House of Commons, the Chamberlain Cabinet would have been voted out of office. "It seemed," he noted in his diary on September 2, "that appeasement was once more in full swing, and that our word of honour to the Poles was being deliberately broken."* On the same day, Leslie Hore-Belisha, Chamberlain's Secretary for War, wrote in his diary that had Arthur Greenwood, who spoke on behalf of the Labour Party, "turned on the Government, he would have had Tory support, and it might have meant the fall of the Government".**

The mood in Parliament communicated itself to members of the Cabinet. Some Ministers—Leslie Hore-Belisha, Sir John Anderson, Herbrand Edward de la Warr and Walter Elliot—asked John Simon, Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was close to Chamberlain, to tell the Prime Minister to

* Hugh Dalton, *The Fateful Years. Memoirs, 1931-1945*, London, 1957, pp. 264-65.

** R. J. Minney, *The Private Papers of Hore-Belisha*, Garden City, New York, 1961, p. 226.

declare war on Germany.* A group of leading Tories—Anthony Eden, Robert Boothby, Brendan Bracken, Duncan Sandys and Alfred Duff Cooper—gathered at Churchill's home. "We were all in a state of bewildered rage," writes Duff Cooper.** Boothby said that if Chamberlain did not declare war within the next few hours his chances of remaining in office were nil. This group felt that if on the next day Churchill spoke in the House of Commons against Chamberlain he would cause the downfall of the Government. But Churchill refused to take this step because in his pocket he had Chamberlain's invitation to join the Cabinet as First Lord of the Admiralty.

That same evening the Tory Chief Whip saw Chamberlain and "warned him" in no uncertain terms "that unless we acted on the following day [i.e., declared war—*U. T.*] there would be a revolt in the House".***

The Cabinet met at 23:30 hours on September 2. It was now obvious to everybody that there were only two alternatives before the Cabinet: either to declare war on Germany or on the following day Parliament would vote the Government out of office. It was decided to send Germany an ultimatum at nine o'clock in the morning of September 3. The ultimatum would expire at 11 o'clock that same morning, i.e., one hour before the House of Commons opened.

The ultimatum stated that if the German Government failed to give satisfactory assurances that it would cease the invasion of Poland and quickly withdraw its troops, Britain would be in a state of war with Germany as of 11:00 hours on September 3, 1939. This caught the Germans by surprise. When the ultimatum was reported to Hitler he asked Ribbentrop, his Foreign Minister: "What's now?" This question meant that Ribbentrop had deluded himself and the Fuehrer regarding Britain's possible reaction to the German invasion of Poland.*)

Yet, until the very last minute neither did the British Government expect to have to declare war. It did so against its own will, being forced by a number of factors. Its anti-Soviet designs had gone astray. The British ruling classes

* Ibid., pp. 226-27.

** Alfred Duff Cooper, *Old Men Forget*, London, 1954, p. 259.

*** Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, *Op. cit.*, p. 322.

*) P. Schmidt, *Hitler's Interpreter*, New York, 1951, pp. 157-58.

felt they had been tricked by Hitler: he had been paid in advance for a war against the Soviet Union and now he was refusing to act according to the plans of the London politicians. In August 1939 these same politicians had refused to sign a treaty with the Soviet Union against aggression in Europe, i.e., mainly against nazi Germany, and now after Germany had signed the Treaty of Non-Aggression with the USSR, they were compelled to declare war on Germany. On September 3, 1939 Britain and France alone went to war against Germany; only a couple of weeks before that they had turned down an alliance with the USSR against Germany's aggressive aspirations. What was behind this development? It was by no means the German attack on Poland. Firstly, although Britain and France had given Poland "guarantees", they had no intention of enforcing them. Secondly, while the Anglo-Franco-Soviet talks were in progress in the spring and summer of 1939, it was obvious that Germany was getting ready to attack Poland. Properly speaking, that was why these negotiations were conducted. The crux of the matter was that before the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Treaty was signed, Britain and France had regarded Germany as the main shock force against the USSR and, naturally, did not wish to hinder her counter-revolutionary mission. Now they saw her as a "traitor". Her signature under the non-aggression treaty was tantamount to a declaration that she had no intention of fighting the Soviet Union. Naturally, at the time neither in London nor in Paris did anyone suspect that Germany regarded this treaty only as a stratagem and was planning to attack the Soviet Union in violation of this treaty after she had defeated Britain and France. Even if the governments of Britain and France had any inkling of this, it could hardly have given them any pleasure inasmuch as under the German plan a Soviet-German war had to be preceded by the defeat of Britain and France and the German occupation of the whole of Western Europe. Churchill said in one of his speeches that Britain declared war on Germany because Hitler, who had promised "war against the Bolsheviks", had "deceived Western civilisation" by signing a non-aggression treaty with the USSR. In a brochure containing a preface by Viscount Halifax, Lord Lloyd of Dolobran says the motive behind Britain's declaration of war on Germany was the latter's "betrayal of Europe", "Hitler's last act of apostasy", which

was to sign a non-aggression treaty with the USSR. Accusations in this vein were hurled at Hitler by the British press at the close of 1939 and in early 1940. In Liverpool on February 28, 1940, Anthony Eden, then Secretary of State for Dominions, bitterly reproached the German Government for betraying the struggle against the Soviet Union. "It is strange to think," he wrote, "how many hours I used to spend in the Foreign Office listening to the present German Foreign Secretary when he was Ambassador in London, and when he used to expound to me at no small length the dangers and horrors of Bolshevism."* It never occurred to Eden that in addition to charging the German Government with "treachery", he was giving away his own Government. If Ribbentrop had spoken of this for hours at the British Foreign Office, it meant the British Government had wanted to discuss the "Bolshevik threat" with him and had stinted neither its time nor energy.

But there was more to it than Germany's "betrayal" of the anti-socialist cause. By her actions she aggravated Anglo-German contradictions to the extent that British ruling circles found they had to go to war against Germany. "The Munichites," *Labour Monthly* wrote, "replied by declaring war on nazi Germany as soon as it had signed the Pact of Non-Aggression with the Soviet Union and thus made clear that its offensive would be directed against their imperialist interests."**

One of the major factors determining Britain's stand was the desire of the British people to help stamp out the menace of nazism. While a section of the ruling classes urged that Germany should be repulsed because her actions were a direct threat to British imperialist interests, the working people considered that a military rebuff should be given to Germany because German nazism was a threat to the freedom of nations, to progress. On the example of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Spain, as well as Germany herself, the British people by then knew the meaning of nazism. All illusions regarding the Munich deal had crumbled long ago, and the shame of Munich was obvious to anyone who cared to open his eyes.

The Soviet Union, whose foreign policy had fostered the

* *The Times*, March 1, 1940, p. 5.

** *Labour Monthly*, August 1941, p. 347.

growth of political consciousness among the nations, had done much to expose the aggressive nature of nazism and the Munich compact. The mood of the masses powerfully influenced the stand of British MPs. It so happened that this mood coincided with the considerations of the ruling circles. Therefore, on September 3, the House of Commons unanimously voted for a declaration of war. The Conservative, Labour and Liberal parties were at one on this question.

. An important role was played by the United States, which in the autumn of 1939 felt its imperialist interests would be furthered if war broke out between Germany and the Anglo-French bloc. At the time of Munich the US Government urged Hitler's appeasement at the expense of Czechoslovakia, the reason being that in 1938 a war against Germany might have ended before the USA could intervene. Such a war held out nothing for the US monopolies. The situation changed radically by the summer of 1939. Germany's power had grown and if she attacked Britain and France the war promised to be a long one. Such a war would weaken the USA's imperialist rivals and clear the way for the materialisation of US plans for world domination. Moreover, a big war in Europe was desirable because it could smooth away the USA's own economic difficulties. US President Franklin D. Roosevelt admitted that his New Deal had not improved the American economy. He now pinned his hopes not on "planned capitalism" but on gearing the economy to the military situation. No country, he said in 1938, "has devised a permanent way, a permanent solution of giving work to people in the depression periods. . . . The only method devised so far that seemed to give 100 per cent of relief, or nearly so, is the method of going in for armaments."*

Hoping that orders for military supplies would cure US economy of its chronic ailments, the US Government, much to the surprise of the British Government, urged firm opposition to Hitler's claims on Poland. This happened at the close of August 1939. The Roosevelt Administration made it clear to the British Government that it had to honour its guarantees to Poland. Joseph P. Kennedy, the US Ambassador in London, said that "...neither the French nor the British would have made Poland a cause of war if

* *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1938*, New York, 1941, pp. 406-07.

it had not been for the constant needling from Washington... In the summer of 1939 the President kept telling him [Kennedy] to put some iron up Chamberlain's backside."** The US Government informed Britain and France that if they "did not go to Poland's aid, those countries could expect no help from America".**

Lastly, the fact that most of the British Dominions likewise considered it was necessary to put up armed resistance to Germany, which was threatening the interests of Britain and the British Empire, also played its role. In March 1939 the governments of the Dominions, which had supported the appeasement policy and had approved the Munich bargain, began to reassess values and at the close of August all of them, with the exception of the Government of the Union of South Africa, came to the conclusion that appeasement had failed and that no further concessions would lead to agreement with Germany on acceptable terms.

Being independent in their internal and foreign policy, the British Dominions were not parties to Britain's guarantees to Poland. Therefore, in September they were free to choose between fighting the war on Britain's side or remaining neutral. The German threat to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa and Eire (Ireland) was not as direct as to Britain, but the economic, political and military interests of Britain and the Dominions intertwined so closely that a menace to Britain was, at the same time, a menace to the Dominions. In the long run this was what drew all the Dominions (save Eire) into the war on Britain's side.

The many British colonies with their large populations, with a vast country like India among them, were declared by the British Government to be in a state of war with Germany. This declaration was made without consulting the peoples of the countries concerned, and, naturally, could not fail but hinder the mobilisation of the resources of the British Empire for the conduct of the war. Formidable difficulties of this kind were subsequently encountered by Britain in India.

* *The Forrestal Diaries*, Ed. by W. Mills and E. S. Duffield, New York, 1951, p. 122.

** Charles C. Tansill, *Back Door to War. The Roosevelt Foreign Policy 1933-1941*, Chicago, 1952, p. 555.

The Real Worth of the British Guarantees to Poland

"War was declared," write M. Gilbert and R. Gott. "But appeasement lived on."** Such was Britain's policy during the initial period of the war, a period that lasted seven months.

Poland was the first victim of this policy. No attempt was made by Britain or France to honour the guarantees they had given her. Had these countries the practical possibility of honouring their pledge to Poland? Unquestionably. On the European continent they had the necessary forces to strike Germany a blow which could have saved Poland. First and foremost, evidence of this is to be found in the depositions of leading German generals. General Alfred Jodl maintained that "in 1939 the world could not avert the catastrophe because the 110 divisions, which the French and British had, were completely idle in face of 23 German divisions in the West".** General Siegfried Westphal wrote that if early in September the Allies had started an offensive they could easily have reached the Rhine and even crossed it, adding: "The subsequent course of the war would then have been very different."*** But this did not happen. J. F. C. Fuller, the British military historian, put the matter in a nutshell with the words: "The strongest army in the world, facing no more than twenty-six divisions, sitting still and sheltering behind steel and concrete while a quixotically valiant Ally was being exterminated!"*) An entry in the diary of Hugh Dalton, made at this time, says: "It was impossible to justify our treatment of the Poles. We were letting them down and letting them die, while we did nothing to help them."***)

The Polish military mission which arrived in London on September 3 had to wait an entire week before it was received by General W. E. Ironside, Chief of the Imperial General Staff. And this during the German blitzkrieg in Poland, when every minute counted. The talks lasted from Septem-

* Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, Op. cit., p. 326.

** *Pravda*, July 22, 1959.

*** *The Fatal Decisions*, New York, 1956, p. 3.

*) J. F. C. Fuller, *The Second World War 1939-1945*, London, 1948, p. 55.

**) Hugh Dalton, Op. cit., p. 277.

ber 9 to 15, and at the closing session Ironside declared that in the way of war supplies—tanks, anti-aircraft and anti-tank artillery, fighter planes and uniforms—the best Britain could do for Poland was to send her 10,000 Hotchkiss rifles (old British automatic rifles of World War I vintage) and 15-20 million cartridges. The first transports from Britain, he said, would arrive in five or six months at the earliest.* This statement was made when the President and Government of defeated Poland were already on the Rumanian frontier, on their way out of their own country.

Political considerations lay behind Britain's and France's non-fulfilment of their guarantees to Poland. "For the men of Munich," Wladislaw Gomulka said, "Poland was a pawn which they lightly sacrificed in a dirty game in the hope that after it rapidly overran our country, the Wehrmacht would come face to face with the Soviet Army. Attempts were continued, by somewhat different means, to implement the objective underlying the Munich policy, namely that of pushing the Third Reich against the USSR."**

Another aspect of Britain's unseemly behaviour towards Poland was that when she pledged to help her in the event of German aggression she knew beforehand that she would not keep her word. The Treaty of Mutual Assistance was signed by Britain and Poland on August 25, 1939, the day after US Ambassador Kennedy had informed Washington that Chamberlain had told him that "after all they cannot save the Poles"*** Moreover, J. R. M. Butler makes it clear that British policy for the conduct of the war "had been concerted with the French in the spring of 1939", that the "implications of the Polish alliance should war break out were further discussed during the summer", and, as a result, the British and French governments came to the conclusion that "the fate of Poland will depend upon the ultimate outcome of the war, and that this, in turn, will depend upon our ability to bring about the eventual defeat of Germany, and not on our ability to relieve pressure on Poland at the outset".*) Consequently, these governments decided to leave

* F. Yuzviak, *The Polish Workers' Party in the Struggle for National and Social Liberation*, Moscow, 1953, Russ. ed., p. 37.

** *Pravda*, July 22, 1959.

*** William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, p. 196.

*) J. R. M. Butler, *Grand Strategy*, Vol. II, *September 1939-June 1941*, London, 1957, pp. 10-12.

Poland to Hitler's tender mercies long before Britain signed the Treaty of Mutual Assistance with Poland. Deprived of assistance from her Allies, Poland with her corrupt bourgeois-landlord rulers was quickly crushed by the German armies.

The Phoney War

Pressure of circumstances forced Britain and France into war against Germany. For very many people in Britain, France and other countries the declaration of war was testimony of the failure of the appeasement policy, which the British and French governments had been pursuing, but for Chamberlain and his colleagues in London and Paris even this testimony was not enough. They regarded the declaration of war on Germany not as an end to their anti-Soviet conspiracy with Germany but as a means of pressuring her into a partnership in that conspiracy on terms acceptable to them. The British appeasers reckoned that if Hitler persisted in ignoring them the war would in the end influence "Germany's internal front", i.e., bring about the replacement of the Hitler regime by some other reactionary government prepared to reach agreement with London. Naturally, with this objective in view, the war had to be conducted in such a way as to make Hitler feel the pressure being brought to bear on him and, at the same time, to prevent it from reaching proportions that would rule out the possibility of an agreement. That was the situation during the first seven months of the war. It was the direct outcome of the policy which Britain and France had been pursuing for many years. That policy had led to war, and it was continued during the war. All this fully conformed to the well-known postulate that war is the continuation of policy by other means.

This strategy was framed by the British and French governments long before the German attack on Poland. In the event matters would deteriorate to the extent of war against Germany, the British and French General Staffs decided in the spring of 1939 that "during this time our major strategy would be defensive". This initial stage, it was planned, would last three full years, in the course of which Britain and France would build up their strength. In this period

"the steady and rigorous application of economic pressure would be reducing the powers of resistance of our enemies".* Economic pressure, or economic warfare as it was called in Britain, had, essentially, to consist of solely a blockade, insofar as defensive strategy ruled out air strikes with the purpose of undermining Germany's economy.

At first glance this would seem to be an extremely strange and incomprehensible strategy. Chamberlain was obviously aware the war could not be won by a defensive strategy. In London they could not fail to realise that the blockade of Germany as the principal means of conducting the war was clearly untenable if only for the reason that it could be imposed only from the West, because the countries north, east and south of Germany were neutral, and under international law she could freely trade with them. Even if the blockade really began to sap the German economy to the extent of crippling Germany's ability to fight, there was no guarantee that she would not try to forestall the consequences of a blockade by striking a blow at the West, at Britain and France, in order to ensure victory.

From the standpoint of the conduct of the war against Germany, the Anglo-French strategy is incomprehensible and illogical, but it becomes understandable and logical as soon as account is taken of the fact that it was directed not towards a struggle until victory over Germany but towards the creation of conditions for turning Germany against the Soviet Union.

In the light of this policy and strategy one distinctly sees what induced the British Government to betray Poland. "It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Poland was sacrificed as deliberately as Czechoslovakia was," writes the American Professor D. F. Fleming. "Poland meant... to the Munich-men ... another diversion of German conquest-mania toward the East which would gain them a little additional time, if it did not lead to a German-Soviet clash."**

Chamberlain's pre-war policy and his line during the initial stage of the war, which was a continuation of that policy, are evidence of the inability of the men who headed

* J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

** D. F. Fleming, *The Gold War and Its Origins, 1917-1960*, Vol. I, 1917-1950, London, 1961, p. 95.

the British Government at the time correctly to assess the situation in Europe and foresee the actions of Britain's adversaries. "This unfortunate episode over," Fleming writes, having in mind the defeat of Poland, "Chamberlain settled down for a comfortable war.... He doubted that Hitler would dare to attack the Maginot Line. He did not believe in an armoured blitz through the Low Countries. He thought Hitler would shrink before 'a breach of neutrality so flagrant and unscrupulous'. He doubted, too, that Hitler would attempt a great air blitz on Britain.... Chamberlain waited calmly for 'the collapse of the German home front'."*

The most conspicuous result of this policy was that Britain and France took no advantage of the favourable situation and balance of forces in September 1939 for an offensive which might have brought Germany to her knees and thereby put a speedy end to the war. This was possible in September 1939 when Germany's main armed forces were tied down in Poland and only 23 German divisions faced the 110 Allied divisions in the West. This assessment has been confirmed by Alfred Jodl, the German Chief of Operations, and by Maurice Gamelin, former Commander-in-Chief of the French Army.**

Hitler miscalculated in believing Britain and France would not go to war. But when they declared war, he said they would not fight. He was not mistaken, at least with regard to the first seven months of the war.

Military action by the British and French was confined to dropping leaflets on Germany. The Allied navies made some effort to enforce a blockade of Germany. Naturally, in this comfortable war neither the Allies nor Germany sustained any losses. In Europe, Fuller notes, the British suffered their first casualty on December 9—"Corporal T. W. Friday was shot dead when on patrol. By Christmas two more men had been killed, and by that date the total French casualties for Army, Navy and Air Force were 1,433."*** In the diary of King George VI of Britain, the entry for

* D. F. Fleming, *Op. cit.*, pp. 95-96.

** *Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal*, Vol. XV, Nuremberg, 1947-1951, p. 350. M. Gamelin, *Servir*, Vol. III, *La Guerre (septembre 1939-mai 1940)*, Paris, 1947, p. 38.

*** J. F. C. Fuller, *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

March 3, 1940 reads in part: "We have been at war for six months today. . . . The war in the first six months has been one of words and propaganda mainly from Germany."* Indeed, this was a phoney war, unprecedented in history.

Nobody is quite sure who coined the phrase. John W. Wheeler-Bennett writes: "Thereafter the fog of war closed down upon the Western Front, and the conflict passed into that phase of sinister inactivity, which the Americans christened 'The Phoney War' or, more satirically, the 'Sitzkrieg'."** The French novelist and journalist Roland Dorgeles claimed he had used the title "The Phoney War" for one of his reports from the front in October 1939.*** The phrase caught on. Staff members of the British Royal Institute of International Affairs write that the phrase was coined by the US Senator William E. Borah.**** The American publicist William L. Shirer writes: "Hardly a shot had been fired. The German man-in-the-street was beginning to call it the 'sit-down' war—Sitzkrieg. In the West it would soon be dubbed the 'phoney' war."*)

Shirer adds: "Were the Germans surprised? Hardly."**) Indeed, Britain and France behaved as Hitler hoped they would. On top of that he did his best to help them fight the phoney war. In Directive No. 2 of September 3, 1939 he ordered: "In the West the opening of hostilities is to be left to the enemy." The German Air Force was instructed to refrain from attacking British naval bases until the British began raiding German objectives.**) The British Government observed with joy and hope that Germany had no objection to conducting the phoney war. In September the British Chiefs of Staff Committee noted that "entirely contrary to expectation" the Germans were taking no action whatever against Britain. On September 12 the Anglo-French

* John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *King George VI. His Life and Reign*, London, 1958, p. 435.

** Ibid., p. 425.

*** R. Dorgeles, *La Drôle de Guerre. 1939-1940*, Paris, 1957, p. 9.

**** *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, Ed. by Arnold and Veronica M. Toynbee, London, 1958, p. 449.

*) William L. Shirer, Op. cit., p. 633.

**) Ibid.

***) *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945*, Series D. Vol. VII, Washington, 1956, p. 549.

Supreme War Council recommended the continuation of the policy of limited action.*

It was no accident that Germany put no obstacles in the way of the phoney war. Such a war fell in with the designs of the Nazi leaders, for it allowed them to switch the German economy to a war-time footing without hindrance, replace the losses suffered by their armed forces in Poland and build up strength for an assault on Britain and France in the immediate future. For their part, too, Britain and France were able to mobilise their forces unhindered. But that was their only gain from this phoney war. Time unquestionably worked for Germany. She prepared for the impending battles more energetically and successfully than Britain and France because she intended to settle the conflict on the battlefield, while Britain and France hoped to settle it by striking a bargain with Germany. The phoney war had a demoralising effect on the armies and peoples of Britain and France; it undermined their determination to fight and was one of the major factors of the defeats suffered by these countries in the spring and summer of 1940. Arnold Toynbee, the British historian, writes that this "strange twilight state of existence, which was neither peace nor war, played into Hitler's hands"**. While Germany was getting her war machine into gear for a blow at Britain and France, the governments of the latter countries doggedly looked for an opportunity to end the war against Germany and get her to embark on a military crusade against the Soviet Union. This crusade, the politicians in London and Paris hoped, would destroy socialism in the USSR and make it possible to achieve a durable agreement with Germany at the expense of Soviet territory and resources.

As soon as Poland collapsed, the bourgeois press and a section of the politicians in Britain began moulding public opinion in anticipation of a bargain with Germany. They started with the assertion that there was little to choose between the foreign policy aspirations of the USSR and Germany,***, and then they quickly passed on to the argument that the USSR was a greater menace than Germany. Although the idea of a peace and alliance with Hitler had

* J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

** *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, p. 259.

*** *The Economist*, September 23, 1939.

the tacit approval of part of the British leadership, nobody ventured to expound it openly because the attitude of the people towards nazism had to be taken into account. In November 1939 the magazine *Labour Monthly* wrote: "The most influential sections of British imperialism openly and with a loud voice demand to 'switch' the war, that is, to transform the war into war against the Soviet Union. They demand that Germany speedily abandon its present alignment in order to enter into the anti-Soviet combination, and they swear that their interests are really identical. There is still a division of two schools of thought in this connection. One school demands the speediest possible settlement with German reaction, even possibly with Hitler, in order to advance to the aim of anti-Soviet war. The other school insists on the necessity of first inflicting a decisive military defeat on Germany in order to compel its submission."*

The press and some propagandists, among them the Tory Alfred Duff Cooper, sought to persuade the Germans that they had to organise a "Right-wing revolution" and replace the nazi government by some other reactionary regime with which Britain could reach agreement on peace and on "switching" the war against the USSR. The Conservative *Sunday Times* wrote that the prospect of a decline in the fortunes of Germany and of an expansion of Russia's influence "has no attraction for the vast majority of the English people. If any way offered by which we could make peace with what is admirable in German character and achievement ... we in this country would eagerly welcome it."** The people clearly had nothing to do with this. In speaking of the people, the newspaper had in mind the reactionary and imperialist circles of both countries, while by guardians of "what is admirable in German character" it meant the German Junkers and monopolists who had fought Britain in the First World War and put Hitler in power so that he could unleash the Second World War. The ideas propounded by the newspaper were shared by the Government.

From time to time members of the British Cabinet let the cat out of the bag relative to their intentions. In the House of Commons on November 28 Prime Minister Chamberlain said nobody knew how long the war would last, how it would

* *Labour Monthly*, November 1939, p. 697.

** *Sunday Times*, October 1, 1939.

develop and who would be on Britain's side when it ended.* In his official statements Chamberlain spoke vaguely about the vicissitudes of war, while privately, among his family and friends he spoke of bringing the war between Britain and Germany to an end. On November 5 he wrote to his sister Ida: "Well it may be so, but I have a 'hunch' that the war will be over before the spring."** The source of this hunch was not difficult to find: it seemed to Chamberlain that at last he had the means for "switching" the war.

He had in mind the Soviet-Finnish War, which broke out at the close of November 1939.

Anglo-French Relations

At the initial stage of the war, France was Britain's only Ally, in addition to Poland and countries of the British Empire. She was her main Ally, but the relations between them were complicated and far from being cordial. These relations were weighted down by the burden of the recent past, of the 1920s and 1930s, when the two countries had been rivals for domination in Europe. The deadly threat from Germany forced them to draw together but it did not remove the contradictions dividing them. The relations between them were poisoned by reciprocal suspicion that one of them might form a bloc with the common enemy, Germany, at the expense of the other.

In the summer of 1939, taking into account the experience of the First World War, when the Allied cause suffered through the absence of a single military leadership, Britain and France agreed that if war broke out they would have a Supreme War Council consisting of the Prime Ministers of the two countries and of one other Minister from each. The functions of this body were only consultative, the final decisions being left to the governments. At the same time, they set up the mechanism of liaison between their military staffs. Close contact was maintained between the two Prime Ministers until the fall of France in June 1940.

One of the major bones of contention was the participation of British land forces in the war on the European continent. With the memory of the great losses suffered by

* *The Times*, November 19, 1939.

** Ian Macleod, *Neville Chamberlain*, London, 1961, p. 281.

them in Europe in 1914-18 still fresh in their minds, and clinging to their traditional policy of having someone else pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them, the British at first categorically refused to send troops to the continent, offering only air and naval assistance. In the end they had to concede and a few months before war broke out they approved a plan under which a British expeditionary corps would be sent to France.

As in the First World War, one of the reasons Britain was reluctant to have a large force in Europe was that she wanted to have as many troops as possible in the Middle East to protect her colonies and, if opportunity afforded, to lay her hands on colonies belonging to other countries. In the Middle East the British Government built up its second strategic reserve to supplement the usual reserve kept in Britain.* On the whole, history repeated itself. Britain sought to let France have the honour of bearing most of the burden of the war in Europe, while she herself tried to give most of her attention to the colonial regions. The colonial nature of British imperialism made itself felt, and this could not but arouse the well-founded suspicions of the French.

To diminish these suspicions and have the possibility of influencing French policy, Britain had to send an expeditionary corps and a number of air units to France. The first contingent of British troops arrived in France early in October 1939. Avoiding anything that might break the calm of the phoney war, the German Command let the British land in France unhindered. Towards the spring of 1940 the British expeditionary forces in France comprised 10 divisions, including one motorised division.**

Edouard Daladier, who was French Premier when war broke out, and some of his Ministers together with their advisers were not at all anxious to co-ordinate their policy with that of Britain any too closely, and in this there was complete reciprocity on the part of Britain. These French leaders felt conditions might arise that would enable France to come to terms with Germany without British participation. They were undoubtedly guided by the experience of history, which showed that Britain had never shrunk from a deal

* J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

** C. Falls, *The Second World War. A Short History*, London, 1948, p. 25.

with Germany at the expense of her allies, and whenever possible had been prepared to make such a deal at the expense of France as well. British policy in the 1920s and 1930s furnished sufficient grounds for suspicions of this kind. That was why it took the British Government a long time to get French agreement to a joint declaration obligating the Allies not to conclude a separate armistice and peace. On December 11, 1939, when Viscount Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary, asked Daladier on what terms such a declaration could be signed, the latter avoided giving a direct reply. Daladier told Gamelin of this conversation and observed that at first "a comparison must be made between the purposes of France and Britain in this war".*

The declaration was signed only on March 28, 1940, after Paul Reynaud took over the French premiership from Daladier. Under that declaration the two governments pledged not to negotiate or sign an armistice or a peace treaty during the war without mutual consent.

Bid to Win Over Italy

Relations with Italy occupied a key role in British policy. When the war broke out, although Mussolini had close ties with Hitlerite Germany, he could not make up his mind whether it was prudent to support the nazis unconditionally. On the one hand, he was not at all confident that Germany could crash through the Maginot Line and defeat Britain and France; on the other hand, he realised that if Italy deserted to the Allies she "might suffer the fate of Poland without Britain and France doing anything to help her"**. This wavering was behind Mussolini's refusal to enter the war on Germany's side in September 1939; his excuse was that Italy was not prepared and he demanded large deliveries of armaments and various strategic supplies. The Germans had to agree with this, with the result that for a while Italy was a non-belligerent.

This raised hopes in London that Italy might be drawn over to the side of the Allies or, at least, induced to remain neutral. This was a continuation of the policy which Chamberlain had been pursuing for a number of years in an effort

* M. Gamelin, *Op. cit.*, p. 152.

** *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, p. 213.

to win Italy over from Germany and, naturally, subordinate her to Britain's influence. Activity in this direction was now resumed with redoubled energy, especially as Italy, being an ally of Germany, threatened British interests in the Mediterranean, in Africa and in the Middle East. In their courtship of Italy the Allies took into account Mussolini's apprehensions that Italy would be left out of the division of the spoils of war and, to use his own words, relegated to the junior group in the European political football league. Churchill had this in mind when in a radio broadcast on October 1, 1939 he officially offered Italy the position of a "great and friendly nation", membership in the European directorate, which would administer European affairs after the war, and the recognition of her interests in the Balkans.* In November 1939 Churchill offered Italy "historic partnership" with Britain and France in the Mediterranean.** A month before this offer was made the British Government extended *de facto* recognition to Italy's seizure of Albania.*** These political steps were accompanied by measures of an economic nature.

It was not easy to appease Italy economically. In London they knew that solely promises of future political blessings and benefits would not give them any influence over Italian policy; economic concessions had to be made, and without delay. However, economic aid to Italy contravened the objectives of the war against Germany, for such aid would strengthen Germany's ally. Moreover, economic relations with Italy would make a considerable breach in the economic war, on which the British Government was pinning much of its hopes. Nonetheless, the British Government took the road of economic co-operation with Italy.

By way of exception, Britain allowed Italy to import German coal by sea via Rotterdam. The Allies placed large orders with Italian firms. Britain purchased in Italy various goods, including Army uniforms, footwear and blankets. In payment for these items Britain supplied Italy with diverse raw materials, some of which were of a strategic nature. Britain and Italy signed an agreement on October 27, 1939, setting up a Joint Standing Committee to consider means of

* *The Times*, October 2, 1939, p. 10.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Into Battle*, London, 1942, p. 144.

*** *Survey of International Affairs. The Eve of War, 1939*, London, 1957, p. 254.

economic collaboration.* In January 1940 Mussolini wrote to Hitler, telling him that the "existence of these commercial relations permits us to acquire those raw materials without which we cannot complete our military preparations and which therefore ultimately benefit Germany as well".**

Some British politicians and historians would have liked to bury in oblivion this aspect of Anglo-Italian relations of the initial period of the war.

In March 1940, when Germany's plans regarding an offensive against Britain and France took final shape, the Germans demanded a definite pledge from Italy that she would enter the war on their side. This caused alarm in London. E. W. Playfair, a high official of the British Treasury, was sent to Rome on March 15 with broad economic proposals. Chamberlain followed this up with a "goodwill message" to the Italian Government.*** But all this was in vain. The Italian fascists had made their choice. On March 18, at a conference with Hitler in the Brenner Pass Mussolini promised to enter the war as Germany's ally.

Peace Negotiations, Autumn of 1939

Since Britain and France had declared war on Germany against their will and since a considerable section of the British ruling circles were eager to turn the war into a crusade against the Soviet Union, it was inevitable that there should be a series of attempts to start peace talks between the Allies and Germany. An excuse was all that was needed. That excuse was the defeat of Poland. The governments of Britain and France had maintained, in defiance of truth, that they had gone to war over Poland. Now that Poland lay crushed and had ceased to exist as a state, it seemed that the grounds for war against Germany had likewise disappeared. In mid-September this argument was brought forth by Hitler and by the British politicians, who desired to come to terms with him.

Numerous official, semi-official and unofficial channels for contact between the ruling circles of Britain and Germany

* *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, p. 234.

** *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. VIII, Washington, 1954, p. 605.

*** *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, p. 239.

came into being in the 1930s, when the Munich policy flourished. The war cut short diplomatic relations between the two countries, but semi-official and unofficial contact was maintained, and in September and October 1939 these contacts were used for reciprocal peace feelers. The system of contact was extraordinarily intricate and it is doubtful if all of its ramifications are known even today though much has come to light with the publication of the German archives. For the same reason it is virtually impossible to establish who—the Germans or the British—first brought up the question of peace in September 1939. Most probably both sides dropped the corresponding hints and put out peace feelers simultaneously as soon as they found themselves in a state of war. The English historians Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott write that “perhaps the various peace moves began once war broke out” and went on to qualify them as “routine exercises for the Foreign Office”.*

In this connection both British and Soviet historians give the closest attention to the activities of the British intelligence agent Baron de Ropp and the British diplomat Ogilvie Forbes. On the eve of the war Ropp was the liaison man between the British Munichmen and leading German nazis. At his last meeting with Rosenberg in Berlin, when war seemed inevitable, Ropp said “it to be in the best interests of both countries [i.e., Britain and Germany—*U. T.*] if, after the disposal of Poland, which was assumed to be likely, ways and means should be sought to prevent a European struggle from finally breaking out”.** Ropp and Rosenberg kept in touch with each other after the outbreak of war, and in the second half of September Rosenberg received from Ropp a proposal for “a private exchange of views” on the possibility of ending the war. In this communication Ropp said he was acting on behalf of the British Air Ministry.

Another peace feeler was put out by Ogilvie Forbes, counsellor at the British Mission in Norway, who before the war had been a counsellor at the British Embassy in Berlin. On September 24 he had a talk with a Swedish businessman named Birger Dahlerus, who in August and the first week of September engaged energetically in mediation between Britain and Germany. Forbes told Dahlerus that his Govern-

* Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, *Op. cit.*, p. 331.

** *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945*, Series D. Vol. VIII, p. 134.

ment desired peace talks with Germany, asking him to act as mediator, and even discussed the approximate terms for a possible peace.* The Swede lost not time. Two days later he was received by Hitler, whom he informed that the British Government was looking for a way to conclude peace and that what worried the British was how to do it without losing face.

Hitler spoke in the Reichstag on October 6, putting forward the idea of a European conference to settle problems arising from Poland's defeat and also the question of colonial claims and of armaments restrictions.** This speech was printed in a brochure in the English language, and the Germans planned to drop it over Britain. But they did not have to trouble themselves. The Hitler speech was given such wide publicity in Britain that the astonished nazis gave up their intention of circulating the prepared brochure. The speech was printed in full by *Manchester Guardian*.

Was Hitler really eager to sign a peace with the Allies in that period? It is quite probable that his peace move was a stratagem designed to disarm the Allies, sow political discord in Britain and France, undermine their efforts to mobilise resources for the war, and strengthen the hand of the Munichmen. Moreover, it enabled Hitler to win time in which to complete his preparations for dealing Britain and France a crushing blow and to create the conditions for striking this blow suddenly. A fact in favour of this surmise is that on October 9, without waiting for a reply to his "peace" overture, Hitler signed Directive No. 6 ordering preparations for an assault on Britain and France via the Netherlands and Belgium. Parallel with the directive, a memorandum was drawn up which stated that the "German war aim is the final military dispatch of the West, that is, the destruction of the power and ability of the Western Powers ever again to be able to oppose the state consolidation and further development of the German people in Europe", in other words, the complete subjugation of Europe by Germany.***

The German proposal was attentively studied in Britain. In Government and other circles there was strong pressure

* *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. VIII, pp. 143-45.

** *Manchester Guardian*, October 7, 1939.

*** William L. Shirer, *Op. cit.*, p. 645.

in favour of peace with Germany. Ian Macleod writes of the efforts of the "defeatists at home", who were urging "a negotiated peace".* The documents from Chamberlain's private archives, used by Macleod, show that Chamberlain was not averse to official peace negotiations on the basis of what he called "Hitler's clever speech". What deterred him was that Hitler never kept his word. "The difficulty," Chamberlain wrote in a letter to his sister on October 8, 1939, "is that you can't believe anything Hitler says."**

The discussion of this question in British ruling circles ended in favour of continuing the war. In the House of Commons on October 12 Chamberlain officially rejected Hitler's offer of October 6. The keynote of Chamberlain's statement was that Hitler could not be believed, that "the German Government must give convincing proof of its sincerity".***

Hitler's proposal was unacceptable to Britain because it meant agreeing to German domination in Europe and to the restoration of the German colonial empire. Another factor was that the USA and the Dominions were opposed to agreement with Germany. The British people, who no longer wished to tolerate the shame of appeasement, would not have tolerated another bargain with the nazis. US Ambassador Kennedy discussed the question with the Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir John Simon and was told that "if they [the Government] were to advocate any type of peace, they would be yelled down by their own people, who are determined to go on".*)

Chamberlain and his group fell in with those who wanted to continue the war. They rejected Hitler's peace overture, but that did not mean they had basically changed their policy and renounced their inclination to reach agreement with Germany. By no means. They hoped that the groups of military and politicians opposed to Hitler would depose the dictator and set up their own government with which it would be possible to come to terms without fearing that it would not keep its word. On October 8, 1939 Chamberlain

* Ian Macleod, *Op. cit.*, p. 278.

** *Ibid.*, p. 279.

*** *Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons*, Vol. 352, col. 568, London, 1939.

*) William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, p. 252.

wrote to his sister that "the only chance of peace is the disappearance of Hitler and that is what we are working for".*

The British Government maintained contact with these opposition groups through various channels. But Chamberlain underestimated the difficulties of reaching agreement. First, he had overrated the significance of the opposition groups and their willingness to oppose Hitler. These groups were perfectly satisfied with Hitler's foreign policy objectives. The only thing they did not always agree with was his methods and means, fearing that his actions, which were of an adventurist nature, might have dangerous consequences for Germany. Franz Halder, who belonged to one of these groups, told his supporters at the close of 1939: "We ought to give Hitler this last chance to deliver the German people from the slavery of English capitalism."** What he meant was that Hitler should be supported in the war against Britain for supremacy in Europe and for the seizure of Britain's colonial positions. Second, the British Government failed to take proper account of the fact that while thinking of the desirability of replacing the Hitler regime and negotiating with the Allies for an end to the war, the opposition groups were not in the least inclined to renounce the fruits of nazi Germany's long years of aggression. The leaders of the opposition wanted firm assurances that Britain and France would not take advantage of action against Hitler in Germany to deprive her of the fruits of nazi brigandage.

Hitler knew of the British Government's intentions to come to terms with opposition elements among the German ruling circles and decided that if the Allies were dealt a powerful blow London would agree to come to an understanding with him as well.

Political Situation in Britain

When war broke out, a considerable reshuffle was carried out in the British Government in line with the experience gained during the First World War. Chamberlain replaced his peace-time Cabinet of 23 Ministers with a more compact

* Ian Macleod, *Op. cit.*, p. 279.

** U. von Hassel, *The von Hassel Diaries. 1938-1944*, London, 1948, p. 89.

War Cabinet, which consisted of eight members in addition to the Prime Minister. The War Cabinet took over the functions not only of the peace-time Cabinet but also of the Committee of Imperial Defence, with the result that the entire leadership of the war was concentrated in its hands. The Chiefs of Staff Committee, which functioned under the War Cabinet, was a collegial super-chief of a War Staff.*

The first War Cabinet consisted, besides Chamberlain, of Sir John Simon (Chancellor of the Exchequer), Viscount Halifax (Foreign Secretary), Sir Samuel Hoare (Lord Privy Seal), Lord Hankey (Minister without Portfolio), Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield (Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence), Winston Churchill (First Lord of the Admiralty), Leslie Hore-Belisha (Secretary for War) and Sir Kingsley Wood (Secretary for Air). Chamberlain declared that in selecting the members of the Cabinet "personalities must be taken into account". With the exception of Churchill and, perhaps, Hore-Belisha, the Cabinet consisted of devoted and consistent supporters of the Munich policy. The first four named above were directly responsible for the help accorded to Germany in starting the Second World War; since September 1938 these four Ministers had been charting British foreign policy.** Britain's war-time leadership was thus in the hands of men who clearly had no desire and were unable to conduct a real struggle against Nazi Germany.

In order somewhat to strengthen the Government's position and calm the people, who rightly regarded Chamberlain and his supporters as being responsible for the war, Chamberlain brought Winston Churchill into the War Cabinet and gave Anthony Eden the post of Secretary of State for the Dominions. On the eve of the war Churchill won popularity by his criticism of Chamberlain's policies and by demanding that the preparations for a possible war with Germany should be stepped up. Eden was known to be in favour of collective security, although actually this reputation was not quite well earned. In some degree Chamberlain strengthened his own position by including Churchill and Eden in the Government. Not only did this make the Government more acceptable to the people but it considerably narrowed the split in the Tory leadership, with the

* J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

** *Ibid.*, p. 5.

result that the Government could count on almost unanimous support from the whole Conservative Party.

Yet the Government's position was far from being firm. The replacement of the Chamberlain Government had been demanded over a number of years by the Communist Party of Great Britain and other progressive elements in the British working-class movement. This became a widespread demand after war broke out, following the failure of appeasement. A struggle under the slogan "the Munichmen must go" became a feature of the British political scene. The weekly *Tribune*, published by Left-wing Labour publicists, voiced the thoughts of many Englishmen when in mid-September 1939 it wrote: "If any real national unity was to be sustained, there must be a swift change of Government: Chamberlain and his closest associates must go."^{*} This was not an unrealistic wish. It could have been materialised if it had the support of the leadership of the Labour Party and the trade unions.

However, the Right-wing Labour leaders thought otherwise. On September 3, 1939 Arthur Greenwood, who acted as Labour leader when Clement Attlee fell ill, declared in Parliament that the Labour Party whole-heartedly backed the Government's conduct of the war against Germany.

An analogous stand was adopted by the Liberal Party. The British trade unions likewise promised their support. The corresponding resolution was passed, with two abstentions, on September 4 by the Trades Unions Congress.^{**}

Benjamin Disraeli, the 19th-century Tory leader, had noted that coalition governments were not liked in Britain. But from the experience of the First World War the Tories knew modern war could not be conducted without the support of the people and in September 1939 they made an attempt to form a coalition Government by the inclusion in it of Labour and Liberal representatives. They were particularly eager to draw into the Government members of the Labour Party, which exercised considerable influence among the working class and formed the Opposition in the House of Commons, where it had 154 seats. The Liberals had only 21 seats^{***} in Parliament and represented small sections of

^{*} Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan. A Biography*, Vol. I, London, 1962, p. 305.

^{**} G. D. H. Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*, London, 1948, p. 373.

^{***} *Ibid.*, p. 310.

the middle and merchant bourgeoisie; they had little influence in the British political scene. The reason Chamberlain wanted them to be represented in the Government was that he desired to call it a coalition Government without reservations.

In the summer of 1939 Chamberlain had made an attempt to improve his personal relations with Attlee, but his offer of posts in the Government was rejected by the Labour Party. Chamberlain had compromised himself much too much in the eyes of the people and he could not be safely supported without sacrificing political influence among the masses. The Liberals refused to join the Government on the same grounds. However, although the Labourites did not accept posts in the Government they gave Chamberlain strong support. If on September 3 or later they and the trade unions demanded Chamberlain's resignation, the Tory Government would have fallen. Instead, the Right-wing Labour and trade union leaders declared their support for the Government's military efforts and thereby allowed Chamberlain to remain in power. Ralph Miliband, a Labour historian, writes that a "remarkable feature of the Labour leaders' attitude, once war had been declared, was their unwillingness to apply all possible pressure for a radical reorganisation of the Government".*

The Labour and trade union leadership promised Chamberlain co-operation and assistance without demanding a policy change, and thus helped him to pursue his own policy. "Without the help and support of the Labour movement," writes Arthur Greenwood, "the Government could not stand in office for another day."**

The policy which Chamberlain pursued with the collaboration of the Labour leaders determined the country's economic pattern in the period of the phoney war. This resulted in a slow and ineffective switch of British economy to a war-time footing. The ruling circles, hoping ultimately to come to an understanding with Germany or, if that proved to be impossible, to sit things out and then intervene in the war at its concluding stage, did not hurry that switch. Their motto was "business as usual".

* Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism. A Study in the Politics of Labour*, London, 1961, p. 268.

** *Labour Monthly*, May 1940, p. 268.

Economic Warfare

The British Government hoped that the economic war would enable Britain to attain her foreign policy and military objectives in the Second World War; this hope was not destined to come true. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s British military agencies had studied the experience of the blockade which had been imposed on Germany during the First World War and planned similar action in the event another war broke out between Britain and Germany.

These carefully laid plans provided for action going far beyond a conventional blockade. This range of action was therefore called not a blockade but economic warfare. Approved by the Committee of Imperial Defence on July 27, 1939, this plan stated in part: "The aim of economic warfare is so to disorganise the enemy's economy as to prevent him from carrying on the war."* It was thus equated to a military operation. The instructions of the Ministry of Economic Warfare, to be set up as soon as war broke out, stated that "economic warfare is a military operation, comparable to the operations of the three Services in that its object is the defeat of the enemy, and complementary to them in that its function is to deprive the enemy of the material means of resistance. But, unlike the operations of the Armed Forces, its results are secured not only by direct attack upon the enemy but also by bringing pressure to bear upon those neutral countries from which the enemy draws his supplies."**

Economic warfare was to be carried on by three kinds of weapons. Firstly, by legislation establishing control over British firms and individuals not only to deprive them of the possibility of helping the enemy but also to use them to pressure neutrals who might help the enemy. Secondly, by diplomatic action aimed at persuading or forcing neutral governments, firms and individuals to abstain from transactions that might benefit the enemy. Thirdly, by military action providing for the use of Armed Forces to deprive the enemy of the supplies needed for the conduct of the war—the seizure of enemy merchant ships, the establishment of so-called contraband control (over the transportation of

* W. N. Medlicott, *The Economic Blockade*, Vol. I, London, 1952, p. 1.

** Ibid., p. 17.

freight for the enemy by neutral vessels), the blockading of enemy coastal areas, the seizure of enemy exports transported under neutral flags, direct attacks on enemy ports, the invasion of economically strategic areas on enemy territory, and air attacks on enemy ships on the high seas, major transport junctions, and storage, production and distribution centres. Unlike the blockade of World War I days, economic warfare embraced air attacks and other means of destroying important economic objectives on enemy territory.

A Ministry was set up to direct economic warfare, and one of its first steps was to build up a control network to halt the smuggling of goods into Germany. Two control posts were formed on the British Isles to keep the main shipping lanes across the Atlantic to Europe under observation. In the Mediterranean similar posts were set up on Gibraltar and at Port Said and Haifa. The British Navy intercepted neutral vessels sailing to neutral ports adjoining Germany and sent them to the control posts for inspection. After inspection the freight was either held up or allowed to be taken to its destination.

Contraband control at once aroused dissatisfaction and protests in the neutral countries. The protests of small states were ignored, while in the case of major powers, primarily the USA and Italy, the British Government proceeded cautiously and more often than not made concessions to them, desiring to avoid complications. For example, early in 1940 friction with the USA compelled Britain to accede to the American demand that she issue clearance certificates to US vessels transporting freight from the USA to neutral states in Europe. These certificates gave exemption from forcible escort to British ports for inspection.

The British Government adopted a similar stand with regard to fascist Italy. When a law on the seizure of freight exported from Germany was passed in Britain on November 27, 1939, it meant that Britain would have to halt the transportation of German coal to Italy by sea. Physically this was very easy to do, but Britain hesitated. She made large concessions in this question to Italy for a number of reasons. One was the policy of appeasing aggressors. Besides, if the attempt to "switch" the war failed, the London politicians hoped to hold Italy back from entering the war as Germany's ally. Some of the most optimistic of these politicians, with memories of the First World War still fresh

in their minds, even hoped to win Italy over to the side of the Allies.

British diplomacy made every effort to sign war-time trade agreements with Germany's neighbours. She tried to induce neutral countries to ban the re-export to Germany of goods received through Allied control and limit the sale of other goods to Germany to the average pre-war level.

The Ministry of Economic Warfare increased the purchase of goods in neutral countries not so much to satisfy the demand in Britain herself as to prevent Germany from acquiring them. This was done through the newly-formed United Kingdom Commercial Corporation,* which was subsidised by the Government.

The fourth basic task of the Ministry of Economic Warfare was to seize German exports.

The economic war was clearly unsuccessful in the period from September 1939 to April 1940; unquestionably it failed to yield the expected results. W. N. Medlicott, author of a two-volume work on the economic blockade, writes: "Too much was certainly expected of it in the winter of 1939-40. This was a time of almost complete quiescence on the part of the Allied fighting services, and both Government and country regarded the blockade as Britain's chief offensive weapon, and looked to it for decisive, or at any rate dramatic, results."** However, developments showed that the hopes placed on it were not justified.

The phoney war in which the fighting forces were idle against Germany and, in the event of necessity, prepared only for strategic defence, gave prominence to economic warfare, turning the economic offensive into the chief weapon. However, inasmuch as this weapon was used not to defeat Germany but to pressure her into a bargain with the Allies against the Soviet Union, its use was rigidly limited. The bombing and shelling of German industrial enterprises of a military or paramilitary nature, as well as of warehouses, transport lanes and so forth were ruled out from the very beginning, with the result that this economic warfare never went beyond the framework of a blockade. Essentially it remained as such to the very end of the war. However, the phoney war made its imprint on the blockade as well, giving it features of its own.

*W. N. Medlicott, *Op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.

** *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Anglo-US Relations

Relations with the USA had always been a complex problem for Britain, and this holds true of the early stage of the war. Despite the extremely acute economic and political contradictions between the two countries, the British Government, which now had a war on its hands, wished to avoid any conflict with the USA. Prior to the outbreak of the war British statesmen and publicists went out of their way to stress that war between Britain and the USA was inconceivable,* but beginning with the close of 1939 this subject was not broached for it was considered as going without saying. The USA was the most powerful imperialist state, and in London it was appreciated that Britain could not afford to alienate the United States and push it to the side of her adversaries. The British Government was aware that US interests made any US-Axis bloc quite improbable and was not particularly troubled on this account. Its worries during the phoney war were to obtain US supplies for the conduct of the war.

In its relations vis-à-vis the USA, the British Government adhered to a policy charted jointly with France in the spring of 1939. The General Staffs of the two countries agreed that "in war all the resources of diplomacy should be directed to securing the benevolent neutrality or active assistance of other powers, particularly the United States of America".** During the phoney war Britain required nothing more than the USA's benevolent neutrality.

Since the British Government was determined to pave the way to another Munich and "switch" the war, active US intervention in European affairs could only upset the game. That explains why the British eyed Washington's diplomatic activities in Europe with the utmost suspicion. The British Government wanted another Munich, but it had to be organised by Britain in her own interests. A compact with the aggressors initiated and directed by the USA obviously did not suit her for it would further primarily US and not British interests. At this stage what worried London most was that Washington might hinder an Anglo-German betrothal and take the matter of a new settlement in Europe into its own hands.

* J. W. Wheeler-Bennett, *Op. cit.*, p. 502.

** J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

Lord Lothian, the new British Ambassador in the USA, arrived in Washington on August 29, 1939. British historians maintain that his task was cautiously to persuade the Americans that a German victory would not benefit them. In fact, Lord Lothian's own statements show he had to get US backing for British policy in Europe in order to induce Germany to come to terms with Britain. He said that if the "neutrals—with the United States in the lead—are prepared to throw their weight behind the Allies, ... we can probably convince Germany that victory is permanently out of reach, and that if eventual Bolshevism of all Central Europe is to be avoided, there must be a sufficient movement to the right inside Germany to make possible a negotiated peace".* The implication is that the British Government was prepared, with US political support, to reach agreement not with Hitler, who had repeatedly cheated his partners, but with some other reactionary German regime which would replace Hitler.

The US Government did not vacillate over whose victory was more advantageous to it. Despite their contradictions and friction with Britain the US ruling circles obviously did not desire her defeat, because if predatory, aggressive Germany and her allies won the war, US interests and security would be directly menaced. German supremacy in Western Europe would mean German control over the West European countries and all or at any rate most of their vast colonial possessions. US capital and goods would be ousted from these territories. Moreover, the Middle East with its raw material resources would fall to the Germans and Italians, and the Americans would lose access to that part of the world. A German victory in Europe would strengthen Japan, the USA's principal enemy in the Far East and thereby expose US interests in that region. Lastly, Germany would have greater influence in Latin America. Taken together this would mean that Germany, which was out to win world supremacy, would ultimately risk a war with the United States.

Besides these considerations, another factor that determined the stand of the Roosevelt Administration was the mood of the American people. The Americans were disgusted

* J. R. M. Butler, *Lord Lothian (Philip Kerr), 1882-1940*, London, 1960, p. 274.

with nazi aggression, and their sympathies were clearly with the countries at war with Germany.

The Neutrality Act, passed in 1937, was in operation in the USA when the Second World War broke out; this act encouraged aggressive states and rendered a disservice to their victims. On September 5, 1939 President Roosevelt published two declarations—one proclaiming US neutrality in the war, and the other banning deliveries of arms and other war supplies to the belligerents in line with the Neutrality Act. Although this stopped the delivery to Britain and France of war supplies to the tune of 79 million dollars, for which licenses had already been issued,* it by no means signified that the US Government planned to make things more difficult for Britain and France. This decision was required under the Neutrality Act. The US Government did not desire to deprive Britain and France of the possibility of purchasing armaments in the USA or prevent American industrialists from profiting by the war. It therefore took steps to help Britain and France by finding loopholes in the Neutrality Act** and immediately initiated steps to revise it. US imperialism felt that the war was opening wide possibilities and had no intention of letting these possibilities slip out of its hands.

US ruling circles based themselves on the calculation that the war would weaken both Germany and her adversaries. They planned to utilise this situation in order to win world supremacy. Henry R. Luce writes: "And the cure is this: to accept wholeheartedly our duty and our opportunity as the most powerful and vital nation in the world and in consequence to exert upon the world the full impact of our influence, for such purposes as we see fit and by such means as we see fit."*** Charles Beard, the American historian, quotes Walter Lippmann: "What Rome was to the ancient world, what Great Britain has been to the modern world, America is to the world of tomorrow."*) Another American historian, Robert E. Sherwood, analysed US policy during the initial stage of the war and drew the conclusion that it had committed "the United States to the assumption of

* Charles C. Tansill, *Op. cit.*, pp. 561-62.

** William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, p. 202.

*** Henry R. Luce, *The American Century*, New York, 1941, p. 23.

*) Charles Beard, *Giddy Minds and Foreign Quarrels*, New York, 1939, p. 78.

responsibility for nothing less than the leadership of the world".*

When war broke out in Europe the US Government assumed that the forces opposed to each other were approximately equal and that there would be a drawn-out struggle between them. From the very outset Britain's possibilities were assessed quite pessimistically. On September 3, 1939, after leaving a conference at the office of US Secretary of State Cordell Hull, where the war in Europe was discussed, US Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle noted down in his diary: "In this war we cannot, as far as I can see, count on a military victory of Britain, France and Poland. Should they be on the eve of defeat, the square question would be presented to us whether to enter the war using them as our outlying defence posts; or whether to let them go, treble our Navy, and meet the ultimate issue ... somewhere in the Middle Atlantic. My mind is rather running on the latter." This way of thinking, Langer and Gleason observe, "was probably influenced as well as shared by many other Administration officials".**

Germany's swift victory in Poland made it plain that the war was not going in favour of the Allies. This gave the US Government further incentive to modify the Neutrality Act so that Britain and France could get the armaments needed by them from the USA.

On September 13, 1939 President Roosevelt announced that Congress would meet in special session on September 21 to modify the Neutrality Act. The US Government contemplated repealing the ban on the sale of armaments to belligerents and making such armaments available on a cash and carry basis.

This intention to lift the embargo on the sale of armaments gave rise to noisy debates in the press and in Congress. Many Congressmen, chiefly Democrats, favoured lifting the embargo, considering that it was in the interests of the USA to render the Allies as much aid as possible.

Economic factors, too, demanded the lifting of the embargo. The US capitalists had long been thirsting for a big war that would promise them large profits. Such a war had

* Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, New York, 1948, p. 151.

** William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

materialised, but business was hindered by the embargo. Consequently, the embargo had to be repealed.

The isolationists opposed the lifting of the embargo, their main argument being that it would involve the USA with Britain and France, undermine its neutrality and, in the long run, draw it into the war. They made the most of the American people's aversion to war, maintaining that the USA could keep out of the war only by pursuing an isolationist policy. This was nothing but smug hypocrisy, because, as Robert E. Sherwood noted, "their attitude toward the Soviet Union—and also, in some cases, toward Japan—was one of extreme belligerency".* Some of the isolationists were motivated by a desire to see the belligerents exhaust themselves to the utmost. Objectively, their actions played into the hands of nazi Germany because the embargo made it easier for her to fight her adversaries.

In spite of this opposition the US Congress repealed the embargo on November 3, 1939, and on the next day Roosevelt signed a bill introducing cash and carry, thereby extending both material and moral support to the Allies.

However, the new act contained a provision which greatly benefited Germany—the Baltic Sea and the Northeastern Atlantic from Norway to Spain were placed out of bounds to US merchant ships. By withdrawing these ships from the zone of hostilities, the USA facilitated the German U-boat war against Britain and France. The presence of US ships in this zone had somewhat restrained the nazis in their attacks on merchant shipping for they were not disposed to provoke a worsening of relations with the USA. Hitler wanted the USA to stay out of the war for as long as possible. Having learned to smash his adversaries one by one, he did not want a quarrel with the USA at this stage.

The situation in Western Europe at the close of 1939 and beginning of 1940 seriously alarmed the US Government. It was aware that in Britain and France influential circles favoured an agreement with Germany and it therefore feared Hitler's "peace overtures" might lead to the conclusion of peace between Germany and the Western Powers without US participation. US imperialism would gain nothing from such a peace: the war which was lining the pockets of the US monopolies would end and, on top of

* Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, p. 131.

that, the peace might result in an Anglo-German compact directed against the United States. The US press raised a hue and cry. It began to speak of "active neutrality", saying that it was vital for the USA to exercise the decisive influence on the course of the war and, particularly, on the kind of peace that would be signed, that the President had to make sure that the peace proposals among certain circles in Europe did not threaten US interests.

The US Government did not wish an early peace in Europe but the uncertain outcome of a long war between Germany and the Allies aroused its apprehensions. What suited Washington was that the war should equally weaken the belligerents. But what if that did not happen? US Assistant Secretary of State Sumner Welles wrote that in January 1940 Roosevelt feared lest "a victory by Hitler would immediately imperil the vital interests of the United States" and that, on the other hand, "an eventual victory of the Western Powers could probably be won only after a long and desperately fought contest which would bring Europe to total economic and social collapse".* To forestall what the US press called "social chaos" in Western Europe, Washington urged London and Paris to cling to their "defensive strategy".

A "defensive strategy" could only be temporary. As a way of reaching a radical settlement, US ruling circles were not averse to bringing the war to an end through their own mediation, and to forming, with their participation, an alliance between Germany, Britain, France and Italy against the USSR. Sumner Welles was sent to Europe in February 1940 to explore and, if possible, prepare the ground for such a settlement.

He visited Rome, Berlin, London and Paris, meeting the leaders of the four powers and sounding them on the possibility of a European peace. This was an obvious attempt to engineer another Munich with far-reaching consequences. Langer and Gleason note that in the final weeks of the phoney war "the mood of the United States" was akin to "that of England before Munich". Roosevelt, they say, believed "a peace negotiated with Hitler was at least preferable to a peace dictated by him".** Welles sought to capitalise on

* Sumner Welles, *The Time for Decision*, New York, 1945, p. 73.

** William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, p. 375.

the fear of the spread of the revolutionary movement, of socialism. He tried to persuade Hitler to be more tractable, declaring that "if a war of annihilation now broke out ... it would exhaust the economic and financial resources which still existed in Europe".*

The German leaders made it plain to the US emissary that Germany sought supremacy in Europe, stating "Germany wished for nothing more in Europe than the United States had in the Western Hemisphere through the Monroe Doctrine".** The nazis declared they "wanted peace, but only on condition ... that the will on the part of England to destroy Germany is obliterated once and for all",*** in other words, provided Britain was weakened and reduced to a second-rate European power.

London was well aware that this time there might be a Munich at the expense of Britain herself. Nothing came of the Welles mission, mainly because of the violent contradictions between the imperialist powers. Hitler made demands which Britain could not accept. Moreover, London was aware the United States intended to form an anti-Soviet bloc at the expense of Britain's interests. Hence the British Government's negative attitude to the Welles mission.

Upon Welles' return to Washington the opinion became current that the war would not end with a swift defeat of the Allies.

Welles left Europe with the conviction that Hitler could be stopped if the USA declared that in its own interests it "would come to the support of the Western democracies".*) But that did not happen. In fact the Welles mission had the reverse effect. Hitler and Mussolini met in conference in March 1940 and agreed they could assault the West without fearing United States' involvement in the war.

British Policy in the Far East

The Far East held a special place in Anglo-US relations. Britain had economic, colonial, political and strategic interests in the Far East, while the USA regarded this vast and

* Sumner Welles, *Op. cit.*, p. 103.

** *Ibid.*, p. 95.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 97.

*) *Ibid.*, p. 119.

potentially rich region as a key sphere of its economic and political expansion. This brought the interests of the two countries into collision. However, Anglo-US contradictions were pushed into the background by two factors: first, the national liberation and revolutionary movement which was growing in China, a movement directed against all imperialist schemes for China, and, second, the aggressive ambitions of Japan, which was out to crush the revolution in China by armed force and ultimately oust her rivals from China. This range of contradictions and interests lay at the root of the situation in the Far East. It was a precarious situation as evidenced by the war raging in this region since 1931 in one way or another, and by Japanese military provocations against the USSR and its ally, the Mongolian People's Republic.

Britain's position in the Far East had been deteriorating since the turn of the century. It was greatly undermined by the policy of appeasing aggressive Japan, which Britain had been consistently pursuing since 1931 in the hope Japan would play the principal role in suppressing the Chinese revolution and initiating a big war against the USSR. Britain's Far Eastern policy thus complemented her European policy, the objective being to settle imperialist and class contradictions by a war against the USSR on two fronts—in the West and in the East. The close relations that had been built up between Germany, Italy and Japan in the course of the 1930s and the extreme hostility of these countries for the USSR gave the British Government grounds for designs of this kind. In Europe Britain threw sops to the anti-Soviet aggressor, letting him swallow Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland; in the Far East she encouraged Japan at China's expense. The Craigie-Arita Agreement, signed in July 1939, was a Far Eastern variant of Munich in which Britain formally sanctioned the continuation of Japanese aggression in China.

The Soviet-German Non-Aggression Treaty upset the calculations of those who were trying to embroil the USSR in a clash with Germany. Moreover, it sowed discord in the camp of the fascist powers as well. Both the Italian fascists and the Japanese ruling circles were unable to conceal their irritation. This was one of the reasons why Italy and Japan—Germany's allies—refrained from entering into the war in September 1939. "During the first months of the

war," Llewellyn Woodward writes, "the danger of Japanese intervention was not great. The Russo-German agreement had shocked Japanese opinion."* This was a substantial advantage which the Soviet-German treaty created for Britain and France.

On September 4 the Japanese Government declared that "the Empire will not intervene in the present war in Europe".** This was a formal statement of Japanese neutrality. Earlier, on August 30, the Japanese Government had instructed the General Staff to put an end, as soon as possible, to the military conflict with the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic on the Khalkhin-Gol River. Talks were started in Moscow, and on September 15 they ended with the signing of an agreement terminating hostilities.***

These developments galvanised British diplomacy into feverish activity. In London the Japanese reaction to the Soviet-German treaty was regarded as sufficient for an attempt to wrest Japan away from Germany. This sprang not only from the desire to split Britain's imperialist rivals but also from the fear that relations between Japan and the USSR would be normalised. If that happened Britain would have had to relinquish her hopes of getting Japan to attack the USSR. "The British," Langer and Gleason write, "fearing at first lest the nazi-Soviet pact be followed by a Soviet-Japanese agreement, and then realising the discomfiture of the Tokyo Government [over the Soviet-German agreement.—*U. T.*], were eager to exploit the grievance. They proposed to try for a settlement with Japan in the hope of drawing that power to the side of the democracies."*) The fact that the British Government entertained that hope is evidence of how poorly it understood the nature of the contradictions operating in the Far East and the designs of the Japanese ruling circles.

Japan was determined to repeat her experience of the First World War, when she took advantage of the war in Europe to strengthen her position in China at the expense of the European powers. In the neutrality statement of Sep-

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

** *Istoriya voyny na Tikhom okeane* (A History of the Pacific War), Vol. II, Moscow, 1957, p. 307.

*** *Ibid.*, pp. 307-09.

*) William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, p. 194.

tember 4 and in the Japanese Government's policy statement, published on September 13, it was declared that Japan "founded her policy on a settlement of the Chinese incident".* This meant she was out to complete her conquest of China.

The implications of this for Britain were explained by the Japanese Government on September 5, when it demanded that the European belligerents withdraw their warships and troops from Japanese-held regions in China. Woodward maintains that the "British Government left this 'friendly advice' unanswered".** This clashes with the truth. Firstly, in October 1939 about 20 British warships were withdrawn from China to Singapore, and on November 12 the British announced the withdrawal of their troops from North China.*** Secondly, this reply by action was supplemented with a reply to the Japanese through diplomatic channels. On September 8, Sir Robert Craigie, the British Ambassador in Tokyo, handed the Japanese Foreign Ministry a message from Lord Halifax proposing a peaceful settlement of the China problem between Britain and Japan.*)

Time and again the British offered to begin talks on this problem, but the Japanese were not to be hurried—they were waiting to see how matters would develop in Europe. Later Craigie wrote in his memoirs of the "close influence of events in Europe on the trend of Japan's foreign and domestic policies".**) The Japanese saw through Chamberlain's phoney war policy and were not inclined to talk seriously with the British until the outcome of that policy became clear. In February 1940 the German Ambassador in Japan Ott reported to Berlin that "no important decisions can be expected before the impact of military operations in Europe is felt".***)

Britain and France attempted to enlist American help in reaching agreement with Japan, but they met with a rebuff. Langer and Gleason say "these ideas were at once

* *Istoriya voiny na Tikhom okeane*, Vol. II, p. 307.

** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 164.

*** S. Woodburn Kirby, *The War Against Japan*, Vol. I, London, 1957, p. 23.

*) *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1939*, Vol. III, p. 69.

**) Robert Craigie, *Behind the Japanese Mask*, London, 1945, p. 85.

***) *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. VIII, p. 806.

discouraged by the State Department, where it was felt that any suggestion of interference in Tokyo would be resented".* The Americans did not object to a compact at the expense of China but they disliked the idea of Britain initiating such a compact, for it meant British interests would be given prime consideration while American interests would be pushed into the background. While refusing support to Britain in her efforts to come to terms with the Japanese, the Americans recommended a firm British stand to the Japanese demand on the withdrawal of British troops and warships from China, and in November-December 1939 negotiated with the Japanese on the China problem; nothing came of these negotiations.

The British Government appreciated that in the Far East its forces were not strong enough to enable it to pursue an independent policy, and that the USA was its natural ally against Japanese expansion. In the event war broke out the USA was the only country Britain could rely on and even in 1939 it was obvious to the British that if the situation deteriorated to a war between Britain and Japan it would be expedient to draw the USA into that war. A US diplomat in London, named Johnson, reported to Washington at the time: "... There is no doubt it [the British Government.—*U. T.*] would more than welcome an action on our part which would involve US with Japan and therefore by so much alleviate Great Britain's desperate plight."**

However, during the phoney war, when the British Government went to all ends to turn the war against Germany into a war against the USSR it did not feel that a close alliance with the USA in the Far East was urgent. London wanted not war but agreement with Japan, and it was not the British Government's fault that this agreement was not reached.

The British conception of this agreement was stated by Sir Robert Craigie in a speech on March 28, 1940, in honour of the Japanese Foreign Minister Hachiro Arita. He declared that Britain and Japan "are ultimately striving for the same objectives, namely, lasting peace and the preservation of our institutions from extraneous subversive

* William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, p. 194.

** *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1939*, Vol. IV, Washington, 1955, p. 229.

influences. It is surely not beyond the powers of constructive statesmanship to bring the aims of their national policies into full harmony.... I ... hope that this goal may be nearer today than it has seemed to be these last few years.”* By efforts to preserve British and Japanese institutions from “extraneous subversive influences” he meant joint action by the two countries against the USSR and the revolutionary movement in China. This was stated in plainer terms in a talk between the Japanese Ambassador in London and R. A. Butler. The Japanese Ambassador told the British Assistant Foreign Secretary that Japan’s aims in China ruled out “communist and Bolshevik elements” and were aimed at “removing Bolshevism as a source of disorder and at restoring peace and order”.** On April 5, 1940 *The New York Times* commented on the Craigie speech, saying it resembled the speeches made by the British Ambassador in Berlin Neville Henderson. Thus, both in the Far East and in Europe British policy had one and the same class foundation.

Dogged, virulent anti-communism prevented the British Government from appreciating how this policy was imperiling British interests. In the hope of using Japan against the Chinese revolution and the Soviet Union, Britain made it possible for her to build up powerful positions and failed to take effective steps to strengthen her own military position in the Far East. This line of behaviour, pursued during the phoney war, hourly changed the balance of forces to Britain’s detriment. That explains Japan’s lack of haste in her negotiations with Britain. She felt that time was working for her. Britain began reaping the bitter fruits of her policy as early as the summer of 1940.

Anglo-Soviet Relations During the Phoney War

It would seem that Britain’s and France’s declaration of war on Germany on September 3, 1939 should have marked a turning point for the better in the relations between Britain

* T. A. Bisson, *America’s Far Eastern Policy*, New York, 1945, p. 100.

** V. N. Yegorov, *Politika Anglii na Dalnem Vostoke (Sentyabr 1939-Octyabr 1941)* (British Policy in the Far East, September 1939-October 1941), Moscow, 1960, pp. 37-38.

and the Soviet Union. It would seem that being engaged in war against Germany, Britain would have wanted to maintain good relations with the Soviet Union, a Great Power which was neutral in that war. But that did not prove to be the case. During the early months of the war Anglo-Soviet relations deteriorated to the extent that early in 1940 the two countries were on the brink of war. The reason for this was Britain's old policy of trying to provoke war between Germany and the USSR.

In the course of the phoney war, while unnatural passivity was observed on the military front, the diplomatic front seethed with activity. The British and French governments explored every possibility of rectifying Hitler's "error" and turning the war against Germany into a joint war of the three powers and their allies against the Soviet Union. This was a most sinister piece of adventurism even from the standpoint of British and French imperialist interests.

During the first two weeks of the war the British Government maintained vis-à-vis the USSR a cold reserve which poorly concealed its feelings and intentions. At the same time, it used every media to declare that Britain was fighting a war against Hitlerism.* This was designed to convince the people that as far as Britain was concerned it was an anti-nazi, just war, and win their support, which the Government so sorely needed.

Having declared they were fighting a war against Hitlerism, the British ruling circles could not, during the first days of the war, openly start an anti-Soviet campaign. However, their hostility for the Soviet Union in this period was particularly deadly as a result of the USSR's recent major diplomatic success in signing the non-aggression treaty with Germany and thereby foiling the anti-Soviet designs of the British and French governments. Encouraged by the Cabinet Ministers the British press said what the former for the time being forbore to say officially. The Labour and Liberal press showed particular zeal, hammering on the idea that by signing the non-aggression treaty with Germany, the Soviet Union had sparked the Second World War. Ever since September 1939 this idea continues to be peddled by bourgeois historians in order to divert attention from

* *Labour Monthly*, November 1939, p. 645.

the fact that by rejecting an anti-aggression alliance with the USSR, Britain and France enabled Germany to unleash the Second World War.

The actions of the British ruling circles were not confined to encouraging an anti-Soviet campaign in the press. Early in September the British authorities imposed a ban on the export to the Soviet Union of machinery, machine-tools, rubber, cocoa and other items which had been ordered and paid for.* The Soviet Government had no alternative but to retaliate by prohibiting the export of Soviet goods to countries creating unfavourable conditions for Soviet foreign trade.

This exacerbation of relations with the Soviet Union hurt British national interests. This was understood by the calmer and more prudent members of the British ruling circles. "Mr. Lloyd George and others," write the progressive English authors W. P. and Zelda K. Coates, "deplored the loss of the USSR as an ally and urged strongly the need to take steps to renew contact with the Soviet Government and to come to a friendly understanding."*** Regrettably, at the time these sober considerations were not shared by the majority of the British ruling circles. In the second half of September they began to speak openly of their hostility for the Soviet Union, the cause being Poland's collapse and the entry of Soviet troops into Western Byelorussia and Western Ukraine following the disintegration of the Polish state and the flight of the Polish Government.

After the Great October Socialist Revolution Western Byelorussia and Western Ukraine had been forcibly torn away from Soviet Russia by the Polish military with the support of the Western Powers and turned into a spring-board for anti-Soviet provocations. The entry of Soviet troops into these regions was, therefore, an act of historical justice. The American historian John L. Snell writes: "Weak in 1921, the USSR had been forced to agree to a frontier that left five million Byelorussians and Ukrainians inside Poland."*** At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 the then British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon recommended a

* W. P. and Zelda K. Coates, *A History of Anglo-Soviet Relations*, London, 1945, p. 620.

** Ibid.

*** John L. Snell, *Op. cit.*, p. 155.

frontier between Soviet Russia and Poland along a line leaving the Byelorussian and Ukrainian population in Soviet Russia. This was unequivocal British recognition of Russia's rights to the corresponding territories. On October 26, 1939 Viscount Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, declared in the House of Lords that "the action of the Soviet Government has been to advance the Russian boundary to what was substantially the boundary recommended at the time of the Versailles Conference by the noble Marquess who used to lead the House, Lord Curzon, and who was then Foreign Secretary".*

In this action the Soviet Government was motivated by the need to safeguard the Soviet Union's security, protect the nations from fascism, oppose German aggression and save the Ukrainians and Byelorussians residing in Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia from the threat of nazi enslavement as a result of the German occupation of Poland.

The advance of Soviet troops and their defensive installations to the West blocked the road of the German invaders to the East and deprived Germany of the possibility of seizing these territories and using their manpower and material resources for aggression. It conformed to the interests not only of the Soviet Union and of the Byelorussians and Ukrainians residing in the territories in question but also of all other nations desiring the world's liberation from fascism.

Nevertheless, the entry of Soviet troops into Western Byelorussia and Western Ukraine was used by the British ruling circles for a frenzied anti-Soviet campaign, which seriously undermined the relations between the two countries.

On September 17, when the Red Army entered Western Byelorussia and Western Ukraine, the Soviet Government sent all diplomatic representatives in Moscow, including the British representative, a Note with a copy of the Note handed to the Polish Ambassador in Moscow substantiating the Soviet action. It was stated that the Soviet Union "would pursue a policy of neutrality in its relations with Britain".** It has now become known that the reaction of the British Government to this Note was "to consider whether they

* *Parliamentary Debates. House of Lords*, Vol. 114, col. 1565.

** *Pravda*, September 18, 1939.

would or would not declare war on the USSR".* The British had no legal grounds for raising this question for discussion. The Anglo-Polish Treaty of Mutual Assistance of August 25, 1939 had Germany and no other country in view. A secret protocol appended to this treaty contained a special reservation on this point.** In the House of Commons R. A. Butler said on this score that during "the negotiations which led up to the signature of the agreement, it was understood between the Polish Government and His Majesty's Government that the agreement should only cover the case of aggression by Germany; and the Polish Government confirm that this is so".*** Thus, in considering whether to declare war on the Soviet Union in September 1939 the British Government displayed a meaningful initiative which characterised its true policy in regard to the Soviet Union. Woodward says the British Government hesitated to declare war on the USSR because it "might make the defeat of Germany more difficult".*) The British Government thus felt it could not add a war with the Soviet Union to the war it was already fighting against Germany, one of the reasons, according to Woodward, being that Britain simply did not have the forces to fight two wars at one and the same time.

At the close of 1939 and beginning of 1940 the British Government redoubled its efforts to turn the war with Germany into a war against the USSR in alliance or collaboration with Germany. It used the period of the phoney war to look for ways of achieving this purpose and to prepare the British people and world public opinion ideologically and psychologically.

The second stage of British anti-Soviet propaganda began with the defeat of Poland. In the words of *Labour Monthly*, "full propaganda war against the Soviet Union was unloosed".**) The Conservative, Liberal and Labour press hurled every possible abuse at the Soviet Union, misrepresented its foreign policy, blamed it for the fall of Poland, and so on and so forth. This anti-Soviet clamour had two objectives: envenom the British people against the Soviet

* Llewellyn Woodward, Op. cit., p. 7.

** William L. Shirer, Op. cit., p. 733.

*** *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, Vol. 352, col. 1082.

*) Llewellyn Woodward, Op. cit., p. 7.

**) *Labour Monthly*, January 1940, p. 8.

Union and divert their attention from Poland's betrayal by the British ruling classes. Commenting on this W. P. and Zelda K. Coates write: "Apart from the Communists and a comparative handful of Labour and Socialist adherents, British 'Left' circles [i.e., Right-wing Labour and trade union leaders.—U. T.] were more whole-hearted, certainly more vocal, in their denunciation than the Right."*

Repercussions of this ideological campaign are felt to this day with the difference that the arguments of the British bourgeois and Right-wing Labour press of those days have been adopted by bourgeois historians, who state them in a calmer tone but with the same objectives as before.

Arnold Toynbee writes that when the line between Soviet and German troops in Poland was demarcated, the Soviet Government "knew, as surely as Hitler himself, that the ultimate objective of all Hitler's successive acts of aggression was to acquire for the Third German Reich a vast Lebensraum in the East which, if Hitler had his way, would be carried far beyond the present demarcation line and would tear the heart out of the Soviet Union".** Today when one reads the British press of the close of 1939 and the bourgeois authors who condemn Soviet action in Poland in 1939, one is struck by the thought that Britain would have liked the Soviet Union to have been inactive. In the situation obtaining at the time Soviet inactivity would have inescapably placed the population of Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia under the heel of nazi Germany and given her the possibility of "tearing the heart out of the Soviet Union", to use Toynbee's expression. This, therefore, is what would have suited the British propagandists of the autumn of 1939 and those who keep alive their "righteous indignation". Their wrath was aroused by the fact that that development was forestalled by the Soviet Government.

True, in those days there were among British politicians people who understood that the Soviet action in Poland in the autumn of 1939 and the signing of mutual assistance treaties with Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in September-October 1939 were part of the struggle against Germany and, therefore, conformed to British interests. One of these people was Winston Churchill. In a broadcast on October 1

* W. P. and Zelda K. Coates, *Op. cit.*, p. 622.

** *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, p. 40.

he "in effect welcomed the Russian action in Poland".* This was Churchill's personal opinion and not the opinion of the Government, most of whose members at the time were supporters of the Munich line.

Lord Beaverbrook's newspapers were in agreement with Churchill. *Daily Express*, for example, wrote on September 18, 1939 that the Soviet action in Poland should not be regarded as unfavourable to the Allies.

The old Liberal leader David Lloyd George came out strongly against those who saw no difference between Germany and the Soviet Union and recklessly demanded a rupture of relations with and a declaration of war on the Soviet Union. In a letter to the Polish Ambassador on September 28, 1939 he wrote that in Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia "the advancing Russian troops are being hailed by the peasants as deliverers. The German invasion is designed to annex to the Reich provinces where the decided majority of the population is Polish by race, language and tradition. On the other hand, the Russian armies marched into territories which are not Polish, and which were forcibly annexed by Poland after the Great War, in spite of the fierce protests and the armed resistance of the inhabitants. The inhabitants of Polish Ukraine are of the same race and language as their neighbours in the Ukrainian Republic of the Soviet Union.

"I felt it was a matter of primary importance to call attention at once to these salient considerations lest we commit ourselves rashly to war against Russia.... In these circumstances it would be an act of criminal folly to place the Russian advance in the same category as that of the Germans, although it would suit Herr Hitler's designs that we should do so."** Nevertheless, that was exactly what most of the British press and politicians were doing by fanning the anti-Soviet campaign and thereby playing into Hitler's hands.

This lumping of Germany and the Soviet Union in one category was also seen in the fact that in imposing an economic blockade on Germany the British Government was, essentially, determined to blockade Soviet foreign trade as well, thinking that in so doing it would damage the economy

* W. P. and Zelda K. Coates, Op. cit., p. 625.

** Ibid., pp. 624-25.

of Germany which had trade relations with the USSR at the time. Another object of this blockade was to cause difficulties for the Soviet economy, inasmuch as Britain regarded the Soviet Union as a potential enemy.

As a neutral country the Soviet Union had every legal right to trade with any belligerent, and British encroachment on this right was an encroachment on Soviet sovereignty and could not but have had an adverse effect on Anglo-Soviet relations.

We have pointed out that as soon as war broke out the British Government refused export licenses for goods ordered and paid for by the USSR in Britain.* This "tough policy", Medlicott points out, was due rather to anti-Soviet feelings activated during the events in Poland than to "the interests of the blockade against Germany".** However, the British Government soon saw that these anti-Soviet feelings clashed with Britain's practical needs. As a retaliatory measure, the Soviet Union halted the export of timber to Britain. This had an immediate effect. Because of the war Britain could now obtain timber only from North America—a difficult task, especially from the standpoint of transportation. Thus, "the vital consideration at the moment was the desperate need of the country for Russian timber"*** and so, on September 18, "the War Cabinet authorised an approach to the Soviet Union; in exchange for the timber the Soviet Union was to be offered the release of some of the detained machinery".*) The Soviet Government accepted this offer, and on October 11, 1939 an agreement was signed under which in exchange for Soviet timber Britain pledged to supply the Soviet Union with a certain quantity of rubber and tin.**)

The Soviet Government was ready to promote trade with Britain. The barter agreement of October 11 had shown that such trade benefited both countries. In mid-October the Soviet Ambassador in Britain I. M. Maisky had a series of meetings with Viscount Halifax, Sir Stafford Cripps, R. A. Butler and other British leaders, and in his talks with them he urged that the barter agreement of October 11

* W. N. Medlicott, *Op. cit.*, p. 313.

** *Ibid.*, p. 317.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 313.

*) *Ibid.*, p. 314.

***) *Ibid.*

should serve as the starting point for expanding Anglo-Soviet trade. The British did not go farther than to talk about it.

They were preoccupied with other plans, formulated as follows by the *Liberal News Chronicle* on October 25, 1939: Russia knew that for a long time certain influential people in Britain had been hoping sooner or later to set Russia and Germany against each other so that they would destroy each other. Britain would be the winner and pocket the stakes. After Munich thick-skulled politicians openly spoke of the desirability of giving Germany freedom of action in the East. Germany had to become a mobile bastion against Bolshevism and Britain had to encourage and help her. The same thick-skulled politicians were still cherishing the idea of fomenting a clash between Russia and Germany and making them seize each other by the throat to Britain's advantage. The talk about signing peace with a conservative German Government with the object of jointly fighting the "red menace" was not calculated to add sincerity to Anglo-Soviet relations. Talk of this kind was predominant.

The steps taken by the Soviet Union in the autumn of 1939 to strengthen its strategic position considerably increased its might and immediately caused alarm in imperialist circles. This development clearly did not suit the leaders of Britain and France, who saw that even an "anti-Bolshevik bastion" like nazi Germany had been unable to prevent a substantial strengthening of the Soviet Union's position. They were aware that if they won the war they were officially fighting against Germany, nazism would not recover from its defeat and this would greatly weaken the position of the reactionaries in Germany. Besides, this would create favourable conditions for the growth of the revolutionary forces not only in Germany but in Europe as a whole, thus ultimately marking a gain for socialism. Fearing that the liberation of Western Byelorussia and Western Ukraine by the Red Army would bring the peasants to power in place of the landowners, the Conservative *Daily Mail* warned the ruling circles: "This is a danger which all Europe must face. Hitler must face it, like anybody else."* *The Times*, styling itself independent but in fact likewise a mouthpiece of the Conservatives, warned that the war would help the revolu-

* *Daily Mail*, October 2, 1939.

tion in Germany to "mature"; this, it said, was the greatest threat to the Western Powers.* The Western imperialists thus did not desire any strengthening of the USSR or the weakening of the reactionary forces in Germany. It was in their interests to stop the war between Britain and Germany and jointly attack the Soviet Union. It was decided to use the Soviet-Finnish war to this end.

Two weeks before that war broke out the Conservative *Evening Standard* engaged in some remarkable speculations: "If Russia goes to war with Finland, what will happen? Britain will probably be moved to give assistance to that Northern democracy.... But Germany may also assist the Finns.... So we may find this paradox emerging: Britain and Germany co-operating to hold Finland up, and at the same time fighting to bring one another down."** In the situation obtaining at the time, by assistance to Finland the newspaper meant joint Anglo-German military action against the USSR. As regards the "paradox", the British ruling circles felt it would disappear in the course of this joint action: they couldn't very well conduct joint military operations against a third power and fight each other at the same time. The actions taken by the British Government in connection with the Soviet-Finnish war confirm that it had such a plan.

When the Soviet-Finnish talks on a settlement of the frontier issue got under way, the British Government along with other imperialist governments made every effort to cause them to break down. "Soviet Russia," Churchill writes, "... proceeded to block the lines of entry into the Soviet Union from the West. One passage led from East Prussia through the Baltic States; another led across the waters of the Gulf of Finland; the third route was through Finland itself and across the Karelian Isthmus to a point where the Finnish frontier was only twenty miles from the suburbs of Leningrad. The Soviets had not forgotten the dangers which Leningrad had faced in 1919.... Soviet garrisons also appeared in Lithuania. Thus the southern road to Leningrad and half the Gulf of Finland had been swiftly barred against potential German ambitions by the armed forces of the Soviets. There remained only the approach through

* *The Times*, September 30, 1939.

** *Labour Monthly*, January 1940, p. 6.

Finland.”* The British imperialists went to all ends to keep that approach open, and for that very reason, when war broke out between the USSR and Finland, the governments of Britain, France, the USA and some other countries hastened to give Finland every assistance.

Britain began to help Finland long before the first signs of a Soviet-Finnish conflict appeared. More than that, had it not been for this “assistance”, i.e., had the imperialists not turned Finland into a springboard for military adventures against the USSR, there would have been no conflict between the Soviet Union and Finland. Britain played the premier role in the anti-Soviet intrigues in Finland. Early in 1940 the New York newspaper *World Telegram* reported: “Britain and France had sent \$ 40,000,000 worth of war supplies to Finland.”**

Sir Walter Kirke, Director-General of the British Territorial Army, visited Finland in June 1939 with the obvious intention of fanning anti-Soviet feelings. He inspected Finnish war installations spearheaded at Leningrad (the Mannerheim-Kirke Line, as the *Labour Monthly* called it) and declared that “no army can break through this line”.*** His interest in the war preparations near Leningrad was not accidental. Back in 1919 when Yudenich’s whiteguard army, fitted out and supplied on money from Britain and some other imperialist powers, was pushing towards Petrograd, *The Times* wrote: “Finland is the key to Petrograd, and Petrograd is the key to Moscow.”*) In a book published by the British Royal Institute of International Affairs it is rightly pointed out that these words written in *The Times* “had sunk deeply into Soviet minds”.**) In June 1939 General Kirke made a speech in Helsinki, saying that “everybody in Great Britain appreciates Finland’s attitude”, implying her anti-Soviet stand. The authors of the above-mentioned book note that in the House of Commons the Kirke visit “was described as having been ‘purely of a private nature’”.***) Another “private” visitor to Finland in those days was Gene-

* Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. I, London, 1949, pp. 484-85.

** *Labour Monthly*, April 1940, p. 200.

*** Ibid.

*) *The Times*, April 17, 1919.

**) *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, p. 60.

***) Ibid.

ral Franz Halder, Chief of the German General Staff. In this case the quotation marks round the word private belong to the authors who, thereby, express their attitude to the British Government's statement on the private nature of the Kirke mission.

The advance of the Soviet troops in Finland was slower than was expected in the West, and this, Churchill wrote, was hailed with "relief" in Britain.* In London it was felt that there was plenty of opportunity and time in which to carry out the charted plans. "In British circles," Churchill notes, "many people congratulated themselves that we had not gone out of our way to bring the Soviets in on our side, and preened themselves on their foresight."** Britain rendered Finland financial and material aid, including what for those days were large-scale deliveries of aircraft, field guns, ammunition, machine-guns, mines, bombs, anti-tank rifles, means of communication and other armaments.*** "Volunteers" were enlisted for the front: some 2,000 men were recruited.†) All this was done to enable Finland to hold out until the spring, when Britain and France planned to send an expeditionary corps to the Finnish Front.

As early as December 19, 1939 the Supreme War Council had discussed the question of sending British and French troops to Finland. "By the middle of January the principle of an Allied intervention was accepted, and landings in Murmansk, Petsamo, or Narvik were under consideration by experts."**) When it was becoming more and more obvious that Finland would be defeated, steps were taken to speed up the dispatch of troops to that country—the decision to send troops was taken by the Supreme War Council on February 5, 1940. Six British divisions and 50,000 French troops were waiting to be sent to Finland. After the Finnish Government, on February 29, decided to negotiate peace with the USSR, Britain and France spared no effort to prevent Finland from getting out of the war.

Had Britain realised her intentions in the autumn of 1939

* Winston S. Churchill, Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 488.

** Ibid., p. 495.

*** On March 19, 1940, Chamberlain spoke in the House of Commons, listing the armaments sent to Finland (*Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons*, Vol. 358, col. 1836-1837).

†) *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, p. 77.

***) Ibid., p. 79.

she would have found herself at war with the USSR. The landing of troops in Murmansk, a Soviet port, would have meant war, as would have the involvement of British divisions in the fighting against Soviet forces. In February 1940 Lord Halifax told US diplomats Britain would, without an official declaration of war on the Soviet Union, pursue her policies "in all directions regardless of the possibility that as a result Russia may declare war".* The fact that the Chamberlain Cabinet's actions might have resulted in war between Britain and the USSR is admitted both by official and semi-official British historiography. Speaking of the Supreme War Council's decision of February 5, Woodward tells us that Chamberlain put before the Council a plan for the dispatch of regular divisions, declaring that "Russia need not declare war against the Allies unless she wished to do so".** Thus, hostilities were to break out without a declaration of war, much as the British intervention in Soviet Russia was launched 20 years before. A review of international relations compiled by the Royal Institute of International Affairs states that the planned "intervention in Finland was likely to commit the Allies to war against ... the Soviet Union".*** The US historian D. F. Fleming writes that "the French and British governments were actually prepared to go to war with Russia", adding that when war broke out between the Soviet Union and Finland "all the reactionaries in the world saw their chance for an outburst of holy fury against Red Russia. ... Most of the powerful ones in France and Britain (and many in the USA) forgot all about the war with Germany. ... Here in the Russo-Finnish war was a war they could really put their hearts into."*)

In this connection arises the legitimate question: How could Britain go to war with the USSR when she was in a state of war with Germany? Did it imply she intended to fight the combined might of the USSR and Germany? By no means. Shortsighted as the British leaders were, they realised Britain and France did not have the forces for such a war. It is generally admitted in British bourgeois historiography that at the time Britain was in no state to fight

* *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1940*, Vol. I, Washington, 1959, p. 293.

** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

*** *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, p. 78.

*) D. F. Fleming, *Op. cit.*, pp. 101-02.

Germany, let alone a combination of powers. Woodward, for instance, writes that the British and French governments knew they could not open "a decisive campaign against Germany in 1939 or 1940".* Yet they went to all ends to start a war against the USSR as well.

What was behind these seemingly incomprehensible actions? There can only be one answer. Britain and France hoped that by the time war with the USSR would start they would be able to stop the war with Germany and draw her into a concerted military crusade against the Soviet Union. The British journal *Statist* wrote at the time that in Europe the alignment of forces had not yet finally taken shape and developed the idea of conciliation between Germany and the Western Powers on the basis of the Soviet-Finnish War. Eduard Benes, former President of Czechoslovakia, testifies that in the winter of 1939/40 Daladier and Bonnet attempted to draw France and Britain into a war with the USSR, having previously reached agreement with Germany. "Germany was then to have been pressed to attack the Soviet Union, having made peace with the Western Powers."** In equal measure this concerned the British Government, which in this question acted in complete concord with the French Government.

While the war between the Soviet Union and Finland was raging the British Minister in Finland Sir Thomas Snow suggested to the US Minister in Helsinki that the USA sever diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. He said Britain and France would then do the same and that most probably this would impress Germany.*** This shows that in addition to its own efforts to "switch the war", the British Government endeavoured to enlist the assistance of the USA.

At the same time steps were taken to prepare the British people psychologically for a "switch" of the war. The bourgeois propaganda machine embarked upon an unbridled anti-Soviet campaign, which brought to light the British Government's true intentions. *The Times*, for instance, held that the Soviet Union feared "an eventual regrouping of the powers, including ... Germany, on an anti-Soviet front"

* Llewellyn Woodward, Op. cit., pp. XXVII-XXVIII.

** "Memoirs of Eduard Benes", *The Nation*, July 10, 1948, p. 42.

*** A. J. Schwarts, *America and the Russo-Finnish War*, Washington, 1960, p. 29.

[my italics.—U. T.]. The same newspaper published letters calling for a "crusade" against the USSR. James Louis Garvin, a leading British political observer, welcomed the anti-Soviet "moral alignment of nine-tenths of the world. It may be ineffectual now. An overwhelming practical force might emerge from it."*

Right-wing leaders of the Labour Party and of the trade unions were extremely active in this anti-Soviet campaign, sending delegations to Finland to encourage the Finnish reactionaries and instigate them to continue the anti-Soviet war. David Rhys Grenfell, a prominent Labour MP, speaking in Australia, said if Britain declared war on the USSR this decision would have the firm support of the working-class movement. H. N. Brailsford, a Labour publicist, went to the extreme of suggesting the formation of a Labour Government to conduct a war against the USSR. He wrote: "We may have to revise all the doctrines with which we entered this war. If we mean to conduct it as champions of a new civilisation against ... Moscow, we cannot hope for success under Conservative leadership."**

However, it was presumptuous of these people to talk on behalf of the entire British working-class movement. The anti-Soviet policy of the Conservative Government and its Labour henchmen was condemned not only by British Communists but also by politically-conscious rank-and-file members of the Labour Party. There were honest, sober-minded people in the Labour leadership as well. D. N. Pritt, member of the Labour Executive and a prominent barrister, wrote in the press against the attempts to start an Anglo-Soviet war. In a letter to the Executive, he said he had been expelled from the party for publishing two books in which he "stated facts ... and gave arguments against any launching of war by this country against the Soviet Union. Very grave issues are raised for the future of the Labour Party if it is to be taken as contrary to its policy and discipline to support the one Socialist State in the world, and oppose war being launched against it by the National Government, whilst at the same time it is to be highly orthodox to support Mannerheim, and to co-operate with Mussolini and Franco."***

* *Labour Monthly*, January 1940, pp. 9-10.

** *Reynold News*, October 1, 1939.

*** *Labour Monthly*, May 1940, p. 271.

A conference of representatives of various workers' and public organisations was held in London on February 25, 1940 under the auspices of *Labour Monthly*. It was attended by delegates from 379 working-class organisations with a total membership of 340,000, and in its resolution it was stated that the British ruling classes were playing the leading role in staging a war against the Soviet Union, and to this end they were helping Finland and preparing anti-Soviet fronts in the Middle East. "The cause of the Soviet Union," the resolution declared, "is the cause of world socialism, of the whole international working class. We ask the working class to remember how it stopped the anti-Soviet war in 1920, by agitation and strike action, and to act swiftly now to prevent such a war once more."^{*}

The British and French governments failed to complete the process of "switching" the war. Despite instigation and the promise of direct military assistance Finland signed a peace treaty with the Soviet Union on March 12, 1940. The motives for this were twofold: the first was that Finland was defeated and could not continue the war, and the second was that her Government realised that an Anglo-French military presence would turn Finland into a toy in the hands of adventurist imperialist circles. Ralf Törngren, the Finnish Foreign Minister, wrote in 1961: "Though Finland at first appealed for outside aid, in the end her Government chose to accept the Soviet peace terms ... rather than rely on the military assistance offered by Britain and France. This decision was based partly on a realistic appraisal of the possible efficacy of Allied aid: it was feared to be too little, and too late. But it was also due to an almost instinctive reluctance to allow the country to become involved in the conflict between the big powers."^{**}

The British Government's refusal to help terminate the Soviet-Finnish war can be appreciated in the light of its intentions with regard to Finland. On February 22 the Soviet Government requested the British Government to act as mediator in the Soviet-Finnish conflict, and communicated the terms on which it was prepared to settle that conflict. However, as Chamberlain declared in Parliament, Britain declined this role.

^{*} Ibid., p. 132.

^{**} *Foreign Affairs*, July 1961, p. 602.

Noting Chamberlain's endeavours "to switch the war", William Rust, a prominent member of the British Communist Party, wrote that "Finland was the highest point of this anti-Soviet policy, pursued without regard to the interests of the British people, and none will forget the mass incitement against the Soviet Union carried out in Britain by Chamberlain with the help of Transport House".*

Most of Chamberlain's Cabinet were active supporters of the Munich policy. But when war broke out posts in it were given to men like Churchill, who was actively opposed to the Munich line, and Anthony Eden, who had resigned in 1938 after a fall-out with Chamberlain. What was the stand of these men when tension was highest in Britain in the period of the Soviet-Finnish war? Churchill urged energetic British action in Scandinavia up to the landing of British troops. True, his memoirs and bourgeois British historiography emphasise that this action was urged in order to cut the flow of Swedish ore to Germany. However, the British and French governments planned to settle the Swedish ore issue and start a war against the USSR by one and the same action—the sending of troops to Finland via Norway and Sweden. Woodward says that on December 22, 1939, after the French had proposed what the British Foreign Office considered was an invitation to "Sweden and Norway to go to war with the USSR and pledged Allied support to them if they did so", Churchill wanted the War Cabinet "to accept the French plan".**

Churchill himself writes how he "sympathised ardently with the Finns and supported *all proposals* for their aid"*** [my italics.—U. T.]. This is evidence that Churchill wanted Britain and France to send troops to Finland to fight the Soviet Union. As regards the "benefit" of this act to the Finns, it was one of the literary exercises Churchill liked so much and which cannot be interpreted literally. In any case the Finns preferred to decline the "benefit" from the arrival of British and French troops. Churchill supported "all proposals" concerning Finland and, consequently, was quite aware of the possibility of war with the Soviet Union, for,

* *Labour Monthly*, October 1941, p. 434. Transport House—headquarters of the Labour Party.—Ed.

** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

*** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 489.

as he himself writes, "any action we might undertake to help the Finns might lead to war with Russia".*

It looks as if at times he even hastened developments in that direction. He relates that on December 24 (when the War Cabinet was considering plans for a new Allied front in Scandinavia) he circulated among the Cabinet members a paper in which he "summarised Intelligence reports" and warned of "the possibilities of a Russian design upon Norway". The Soviet Command, he wrote in the paper, had "three divisions concentrated at Murmansk preparing for a seaborne expedition".** This was invented by Churchill himself or by his Intelligence assistants. But the important thing for us today is that Churchill did not shun such methods in hastening military operations against the USSR on that front. He speaks of this in his memoirs.

This can only mean that for a certain period Churchill had no differences with Chamberlain regarding the desirability of "switching" the war to the USSR. There is nothing to show that Eden too had anything against Chamberlain's policy at the time. Another point of interest is that Duff Cooper, who shared the views of Churchill and Eden and had resigned from the Government in 1938 in protest against the Munich deal, declared during his United States propaganda tour, undertaken while the Soviet-Finnish war was raging, that "Britain will be at war with Russia very soon".*** In the period in question there was little to choose between the speeches of Churchill and Chamberlain where the question concerned the USSR.

In February 1940, *Labour Monthly* wrote: "The most chauvinist aggressive reactionary forces of British and French imperialism, which seek by all means to extend the war and to break the Western stalemate by the development of an Eastern theatre of war here join hands with the former Munich elements which stumbled into this war against their intention, precisely because they were seeking to promote anti-Soviet war, and would now be only too thankful to find a means to transform this war into anti-Soviet war and to build on this basis a world counter-revolutionary front under British leadership."**) In our view this aptly explains

* Ibid., p. 496.

** Ibid., p. 493.

*** *Labour Monthly*, February 1940, p. 81.

*) Ibid., pp. 74-75.

why Churchill, who represented the most chauvinist and aggressive forces of British imperialism, and Chamberlain, who represented the Munichmen, joined forces on one and the same platform. Churchill's stand on this issue clearly shows that in this given case the adventurist side of his character gained the upper hand.

However, none of the plans for "switching" the war could be carried out without Germany. But German imperialism had no intention at the time of doing any "switching" because it did not desire to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for its British adversaries. While the British Government was nursing its adventurist ideas, the Germans prepared for an offensive in the West. This dawned upon Churchill probably when the Soviet-Finnish war came to an end. That was when he began to speak on a new note. In a broadcast on March 30, 1940 he made a violent attack on the Soviet Union as of old, but, at the same time, explicitly stated that "it is not part of our policy to seek a war with Russia ... our affair is with Hitler and the Nazi-German power".*

The plan for "switching" the war envisaged a British and French military attack on the USSR not only in the North but also in the South—from the Middle East where considerable forces were concentrated. The attack from both directions was to be launched simultaneously, but the peace signed by the USSR and Finland on March 12 upset the British and French designs. In *Grand Strategy*, which is part of the military series of the approved British history of the Second World War, it is stated that both governments "declared that her [Finland's—*U. T.*] capitulation to Russia would be a major defeat for the Allies, most damaging to their prestige throughout the world".** In fact, that is what it was. Moreover, the cessation of hostilities in Finland deprived Britain and France of the possibility of using the North to "switch" the war. "The war with Finland," wrote the Conservative *Sunday Times*, "gave us the first chance of one military initiative which the peace has taken from us."*** Only the southern front now remained and, naturally, its importance grew.

* W. P. and Zelda K. Coates, *Op. cit.*, p. 637.

** J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

*** *Sunday Times*, March 17, 1940.

Not only the governments but also the press of Britain and France concentrated their attention on the southern variant. The *Daily Mail* wrote: "The Scandinavian gate to Central Europe, which for three months has been ajar, is now fast-closed again. By so much the more is the importance of the other open enemy flank in Southeastern Europe increased.... We are well placed to deliver a dangerous thrust at those Caucasian oilfields which are as vital a spot to Germany as to Russia herself."*

The *Daily Telegraph* argued that "the Allies, with the aid of Turkey, might elect to strike in that area (the Caucasus oilfields)".**

The intention was not simply to bomb the oil-rich regions of the Caucasus but also to occupy them. Some people in Britain were so confident that the British would seize the Caucasus that they even began compiling tourist maps of that region.***

In March 1940 the British War Cabinet seriously considered the question of "bombing the Caucasian oil centres"*) and discussed it with the French. Woodward states that "the War Cabinet were bound to consider ... whether we should gain or lose by cutting off Russian oil supplies at the price of war with the USSR".**) On March 28 the Supreme War Council decided to continue studying the Caucasian project, but this study was never completed. The project was also considered at a conference of British diplomatic representatives in Turkey, Hungary, the Balkan countries and Italy at the Foreign Office on April 8 and 11, 1940, but soon, Woodward writes, "the German successes in Norway ruled out of practical consideration any project for an attack on the Caucasian oilfields."***)

British bourgeois historiography insists that in all their foreign policy initiatives the British played a secondary role, that they were pushed by the French. In particular, in regard to the War Cabinet's decision of March 29 approving the Supreme War Council's recommendations to study the

* *Daily Mail*, March 14, 1940.

** *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post*, March 14, 1940.

*** *News Chronicle*, June 7, 1941.

*) Llewellyn Woodward, Op. cit., p. 29.

**) Ibid., p. 30.

***) Ibid., p. 31.

Caucasian project, Woodward says: "Once again French insistence had led the British Ministers to a decision which they probably would not otherwise have taken."* He and others waste their time attributing such modesty and pliability to the Chamberlain Cabinet. Actually, the reverse was the case. During the phoney war the opinion of the British Government was decisive in all major questions of strategy and policy. Besides, neither do the historians cite facts to show that there were serious differences between the Allies. Facts of this kind are simply non-existent. Any discussions that were held concerned tactics and not principle. William Rust rightly noted in December 1940: "*As the representative of the subordinate imperialism, the French ruling class were compelled to adapt their policy to the interests of Britain, which meant, however, that they had to bear the brunt of the war and suffered military defeat*"**. [my italics.—U. T.].

During the Soviet-Finnish conflict British policy in regard to the USSR brought her to the brink of war with the Soviet Union. Diplomatic relations were not ruptured, but the British Ambassador Sir William Seeds left Moscow at the close of 1939, and a successor to him was not appointed. The Soviet Government saw what the British ruling classes were up to and took steps to frustrate their aggressive plans. In pursuance of this purpose it once again raised the question of a trade agreement with Britain. This was of both economic and political significance. A settlement of trade relations would have had a beneficial effect on the political relations between the two countries. On this point George F. Kennan notes that when it had become obvious that "the British blow was going to be directed towards the North Russian borders", the Soviet Government began the "cultivation of better relations with England"***.

But this was no easy task because the British were deliberately engineering a deterioration of these relations. In addition to suspending trade negotiations with the USSR during the Soviet-Finnish war, Britain began to detain Soviet merchant ships. In the Far East the British seized

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

** *Labour Monthly*, November 1940, p. 608.

*** George F. Kennan, *Russia and the West Under Lenin and Stalin*, Boston, 1961, p. 338.

the Soviet ships *Selenga* and *Uladimir Mayakovsky* on the pretext that their cargo of non-ferrous metals might be re-exported to Germany. This was a flagrant violation of the sovereignty of the Soviet Union, which owned both the ships and their cargoes. For that reason the Soviet Ambassador in Britain told Lord Halifax on March 27 that the "Soviet Government would consent to trade negotiations if the British Government expressed genuine readiness to settle the question of Anglo-Soviet trade favourably and, in particular, prior to starting the negotiations released the Soviet ships *Selenga* and *Uladimir Mayakovsky*, which have been detained by the British authorities".* At the same time, in Moscow, V. M. Molotov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, told Sir Stafford Cripps that the Soviet Union desired a trade agreement with Britain.**

In the state Anglo-Soviet relations were at the time these proposals could not have had any success. "The steps of the British Government," a TASS report stated on this score, "to curtail and restrict trade with the USSR (the cancellation of Soviet orders for equipment), the detention of Soviet merchant ships with freight for the USSR, the British Government's hostility for the USSR during the Soviet-Finnish conflict, and the leading role played by the British Government in the Soviet Union's expulsion from the League of Nations could not promote a satisfactory development of these negotiations."***

On April 4, 1940 the Ministry of Economic Warfare drew up a memorandum containing demands which the Soviet Union had to satisfy before Britain would sign a trade agreement. This memorandum required the establishment of Allied reporting officers in Soviet territory to keep a check on Soviet trade with Germany, the restriction of exports to Germany of Soviet domestic produce, and other measures flagrantly infringing upon Soviet state sovereignty.* Acceptance of these demands would have been tantamount to a renunciation of political neutrality and a switch to provoking war with Germany. Medlicott notes that this "pre-

* *Izvestia*, May 22, 1940.

** Eric Estorick, *Op. cit.*, pp. 221-23.

*** *Izvestia*, May 22, 1940.

*) W. N. Medlicott, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 326.

tentious programme" was "of a highly unrealistic character".* It was supplemented with the War Cabinet's decision of March 28 providing for an intensification of the measures against Soviet foreign trade in the Far East.**

Such was the state of affairs when on April 9, 1940 Hitler attacked Denmark and Norway. This attack marked the beginning of the German offensive in the West, which put an end to the phoney war.

* W. N. Medlicott, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 326.

** *Ibid.*

Chapter Two

"ONLY TO SURVIVE"

(April 1940-June 1941)

End of the Phoney War

On April 4, 1940, in an assessment of the prospects of the war, Neville Chamberlain declared that Hitler had "missed the bus".* What he meant was that during the seven months of the phoney war, without hindrance from the enemy, Britain and France had mobilised their forces, radically changed the balance of power in their favour and ensured their future victory. This was evidence of the British Government's amazing inability to understand and correctly appraise the position of the belligerents and foresee the course of the war in the immediate future at least.

Five days later the Germans struck at and swiftly overran Denmark and Norway. "The swiftness and suddenness of the attack temporarily paralysed the British and French governments," writes J. F. C. Fuller.** There was, indeed, an element of suddenness, but the blame for this devolves chiefly on the British Government because, as Shirer points out, it "did not believe the warnings in time".*** The governments of Denmark and Norway had been warned of the impending German attack in March. On April 1 this intelligence was received in London. On April 3 it was discussed by the War Cabinet.

Berlin was well informed of the Anglo-French intention of intervening in the Soviet-Finnish War in order to organise

* J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. 119.

** J. F. C. Fuller, *Op. cit.*, p. 60.

*** William L. Shirer, *Op. cit.*, p. 916.

an anti-Soviet crusade. However, participation in such a crusade held out for Germany extremely limited and doubtful benefits, which clearly did not conform to her appetite. In her bid for world domination Germany intended to inflict a military defeat not only on the Soviet Union but also on Britain and France, who were trying to become Germany's allies. Thus, the "switch" of the war on British terms did not suit Germany and having used the phoney war to build up her forces she struck at the West.

It was no secret to the Germans that Britain and France were getting ready to occupy Norway and Sweden in order to move their troops to Finland, halt the supply of Swedish iron ore to Germany and establish new naval bases against German U-boats and raiders. To counter these moves preparations for the seizure of Denmark and Norway were started by the German Navy at the very beginning of 1940. On March 1, 1940 Hitler signed the directive setting the operation in motion.

The German invasion of Denmark and Norway signified the German Government's rejection of the British and French overtures aimed at organising a joint anti-Soviet crusade, and showed its intention to conduct the war against Britain and France with the purpose of subjugating Western Europe. The British Government was paralysed with dismay, and for good reason, too. Its strategy and policy, which it had framed in the course of many years, were crumbling. A real war, a life and death struggle, was now beginning.

British and French troops landed in Norway with naval and air support. The British War Cabinet quite seriously felt "our overwhelming sea power should enable us to dispose of the German landing-parties 'in a week or two'".* These troops were soon driven out by the Germans. Germany not only outflanked Britain and ensured an uninterrupted supply of Scandinavian iron ore but also secured important forward bases in the North from which to launch sea and air attacks on British communication lanes in the Atlantic. German prestige soared, neutral countries were intimidated and the legend was born of the German Army's invincibility. British and French prestige dropped catastrophically, the neutral countries saw that Britain and

* J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, pp. 127-28.

France were unable to oppose the German pressure, and the morale of the British and French people waned. On the basis of materials compiled by Major-General Leslie Hollis, then Secretary of the British Chiefs of Staff Committee, James Leasor points out that the "British landing in Norway to defend that country against the nazis was an example of how not to carry out such an operation. . . . The Germans gained Norway as a most valuable air and submarine base on the North Atlantic coast, and also won control of the iron ore, for a loss of only 1,300 men. Most important, they now knew that Allied talk of welcoming attack was bravado; they knew how weak we were, and so did the rest of the world."*

Fall of the Chamberlain Cabinet. Churchill in Power

The Norwegian catastrophe was the natural outcome of Chamberlain's Munich policy under conditions of war. In the spring of 1940 the blinkers fell from the eyes of many of Chamberlain's ardent supporters; they realised that if the same course were pursued Britain would not escape a military débâcle and German troops would inevitably invade the British Isles. The only man who did not see this was Neville Chamberlain.

Dissatisfaction with the Government's conduct of the war had been mounting for a long time. Now it was voiced not only by the broad masses but also by top circles. Sober-minded Tories were becoming more and more convinced that if Chamberlain had been a poor leader in peace-time, he was even worse in war-time. This was the theme of discussion at the weekly meetings of Tory anti-Munichites headed by Leopold Amery in the Observation Committee. Presided over by Lord Salisbury, a veteran leader of the Conservative Party, this committee consisted of Conservative members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Lord Salisbury negotiated with the Labour and Liberal leadership in an effort to ascertain if there was a possibility "of bringing about a change". Clement Attlee admits that personally he comported himself with great reserve at these negotiations,

* James Leasor, *War at the Top*, London, 1959, pp. 73-74.

showing reluctance to take an active part in demanding Chamberlain's resignation.*

The Allies' failure to prevent the Germans from occupying Norway brought matters rapidly to a head. Debates on the question of the conduct of the war were started in the House of Commons on May 7, 1940. They were attended by many Conservative MPs serving in the Armed Forces, and some of them had taken part in the abortive landing in Norway. Their indignation was expressed by Leopold Amery, who demanded the formation of a genuine coalition government and made the most dramatic denunciation of Chamberlain, repeating Cromwell's address to the Long Parliament: "You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go."**

But even this did not make Chamberlain realise the full depth of the crisis.

However, the Labour leaders now saw that the Conservatives could alone make Chamberlain go. Initially they had not intended to raise the question of confidence in the Government, but the mood of the Conservative MPs voiced on May 7 made them reconsider their position in the morning of May 8 and take more energetic action, for Chamberlain's "overthrow" held out the promise of political capital. On May 8, Herbert Morrison, speaking on behalf of the Labour Opposition, moved that the question of confidence in the Government should be put to the vote.*** In his reply Chamberlain made another wrong move: he appealed to "his friends" in Parliament to support him in the voting. He thus reduced a crucial political issue to the personal loyalty of his friends, who now, if they had not done so before, realised that matters had gone too far. In the voting, the Government, which usually had a majority of 200, received the support of only 81 MPs. This meant that not only the Opposition—Labour and Liberal MPs—but also a section of the Conservatives had voted against the Government; more than 100 Conservatives voted with the Opposition or abstained, which was likewise a show of opposition. This revolt of the

* F. Williams, *A Prime Minister Remembers*, London, 1961, p. 28.

** A. Marwick, *The Explosion of British Society, 1914-1962*, London, 1963, p. 124.

*** F. Williams, *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

Conservatives would have been even more massive if prior to the voting their leaders had not set afloat the rumour that Chamberlain had decided to reorganise the Government.*

The only thing Chamberlain could now do was to resign. Yet he stubbornly clung to power, offering the Labour Party posts in his Cabinet. They had not accepted a similar proposal in September 1939, and they were even less inclined to accept it now. After this rebuff Chamberlain proposed for the premiership Lord Halifax, who shared his views and submissively carried out his will. The Labour leaders agreed to this nomination, but divergences in the Conservative leadership prevented the materialisation of this plan. Winston Churchill was entrusted with forming the new Cabinet.

On May 10 Churchill formed the new Cabinet, which consisted of Conservatives, Labour men and Liberals. The Labour Party was represented by its leader Clement Attlee (Lord Privy Seal and, in effect and then officially, Deputy Prime Minister), Ernest Bevin (Minister of Labour and National Service), Herbert Morrison (Minister of Supply), A. V. Alexander (First Lord of the Admiralty) and Arthur Greenwood (Minister without Portfolio). A Liberal, Archibald Sinclair, became the Secretary of State for Air. The inclusion of these men in the Cabinet and Churchill's appointment as Prime Minister were calculated to make the new Cabinet more palatable to the people. The Conservatives retained the key posts and did not deviate from their former policies; the Labour Ministers, representing the extreme Right, reactionary wing of the Labour Party, gave them every assistance. Attlee subsequently said he could "remember no case where differences arose between Conservatives, Labour and Liberals along party lines. Certainly not in the War Cabinet. Certainly not in the big things."**

In the new Government the Conservatives retained the posts of Lord President of the Council (Neville Chamberlain), Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Lord Halifax) and Secretary of State for War (Anthony Eden). Altogether, in the Churchill Government the Conservatives had 54 posts, Labour 17 posts and the Liberals four posts.*** The

* Ian Macleod, *Op cit.*, p. 290.

** F. Williams, *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

*** *The Times*, June 1, 1940.

overwhelming majority of the Tory Ministers were confirmed Munichites, but their position was now weaker because Churchill had brought in a number of his own supporters. However, the former were still very influential, the reason for this being that the Government was dependent on the Conservative majority in Parliament, the same majority that had given its blessings to Chamberlain's Munich policy. Another reason was that Chamberlain retained his post as party leader, and this gave him extensive power over the Conservative Parliamentary faction and over the Conservatives in the Government.

Chamberlain remained the Conservative Party leader in defiance of British tradition, which required a Prime Minister resigning under such circumstances to relinquish the party leadership. The flaunting of this tradition in May 1940 was due to the hostility of some prominent Conservatives towards Churchill, a hostility springing from past political collisions and from Churchill's criticism of Chamberlain, and also to a desire to curtail Churchill's freedom of action. Churchill saw his dependence on the Conservative Munichites. When he was requested to form a new Cabinet he wrote to Chamberlain: "With your help and counsel and with the support of the Great Party of which you are the Leader, I trust that I shall succeed. . . . To a very large extent I am in your hands."*

Chamberlain remained in the Government and at the head of the Conservative Party until October 8, 1940, when illness made him resign. In the course of these months he was very active, and both Churchill and the Labour Ministers closely co-operated with him. Churchill took over the Conservative Party leadership after Chamberlain's death on November 9, 1940, and that strengthened his position and, correspondingly, weakened the position of the Munichites.

Churchill's Government was thoroughly imperialist, not only because of its great dependence on the Munichmen. Churchill himself was an extreme reactionary and bellicose imperialist, who had devoted all his life to a struggle against everything revolutionary and progressive in Britain and the whole world. Anthony Eden, who adopted the pose of a "progressive", was likewise an imperialist. The overwhelming majority of the Conservative Ministers represented big

* Ian Macleod, *Op. cit.*, p. 292.

banks and monopolies. These forces put Churchill in power, rightly feeling that of the Conservatives he could best of all organise the military struggle in defence of British imperialism's vital interests.

As a result of the military developments in the spring and summer of 1940, *Labour Monthly* writes, "a shift in the balance of relations within the ruling class followed.... In Britain the Munichite politicians were heavily discredited, but remained strongly entrenched in positions of power. Direct governmental leadership passed into the hands of the alternative section of the ruling class, represented by Churchill, which had consistently stood for an active policy of opposition to Hitler."* These governmental changes unquestionably dovetailed with the country's national interests. Churchill and his associates were aware that capitulation to Germany would mean Britain's downfall, and they were determined to fight Germany seriously, and in this they relied on the support of the British people.

Fall of France

In the morning of May 10, 1940 German troops invaded Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg aiming to crash into France via the almost undefended Franco-Belgian frontier, bypassing the Maginot Line. This time the German attack was not unexpected by the British. Early in May British military leaders had drawn their conclusions from the German seizure of Denmark and Norway and had submitted these conclusions to the War Cabinet, which considered them on May 9. The Chiefs of Staff wrote that this seizure was "a first step in a major plan aimed at seeking a decision this year". However, although the fresh westward invasion was foreseen, a miscalculation was made in determining its direction: it was believed that Britain rather than France would be attacked.**

The German invasion of the West had two political objectives: first, to resolve the imperialist contradictions between Germany and the Allied Powers by force of arms and, second, to create the conditions for the attainment of Germany's principal aim in the war, namely, the conquest of

* *Labour Monthly*, August 1941, p. 348.

** J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. 172.

the USSR and the solution of the question of Lebensraum at its expense. On this point J. F. C. Fuller writes the following: "Clearly, when Hitler's Lebensraum—his aim—is kept in mind, and throughout the war in Europe it must be, or else his strategy becomes unintelligible, it will be seen that the conquest of Norway was the first necessary step in the conquest of the West, a conquest which strategically was essential before turning Eastwards against Russia, so that, when her turn came, the war would be reduced to a one front operation."^{*}

On the eve of the German offensive in the West, the British had in France an Expeditionary Corps of 10 divisions under General John Gort; this force was deployed along the Franco-Belgian frontier. In addition, in France the British had three territorial infantry divisions, some engineering units and 200 aircraft.^{**} Against the 134 German divisions on their Northeastern front the Allies could move more than 130 divisions, i.e., roughly an equal number of troops.^{***} If it is borne in mind that the Germans had to advance against troops in powerful defensive positions, the German superiority in aircraft and tanks did not by any means give them a preponderance of strength. Nonetheless, as soon as the Germans started their offensive the British Government realised that the battle of France was lost.

Here the moral factor was largely decisive. The German Army was fiercely determined to win and was prepared to make sacrifices to this end. The Allied armies, on the other hand, were disorganised by the policy which their governments had been pursuing during the phoney war. The "rotteness of France", J. F. C. Fuller says, was "so staggering that it would not have mattered much what weapons the French Army had been armed with. It did not want to fight, and it did not intend to fight, it was like a mouse before a cat."^{*)} In the case of the British troops in France, their morale was not very high either. The French Government was even more rotten than the army. Its stand was undermined by those who feared the French people and were

^{*} J. F. C. Fuller, *Op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

^{**} J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, pp. 155-56; J. F. C. Fuller, *Op. cit.*, p. 65. During the fighting in May General Gort received reinforcements in the shape of one tank division.

^{***} J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. 177.

^{*)} J. F. C. Fuller, *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

prepared to surrender to Germany rather than have a Popular Front. The Dutchman L. Hartog tells us that ever since 1936 the "upper classes" in France had been guided by the slogan "Better Hitler Than the Popular Front".*

From the approved British history of the Second World War we learn that as early as the night of May 13 London found the course of the battle in France "particularly alarming", and that on May 16 it was reported to the War Cabinet "that the situation was most critical".** Realising that the fall of France was inevitable, the Churchill Cabinet tried to prolong the French resistance. This was the purpose of the numerous talks Churchill and other British leaders had in France with the French leaders. The task was a formidable one. The French demanded additional British divisions and air squadrons. The British, for their part, tried to persuade the French to go on fighting, but declined to send aircraft and troops on the excuse that they were needed for the defence of Britain. Naturally, the French regarded this evasion as a desire to make France go on fighting for as long as possible and, at the same time, preserve as much of Britain's forces as possible.

Britain had sufficient grounds for doubting the competency and, more important, the desire of the French Command to put up a real fight. Moreover, she knew that the French Government, particularly after Marshal Petain had been brought into it, contained many defeatists who wanted peace with Hitler. The French Government, for its part, did not trust Britain, feeling she had already written off her Ally and would not throw the whole weight of her military machine into the fighting in France. The British Government had given more than enough grounds for this. On May 16 Churchill had promised Paul Reynaud six additional squadrons of fighter planes, but the French never received them.*** On May 22, after the German troops had reached the English Channel, cutting off the British Expeditionary Corps and some French units, Churchill assured Reynaud that the British troops would, along with the French, launch a counter-attack with the objective of closing the breach made by the Germans and forming a junction with the main French

* L. Hartog, *Und morgen die ganze Welt*, Gutersloh, 1961, S. 189.

** J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, pp. 182-83.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 185.

forces. This operation never came off, and the French felt the British were to blame.

For this, too, they had sufficient grounds. On May 10 the British troops under Gort and a number of French divisions began an advance into Belgium, but this advance did not take them very far. Six days later they turned back and on May 19 Gort was already "examining the question of a withdrawal towards Dunkirk".* On that same day the British Admiralty started preparations to evacuate Gort's troops from Boulogne, Calais and Dunkirk to Britain.** On May 22, when Churchill promised the French that British troops would be sent to the south to close the breach made by the Germans there, the Command of these troops and the British Government were actually pre-occupied with the thought of saving the Expeditionary Corps by evacuating it to Britain.

The evacuation was accomplished and it stirred up bad blood between the Allies. The French felt themselves grossly insulted when during the evacuation the British Navy gave priority to British troops, taking French troops on board reluctantly. But more important than that was the fact that after Dunkirk France felt she had been deserted by Britain.

Most British bourgeois historians portray the evacuation at Dunkirk as an outstanding victory, as a miracle. But it has been established beyond any doubt that one of the "miracle-workers" was none other than Hitler. With his sights on the future war with the USSR, he did not want British prisoners of war in Northern France to complicate the possibility of reaching agreement with Britain on a joint invasion of the Soviet Union. J. F. C. Fuller writes that the evacuation "has been called a 'miracle'; but in war miracles are no more than exceptional operations. In this case the answer would appear to be an exceedingly simple one—namely, that Hitler held back the final assault on his cornered enemy."*** Field-Marshal Harold Alexander, a prominent British war-time military leader, who as Major-General supervised the evacuation of the remnants of the British troops from Dunkirk, wrote in 1962 that if "Hitler had thrown the full weight of his armies into destroying the BEF,

* J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. 187.

** *Ibid.*, pp. 188-89.

*** J. F. C. Fuller, *Op. cit.*, p. 76.

it could never have escaped. If I am asked, 'who saved the BEF?', my reply is 'Hitler'."* The explanation is that "Hitler was convinced that Britain would be prepared to come to terms once France ... was eliminated". Alexander quotes a high-placed official of the German Foreign Ministry, who said that "Hitler personally intervened to allow the British to escape. He was convinced that to destroy their army would be to force them to fight to the bitter end."** Lastly, there is the evidence of the so-called testament of Hitler, which he dictated in the spring of 1945. "Churchill," Hitler said, "was quite unable to appreciate the sporting spirit of which I had given proof by refraining from creating an irreparable breach between the British and ourselves. We did, indeed, refrain from annihilating them at Dunkirk."***

Two British divisions remained in France after the Dunkirk evacuation. The British Government gave a negative answer to the repeated French requests for more aircraft and troops. At a meeting of the Supreme War Council in Briare on June 11-12, Churchill declared: "This is not the decisive point and this is not the decisive moment. That moment will come when Hitler hurls his Luftwaffe against Great Britain. If we can keep command of the air, and if we can keep the seas open, as we certainly shall keep them open, we will win it all back for you."*) The French were denied assistance on the grounds that Britain had to be defended, and that if Britain withstood the test she would, at some future date, win France from the Germans.

The above-quoted statement contains the admission that it was hopeless to continue the fight in France. Nonetheless, Churchill urged the French to continue resisting the enemy. At Briare he pledged to dispatch fresh divisions to France "as soon as they could be equipped and organised" with the purpose of enabling French and British troops to entrench themselves in Brittany and continue the struggle. This was an unrealistic plan and Churchill obviously had no serious intention of carrying it out. General Ismay writes that at

* *The Alexander Memoirs, 1940-1945*, Ed. by J. North, London, 1962, p. 75.

** *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

*** *The Testament of Adolf Hitler. The Hitler-Bormann Documents, February-April 1945*, London, 1961, p. 96.

*) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, London, 1951, p. 137.

the Briare airport before flying to London he asked Churchill "need we be in too much of a hurry" to send reinforcements to France. "Could we not unobtrusively delay their departure?" To which Churchill gave his famous reply: "Certainly not. It would look very bad in history if we were to do any such thing."* Churchill had every reason to worry over how history would assess Britain's fulfilment of her Allied duty to France. Ismay notes: "As Churchill had never ceased to impress upon me, our contribution to the battle in France had been niggardly."** Notwithstanding Churchill's pathetic statement at the Briare airport, Ismay's advice was followed to the letter. No reinforcements were sent to France, and on top of that on June 16 the evacuation of the British troops still in France was ordered.***

This was preceded by developments that seriously worsened the situation not only of France but also of Britain. Influenced by German military successes and by Germany's obvious victory in the battle of France, Italy "hastened to assist the victor". The British and French governments probably could not, at the time, say definitely if at the conference with Hitler in the Brenner Pass in March 1940 Mussolini had pledged to enter the war on Germany's side in the event she started her offensive in the West. After May 10 the two governments made feverish attempts to, as Churchill put it, "buy off Mussolini".*) In Rome, E. W. Playfair, representing the British Exchequer, discussed a clearing agreement envisaging the placing of British orders with Italian shipyards. Another British emissary, Wilfred Green, was negotiating with the Italians an agreement to free most Italian exports from the contraband control imposed by Britain within the framework of economic warfare. On May 16 Churchill personally joined in the efforts to cultivate the Italians. He sent a personal message to Mussolini in which he warmly recalled his meetings with the fascist dictator in Rome and said he desired "to speak words of goodwill to you as Chief of the Italian nation". He wrote: "I declare that I have never been the enemy of Italian greatness, nor ever at heart the foe of the Italian

* *The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay*, London, 1960, pp. 141-42.

** *Ibid.*, p. 141.

*** J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. 202.

*) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 108.

lawgiver"; he called upon Mussolini "to stop a river of blood from flowing between the British and Italian peoples".*

In the obtaining situation, Churchill's words that he had "never been the enemy of Italian greatness" were a direct offer of concessions to ensure this "greatness", i.e., to satisfy Italian claims. On May 18 Mussolini replied in haughty terms that Italy would honour her obligations under her treaty with Germany. "From this moment," Churchill writes, "we could have no doubt of Mussolini's intention to enter the war at his most favourable opportunity."** Yet on May 25 Lord Halifax told Giuseppe Bastianini, the Italian Ambassador in London, that the Allies were prepared to consider any proposals for negotiations regarding Italian interests and possible foundations for a just and lasting peace.*** This was a declaration of Britain's readiness to satisfy Italian claims and examine the terms on which war could be ended and a peace treaty signed. However, the British were unwilling to state these terms and recommended that this should be done by the Italians.

The French, whose position was more desperate than that of the British, were prepared to go much farther than Churchill in appeasing Italy. The French wanted London to agree to offer Italy concrete concessions with regard to Tunisia and certain other French interests, and also at the expense of Britain. In London on May 26 Reynaud sought British agreement to the internationalisation of Gibraltar, Malta and the Suez Canal.*) The British Government rejected these proposals. "My own feeling," Churchill says, "was that at the pitch in which our affairs lay, we had nothing to offer which Mussolini could not take for himself or be given by Hitler if we were defeated. One cannot easily make a bargain at the last gasp."**) Mussolini's negative reply on May 18 made Churchill realise that Italy could not be bought off.

The French Government, however, was in a plight where it was willing to grasp at a straw. On May 31 it sent the Italian Government a Note offering direct negotiations and

* Ibid., p. 107.

** Ibid., p. 108.

*** Ibid., p. 109.

*) *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, p. 246.

**) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 109.

promising the satisfaction of Italian claims in the Mediterranean through concessions on the part of both France and Britain. The British Government dissociated itself from these proposals. There was nothing it could do to change the course of events. On June 10 the British and French ambassadors in Rome were informed by the Italian Foreign Minister that Italy had declared war on Britain and France.

This left the British Government in no doubt that France would soon sue for peace. All its efforts to induce the French to continue the battle had no result. The British Government was now faced with the problem of what stand to adopt in connection with France's inevitable withdrawal from the war. This stand was determined, firstly, by considerations regarding the further conduct of the war against Germany and Italy and, secondly, by the desire to take advantage of France's defeat and appropriate as much as possible of the French heritage. This could be achieved only if the French Government co-operated. Inasmuch as the last of the British troops were leaving the European continent and, consequently, the promise of military assistance could no longer be used to influence the French, the British Government had only one last means—France's pledge of March 1940 not to enter into separate peace negotiations with the enemy.

Britain used this very flimsy trump to gain possession of the French Navy, whose surrender, she feared, the Germans would definitely demand under the armistice terms. In return for its agreement to France's withdrawal from the war, the British Government demanded the dispatch of French naval units to British ports. This would have meant harsher German armistice terms in retaliation. The French Government, therefore, refused to put its Navy at Britain's disposal, but promised to take steps to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Germans.

While the French Navy was needed by Britain mainly for the war against Germany, the French colonies were the cake from which she could snatch a piece, taking advantage of France's difficulties. On June 17 the British Foreign Office instructed its Consuls in French colonies to tell the local authorities that since France was surrendering to Germany the British Government offered to protect them against the enemy and hoped to have the co-operation of these authorities. On the whole, the colonial administration took a nega-

tive attitude to this offer, while the French Government protested to the British Ambassador. Nonetheless, Britain continued her efforts to gain control of the French colonies, and this evoked strong protests from the French Government.*

During these tense days London hit upon a method by which it hoped to acquire the French Navy, the French colonies, the French merchant fleet and all other French resources which the Germans had not yet seized. On June 17 the British Government proposed that the "two governments declare that France and Great Britain shall no longer be two nations, but one Franco-British Union",** with its own Constitution, Parliament, Government and armed forces. The French Government's agreement to such a union and its transfer to London, where it would have become part of a united Government would have signified, firstly, that Britain would have at her disposal all French resources not yet captured by the Germans, secondly, that France would continue the war against Germany and Italy, and, thirdly, that under the obtaining balance of forces the British would play the dominant role in the union. This fantastic plan failed. The French refused the offer of a union for they did not believe in Britain's ultimate victory. In the French Government the upper hand was gained by forces desiring a deal with victorious Germany and believing that Britain's days were numbered. Those advocating co-operation with Britain were frightened that Churchill's plan, if it led to victory over Germany, would in the end reduce France to the status of a British Dominion.

On June 17, without agreeing the question with London, the French Government, headed by the defeatist and pro-fascist Marshal Petain, requested Germany and Italy for armistice terms, and the armistice was signed on June 22 at Compiègne.

That ended an important phase of Anglo-French relations, a phase which began immediately after the First World War. The struggle for the premier role in European politics had ultimately been won by Britain, and France, which had followed in the wake of British policies during the difficult 1930s, found herself involved together with

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 183.

** *Ibid.*

Britain in war with Germany, a war she had mortally dreaded. When war finally broke out the French were on the whole justified in considering that Britain was not doing all she could have done to help her Ally—France. Much of the responsibility for the catastrophe that overtook France in 1940 rested with Britain. This feeling was very much in evidence in France, which, as the British Ambassador Sir Ronald Campbell put it, was swept by a “wave of Anglo-phobia”.* The French Munichites, who were mainly responsible for the catastrophe, took advantage of this mood to betray France, first surrendering to nazi Germany and then collaborating with her.

Campbell and the entire British Embassy staff left France in a torpedo boat on the day after Marshal Petain signed the armistice with nazi Germany.

Contrary to what the British expected, the German Government did not demand the surrender of the French Navy. With the exception of the units necessary to protect French interests in the colonies, all French naval vessels were required to return to their home ports and disarm. The Germans solemnly promised to make no claim on the French Navy either during the war or at the signing of the peace treaty. The British Government quite rightly did not believe the nazi assurances and took steps to prevent French warships from returning to their home ports. French vessels that happened to be in British ports were seized on July 3. The British attempts to gain control of the French squadron at Mers-el-Kebir flared up into a battle in which a number of French warships were destroyed and more than 1,300 French sailors lost their lives.** At Alexandria the French naval vessels were disarmed but remained under French control. The British efforts to seize the French Navy and, in particular, the Mers-el-Kebir engagement strained Anglo-French relations to the utmost. In the French Government Admiral Darlan and Pierre Laval demanded military retaliation but the other members of the Government understood that the country was fed up with war. Matters ended with the French Ambassador's recall from London. The actions of the British Government “aroused deep and lasting resentment in the French Navy and among

* *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, p. 209.

** J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. 225.

many other Frenchmen... The bombardment of July 3 drew a line of blood between Petainist France and Britain.”*

Emigré Governments in London

Before the Franco-German armistice was signed, the British had suggested that the French Government should move to London or to a French possession in North Africa and continue the war from there side by side with Britain. After the British saw there was no chance of this suggestion being accepted they contacted General Charles de Gaulle, Deputy War Minister in the French Government, who was determined to continue the war. On June 18 de Gaulle spoke on the British radio network, appealing to Frenchmen to make their way to Britain and contact him there with the purpose of carrying on the struggle against Germany. On June 23 he made another appeal to the French people. This was followed by an announcement, broadcast in the French language, that the British Government had refused to recognise the French Government and would deal with the Provisional French National Committee “on all matters concerning the prosecution of the war as long as it continued to represent all French elements resolved to fight the common enemy”.** On June 28 the British Government announced its official recognition of General de Gaulle as “the leader of all Free Frenchmen, wherever they may be, who rally to him in support of the Allied cause”***

De Gaulle's Committee was not recognised by Britain as a government. However, by that time there were in London governments of a number of countries that had been occupied by the Germans—Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and Poland. These governments had the support of the British. Their number increased with the occupation by Germany of other parts of Europe. The British welcomed them to London and created some conditions for their activities. The existence of such governments enabled Britain to make use, for the conduct of the war, of the corresponding countries' material and manpower resources that were out of Germany's reach.

* Ibid., p. 227.

** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 76.

*** Ibid., p. 77.

Moreover, in the event of victory, these governments could return to their respective countries where they would pursue policies more or less in accordance with British interests and would serve as the nucleus rallying anti-revolutionary forces should a revolutionary situation arise in these countries in the course of the war.

Strategy of Survival

The fall of France radically changed Britain's political, military and strategic position. She found herself alone against the German threat. Western Europe with its vast industrial and manpower resources was in German hands, and they could be used by the Germans to deal Britain a mortal blow. To counter this blow Britain had a large Navy, a fairly strong Air Force and an almost unarmed Army, which had just fled from France where it had abandoned all its armaments. Italy had cut British communications across the Mediterranean and, with her ally, was poised to seize British possessions and positions in the Middle East and North Africa. In the Far East Japan obviously intended to use the favourable situation for capturing the possessions of the European powers. Britain was thus in an extremely difficult situation, and the fault for this lay squarely with the Conservative Government, which had led the country to the brink of disaster.

Recalling this period, Churchill quoted the words of Dr. Samuel Johnson: "Depend upon it, when a man knows he is going to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully."* The British Government was clear about the outcome of the Battle of France as soon as it started, and therefore after May 10 it concentrated on two problems: whether to continue the struggle after France's capitulation, and if the struggle was to be continued what should be the political and strategic plan. These were closely intertwined problems and they had to be considered and decided simultaneously. As early as May 19 the Chiefs of Staff set up a committee to draw up plans "just in case", having in mind the fall of France.** This problem was discussed by the War

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 144.

** W. N. Medlicott, *The Economic Blockade*, Vol. I, London, 1952, p. 60.

Cabinet on May 27, and later, in August 1940 in connection with the Anglo-US Staff talks.

After long discussion it was decided to go on with the war. Churchill told the British people that Britain would fight on after the French surrender. Hitler obviously did not believe this statement and planned to sign a peace that would benefit Germany. He was so sure of this that he did not even order plans to be drawn up for the conduct of the war against Britain after France was conquered. He waited for the British to sue for peace and, at the same time, used various channels for sounding British opinion. In the USA head of the German Embassy Hans Thomsen tried to contact Lord Lothian on this question. This choice was not accidental: Lord Lothian was a confirmed Munichite.* The German representative Prince Max Hohenlohe met the British Minister in Switzerland Sir David Kelly.** The Pope and the King of Sweden joined this "peace campaign".

As in October 1939 when it made its "peace overtures", the German Government hoped that the crushing defeat suffered by the Allies would untie the hands of the adherents of appeasement in Britain, who would replace Churchill by their own man and sign a peace. On July 22, 1940 the German Minister in Eire Eduard Hempel reported to Berlin that the German peace proposals would be favoured "by Chamberlain, Halifax, Simon, and Hoare, ... also Conservative circles (the Astors, Londonderry, etc.), high officialdom (Wilson), the City, *The Times*".*** The Duke of Windsor, formerly Edward VIII, was accorded a prominent place in the nazi "peace" plans.*) These manoeuvres worried Churchill and he gave instructions that "Lord Lothian should be told on no account to make any reply to the German Chargé d'Affaires' message".**)

Hitler waited until mid-July for a British initiative and then proposed peace himself. On July 19 he made a speech in the Reichstag in which he declared he could "see no reason why this war must go on" and promised that the British Empire, "which it was never my intention to destroy or even

* William L. Shirer, Op. cit., pp. 983-84.

** *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. X, Washington, 1957, p. 245.

*** Ibid., p. 262.

*) *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1940*, Vol. III, p. 41.

**) Winston S. Churchill, Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 229.

to harm", would remain intact. He did not make any concrete proposals but the abuse he heaped on Churchill was tantamount to a demand for his removal from power.* Later, in his *Testament*, he wrote: "Britain could have pulled her chestnuts out of the fire, either after the liquidation of Poland or after the defeat of France. It would not, of course, have been very honourable on her part to do so; but in matters of this kind, the British sense of honour is not too particular."**

Thus, Britain was offered peace provided she recognised German supremacy in Europe, in return for which she would be allowed to keep her empire. Peace on these terms would have reduced Britain to a subordinate position with regard to Germany and would, in the long run, have led to the gradual peaceful seizure of the British Empire by the Germans.

Properly speaking, this was the only way Germany could lay her hands on the greater portion of British imperial possessions. General Franz Halder, Chief of the German General Staff, says Hitler's view was that "if we smash England militarily, the British Empire will disintegrate. Germany, however, would not profit from this. With German blood we would achieve something from which only Japan, America and others will derive profit."***

The Churchill Cabinet had other ideas, and an hour after Hitler's speech was broadcast, the BBC declared his "peace" overtures would not be accepted. This speed was needed to prevent the German proposals from being discussed by the nation, because that would only have played into the hands of the Munichites and Hitler. Initially Churchill wanted the House of Lords and the House of Commons to pass a solemn resolution rejecting the Hitler proposal. But this was impossible to do without lengthy debates, and such debates were undesirable. In the end, on behalf of the Government, Lord Halifax spoke on the radio on July 22, turning down the German proposal. It is significant that this was done not by Churchill himself, but by Halifax, a prominent Munichite. It was a step taken to demonstrate the War Cabinet's unanimity on this issue.

The time span from May 10, 1940 to June 22, 1941 may

* William L. Shirer, *Op. cit.*, pp. 990-91.

** *The Testament of Adolf Hitler*, p. 35.

*** William L. Shirer, *Op. cit.*, pp. 752-53.

be termed the period of the "diplomacy of survival".* J. R. M. Butler rightly notes that "Grand Strategy is concerned both with purely military strategy and with politics".** This was particularly true of the twelve months following the fall of France, when Britain's relatively meagre military means induced her to employ all possible political means.

British historians speak in detail of the different plans which British strategists drew up in the course of the second half of 1940. In these plans the accent was on economic pressure on Germany. The view prevailing among British strategists was that the "defeat of Germany might be achieved by a combination of economic pressure, air attack on economic objectives in Germany and on German morale and the creation of widespread revolt in her conquered territories".*** This strategy testifies to the naivete of its makers. In 1955 Llewellyn Woodward, who had studied the pertinent state archives, justifiably wrote that in the summer of 1940 the people who knew all the facts hardly "believed that there was much chance of the survival, let alone the ultimate victory, of Great Britain".*)

Although the Government approved the economic pressure strategy it concentrated mainly on diplomacy for it was aware that if Britain remained alone she would be doomed to defeat, that only new allies could save her. In the summer of 1940 only two Great Powers—the USA and the USSR—were not involved in the war and could bring Britain salvation if she managed to win their support.

Therefore, as soon as Churchill came to power the basic policy adopted by him was to steer towards an alliance with the USA. There were many obstacles on this road. Firstly, in the summer of 1940 the Americans were very sceptical about Britain's ability to continue the war. On July 1, after a talk with US Ambassador Joseph Kennedy, Chamberlain wrote in his diary: "Saw Joe Kennedy who says everyone in USA thinks we shall be beaten before the end of the month."**) Secondly, strong resistance in the USA came from

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. XLVII.

** J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. XV.

*** *Ibid.*, pp. 212-13.

*) *International Affairs*, July 1955, Vol. XXXI, No. 3, p. 274; Llewellyn Woodward, *Some Reflections on British Policy, 1939-45*.

**) Ian Macleod, *Op. cit.*, p. 279.

the isolationists, who for various reasons did not desire the USA to enter the war, and nobody could tell how long it would take to overcome that resistance. Thirdly, the Axis powers parried Britain's steps towards an alliance with the USA by signing a pact with Japan, which meant that if the USA entered the war it might be forced to concentrate all its efforts in the Pacific. Fourthly, even if the USA decided to fight on Britain's side in Europe it could not very soon make an effective contribution to the war. Major-General John Noble Kennedy, who in 1940 was Director of Military Operations at the British War Office, notes in his memoirs that in that period he often saw Colonel Raymond Lee, the US Military Attaché, whom he describes as "a very charming and intelligent man and a good friend of ours, and he was inclined to take an optimistic and philosophical view of the prospects".* "If we" [Britain and the USA.—U. T.], the optimist Lee argued, left the Germans alone, "they would finally exhaust themselves by offensives, although they might drive us back at first even as far south as the Equator".** The prospect of being driven by the Germans into the African jungles as far as the Equator and then returning to Europe with US assistance clearly was not an enticing one for the British. Lastly, the British were aware they would have to pay dearly for this assistance, and that the more Britain became dependent on the USA militarily the greater would be the price she would have to pay. "So long as the enemy held the initiative," writes J. R. M. Butler, "and especially after the collapse of France and while American opinion was resolute not to enter the war, there was bound to be something unrealistic about many appreciations and proposals. But how that victory was to be won could not be foreseen." Nobody, he adds, could offer "practical recommendations as to how to keep our heads above water through the critical months immediately ahead".***

These circumstances gave the Soviet Union an exceptionally important part in British political strategy. Step by step Churchill worked towards better relations with the USSR with the objective of ultimately procuring its assistance. On this point Llewellyn Woodward writes that "for the Foreign

* John N. Kennedy, *The Business of War*, London, 1957, p. 65.

** Ibid.

*** J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. XVIII.

Office, these days of military disaster [second half of May 1940.—*U. T.*] were crowded also with other negotiations; an attempt to discover how far the Soviet Government might change their attitude".*

Battle of Britain

It so happened that even before it entered the war in 1941 the Soviet Union played a vital part in saving Britain.

At the close of June and beginning of July 1940, while awaiting a British reply to his "peace" overtures, Hitler became more and more obsessed with the idea of attacking the USSR, and that was the principal reason why peace with Britain was desirable at the time. His military theories and the plans of his General Staff ruled out war on two fronts. "I had always maintained," he said, "that we ought at all costs to avoid waging war on two fronts, and you may rest assured that I pondered long and anxiously over Napoleon and his experiences in Russia."** Britain's vacillation induced him to think of military means of making her more pliable. This gave birth to the idea of invading Britain.

On July 2 Hitler issued his first directives to the German Armed Forces to prepare for a possible invasion, which "is still only a plan, and has not yet been decided upon".*** On July 13 Halder jotted in his diary that the "Fuehrer is obsessed with the question why England does not yet want to take the road to peace".*) Meditating on the reasons, Hitler came to the conclusion "that England is still setting her hope in Russia".**) Naturally, this became another motive for attacking the USSR, but Hitler was not yet inclined to take that step without first signing a peace with Britain. Therefore, as Halder testifies, "he too expects that England will have to be compelled by force to make peace".***) Directive No. 16, ordering preparations for a landing operation in Britain, was signed on July 16. A significant part of the wording is: "I have decided to pre-

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. XXIX.

** *The Testament of Adolf Hitler*, p. 63.

*** William L. Shirer, *Op. cit.*, p. 751.

*) *Ibid.*, p. 752.

**) *Ibid.*

***) *Ibid.*

pare a landing operation against England, and if necessary to carry it out." The "if" meant Hitler counted on the possibility that no landing would be necessary, that the threat of an invasion would be enough to force Britain to sue for peace. This is confirmed by Hitler's "peace" overtures of July 19. At the same time, the "if" served another purpose: if the British Government turned down the overtures it would be blamed in both Germany and Britain for the loss of life which an invasion would entail. On July 1 Hitler told the Italian Ambassador that "it was always a good tactic to make the enemy responsible, in the eyes of public opinion in Germany and abroad, for the future course of events. This strengthened one's own morale and weakened that of the enemy. An operation such as the one Germany was planning would be very bloody. . . . Therefore, one must convince public opinion that everything had first been done to avoid this horror."*

Horror was indeed in store for Britain. For the invasion the Germans lined up 40 crack divisions which had the task of smashing the 17 British divisions guarding the coast and the 22 divisions in reserve. After Dunkirk the British land forces were in such a state that it would not have given the Germans much trouble to crush them. The biggest menace to an invading force was the British Navy and also the Air Force, which was strong. However, the general balance of strength was such that if the Germans had made a serious attempt to invade Britain they would have been successful. The West German historian Karl Klee writes: "Unquestionably, there was every possibility of carrying out a successful landing. The greatest opportunity for this was right after Dunkirk."**

Hitler, however, did not propose to fight for every inch of British soil. He believed that as soon as German troops landed on the coast and appeared in the vicinity of London, the Churchill Government would fall and a new government would sign Britain's surrender. A coup, he felt, would be accomplished by the fifth column consisting of Mosley's nazi thugs and extreme reactionary elements in the Right wing of the Conservative Party.

* *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. X, pp. 79-80.*

** Karl Klee, *Das Unternehmen "Seelöwe". Die geplante deutsche Landung in England 1940*, Göttingen, Berlin, Frankfurt, 1958, S. 244.

The most notorious of these elements was the Duke of Windsor, who in 1936 was forced to abdicate because of his attempts to interfere in the administration of the country more than was allowed by British tradition. Hitler cherished the idea of returning the Duke of Windsor to the British throne, and in return the former and prospective king of England would have to assist Germany. On July 2 the German Ambassador reported from Spain that "Windsor has expressed himself ... against Churchill and against this war". On July 11 the German Minister in Lisbon reported the Duke of Windsor as characterising "himself as a firm supporter of a peaceful arrangement with Germany. The Duke definitely believes that continued severe bombing would make England ready for peace."* The implication is obvious: the Duke of Windsor was in some measure prepared to collaborate with the Germans in return for help to recover the British throne.

In expecting that a landing would bring about a coup in Britain, Hitler counted not only and not so much on the Duke of Windsor and the former Munichites as on extremely influential banking, industrial and other business circles and on the landed aristocracy. Chamberlain's group, too, the British journalist Edward Bishop writes in his book *The Battle of Britain*, might at the time have agreed to a peace arrangement with Hitler.** Hitler had two objectives in mind when he calculated on the creation of a pro-nazi government in Britain: firstly, this would facilitate the conquest of the British Isles and, secondly, it would prevent the disintegration of the British Empire following the defeat of the metropolis and help the Germans gain possession of at least part of it.

The Germans carefully laid their plans for Britain's administration after her conquest. The regime would be harsher than in any other West European country, and this would refute the legend of Germany's "special" attitude towards Britain. A directive issued by the German General Staff on September 9, 1940 stated in part: "The main task of the Military Administration is to make full use of the country's resources for the needs of the fighting troops and the requirements of the German war economy.... The able-

* William L. Shirer, *Op. cit.*, p. 786.

** *Daily Worker*, September 22, 1960.

bodied male population between the ages of 17 and 45 will, unless the local situation calls for an exceptional ruling, be entrained and dispatched to the Continent with the minimum of delay.”* The purpose of the laws drawn up by the nazis for Britain “was to grind the British people to a state of permanent and total subservience”.** SS General Walter Darré, the top nazi racial expert, said in the autumn of 1940: “As soon as we beat England we shall make an end of Englishmen once and for all. Able-bodied men will be exported as slaves to the Continent. The old and weak will be exterminated.”***

A Gestapo reign of terror, whose organisation was entrusted to Professor Franz Alfred Six, a racial expert, was to be established in occupied Britain. The purpose was to exterminate physically not only progressive leaders but all the cream of the British intelligentsia as well as many leaders of the Conservative and Liberal parties. For a start a list was compiled which contained 2,300 names, among which were Churchill and a number of other statesmen and leading members of different parties, prominent newspaper publishers and correspondents. The nazis did not omit H. G. Wells, Virginia Woolf, Edward M. Forster, Aldous Huxley, J. B. Priestley, Stephen Spender, C. P. Snow, Noel Coward, Rebecca West, Philip Gibbs and the publicist Norman Angell. Also on the extermination list were Gilbert Murray, Bertrand Russell, John B. Haldane and other scientists.*)

The Luftwaffe began an offensive in July 1940 to force Britain to surrender and prepare the ground for an invasion, if an invasion was found to be necessary. The Germans operated, as usual, in accordance with carefully laid plans. The air strikes were at first aimed at airfields and then, in September, directed against the civilian population. The British Air Force fought skilfully and with courage. The nazis suffered heavy losses. They miscalculated in hoping to intimidate, demoralise and psychologically prepare the British people for surrender. All they achieved was to make the British people more determined than ever to defend their freedom and independence. Walter H. Thompson, the Scot-

* Comer Clark, *England Under Hitler*, New York, 1961, pp. 47-48.

** Ibid., p. 69.

*** Ibid., p. 51.

*) William L. Shirer, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1028-29.

land Yard inspector who was Churchill's personal body-guard during the war, writes in his memoirs: "Hitler began to bomb England severely in the early part of August.... What was the British reaction to all this? I think it was astonishment first of all. Then, in turn, apprehension, bitterness and anger."*

In the autumn of 1940 the RAF losses reached such a high proportion as to border on catastrophe. The Germans could now have launched an invasion much more easily. The Luftwaffe would have had little trouble in disposing of the Britain naval units in the English Channel. But this was the very moment when Hitler cancelled the invasion. He did not risk hurling his forces at the British Isles when in his rear there was the powerful Soviet Union, which clearly disfavoured the piracy of the nazis and their aspiration to conquer other countries and dominate the world. Thus, the very existence of the mighty socialist state saved Britain from invasion in 1940 and, consequently, from a terrible national and state catastrophe. In one way or another this is admitted even by bourgeois historiography. US Rear-Admiral Walter Ansel writes that in September 1940 "Hitler linked together Problems Russia and England all of a piece, making by implication the question one of, Which came first, Russia or England?... The one thing he made clear was that Russia stood in the forefront of his thinking."** Alexandre McKee notes Hitler was confident the "major campaign" would be fought against the Soviet Union and not against Britain.*** Hitler discussed the question of a war against the USSR with his accomplices as early as June 2, and at the close of July told them that Russia had to be put out of the way—the sooner the better.*¹) The preparations for this "major campaign" were in full swing in the autumn of 1940.

Germany's switch to the East did not mean she had given up her intention of settling accounts with Britain. Simply Hitler was determined to safeguard his rear by making peace with Britain, secure victory in the East and then crush

* Walter H. Thompson, *Assignment: Churchill*, New York, 1961, p. 215.

** Walter Ansel, *Hitler Confronts England*, Durham, 1960, p. 295.

*** Alexandre McKee, *Strike from the Sky*, London, 1960, p. 277.

*) Walter Ansel, Op. cit., pp. 107-08; J. R. M. Butler, Op. cit., 284.

Britain. Churchill was perfectly well aware of this and drew practical conclusions in the spring of 1941.

It is extremely important to bear in mind that Hitler had no intention of fighting the USSR and Britain simultaneously. According to his directive of October 12, 1940, the preparations for Operation Sea Lion were to continue with the sole purpose of maintaining political and military pressure on Britain. This pressure was designed to "soften" Britain for a peace in the spring of 1941, which would deliver Germany from a war on two fronts, and deceive the British ruling circles about the fate the nazis were planning for their country.

Anglo-US Relations

The import of France's downfall, the British historian John W. Wheeler-Bennett points out, was that the task was now "the substitution of the United States of America for France as Britain's chief ally".* Formerly, all the British Government wanted was material aid from the USA; but in the summer of 1940 it bent its efforts towards bringing the USA physically into the war.

Relations with the USA were so vital to Britain that essentially Churchill took the direction of these relations from the Foreign Office into his own hands. He tackled fundamental issues through direct correspondence with President Roosevelt. In the course of the war Churchill sent Roosevelt 950 telegrams and received about 800 telegrams in reply. Churchill signed these messages as "Former Naval Person".** His personal contact with Roosevelt facilitated his task of directing relations with the USA.

When Lord Lothian died on December 12, 1940, his place as British Ambassador in the USA was taken by Lord Halifax. This appointment of a member of the War Cabinet and a former Foreign Secretary to the post of British Ambassador in the USA gave weight to that office and underscored the importance Britain attached to her relations with the USA. Anthony Eden replaced Halifax as Foreign Secretary. Early in 1941 John G. Winant, whose views were more in accord with the aims of US policy in this period, took over the US

* John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *Op cit.*, p. 501.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 22.

Embassy in London from Joseph Kennedy, an ardent supporter of the Munich policy. When Winant stepped down from the train bringing him to London he was welcomed by King George VI. This, said *The Times* on January 1, 1961, was the first time in British history that an ambassador was met by the king.

In May-June 1940 Churchill made his first attempt to bring the USA into the war, painting for Roosevelt a gloomy picture of the defeat of France and Britain. Together with Reynaud he tried to press Roosevelt into declaring war on Germany. "We feel that the United States is committed beyond recall to take the only remaining step, namely, becoming a belligerent in form."* On June 14-15 Churchill wrote to Roosevelt: "A declaration that, if necessary, the United States would enter the war might save France." But the USA was not prepared for war and its involvement would have changed little. For Britain, however, the important thing was that the USA should formally enter the war on her side. "In any case," Woodward says, "American belligerency would have a great moral effect on our own people and on our enemies."**

The American response was restrained for, as we have already pointed out, the USA was not prepared for war. However, this must not be taken to infer that Roosevelt and the other US leaders desired to see Western Europe completely dominated by Hitler. In a speech before prominent businessmen on May 23 Roosevelt underlined the danger the USA would face if Germany defeated France and Britain. The US Government counted on Britain being able to withstand the German onslaught and on Hitler failing to win complete domination in Western Europe. "Both the President and Secretary Hull," writes the American historian Charles C. Tansill, "were certain that while France 'was finished', Britain, with the aid of American supplies, could withstand a German assault."*** This held the prospect of a drawn-out war, which suited American business. Moreover, a long war would give the United States the possibility of picking up the French legacy in the shape of a navy and colonies without interference from embattled

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 185.

** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, pp. 63, 89.

*** Charles C. Tansill, *Op. cit.*, p. 589.

Britain, which was vitally interested in US aid. Here British and American imperialist interests came into collision, revealing the contradictions dividing them.

Britain and the USA adopted different attitudes towards France after her surrender, when the pro-nazi Vichy regime was established. Although this was an undoubtedly fascist regime and despite the fact that it was controlled by Germany, the United States decided to maintain diplomatic relations with it. In this the US Government was guided by a number of considerations. Through contact with the ring-leaders of the Vichy administration, the US ruling circles hoped to prevent Germany from seizing the French Navy and make an attempt to gain possession of it themselves. William L. Langer tells us that Roosevelt established relations with Vichy after he had decided "that the fate of the French fleet could be influenced only by representation at Vichy".* Moreover, the US ruling circles hoped to use these relations as a vehicle for penetrating into the French colonies in Africa. That "entire region", Langer says, "was of obvious and vital interest to the United States".**

In its bid to seize the French Navy and colonies, the USA came into collision with similar claims on the part of Britain. This was one of the causes aggravating Anglo-US contradictions during the war years. The struggle for the French heritage was also mirrored in the fact that instead of establishing diplomatic relations with the Petain regime Britain pinned her hopes on General de Gaulle, who headed the Fighting France movement. In this period the Americans adopted a negative attitude towards de Gaulle, regarding him as a British agent. This was one of the reasons the USA withheld its support for the Fighting France movement.

A result of France's surrender was that anti-nazi feeling began to run high in the United States. This was only natural, for the enslavement of yet another country by Germany was resented and, moreover, the conquest of the whole of continental Western Europe by the Germans sharply increased the nazi threat to the USA. To quote the words spoken by a newspaperman in June 1940: "Revolution seems not too strong a word for the change in American thought from belief in security to dread of tomorrow."*** This was

* William L. Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble*, New York, 1947, p. 76.

** Ibid., p. 285.

*** William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, p. 505.

said approximately when Roosevelt observed: "The domination of Europe ... by nazism—including also the domination of France and England—takes what might be called the buffer out that has existed all these years between those new schools of government and the United States."* This buffer consisted of the British Navy and the French Army. Their destruction would leave nothing between the USA and the fascist countries in Europe.

This upsurge of anti-German feeling was accompanied by a growing demand for more effective assistance to Britain. The influence of the isolationists ebbed considerably. "But to many prominent businessmen, lawyers and intellectuals, especially in New York City, not even this was enough," write Langer and Gleason. "In these circles it was thought that ... Britain could stand if given adequate support."** Public organisations demanding more American aid to Britain mushroomed into existence in the USA.

The increased threat to the United States made the American Government substantially enlarge its military programme. The adoption of this programme and the enforcement of military conscription were a further departure by the USA from its policy of neutrality and a major step that took it towards involvement in the war. That that was where matters were heading was clear to many people both in the USA and abroad.

The conquest by Germany of a number of European powers with colonies in the Atlantic heightened American interest in these colonial territories. Principally these were French, Dutch and British administered islands situated in the expanse from Puerto Rico to the northern coast of South America. From the viewpoint of the struggle against Germany, it was important to the United States that vanquished France and the Netherlands did not "cede" their Latin American possessions to Germany and that the Germans should not have the possibility of building war bases in these territories. Besides these war-induced considerations, the US ruling circles had other grounds for taking an interest in these territories. The long and short of it was that they wanted these territories themselves and were determined to prevent them from being seized by either Germany or

* Ibid., p. 491.

** Ibid., p. 506.

Britain, whose marines had landed on the Dutch island of Aruba in May 1940.*

In June 1940, in furtherance of these aims, the US Congress passed a resolution giving an extended interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. It stated that the United States would not recognise the transfer of any territory in the Western Hemisphere from one non-American power to another. The backstage imperialist dealings behind this resolution were divulged by the US press, which urged the Government to take possession of definite territories.

Then the attention of the US ruling circles was switched to the northern part of the American Continent. On August 18, 1940 President Roosevelt met the Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King at Ogdensburg, USA, where they formulated the Ogdensburg Agreement establishing a Permanent Joint Board on Defence. Co-ordination of the military effort of these two countries was in the interest of the war against Germany, but as far as the USA was concerned there was another side to this agreement—it bound Canada to the USA and, in the event of Britain's defeat, cleared the way for Canada's complete subordination to the USA.

The United States did not wish Britain to be defeated or to sign a peace with Germany, for such a peace would have meant recognition of German supremacy in Western Europe and the Middle East and the inevitable subordination of Britain to Germany. As a result the German threat to the USA would loom larger.

After France's surrender the balance of strength between Britain and her adversary was such that without US aid Britain had no chance of winning the war. This was appreciated in both London and Washington. The US Government was prepared to extend to Britain any aid save direct American involvement in the hostilities. In June 1940 the US sold Britain more than 500,000 rifles, 22,000 machine-guns, 895 field guns and 55,000 Thompson guns.** In addition US military authorities agreed to let Britain have part of the current US aircraft output earmarked for the US Air Force.

While taking care to stiffen British resistance to Germany, the Americans prepared to seize as much as possible of her

* William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, p. 625.

** M. M. Postan, *British War Production*, London, 1952, p. 117.

possessions in the event she was defeated, namely her Navy and the largest possible share of her colonial empire. One of the means for attaining this goal, the US ruling circles believed, was to set up a British Government in exile which would be dependent on the USA. Roosevelt sounded Churchill on the possibility of moving the British Government to Canada. He "wanted to be assured that the British would do what the Dutch, Belgians, Norwegians, Czechs and Poles had done and set up a Government in exile".*

At this stage, R. Palme Dutt writes, the "choice before the British ruling class becomes the choice between coming to terms with German capital, at a price, or of coming to terms with American capital, also at a price".** Britain did not have the strength to carry on the war against Germany singlehanded. Continuation of the war in alliance with the USA would, in the obtaining circumstances, inescapably involve the transfer of a number of strategic British bases to the USA and concessions in foreign trade, in other words, it would lead to Britain's ceding some of her influence in favour of US imperialism. On the other hand, peace with Germany would place Britain in an even more difficult position. The British Government decided on an alliance with the USA, and although it knew it would have to make concessions it was by no means inclined to become completely subservient to the USA and meant to get something out of the alliance.

In the summer of 1940 it stepped up its efforts to draw the USA into the hostilities. The British warned the Americans that if Britain were not given sufficient aid she might be defeated and the USA would gain nothing from the British heritage. In June 1940 Churchill instructed Lord Lothian, the British Ambassador in the USA, to talk to the US President "in this sense and thus discourage any complacent assumption on United States' part that they will pick up the debris of the British Empire by their present policy".***

A cornerstone of Anglo-US relations after the fall of France was the agreement to transfer 50 old US destroyers to Britain. The question of these destroyers was first broached

* Robert E. Sherwood, Op. cit., p. 147.

** R. Palme Dutt, "The Truth About Anglo-American Policy", *New Masses*, Dec. 17, 1940.

*** Winston S. Churchill, Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 355.

by Churchill on May 15, 1940. Britain needed them to protect convoys from the USA against German U-boats, which were taking a heavy toll of British shipping, and also for operations in the Mediterranean against the Italian Navy.

Anglo-US talks on this question were started on July 23, 1940 and ended on September 2 with an agreement under which in exchange for the 50 American destroyers the USA was given a 99-year lease for the maintenance of naval and air bases on Newfoundland, the Bermudas, Jamaica, Santa Lucia, Trinidad, Antigua, the Bahamas and British Guiana. In addition, the British Government pledged in writing that in the event Britain was occupied by the Germans the British Navy would be neither surrendered nor scuttled but would be sent to protect other parts of the British Empire. This agreement contributed towards the conduct of the war against nazi Germany, but its undertone was that the US imperialists were out to make use of Britain's difficulties in 1940 to obtain concessions, which would in the end weaken her position in the Western Hemisphere.

The transfer of the American destroyers to Britain marked a further departure by the USA from its policy of neutrality and another step towards US involvement in the war on Britain's side. Woodward writes that the transfer of the destroyers was an act of war.* That was exactly what Churchill was after, but it was still not a direct military collision between the USA and Germany, which he wanted and which Hitler was making every effort to postpone until he could strike at the USA under more favourable conditions.

Talks between the General Staffs of the USA and Britain began in Washington in January 1941 and two months later (on March 27, 1941) they led to an agreement envisaging "full-fledged war co-operation when and if Axis aggression forced the United States into war".**

At the close of 1940 the question of funds to pay for the armaments purchased by Britain in the USA acquired special importance in Anglo-US relations. When the 1940 US presidential elections ended Roosevelt announced that Britain and Canada would be allowed to purchase half of the American war output. This satisfied the British Govern-

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

** S. E. Morison, *The Battle of the Atlantic, September 1939-May 1943*, Boston, 1947, p. 46.

ment but, at the same time, it began to press for a change in the existing system of payment for US supplies.

The cash and carry principle did not suit Britain because to pay for American supplies she had to realise her foreign investments and thus damage her post-war economic position. In London the utmost effort was made to safeguard every possible foreign investment. On December 8, 1940 Churchill wrote to Roosevelt: "The moment approaches when we shall no longer be able to pay cash for shipping and other supplies. . . . I believe you will agree that it would be wrong in principle . . . after the victory was won with our blood . . . and the time gained for the United States to be fully armed . . . we should stand stripped to the bone."*

In reply to those in the USA who wanted to make Britain use all her foreign investments to pay for American supplies, some people in Britain said fairly loudly if it would not be better to make peace with Germany before the Americans took away their "last shirt". This forced the US Government attentively to study Churchill's appeal of December 8. F. Davis and E. K. Lindley write that in Britain feeling in favour of peace might easily have been promoted "if the price of American help were to be the gradual transfer of the British financial empire overseas into American hands. In the vital interest of the security of the United States, the President could not risk a policy which might sap the British will to resist and so open the way for negotiated peace."**

The Lend Lease Act, which enabled Britain to receive American supplies without having to pay cash for them was passed in the USA on March 11, 1941. Supplies under Lend Lease were paid by the US Government from the State Budget. The architects of Lend Lease believed this act would subsequently enable the USA to secure economic and political concessions from Britain. In other words, in rendering Britain aid, the US ruling circles had the twofold objective of weakening Germany as a dangerous rival and of weakening and subordinating their Ally, Britain. This was where the sharp contradictions between Britain and the USA manifested themselves. In a speech at the American Bankers Association at the close of December 1940, Virgil Jordan,

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 500-01.

** F. Davis and E. K. Lindley, *How War Came*, New York, 1942, pp. 113-14.

President of the National Industrial Conference Board, said that as a result of the war Britain "will be so impoverished economically and crippled in prestige that it is improbable she will be able to resume or maintain the dominant position in world affairs which she has occupied so long. At best, England will become a junior partner in a new Anglo-Saxon imperialism, in which the economic resources and the military and naval strength of the United States will be the centre of gravity ... in modern terms of economic power as well as political prestige the sceptre passes to the United States."*

This was understood in Britain. In October 1940 the magazine *Economist* wrote of the prospects of Anglo-US co-operation in the following terms: "The question of leadership need hardly arise. If any permanently closer association of the two nations is achieved, an island people of fifty millions cannot expect to be the senior partner. The centre of gravity and the ultimate decision must increasingly lie with America. We cannot resent this historical development."**

Nonetheless, this was resented by the British ruling circles. They pressed for equality in their relations with the USA and clung tenaciously to their imperialist interests. At the moment, however, they refrained from intensifying the struggle in this sphere; first and foremost, they and the Americans had to concentrate on the struggle against the common adversary, which they did. Anglo-US co-operation continued to broaden out after the adoption of the Lend Lease Act.

American officers arrived in Britain in March 1941 to prepare bases for US troops. In April 1941 Roosevelt announced that the Western Hemisphere's "defence zone" was being extended to 25° West longitude. Beginning on April 24, US naval and air units escorted merchant ships side by side with British naval units. That gave the convoys more security for it became increasingly more difficult for German U-boats and raiders to sink ships carrying supplies to Britain. The participation of US Armed Forces in these convoys meant that a collision with German naval units became

* *The Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, New York, December 21, 1940, p. 3613.

** *The Economist*, Oct. 19, 1940.

very probable if such units were encountered in the area patrolled by the Americans. Indeed, the US destroyer *Niblack* clashed with a German U-boat off Iceland on April 10, 1941.

In May 1941 the US Government announced that US Armed Forces were helping to ensure Britain with supplies by sea and that the USA would employ every means at its disposal to continue ensuring the delivery of these supplies to Britain. The President proclaimed a state of emergency. The United States was drawing closer to war. Yet the decision to go to war was taken by America not in connection with the situation in Europe but in connection with the situation which took shape in the Far East at the close of 1941.

Emergency Measures by the Churchill Government. Britain Gears Her Economy to War-Time Requirements

After the German offensive in Europe was launched and it became obvious that France would fall, the British Government launched a series of emergency measures designed to repulse a German invasion of the British Isles. The Home Guard began to be formed as early as May 14. It consisted of people between the ages of 17 and 65 working in the day-time and undergoing military training in the evenings. The British people became increasingly more aware of the mortal danger threatening their country. They considered the struggle against nazism as a just one and willingly joined the Home Guard, whose strength reached 1,600,000 in June 1941.*

On May 22 Parliament passed the Emergency Powers Act, which gave the Government the authority to mobilise any person for any military or civilian assignment required by the country's interests and place under supervision any property and requisition any industrial or transport enterprise and direct its activities.**

These steps were justified in view of the life and death struggle which Britain now had to wage. Yet the Govern-

* *Statistical Digest of the War*, p. 13.

** G. D. H. Cole, *Op. cit.*, p. 384.

ment and the bourgeoisie took advantage of the situation to consolidate and broaden their dictatorship over the working class, whom their experience and the consequences of the First World War made them fear mortally. In accordance with the Emergency Powers Act, the Government issued a series of orders, among which Order 18B permitted the authorities to take any person into custody without making a charge or without trial, and Order 2D gave the authorities the power to suppress any newspaper at their own discretion. Order 1305 issued by the Labour Minister Ernest Bevin qualified participation in a strike as a crime punishable by a fine or by imprisonment for a term of up to six months. These measures, which were supplemented and enlarged in the course of the war, concentrated unlimited power in the hands of the War Cabinet and turned its leader, Churchill, as his American biographer Virginia Cowles notes, into a "virtual dictator".*

Energetically and, this time, in earnest, for now it had become a matter of life and death, the Churchill Government began to switch Britain's economy to a war-time footing, and build up powerful Armed Forces, with emphasis on restoring and enlarging the land army.

Results soon became evident. War industry output grew rapidly. The strength of the British Armed Forces reached 3,290,000 in 1941.** These results would have been even more striking if the country's mobilisation for the conduct of the war had not been obstructed by the Munichites, who were well-entrenched in the economy, and also by the mercenary interests of the monopolies, which regarded the war primarily as a means of obtaining bigger profits by intensifying the exploitation of the working class.

The Home Situation and the Class Struggle

Churchill told the nation that for the immediate future he had nothing to offer but "blood, toil, tears and sweat". These words were borrowed from Garibaldi's speech to his comrades after the fall of Rome in 1849. Indeed, the war demanded sacrifice, but this sacrifice had to be borne by the

* Virginia Cowles, *Winston Churchill*, London, 1953, p. 318.

** *Annual Abstract of Statistics*, No. 84, p. 101.

working people because the bourgeoisie used its privileged status in the capitalist state to reduce its burden and to grow rich on the war. The toil and sweat that Churchill demanded of the working people multiplied the revenues of the British monopolies. Working conditions deteriorated. Legislation covering these conditions was annulled for the period of the war. In 1941 real wages were 11 per cent below the pre-war level.

Monopoly profits, official statistics reveal, rose from £1,368 million in 1938 to £2,190 million in 1941.* These are clearly understated figures; they do not mirror a considerable portion of the profits because under war-time conditions the bourgeoisie took pains to conceal and mask its revenues. A law imposing a 100 per cent tax on war super-profits was passed by the Churchill Government. However, this law only camouflaged the war profits of the bourgeoisie. Firstly, it covered only that part of the profit which exceeded the average profits in 1936-38, i.e., when as a result of Britain's rearmament on the eve of the Second World War the profits of the capitalists soared. Secondly, the wording of the law enabled the bourgeoisie to conceal any profits exceeding the 1936-38 level. These profits were used for the purchase of new enterprises, the enlargement of old enterprises or the formation of reserve funds, thereby creating secret profit reserves which the working people knew nothing about. The purpose of all this was to remove, as far as possible, all causes that might aggravate the class struggle, which the bourgeoisie feared very much under war-time conditions. This showed the British bourgeoisie's class sagacity which sprang from long experience.

However, even the experienced British bourgeoisie could not accomplish the impossible, namely establish complete class peace for the duration of the war. During the Second World War, in contrast to the period 1914-18, the class struggle in Britain immediately acquired, on the whole, a political nature. In the initial stage of the war the British working people, mainly the working class, vigorously demanded that the war be turned into a just, anti-fascist struggle and called for clearing the Government's foreign and war policy of reactionary trends, most convincingly demonstrated by the Chamberlain Government's desire to terminate

* Ibid., p. 229.

the war against Germany, make a deal with her and jointly attack the Soviet Union.

A determined drive was started with the object of removing the Munichites from the Government. This, progressive and realistically-minded people believed, was vital if the war against nazism was to be conducted actively. The British Communists and their newspaper the *Daily Worker* were in the forefront of those who took action under the slogan "The Munichites Must Go". This slogan was energetically supported by many trade unions, the British co-operative movement and the finest section of the British intelligentsia.

A People's Convention was held in London on January 12, 1941, the 2,234 delegates representing 239 industrial enterprises, many trade unions, trade union councils, and co-operative, political, youth and other organisations. It charged the ruling classes of Britain with plunging the country into war, with conducting the war in pursuance of their reactionary class interests and with shifting the burden of war and the sacrifices it entailed onto the shoulders of the working people. It declared that these ruling classes were "promoting hostility to the Soviet Union and generally pursuing policies which are leading the people to catastrophe".*

The programme adopted by the Convention stated that its participants were determined to set up a people's government that really represented the working class and was capable of winning the trust of working people throughout the world. The Convention countered the attempts of the reactionaries to direct the war against the Soviet Union with a demand for friendship with the USSR. It called upon the working people of Britain to unite in the struggle for these aims and compel the ruling classes to accept them.**

The overwhelming majority of the delegates to the Convention were not Communists, although the Communist Party of Great Britain played a prominent part in convening it. The popular nature of the Convention alarmed the Government, which saw that the people were entirely dissatisfied with its war, foreign and home policies and were determined to secure a change.

The Communist Party of Great Britain consistently de-

* *Labour Monthly*, February 1941, p. 93.

** *Ibid.*, p. 94.

manded a change in the Government's policy and the removal of the men of Munich. This enhanced its prestige in the nation. On the day after the Convention opened the newspaper *Daily Mirror* wrote that the people "expected the Labour Ministers in the Government to be their champions. They are disappointed in them. Labour Ministers behave like pale imitations of Tory Ministers. So the people ... are beginning to turn to the Communist Party."*

The Government was aware that the people were rapidly veering to the Left, and it intensified its persecution of progressive elements, the Communist Party in particular. On January 21, 1941, Labour Home Secretary Herbert Morrison ordered the closure of the communist newspaper the *Daily Worker*. This made British people deeply indignant. Protests against this action came from many trade unions, co-operative societies and intellectuals. Bernard Shaw declared that the *Daily Worker* was suppressed because it advocated friendship with the USSR and realised that a war between Britain and the USSR "would make every intelligent Briton a defeatist".**

The economic struggle of the British working people did not play such a substantial role in 1939-41 as in 1914-18, but it was pronounced particularly during the initial period of the war. Strikes flared up from time to time, but most of them were of short duration. The workers used this means to safeguard their living standard. The strike movement would have been much larger if the workers had not been aware that strikes crippled the war effort against nazism. The more the war acquired the nature of a liberative, anti-fascist struggle the more restraint and patience were displayed by the British working class.

British Attempts to Create an Allied Front in the Balkans

After Germany abandoned her intention of invading the British Isles, hostilities moved to the Mediterranean and North Africa. Italian troops seized British Somaliland and invaded Kenya, Sudan and Egypt. This Italian activity alarmed London. Britain's efforts to safeguard her colonial

* *Daily Mirror*, January 13, 1941.

** W. Rust, *The Story of the "Daily Worker"*, London, 1949, p. 87.

possessions during the Second World War were as energetic as in 1914-18. She sent military reinforcements to the Middle East at great risk to the security of the British Isles. At the close of the summer of 1940, when the threat of a German invasion hung over Britain, the Government sent to Egypt half of the available tanks (of which there were only 500).^{*} With these tanks British troops drove the Italians out of Egypt and the whole of Cyrenaica. Towards the spring of 1941 the Italians were ousted from British Somaliland, Kenya, Sudan and their own colonies—Somali, Eritrea and Abyssinia.

The military successes in North Africa enabled Britain to activate her foreign policy in the Balkans. Another factor facilitating this was that at the close of 1940 and beginning of 1941 German expansion was concentrated in Southeast Europe where the nazis were preparing a springboard against the Soviet Union from the right flank, enslaving the Balkan peninsula and hoping to carve a road to the British and French possessions in the Middle East.

The abandonment by Britain and France of their Allies to the tender mercies of Germany, their reluctance or inability to defend Poland, Denmark, Norway, Belgium and the Netherlands and, lastly, the fall of France herself caused Britain's international prestige to fall catastrophically. The Balkan countries had learned the worth of British "guarantees" and in face of the German threat they took the road of surrender without even trying to obtain British assistance. This smoothed the way to German aggression in the Balkans.

German diplomacy secured the alignment of Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria with the Axis bloc. In October 1940 German troops occupied Rumania. Mussolini felt he had to get a share of the Balkan pie and on October 28 attacked Greece. Unexpectedly for the invaders the Greek Army put up a strong resistance and the Italians had to go over to the defensive. Britain had given Greece guarantees in 1939 and now she invoked them to land troops on the Greek islands of Crete and Lemnos.

Greek resistance to the Italian invasion meant that if Germany came to her ally's assistance Greece would have to fight against Germany as well. The British Government could not make up its mind as to what stand to adopt with

^{*} Michael Foot, *Op. cit.*, p. 144.

regard to the fighting in Greece. True, on September 5, 1940 Lord Halifax told the House of Lords that Britain would honour her commitments to Greece, but this statement was made before the need to fulfil the commitments arose.* Finally, in February 1941, it was decided to send Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, who had taken the place of Halifax, and Chief of the Imperial General Staff General John Dill to the Middle East to study the situation on the spot and prepare recommendations for the War Cabinet.

In the Balkans the British emissaries tried to form a bloc consisting of Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia under Britain's leadership. After Italy entered the war, Turkey renounced her 1939 mutual assistance pact with Britain and France and proclaimed herself a non-belligerent. Following the fall of France she adopted a wait and see attitude and on the pretext that she was unprepared for war denied Britain even political assistance. The British had to rest content with Turkish neutrality. Besides, they were not at all sure that Turkey's entry into the war against Germany would not speed up the German break-through to the Middle East. In Yugoslavia a sharp struggle was being waged between advocates of a German orientation and those urging resistance to the German invasion of the Balkans. Britain counted on the support of the latter forces to bring Yugoslavia over to her side. These circumstances brought the British Government round to the idea of forming a bloc of four countries. On March 27, 1941 Churchill wrote to the Turkish President that "now is the time to make a common front" for "preventing the German invasion of the Balkan peninsula". The proposed bloc, Churchill explained to Eden, would operate as follows: "Together Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, and ourselves have seventy divisions mobilised in this theatre. The Germans have not yet got more than thirty. Therefore, the seventy could say to the thirty, 'If you attack any of us you will be at war with all.'""* This was an unrealistic project, and it was soon abandoned.

Early in March the British Government decided to send troops to Greece in order to stimulate the formation of a four-power bloc. Moreover, the promise given to Greece had to be made good. Britain could not afford a repetition of

* *Parliamentary Debates. House of Lords*, Vol. 117, col. 368-69.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 149.

the "Polish variant"; she feverishly looked for new allies and was compelled to demonstrate that she could keep her word. Woodward observes that the risk of sending troops "had to be taken for moral reasons—our guarantee to Greece . . . the discredit which would come to us if once again we failed to honour a guarantee with direct help".*

The first contingents of British troops landed in Greece on March 7. They totalled 57,000 men, and comprised a British tank brigade, two Australian divisions, one New Zealand division and a Polish brigade. On April 6 Germany attacked Yugoslavia and Greece, and the British troops were evacuated at the close of the same month. Though the troops, now numbering 43,000 effectives, were evacuated, all the heavy armaments and equipment were left behind as at Dunkirk.**

A period of trial now awaited Britain. The German Air Force pounded the British troops out of Crete. In North Africa German and Italian troops under General Erwin Rommel took the offensive. At the end of March a coup brought the pro-German Government of Rashid Ali al-Qilani to power in Iraq. At the same time, the Germans energetically penetrated Syria, which was under the suzerainty of the Vichy Government. Britain faced serious danger in the Middle East.

While proposing the formation of an Allied front in the Balkans Churchill could not count on stopping the Germans there. He hoped such a front would turn the German offensive from the Middle East toward the Soviet Union. On March 28, 1941 he wrote to Eden: "Is it not possible that if a united front were formed in the Balkan peninsula Germany might think it better business to take it out of Russia?"*** Germany turned against the USSR on her own initiative after conquering the Balkans. That, too, saved the British positions in the Middle East.

Economic Warfare at a New Stage

A new stage of the economic war, which had started twelve months previously, set in in the spring of 1940. The months preceding the fall of France had shown that the

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 132.

** J. F. C. Fuller, *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

*** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 151.

British Government had not been justified in pinning its hopes on an economic war, for it had not prevented Germany from crushing the Allies. Nonetheless, in the spring of 1940, the economic blockade continued to occupy an important place in Britain's strategy.

A Committee set up on May 19 by the Chiefs of Staff to work out strategy in the event France fell raised before the Ministry of Economic Warfare the question whether there was "any strategic advantage in continuing economic warfare" if France were conquered and Italy entered the war. The Ministry replied in the affirmative but made a number of reservations.* Soon afterwards Britain's military and civilian leadership adopted a plan for the further conduct of the war in which economic pressure remained one of the principal means by which it was hoped to defeat Germany. The accompanying report from the Chiefs of Staff stated that "upon the economic factor depends our only hope of bringing about the downfall of Germany".**

A curious situation arose. The Ministry of Economic Warfare considered that the economic war could only be successful if it were accompanied by military action, while the military leaders pinned all their hopes on an economic blockade. This sprang not only from the inability of the British military leaders to foresee the further course of the war but also from the fact that in the second half of 1940 Britain had no other effective means of fighting the war. The role which British strategists accorded to economic warfare in the period from June 1940 to June 1941 in a way mirrored Britain's extreme military weakness. Hence "some inclination to look afresh for miracles in the economic field of warfare"***

The Ministry of Economic Warfare had to determine how far Germany's economic potential had changed following the battles in the West and what concrete effect economic warfare would have on her. The Ministry's deductions did not say that Germany was succumbing to the blows of the blockade, but maintained that as early as the spring of 1941 she would have the same difficulties as, it was believed, she had experienced in the spring of 1940. These assessments

* W. N. Medlicott, *Op. cit.*, p. 60.

** *Ibid.*, p. 421.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 415.

suffered from a surfeit of optimism. W. K. Hancock and M. M. Gowing, authors of one of the volumes of the official British history of the war, note that "Germany's economy was immeasurably strengthened by her conquests and the Ministry of Economic Warfare's forecasts were sheer illusion. But ... one of two illusions may possibly have done less harm than an overdose of the harsh truth would have done."* Medlicott writes that the chief value of that Ministry's forecasts was that they were "a stimulus to the morale of the fighting Services".**

The new situation in Europe in mid-1940 required a change of the methods of enforcing an economic blockade. Even before the fall of France, the sea blockade of Germany and the part of Europe occupied by her was never airtight, but after the Germans seized the entire northern and western coast of Europe and Italy entered the war this became a hopeless task. As a result, the Ministry of Economic Warfare had to switch from "control on the seas to control on the quays", i.e., from the naval blockade—the actual interception of blockade runners by ships of the Royal Navy—to export control in all overseas territories from which contraband supplies could reach Europe.*** Britain took steps to control the sources of export to countries dominated by Germany and the world maritime transport. Three methods were used to achieve this purpose: special passes for freight and ships, special ships' passports, and export quotas for neutral countries. In addition, the state commercial corporation which purchased in neutral countries commodities that might be needed by Germany stepped up its activities. This body of measures was launched in the winter of 1940/41, and was implemented without essential changes throughout the war.

This pressure, whose aim was to damage Germany's economy, had to be maintained consistently. However, it evoked widespread dissatisfaction in a number of neutral countries. Fearing that a tight blockade would push these countries into the enemy's camp, the British Foreign Office demanded exemption for them and this undermined the

* W. K. Hancock and M. M. Gowing, *British War Economy*, London, 1949, p. 100.

** W. N. Medlicott, *Op. cit.*, p. 420.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 417.

blockade as a whole. Foreign policy aims thus clashed with the objectives of the economic war.

On the whole, as in the period of the phoney war, this economic warfare was unsuccessful in the period from the fall of France to Germany's attack on the USSR. "During the second phase, from July 1940 to June 1941," Medlicott writes, "there was still, in spite of disappointments, a tendency to exaggerate the possibilities of the economic blockade."*

The Soviet Union's entry into the war marked a turning point in the economic blockade, for it gave Britain, especially after the USA became involved in hostilities, the possibility of planning and enforcing an economic blockade on a global scale. The "economic campaign, although it was being waged with increasing efficiency", Medlicott says, "nevertheless ceased to be regarded as one of the main instruments of victory". After the USSR and the USA entered the war, he points out, "the high strategy of the Allies turned more and more to the preparation and launching of great military offensives".**

British Far Eastern Policy

The defeat suffered by the Allies in Europe opened the door wide to Japanese aggression in the Far East. Here were vast colonial possessions of Germany's victims—the Netherlands (Indonesia) and France (Indochina)—and of Britain (Malaya, Burma, India and so on), whose position was desperate. Because of these colonies' geographical situation the Germans could not even try to lay their hands on them. Japan, however, was in a position to make such an attempt. In the obtaining situation Britain could not seriously prevent Japan from completing her conquest of China. That induced the Japanese to speed up their expansion in the summer of 1940. They felt, the chief of the Japanese military intelligence told the British Military Attaché in Tokyo, that their descendants would damn them if they failed to take the opportunity that was falling into their hands.

Real resistance could be offered to Japanese aggression by China and the USA. The Chinese people were fighting

* Ibid., p. 43.

** Ibid.

for independence against enslavement by Japan. The USA planned to further its expansion in the territories Japan was interested in, chiefly China. Even before France fell Britain did not have the necessary forces in the Far East to wage an independent struggle against Japanese claims, and she was much less in a position to wage such a struggle single-handed after her troops had been driven out of the European continent, and the British Isles and the British Middle Eastern possessions were threatened by Germany and Italy. Developments showed that in the Far East only China and the USA could be Britain's allies.

Britain was one of the imperialist exploiters of China and a rabid enemy of the Chinese revolution. She "protected" China against Japan only so that the Japanese would not oust British business, which was deriving enormous profits. During the 1930s and in the course of the phoney war, this "protection" was implemented through an arrangement with Japan at the expense of the Chinese people.

The United States was penetrating China and the Far East generally so energetically that its clash with Japan had long ago brought these two countries to the brink of war. In the Far East the USA was, naturally, pursuing its own interests, and at the close of May 1940 it was naive on the part of the British War Cabinet to believe that in the Far East British interests would be protected by the United States.*

In the summer of 1940 Japan demanded that Britain close the frontier between Hongkong and China and halt traffic along the Burma Road to China. Essentially, this was a demand to participate in the blockade of China and thereby help Japan crush Chinese resistance. On June 27 the British made it plain to Washington that if the USA did not declare its determination to oppose any change of the status quo in the Far East and the Pacific, major concessions would have to be made to Japan. In effect, this was a British demand for an American ultimatum to Japan, the consequences of which could only be war. This suited Churchill because if Britain and the USA became allies in the Far East they would, in view of the nature of the relations between Japan, Germany and Italy, inevitably be allies in Europe. Churchill was prepared to risk war in the Far East

* J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. 328.

if it would compel the USA to enter the war in Europe. This was appreciated in Washington and the reply was that the USA could not risk war with Japan.* At the time the British hardly expected any other reply. All they needed was justification for a policy of appeasing Japan, which they intended to continue. In regard to Germany Churchill pursued a policy of armed struggle, but in regard to Japan he was prepared to follow the line of appeasement initiated by his predecessor Chamberlain. The Chiefs of Staff, J. R. M. Butler writes, felt "we should rather seek a general settlement with Japan".**

In accordance with this line the British Government closed the Burma Road on July 18, 1940. Twelve days before that happened the British Ambassador in Japan Sir Robert Craigie was instructed to explain to the Japanese "that we could not close the Burma Road to legitimate trade without departing from neutrality [in the war between Japan and China.—*U. T.*] and discriminating against China"*** Thus appeasement was implemented at China's expense. But that was not all. As Lord Lothian told Sumner Welles, the British Government was prepared to buy off Japan by letting her have Indochina.^{*)} However, the Japanese felt they could grab more than the British were prepared to give them.

Early in September 1940 Japan entered into a compact with the Vichy Government on the occupation of Indochina by Japanese forces. The signing of the Tripartite Pact between Japan, Germany and Italy was announced on September 27. The signatories of this pact agreed on the creation of a "new order" in Europe and of a "Greater East-Asia Co-prosperity Sphere", and pledged each other political, economic and military assistance in the event of hostilities, with any power at present not involved in the European and the Sino-Japanese wars. This was the reply of the fascist powers to the gradually shaping Anglo-US bloc. Its consequences were that Britain saw Japan's unwillingness to come to terms and gave up her efforts to appease the Japanese, and it drew Britain and the USA closer together on issues

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 166.

** J. R. M. Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. 329.

*** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 166.

*) *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Vol. IV, 1940, p. 375.

of Far Eastern policy. Churchill told Parliament that "the Japanese Government have entered into a Three-Power Pact ... which binds Japan to attack the United States should the United States intervene in the war now proceeding between Great Britain and the two European dictators".* In the given case, however, something else was much more important to him, namely, that if war broke out between Japan and the USA Germany would have to declare war on America. Thus, US involvement in the war in the Far East automatically committed it to enter the war in Europe.

This explains why in October 1940 the British Government reopened the Burma Road and urged the USA to adopt a firmer stand towards Japan. The Anglo-US talks at the end of 1940 and beginning of 1941 were marked by British efforts to secure from the USA a declaration stating that any Japanese attack on British or Dutch possessions in the Far East would be tantamount to a declaration of war on the USA. This the USA declined to do. In April 1941 when Japanese pressure increased in the South Seas, particularly in Indonesia, Britain once again raised the question of such a declaration by the USA, Britain and the Netherlands. But, as Woodward notes, the "United States and the Netherlands governments still thought that a public declaration would be too provocative".**

In May 1941 the British Government was alarmed by a communication from Halifax in Washington, in which the Ambassador said the US Secretary of State Cordell Hull had informed him of the arrival in the USA of the Japanese emissary, Saburo Kurusu, to negotiate a settlement of the China problem on terms acceptable to both the USA and Japan. It would seem that this possibility of averting war in the Far East should have been received as good news by the British Government. It had, it will be recalled, spent the summer of 1940 trying to reach agreement with the Japanese. However, the reverse happened. The US-Japanese talks and, consequently, the possibility of averting war caused great dissatisfaction in London. On May 21 Halifax was instructed to "expose" Japan's designs in these negotiations and persuade the US Government to refrain from

* *Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons*, Vol. 365, col. 301.

** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 172.

reaching agreement with Japan. This high-handedness infuriated Hull, who declared that he was not going to be lectured by the British. But at the same time he said he did not expect the talks with the Japanese to be successful. This somewhat calmed the British and they renewed their efforts to persuade the USA to issue a declaration demanding that Japan leave the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) in peace.

Anglo-Soviet Relations After the Phoney War

The period from April 1940 to June 1941 witnessed a sharp struggle among the British ruling circles on the question of Anglo-Soviet relations. The appeals of the more sober-minded politicians who realised that better relations with the USSR would strengthen Britain's position were met with rabid hostility by the Munichites, whom blind hatred of the socialist state prevented from assessing the situation realistically. At the time the Soviet Union was a neutral country, whose relations with Germany were governed by a non-aggression treaty. This could not serve as an obstacle to normal relations with Britain. During the phoney war the Soviet Union repeatedly attempted to improve relations with Britain, but these efforts broke down in face of British hostility.

The situation somewhat changed in May 1940. Until then the Soviet proposals for a trade agreement found no understanding in the British Government, but, writes Llewellyn Woodward, by the middle of May in "view of the military situation it was most desirable to avoid protracted negotiations and delays for which the Soviet Government would hold us responsible".* The War Cabinet therefore decided, on May 20, to send Sir Stafford Cripps on a special "exploratory" mission to Moscow. This provided evidence of the British ruling circles' dual attitude to Anglo-Soviet relations. The Cripps mission to Moscow was designed to satisfy those who were beginning seriously to ponder over the importance of relations with the Soviet Union to Britain's future.

Cripps and those who sent him had far-reaching aims. He considered quite rightly that the British Government

* Ibid., p. 140.

"had mishandled the negotiations" with the USSR, but, on the other hand, much too optimistically felt he could get a trade and also a political agreement with the Soviet Government.* His self-delusion probably sprang from the fact that his explanation for the "mishandling of the negotiations" was that those who had conducted them had not displayed sufficient ingenuity and perseverance and had failed to take into consideration that influential forces were operating in London whose intrigues rendered the negotiations futile. These same forces continued to operate while Cripps himself conducted the negotiations, with the result that until the German attack on the Soviet Union he failed to sign a trade agreement despite the Soviet Government's efforts to normalise relations with Britain.

This happened because the British Government wanted not so much normal relations with the USSR as a deterioration of Soviet-German relations. Throughout the Anglo-Soviet negotiations in the second half of 1940 and the first half of 1941 the British side underscored the point that if the USSR wanted normal relations with Britain it would have to act against Germany in the growing world conflict. The ultimate British objective was to compel the USSR to renounce its neutrality, scrap its non-aggression treaty with Germany and enter the war against her. If one does not bear this objective in mind one will not understand the Soviet attitude towards Britain at the time.

Sir Stafford Cripps took with him to Moscow a personal message from Churchill to J. V. Stalin. This was a powerful means, for nothing of the kind had ever taken place before in Anglo-Soviet relations. The purpose of the message was to make it easier for Cripps to establish contact with Soviet leaders and explain to the latter that the proposals which Cripps would put forward came directly from the British leaders. "In the past—indeed in the recent past—our relations have, it must be acknowledged, been hampered by mutual suspicions," Churchill wrote and, referring to the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Treaty, added: "But since then a new factor has arisen which I venture to think makes it desirable that both our countries should re-establish our previous contact. . . . Germany's present bid for the hegemony of Europe threatens the interests" of Britain and the

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 140.

USSR.* This message was written on June 25, three days after France signed the act of surrender, and consequently it was clear what "new factor" Churchill had in mind. The French surrender had changed the power balance in Europe to Britain's detriment, and it was solely Churchill's realisation that Britain could not survive without Soviet support that forced him to send that message.

British Foreign Office documents of the period convincingly show that in Anglo-Soviet relations the principal objective of British policy of that period was to bring the USSR into the war against Germany. The British Government pursued this objective although it knew quite well that the Soviet Union was inadequately prepared for such a war because in the summer of 1940 Germany, through British connivance, had seized Western Europe and had an incomparably larger military-strategic potential than a year earlier, when the Soviet Union had been willing jointly with Britain and France to throw its might against nazi aggression. This the Chamberlain Government had rejected. "Sir Stafford Cripps' instructions," Medlicott writes, "show that there was no serious belief in the Foreign Office that the Soviet Government could be induced to reverse its present position and side with the Allies against Germany." It was assumed that the Soviet Government's "aims were first to avoid hostilities with any Great Power... In the military sphere Russia was not sufficiently well prepared to undertake, or even to risk, actual hostilities."**

On July 1 Cripps met with Soviet leaders for nearly three hours, discussing the situation in Europe and the political and economic relations between Britain and the Soviet Union. Cripps gave the Soviet leaders to understand that Britain desired to restore the "old equilibrium" in Europe. Inasmuch as in the British view this implied re-establishing British domination in Europe it did not get a positive response from the Soviet side.

From the British version of this talk we learn that Cripps raised the question of Anglo-Soviet trade essentially with the purpose of ascertaining the state of trade between the USSR and Germany. He "asked whether Anglo-Soviet relations were sufficiently good and friendly to ensure that

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 119-20.

** W. N. Medlicott, *Op. cit.*, p. 635.

there was no danger that any goods, supplied by Britain for Russia's internal economy, would pass to the enemy". The reply received by him "seemed not unfavourable to business with England". Moreover, the nature of Soviet-German economic relations was explained to the British Ambassador. He was told that the Soviet Union was selling Germany surplus products and not goods which the USSR was itself compelled to import. In return the USSR was receiving machinery and some artillery, aircraft and lorries; the USSR had received from Germany an unfinished cruiser. To enable Germany to fulfil these deliveries the Soviet Union was letting her have part of its imported non-ferrous metals. Cripps agreed that this was not an "overriding difficulty" in the way of Anglo-Soviet trade negotiations.*

That acknowledgement was significant, its implication being that the British Ambassador essentially recognised the justness of the Soviet position in regard to economic relations with Germany. "The talk," Medlicott points out, "though frank, had been friendly enough."** This is an admission that the Soviet Government was prepared to give its attention to any step taken by the British Government which might be construed as a desire for normal relations with the USSR.

However, it is noteworthy that Churchill thought it better to conceal the truth about the Soviet Government's reaction to his overture. He confined himself to publishing in his memoirs the message of June 25, adding that "Sir Stafford Cripps reached Moscow safely, and even had an interview of a formal and frigid character with Stalin".*** This was said deliberately, for if Churchill had told the truth about Cripps' meeting with Soviet leaders it would have uncovered one of the biggest lies about Soviet foreign policy during the first phase of the world war. Beginning with Churchill the whole of British bourgeois official and unofficial historiography doggedly, in spite of the truth, maintains that during the first phase of the Second World War the Soviet Union was an "ally" of Germany,^{*)} that a military alliance had already existed between them,^{**) that the}

* W. N. Medlicott, Op. cit., p. 639.

** Ibid., p. 640.

*** Winston S. Churchill, Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 120.

*) *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, dust cover.

**) James Leasor, *Rudolf Hess. The Uninvited Envoy*, London, 1962, p. 58.

USSR actively aided "by supplies and facilities the development of Hitler's power",* and so on and so forth. Here reference is usually made firstly to the political and, secondly, to the economic co-operation between the USSR and Germany. Both references are clearly untenable.

The political relations between the USSR and Germany were governed by the fact that the USSR had proclaimed and observed neutrality in the war and by the Soviet-German Treaty of Non-Aggression of August 23, 1939. Even bourgeois authors, who clearly cannot be suspected of sympathy with the Soviet Union, admit that the USSR was strictly neutral in 1939-41. One of them, George Ginsburg of the University of California writes that following the outbreak of the Second World War and for nearly two years thereafter the USSR was "in the position of an official neutral, in which status it was confirmed by the international community". It, he notes, maintained that status "from the time of the German attack on Poland which marked the outbreak of the Second World War to the date of the German attack on the Soviet Union".** As regards the non-aggression treaty with Germany, the USSR had every intention of strictly abiding by it, although there was no guarantee that Germany would not scrap it whenever she felt it was to her advantage to do so. This was the main reason why, foreseeing a possible German attack, the USSR took a series of steps in Eastern Europe to strengthen its strategic position with a view to safeguarding its security and furthering the general struggle of the peoples against nazism.

Ill-wishers fabricate grounds for accusing the Soviet Union of political co-operation with Germany in 1939-41, alleging that the non-aggression treaty was an alliance, in spite of the fact that the text of the treaty was published in Britain, the USA and many other countries. The methods employed by them are primitive, to say the least: they begin by mentioning the non-aggression treaty and then go on to speak of an alliance between Germany and the USSR with total disregard of the colossal difference between the two concepts.

Other fabrications are concocted. One of them concerns

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 496.

** George Ginsburg, "The Soviet Union as a Neutral, 1939-1941", *Soviet Studies*, Oxford, Vol. X, July 1958, No. 1, pp. 12-13.

the talks in Berlin on November 12 and 13, 1940 between the German leaders and the Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. At these talks the Germans sought Soviet co-operation in aggression, offering in return a division of spheres of influence with the countries south of the Caspian as the Soviet Union's share. Ideological and political enemies of the USSR allege that the Soviet Union accepted the bargain. In 1948, when the US State Department published tendentiously selected materials from the nazi archives and published them in a volume titled *Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941*, the American newspaper *New York Herald Tribune* headlined its news story: *US Reveals Documents of a Stalin-Hitler Pact to Divide Up the World*.^{*} The November talks and this book of documents are discussed from the same angle in the British bourgeois press and historiography. And this in spite of the fact that even the above-mentioned volume contains evidence that a pact of this nature was never concluded, neither in Berlin nor anywhere else. The testimony of documents^{**} is that when the nazi leaders offered the Soviet Union Iran, Afghanistan and even India, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs turned the talk to German policy in the Balkans, making it clear that the USSR was opposed to nazi expansion in that area. A book about the British intelligence centre in New York during the Second World War quotes an interesting statement by the German Consul-General in San Francisco Fritz Weidemann, who in November 1940 was in contact with William Wiseman, a British Government representative, with whom he had talks on a possible peace between Germany and Britain. At these talks, the book says, Weidemann told Wiseman that "the Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov's recent visit to Berlin when he met Hitler had been a failure. In Weidemann's opinion, Molotov had been given instructions by Stalin to discuss everything and agree to nothing."^{***} The American John L. Snell writes that in crucial conferences with Molotov Hitler "was unable to buy him off".^{*)} Comparable assessments were

^{*} D. F. Fleming, Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 106.

^{**} *Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941. Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office*, Washington, 1948.

^{***} H. Montgomery Hyde, *Room 3603. The Story of the British Intelligence Centre in New York During World War II*, New York, 1963, pp. 77-78.

^{*)} John L. Snell, Op. cit., p. 62.

given by many other well-known bourgeois historians and it is significant that their conclusions are based on the aforementioned collection of documents from the German Foreign Ministry published by the US State Department. The Soviet Union's rejection of the deal proposed by the nazis greatly aggravated Soviet-German relations and unquestionably accelerated the German invasion of the Soviet Union. This is admitted even by Hitler.*

On this point Medlicott says: "Sir Stafford Cripps reported ... the Molotov visit to Berlin did not appear to have produced any strengthening of Soviet-German political ties."** George F. Kennan, the American diplomat and historian, states the following about the results of that visit: "These questions led Ribbentrop to probe the possibility of bringing Russia, too, into the Three-Power Pact. The idea was not to induce her to fight on Germany's side, but to bind her not to go over to the other one. ... What was at stake could not have been more serious. This was, in fact, the real turning point of World War II." The Soviet demand that Germany leave the Balkans in peace "conflicted flatly with Germany's military interests. And this stiff position was reaffirmed, two weeks later, on November 26, 1940, in a diplomatic note to the German Government. ... Less than a month after the receipt of this note ... Hitler issued orders for the preparation of the so-called Operation Barbarossa, designed—as was stated in the first sentence of the order—to crush Soviet Russia in a quick campaign."*** Incidentally, Kennan arrived at this conclusion after analysing the book *Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941*. Thus, indisputable facts make it plain that in Soviet foreign policy there was not a hint of a striving to form an alliance with Germany or to appease her.†)

This is equally true of Soviet-German economic relations. The Soviet Union maintained trade relations with Germany for which, from the standpoint of international norms and customs as a neutral power, it had every legal and moral

* *The Testament of Adolf Hitler*, p. 65.

** W. N. Medlicott, *Op. cit.*, p. 647.

*** George F. Kennan, *Op. cit.*, pp. 342-44.

†) Sir Stafford Cripps, it is interesting to note, regarded the Soviet-Japanese Non-Aggression Treaty of April 13, 1941 "as anti-German since its only object can be to protect the Russian Eastern frontiers in the event of an attack on the West by Germany" (Eric Estorick, *Op. cit.*, p. 240).

right. The Soviet-German Trade Agreement of August 19, 1939, notes the American bourgeois author David J. Dallin, "by no means represented a revolutionary shift in Russo-German trade relations. On the contrary ... its provisions were modest."* On this score George Ginsburg declares that "the existence and successful execution of the commercial pact did not serve to modify Soviet neutrality. Neither in this agreement, nor in the various other economic arrangements which followed, did the USSR undertake to trade only with Germany, nor were its obligations under them such as effectively to bar commercial exchanges with the opposite camp."**

The Soviet Union sold Germany food and raw materials, which were of definite value to Germany. But these deliveries were made only because in exchange Germany supplied machines and armaments that were vital to the Soviet Union's defence and industry. "The treaty of August 19, 1939," writes Mueller-Hillebrand, "was used as the basis for signing a commercial treaty with the Soviet Union under which the USSR pledged to supply foodstuffs and raw materials in exchange for German machinery, naval equipment, armaments, and licenses for the production of militarily important products. ... Thus, the heavy cruiser *Lutzow*, which was at the stage of being fitted out, naval armaments, samples of heavy artillery and tanks, and also important licenses were turned over against reciprocal deliveries. Hitler ordered priority for these deliveries, but in view of armaments shortages some forms of armaments were not supplied with due energy."*** John L. Snell notes that in return for its deliveries "the USSR received coal, military weapons, and naval equipment from Germany".*) There can, consequently, be no question of Soviet appeasement of Germany in this case. The USSR exercised its indisputable right to trade with a foreign country, and used this commerce to strengthen its defence potential.

Many bourgeois historians forget that in the situation obtaining at the time a strengthening of the Soviet Union's

* David J. Dallin, *Soviet Russia's Foreign Policy, 1939-1942*, New Haven, 1944, pp. 57-58.

** George Ginsburg, *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

*** B. Mueller-Hillebrand, *Das Heer 1933-1945*, Band II, Frankfurt, 1956, pp. 52-53.

*) John L. Snell, *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

strategic positions conformed to British interests, because when subsequently the USSR became Britain's Ally it was able the better to fulfil its Allied commitments. Moreover, the build-up of Soviet defence capability diverted German forces to the East at a time when the Soviet Union was not involved in the war. Arthur Woodburn, a British MP, said in 1941: "Little did any of us realise that even by keeping out of the war Russia's great strength was a leaden ball on Hitler's foot which prevented him jumping on us."*

One cannot help getting the impression that some authors unfoundedly accuse the USSR of appeasing Germany not because they do not know the facts but because they seek to absolve Britain of responsibility for her appeasement of Hitler in the period from January 1933 to April 1940 and diminish the British people's dissatisfaction with the circles who pursued that policy. Hence the fabrication that some other country acted in the same manner.

References to Soviet deliveries to Germany with no mention of what the USSR received from Germany in return** are made to conceal the fact that the German military machine, which crashed down on many European countries, including Britain, during the Second World War, was built up by the nazis largely on British credits and British raw materials. In this connection it would be useful to recall a statement in the *Stock Exchange Gazette* on May 3, 1935: "Who finances Germany? Without this country as a clearing house for payments . . . Germany could not have pursued her plans. . . . The provisioning of the opposing force has been financed in London." Another British newspaper, *Financial News*, had this to say: "There can be no doubt that practically the whole of the free exchange available to Germany for the purchase of raw materials was supplied directly or indirectly by Great Britain. If the day of reckoning ever comes, the liberal attitude of the British Government in this matter may well be responsible for the lives of British soldiers and civilians. War materiel, which will eventually be used against this country could never have been produced but for the generosity with which Great Britain

* *Labour Monthly*, October 1941, p. 434.

** Even W. N. Medlicott, a serious historian judging by his book on the British economic blockade of nazi Germany, gives a detailed list of Soviet supplies to Germany but omits a comparable list of German deliveries to the USSR.

is giving her enemy free exchange for the purchase of raw materials.”* In 1938 Germany received from the British and French empires 26 per cent of her supplies of iron ore, 33 per cent of lead, 50 per cent of chromium, 62 per cent of copper, 61 per cent of manganese, 94 per cent of nickel, 60 per cent of zinc and 52 per cent of rubber. In the very last month before the war the London market worked overtime to supply Germany with strategic raw materials. The *British News Chronicle* reported on August 19, 1939: “Huge German orders for rubber and copper were executed in London yesterday regardless of cost. The buying of nearly 3,000 tons of copper sent the price rocketing. . . . Already Germany has bought over 10,000 tons this month in London alone. The London Rubber Exchange enjoyed almost a record turnover owing to a German order for 4,000 tons. . . . Germany is reported to have bought 17,000 tons already this month—two months’ normal consumption.”**

When Britain found herself at war with Germany, the British ruling circles went to all ends to remove all memory of their aid in arming Germany. One of the means by which this was done was to accuse the Soviet Union of what Britain herself was guilty. This distortion of facts was adopted by bourgeois historiography, which zealously continues to spread it to this day.

For some circles it is vital to portray the USSR as an “ally” of Hitler in order to justify British and French policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union during the phoney war and their intention to attack the Soviet Union in 1940 from the north and south.

No radical change for the better took place in Anglo-Soviet relations despite the fact that Soviet-German relations were not an insuperable obstacle to normalisation and the Soviet Government, as evidenced by Sir Stafford Cripps’ talk with J. V. Stalin, was prepared to facilitate such normalisation. The explanation for this is that either Churchill himself was not very consistent in steering towards better relations or his efforts in that direction were violently opposed by influential circles, which even in the latter half of 1940 were unable to overcome their hatred of the Soviet Union and correctly assess the significance to Britain of friendly

* *Labour Monthly*, October 1939, pp. 586-87.

** *Ibid.*

relations with the great socialist power. It is most likely that both these factors were at work.

Sir Stafford Cripps' efforts to hold trade talks in Moscow were, in effect, disrupted by the British Government's actions after the Baltic republics acceded to the USSR. The decision of the peoples of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, over whom hung the menace of nazi enslavement, to re-unite with the peoples of the Soviet Union infuriated the London politicians. This was not surprising, for as Churchill himself had noted, when these countries had bourgeois regimes they were "the outpost of Europe against Bolshevism".* Now all that was changed.

In retaliation for the Baltic republics' accession to the USSR, the British Government froze their assets in British banks and seized their merchant vessels that were in British ports at the time. The Soviet Government naturally could not regard these as friendly acts. *The Times* wrote that "the Soviet Government feel they have received a new cause of annoyance through the British blocking of the gold and credits of the Baltic states".** On top of a cause of annoyance this gave the Soviet Government proof of the insincerity of the British Government, which had officially proclaimed its desire to improve relations with the USSR.

Eric Estorick informs us that in mid-October 1940 Cripps wrote optimistically about the trade talks he had initiated with the People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade. However, Estorick says, "hardly had he presented his proposals to the Soviet Government than the British seized thirteen more ships which had previously formed part of the Baltic merchant fleet. It appeared to the Soviet Government that the voice of Cripps in Moscow was completely out of tune with that of his Government in London."*** The trade negotiations in Moscow between Cripps and the Soviet Government were conducted in secret to prevent them from being obstructed by those who did not desire an improvement of Anglo-Soviet relations. However, the British Government leaked reports about these talks over the radio. It seemed to Cripps, Estorick writes, "that every step he made in Moscow to create better relations with the Soviet Government was

* Winston S. Churchill, Op. cit., Vol. III, Boston, 1950, p. 615.

** *The Times*, Aug. 3, 1940, p. 4.

*** Eric Estorick, Op. cit., p. 236.

followed promptly by some stupid counteraction on the part of the Government at home.... He thought the British Government had played straight into the hands of the Germans.”*

Today we know that Cripps felt it was necessary (in this, too, he did not see eye to eye with the Foreign Office) to accept the Soviet demands regarding the transfer of the Baltic republics’ frozen gold and ships to the Soviet authorities.** The British Government, however, took no notice of its Ambassador’s opinion. W. P. and Zelda K. Coates are therefore quite right when they point out: “The only thing which prevented the conclusion of an Anglo-Soviet trading agreement and the establishment of friendly relations was the persistent unwillingness on the part of the British Government and influential circles in Britain to look realities in the face and to treat the USSR as a powerful neutral country. It was as if they said to themselves—‘The USSR? After all she is only a workers’ country—she can’t expect from us the respect, tolerance, understanding and friendship we have consistently shown towards Turkey, Spain, Japan and even Italy, before she entered the war.’”***

The British working people thought differently. Although the British people had won the Battle of Britain in the summer of 1940, they saw nazi aggression spreading in South-eastern Europe and North Africa and realised that co-operation with the Soviet Union was what could save them.

At trade union conferences more and more speakers demanded friendly relations with the USSR; they voiced the mood of the people. The general tone of the press in relation to the USSR began slowly to change. From time to time, alongside slander and angry attacks, British newspapers began to print sober contentions regarding Anglo-Soviet relations. Many publicists urged Anglo-Soviet rapprochement and the sending to Moscow of an influential representative for talks on this question.

The Right-wing leadership of the Labour Party and the trade unions continued to back the anti-Soviet policy of the most reactionary section of the ruling circles, but the mood of the rank and file was already powerfully influencing the

* Eric Estorick, *Op. cit.*, p. 239.

** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 143.

*** W. P. and Zelda K. Coates, *Op. cit.*, pp. 655-56.

middle echelon of the Labour leadership. This found expression in the increasing number of questions that Labour MPs began to ask in Parliament regarding the attainment of understanding with the USSR. Speaking in County Durham in mid-October 1940, Labour MP Emmanuel Shinwell declared: "I am convinced, because of what I know, that the Russian Government is anxious for a friendly understanding with this country. If we had as Foreign Minister, instead of Lord Halifax, someone who would set aside all the errors of the past and seek to reach a friendly understanding with Soviet Russia, there would be a response that would gratify those throughout the world who desire to preserve our freedom."* Even bourgeois circles began to think aloud of the desirability of an understanding with the Soviet Union. This was shown by the Liberal newspaper *News Chronicle*, which pointed out: "Unless, sooner or later, we work with Moscow there will never be any peace worth having." At the same time, regret was expressed over the failure of the Anglo-French-Soviet talks of 1939.**

The demand for Anglo-Soviet co-operation was most insistent at the People's Convention in London in January 1941. Trade union leader Harry Adams, who attended the Convention, writes that at the Convention it was possible "to see how clearly and steadily the British people felt the need for unity with Soviet Russia, and how deep was their anger against all those who, openly or by dark intrigue, were keeping us and Soviet Russia apart"***

In the spring of 1941 Germany completed her conquest of the Balkan peninsula, and made an attempt to instal a puppet regime in Iraq. This left London in no doubt as to the terrible menace hanging over the Middle East—one of the key centres of the British Empire. The events of the spring of 1941 made it glaringly clear how much Britain needed an alliance with the USSR in order to carry on her struggle against Germany.

The possibility of a German attack on the Soviet Union began to be weighed seriously by the British Government as early as February 1941. It shaped its relations with the

* Ibid., p. 647.

** Ibid., pp. 647-48.

*** Harry Adams, *The People's Convention Fights for British-Soviet Unity*, London, p. 7.

USSR in accordance with its objectives and with this possibility. "It must be remembered," writes Medlicott, "that throughout these early months of 1941 the British Government never lost sight of the possibility of eventual Anglo-Russian collaboration against Germany."*

Yet the actions taken by the British Government at the time plainly show that it never planned to give the Soviet Union equality in such co-operation or to take its legitimate interests into account. The approved British history of the Second World War contains the astonishing information that Britain felt it was necessary to apply "various economic-warfare pressures" on the Soviet Government in order to create the conditions for co-operation with the USSR. The British exercised "all possible pressure on the Soviet Government" to come to some trade agreement.** These tactics could not but have harmed Anglo-Soviet relations. The Soviet Government saw through them and as the representative of a Great Power it reacted negatively to the British efforts to give it an unequal status.

With the purpose of applying pressure on the USSR, Britain persisted in maintaining her unjustifiable stand towards the accession of the Baltic republics to the Soviet Union. She went out of her way to disrupt the Soviet Union's foreign trade, withdrawing her own proposals of October 1940 on the question of Anglo-Soviet trade. This idea was advanced in November by Cripps. The Foreign Office hesitated to act on it, but in December after Halifax became the British Ambassador in the USA and Anthony Eden took over the Foreign Office, Cripps received the latter's authorisation to withdraw the proposals. Eden sent Cripps a personal message in which he said he would not wish to start his tenure of office as Foreign Secretary "by taking a line which might lead to a quarrel with the Soviet Government, and one which might in the circumstances look like a new policy towards the Soviet Union".*** The Ambassador agreed and waited several weeks—until February 21, 1941—before he withdrew his trade proposals of October 1940. Notwithstanding these actions by Britain, the Soviet Union made every effort to avoid an aggravation of its relations with Britain and dem-

* W. N. Medlicott, *Op. cit.*, p. 654.

** *Ibid.*

*** *Ibid.*, pp. 647-48.

onstrated, as Cripps reported to London at the close of March 1941, a "desire to prepare the ground for the possibility of a rapprochement with us".*

Foreboding gripped the British Government when intelligence was received of the concentration of German troops along the Soviet frontier. Although British Intelligence had discovered that nazi armies were concentrating in Eastern Europe it could not say exactly if the USSR would be attacked. At the end of March 1941 it reported to the Government: "We have no grounds for believing an attack on Russia is imminent."** Analogous reports were sent in in April through May and were confirmed by official communications from the Polish emigré Government. Soviet resistance to German diplomatic pressure, blackmail or military attack was in Britain's interest, and throughout the spring of 1941 the British Government sought to goad the USSR into a conflict with Germany.

On April 3, on the basis of information obtained by the British Foreign Office and Military Intelligence, Churchill sent Stalin a message warning him of a possible German invasion. Concerning this message, Cripps reported to London that he feared the Soviet Government might "interpret it as an attempt by us to make trouble between Russia and Germany".***

However, after stating these fears, Cripps himself took the opposite course. On the night of April 12-13 he wrote to the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister declaring that "unless they [the Soviet Government.—*U. T.*] decided on immediate co-operation with the countries still opposing the Axis in the Balkans, the Russians would miss the last chance of defending their frontier with others".*) This was, in effect, a proposal that the Soviet Union should immediately scrap the non-aggression treaty with Germany and act against that country. This move by Cripps hamstrung Churchill's calmer overture and made the Soviet Union doubt the British Prime Minister's motives.

For the sake of the truth it must be noted that while goading the Soviet Union into action against Germany, the British

* Ibid., p. 656.

** *History of the Second World War. Grand Strategy*, Vol. III, June 1941-August 1942. Ed. by J. R. M. Butler, London, 1964, p. 82.

*** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 148.

*) Ibid., p. 149.

Government was, at the same time, urging Germany to attack the USSR. Moves such as these are made in secret, and those who make them do not desire them to be divulged. However, as time passes, much comes to light. Churchill had long ago told of his warning to Stalin about a possible German attack on the USSR. But he did not mention that in the spring of 1941 the British Intelligence Centre in New York, acting in close co-operation with the American FBI, slipped the German Embassy in Washington a document, which stated: "From highly reliable sources it is learned USSR intend further military aggression instant Germany is embroiled in major operations." This, according to British Intelligence officers, was "strategic deception material". The fact that its strategic aim was to push Germany into invading the USSR is unquestionable. This was made public by H. Montgomery Hyde, a former officer of the British Intelligence Centre in New York, in a book which he wrote on the basis of the archives of Sir William Stephenson, the Centre's chief, and his own reminiscences.*

It is worth noting that on April 22, 1941, with regard to one of Cripps' telegrams about the messages of warning sent to the Soviet Government, Churchill commented: "They [the Soviet Government—*U. T.*] know perfectly well their danger and also that *we need their aid*"** [*my italics.—U. T.*]. The British Government's awareness that Soviet aid was indispensable to it determined its attitude in an event many of whose aspects are still shrouded in mystery.

The Hess Mission. Britain Makes Her Choice

Rudolf Hess, the No. 2 in the nazi hierarchy, flew to Britain from Germany and landed in Scotland by parachute on May 10, 1941. He arrived to propose peace on certain conditions and British participation in a war against the Soviet Union. Although the British Government has not published any materials on its talks with Hess, nobody is in any doubt about the substance of the proposals brought by him.

Much has been written about the Hess mission, and the point most discussed is whether he made the proposals to

* H. Montgomery Hyde, *Op. cit.*, p. 58.

** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 149.

the British Government on his own initiative or on Hitler's behalf. Hess claimed (possibly to clear Hitler in the event his mission failed) that he had undertaken the journey on his own initiative. Today, as James Leasor points out, "it seems certain that the only important fact about Hess' mission with which Hitler was not cognisant was the actual date of his departure".* "Those closest to Hitler realised that Hess had carried out what the Fuehrer wanted—and with *Hitler's knowledge* [my italics.—U. T.] except for the actual time and date of his flight, for this was largely dependent on the weather."** In the light of what we know about the relations between Hitler and his minions, we can, without stretching the point, consider that "with Hitler's knowledge" ought to be read "on his orders".

In this question we must not ignore the testimony of Hitler himself. In his *Testament* he dwells at length on the subject of peace with Britain in the spring of 1941. Why did Germany need this peace? "Peace then, however," Hitler wrote, "would have allowed us to prevent the Americans from meddling in European affairs. . . . And lastly, Germany, her rear secure, could have thrown herself heart and soul into her essential task, the ambition of my life and the *raison d'être* of National-Socialism—the destruction of Bolshevism. This would have entailed the conquest of wide spaces in the East."*** Hitler emphasised that in the spring of 1941, i.e., when Hess went to Britain, Germany wanted a peace arrangement. "Had she so wished, Britain could have put an end to the war at the beginning of 1941. In the skies over London she had demonstrated to all the world her will to resist, and on her credit side she had the humiliating defeats which she had inflicted on the Italians in North Africa."*) He went on to say: "At the beginning of 1941, after her successes in North Africa had re-established her prestige, she had an even more favourable opportunity of withdrawing from the game and concluding a negotiated peace with us."***)

The nazi Fuehrer railed at Britain for not having come to terms with him in 1941 and called down on her misfortune and calamities of all sorts. "Whatever the outcome of this

* James Leasor, Op. cit., p. 174.

** Ibid., p. 122.

*** *The Testament of Adolf Hitler*, pp. 33-34.

*) Ibid., p. 33.

***) Ibid., p. 35.

war," he said, "the future of the British people is to die of hunger and tuberculosis in their cursed island."* He had good reason for being furious. He had paid much too high a price for the failure of the Hess mission and for miscalculating Britain's reaction to the German invasion of the USSR.

What made Germany offer peace to Britain? The answer is only too obvious. She feared a war on two fronts. The authors of a book commissioned by the British Royal Institute of International Affairs are quite correct when they write "that Hitler might be playing with the idea of patching up a settlement with Britain in order to free his hands for a single-front war in the East".** "In principle," they say, "he was against Germany's embarking on wars on two fronts. This had always been one of the main counts in his indictment of Kaiser Wilhelm II for having lost the First World War for Germany."*** Hitler himself spoke in this spirit time and again. On November 23, 1939 he told top German military leaders: "We can oppose Russia only when we are free in the West."*)

It cannot be said that on Hitler's part this bid for peace and alliance with Britain against the USSR in the spring of 1941 was totally an adventure. He had good reason for expecting his overtures to be accepted. Indeed, was it not the British Government which in the course of seven pre-war years had given Germany every facility for preparing for war in the belief that it would be a war against the USSR? Had not the British Government during the phoney war explored the possibility of an arrangement with Germany through various nazi emissaries? Had not the British Government, in January-March 1940, endeavoured to "switch" the war to the USSR and expressed its willingness to join Germany in an attack on the USSR? Lastly, were not the same people who had organised Munich and were thirsting to help Germany smash the Soviet Union occupying influential positions under Churchill's Government? These were firm grounds for offering Britain peace and an alliance in a war against the USSR.

* *The Testament of Adolf Hitler*, p. 34.

** *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, p. 403.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 96.

*) *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D, Vol. VIII, p. 442.

However, Hitler failed to take into consideration the important circumstance that the war had opened the eyes of the British people and the more far-sighted of the ruling circles. Churchill and his associates feared Britain's fate would be sealed if Hitler conquered the Soviet Union and seized its resources. Once that happened it would be impossible to oppose the enemy and Britain would become a German satellite. If Churchill had any doubts on this point they were soon dispersed by Hess, whose very first demands were Churchill's resignation and the formation of a pro-nazi Government. And this even before Germany attacked the USSR! "Churchill," James Leasor writes, "had no intention of negotiating any peace treaty with Germany which he was convinced would leave Britain in a position of accepting German suzerainty."*

Churchill proved to be right, displaying considerable foresight. When it was a foregone conclusion that Germany would lose the war Hitler told in his *Testament* of the terms on which he intended to sign a peace treaty with Britain in 1941. "Under the guidance of the Reich," he wrote, "Europe would speedily have become unified." This must be taken to mean the establishment of unchallenged German hegemony in Europe. What was to be the fate of Britain and other European Great Powers? France and Italy "would have had to renounce their inappropriate aspirations to greatness.... As for Britain, relieved of all European cares, she could have devoted herself to the well-being of her Empire.... We ought to have been able to make them [the British.—*U. T.*] realise that the acceptance by them of the German hegemony established in Europe, a state of affairs to the implementation of which they had always been opposed ... would bring them inestimable advantage."** In Britain many people knew the worth of these "advantages" and feared them mortally. Churchill quite rightly believed that when Germany was firmly entrenched as the dominating power in Europe she would without question desire to relieve Britain of her cares of the welfare of the British Empire. Consequently, the proposals brought by Hess were not accepted. As far as can be ascertained, Hitler learned of this rejection only at 21:00 hours on June 22, 1941, from a speech broadcast by Chur-

* James Leasor, *Op. cit.*, p. 174.

** *The Testament of Adolf Hitler*, pp. 33-34, 97.

chill. That is the only explanation why after Hess departed for talks with the British Government the German invasion of the USSR was neither cancelled nor postponed.

This gives rise to the legitimate question: If Hitler knew for certain that Britain would turn down the peace offers and Germany would have to fight on two fronts, would he have started a war against the USSR? All his previous statements and views expressed to the German military leaders on this point indicate that he would not have embarked on that war. Yet it is known that the attack on the USSR was not held up because of any uncertainty regarding Britain's stand, and that prior to June 22 this stand was not even discussed by the German leaders. The only explanation for this is Hitler was sure the attack on the USSR would not lead to war on two fronts and that if Britain did not help Germany against the Soviet Union she would at any rate place no obstacles to the war against the socialist state. There was one more aspect to this question. The British Government ardently desired that Germany should commit an error in this issue, for this error would mean Britain's salvation. That much is as clear as day. Consequently, there can be no doubt that the British Government used the Hess mission to lure Hitler into a trap.

In May-June the British Government's reaction to the Hess mission was such as to fortify Hitler in his view that an arrangement could be reached if developments were given a "push" by an attack on the USSR. The British Munichites regarded Hitler as a traitor when in 1939 instead of attacking the Soviet Union he signed a non-aggression treaty with it. Chamberlain's announcement in Parliament that Britain had declared war on Germany and some of his subsequent speeches contained the accusation that Hitler had broken the promise he had given him (Chamberlain). Consequently, to ensure an arrangement with Britain Hitler had to "redeem his treachery" and prove he was prepared to keep his word. "Why Churchill and the authorities deliberately chose to maintain a mysterious silence over Hess, when in fact the proposals had been turned down, remains officially unexplained," *Labour Monthly* wrote in 1941. "Was this silence, with its suggestion of some possible complicity, a trap to lure Hitler forward on his desperate enterprise [i.e., the attack on the USSR.—U. T.] with the hope of some possible eventual support, only to turn on him with the most positive

counterthrust so soon as he had embarked on it? Had some bright wit of British diplomacy devised the scheme to use Hess as a boomerang and to catch Hitler with his own anti-Soviet bait with which he had so often in the past gulled the British ruling class? Only future records will reveal the details of this episode.”* However, such records have not yet appeared. The British Government continues to maintain its silence, which, in our opinion, speaks in favour of the argument put forward by *Labour Monthly*. British bourgeois historiography likewise passes this episode over in silence, and in cases where it has to speak it confines itself to recounting known facts.

Having allowed Hitler to imagine his hands would be free for a war against the Soviet Union, the British Government decided that if Germany attacked the USSR it would act jointly with the Soviet Union against the Germans. As June 22, 1941 drew nearer, more and more attention was given to this question by the British Government and by the British military leaders. General Ismay, one of Churchill’s closest war-time associates, wrote “that there was obviously no alternative”.**

This decision of the British Government found expression in the tone adopted by the British press and in Anthony Eden’s confidential statements to the Soviet Ambassador. The Conservative press, which clearly mirrored the views of the Government, became unrecognisable in many of its pronouncements regarding the Soviet Union. If the Soviet Union, the *Daily Mail* wrote on June 13, 1941, entered the war, would it be able to hold Hitler in check until the winter, which would halt military operations? If that should happen it would change the whole course of the war. Britain would be much stronger when spring came. The newspaper went on to express the hope that the British Government would give Sir Stafford Cripps a free hand in his talks in Moscow, saying no interests should be allowed to obstruct a possible agreement. Another Conservative newspaper, *Evening Star*, pointed out on June 19, 1941 that during the war there were moments when “Moscow believed that Britain had ambitions against her, or at least that we would relax our war effort against Germany if the Germans went Eastward. In the

* *Labour Monthly*, August 1941, p. 345.

** *The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay*, p. 225.

past, we must admit, there had been some ground for this belief. Just over a year ago most newspapers in this country were clamouring for war against Russia. Can such illusions be removed? This much at least might be publicly stated: Even if Hitler moves Eastward Britain's war against Germany will be maintained with mounting ferocity.**

Statements in the same vein were made by Anthony Eden to the Soviet Ambassador I. M. Maisky. On June 10 he referred to the German military concentrations against the USSR and said that "in the event of a Russo-German war, we should do everything in our power to attack by air German-occupied territory in the West".** On June 13 he declared that "after consultation with the Prime Minister, and in view of the reports received within the previous forty-eight hours, he wanted to tell I. Maisky that, if the Germans attacked the USSR, we should be willing to send a mission to Russia representing the three fighting services ... we should also give urgent consideration to Russian economic needs".*** The decision which Churchill spoke of in his broadcast in the evening of June 22, 1941 had thus been arrived at by the British Government earlier, after it had weighed the situation and even consulted with the USA.

By devious ways the British ruling classes thus came round to seeing the need for fighting, jointly with the USSR, the nazi threat menacing the two countries and the world as a whole. This was due not only to the logic of world developments but also to the wise foreign policy pursued by the Soviet Union. A vital positive role was played in this by the non-aggression treaty which the Soviet Union had signed with Germany in 1939. Had that pact not been concluded the USSR would most certainly have had to stand alone against Germany, which would probably have been assisted, in one way or another, by Britain and other imperialist powers. Such a situation would have been fraught with horrible danger not only to the USSR, the cause of socialism and the freedom of nations, but also to the interests of Britain, which if Germany won the war would have been quickly reduced from the status of an ally to that of a vassal. Unquestionably, that was how the wind was blowing in 1939.

* W. P. and Zelda K. Coates, *Op. cit.*, p. 673.

** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 150.

*** *Ibid.*

The non-aggression treaty changed the course of events and created conditions for an alliance between Britain and the Soviet Union against nazi Germany. Within the framework of a great coalition of freedom-loving nations, this alliance played an outstanding role in ensuring the defeat of Germany and other aggressive powers.

The period of Britain's isolation, which started with the fall of France, ended in June 1941. British historians speak of this period in such a way as to emphasise and considerably exaggerate Britain's role in the Second World War, saying that at one stage she fought singlehanded, and in an under-hand way or openly hurl the accusation at the Soviet Union that from June 1940 to June 1941 its actions left Britain alone in face of the enemy. On this point D. N. Pritt, the well-known British lawyer and civic figure, justifiably writes: "It was often made a boast that Britain 'stood alone' for so long in the war; we may justly be proud that, when the people had to stand alone, they stood resolutely; but it is a black mark for our ruling class that, in a world in which most nations hated fascism and wanted an end of it, they had so conducted the affairs of their country that for the moment no state in the world was prepared to stand with them!"* Soviet foreign policy and the mortal threat from nazi Germany finally led Britain to an alliance with the USSR.

* *The Autobiography of D. N. Pritt, Part One, From Right to Left*, London, 1965, pp. 240-41.

Chapter Three

BRITISH POLICY IN THE PERIOD OF THE FORMATION OF THE GRAND ALLIANCE

(June 1941-December 1941)

Anglo-Soviet Agreement of July 12, 1941

An important phase of the Second World War came to an end in the summer of 1941. By that time world developments and Soviet foreign policy had created the requisites for the emergence of an anti-fascist coalition. This policy had prevented the enemies of the USSR from welding together a united anti-Soviet imperialist front. Moreover, Britain and later the USA were left with no other choice, if they were not prepared sooner or later to surrender to Germany, than to enter into an alliance with the USSR against Germany and her satellites. By force of circumstances both Churchill and Roosevelt found there was only one logical and reasonable move they could make. And they made that move.

When Germany perfidiously attacked the Soviet Union early in the morning of June 22, 1941, she obviously counted on support in one form or another from a number of imperialist powers. That was why the invasion of the USSR was proclaimed a struggle in defence of capitalism against the socialist revolution. After launching its attack on the USSR, the German Government declared that its objective was to save world civilisation from the mortal menace of Bolshevism.* This was an old, tested piece of bait, but this time it failed to lure the British Government. It had no doubts about the stand it had to take in the new war—everything was clear.

* *Archiv der Gegenwart*, Berlin, 1941, S. 5079.

On Friday, June 20, 1941, Churchill left to spend the week-end at Chequers. Despite the war, the Prime Minister maintained his routine, which called for a week-end rest. But this time he did not intend to rest. He was greatly excited by the intelligence that Germany might attack the USSR any day. He made notes for a radio broadcast which he planned to make on this question. With him at Chequers were Anthony Eden, the British Ambassador in the USSR Sir Stafford Cripps, who had been summoned from Moscow on June 11, Lord Beaverbrook, and the American Ambassador John G. Winant, who had just returned from the USA with Roosevelt's approval of Churchill's plans regarding a German-Soviet war.

At eight o'clock in the morning of June 22, Churchill's private secretary John Rupert Colville brought him a communication from London stating that several hours previously Germany had attacked the USSR. Churchill said he would speak on the radio at 9 p. m. He was immensely pleased. Until the morning of June 22 the British Government had been tormented by apprehensions that the USSR would give way to Germany without war. Therefore, when war broke out, Churchill's bodyguard Inspector Thompson writes, "the implications of this were indeed most joyous to us all".* Conveying the atmosphere reigning at Chequers on that day he says it "was difficult . . . to understand the exquisite relief, the sudden release from pressure". This came from the consciousness of the British that "we are no longer alone".**

In a radio broadcast that same evening Churchill declared: "We have but one aim and one single, irrevocable purpose. We are resolved to destroy Hitler. . . . Any man or state who fight on against Nazidom will have our aid. . . . That is our policy and that is our declaration. It follows, therefore, that we shall give whatever help we can to Russia and the Russian people." He explained that in helping the Soviet Union Britain would save herself. "Hitler," he continued, "wishes to destroy the Russian power because he hopes that if he succeeds in this, he will be able to bring back the main strength of his Army and Air Force from the East and hurl it upon this island. . . . His invasion of Russia is no more than a prelude to an attempted invasion of the British Isles. He

* Walter H. Thompson, *Op. cit.*, p. 215.

** *Ibid.*

hopes, no doubt, that all this may be accomplished before the winter comes, and that he can overwhelm Great Britain before the Fleet and air-power of the United States may intervene. He hopes that he may once again repeat, upon a greater scale than ever before, that process of destroying his enemies one by one, by which he has so long thrived and prospered. . . . The Russian danger is therefore our danger, and the danger of the United States, just as the cause of any Russian fighting for his hearth and home is the cause of free men and free peoples in every quarter of the globe.”*

Thus, Churchill declared that Britain would fight on the side of the Soviet Union and showed why she had to do it.

There was no other choice. For Britain the issue was: either alliance with the USSR or destruction in an unequal struggle with Germany and her allies. This is so obvious that it is widely admitted even in literature clearly hostile to the Soviet Union. General Ismay says “that there was obviously no alternative to the Prime Minister’s policy”.** Arthur Bryant, the British historian, publicist and author of a book about Field-Marshal Sir Alan Brooke, war-time Chief of the Imperial General Staff, writes: “Until the Germans struck at Russia in the summer of 1941 Brooke’s first concern was the defence of Britain against invasion. Even after Hitler’s attack on Russia, the thought of it was never far from his mind, for, if the USSR went the way of France . . . a far more formidable attempt on the British Isles was certain.”*** This is an admission that Britain’s fate was being decided on the Soviet-German Front. Also being decided there was not only whether Britain would survive but whether she would be among the victors. Michael Foot, a member of the Labour Party Left wing, writes that the outbreak of war between Germany and the Soviet Union changed the course of the Second World War. “Churchill,” he remarks, “might speak bravely about victory through bombing raids, Mediterranean campaigns and the eventual rising of the European peoples against their nazi overlords. But these vague and distant prospects were now dramatically transformed.” For Britain, Foot goes on to say, “before June 22, 1941, victory

* Winston S. Churchill, *Great War Speeches*, London, 1957, pp. 138-39, 140.

** *The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay*, p. 225.

*** Arthur Bryant, *The Turn of the Tide, 1939-1943*, London, 1957, p. 240.

had been an elusive dream; thereafter it was brought within the range of practical calculation".* American historiography treats the British position much in the same vein. Herbert Feis, for example, writes: "Military necessity was uppermost in the situation. If Russia gave up, while the United States was still wavering, the British Empire could hardly hope to hold out. . . . To Britain this had been an act of self-preservation."** George F. Kennan says: "The outbreak of war between Germany and Russia was the first ray of hope Englishmen had seen in this war. . . . Western statesmen considered that the entire fate of the war depended on the readiness and ability of Russia to stand up to the German attack."***

The statesmen Kennan had in mind included both Churchill and Roosevelt. On June 15, 1941 Churchill had informed Roosevelt that he had intelligence from reliable sources that the Germans would attack the Soviet Union in the immediate future. "Should this new war break out," he wrote, "we shall of course give all encouragement and any help we can spare to the Russians, following the principle that Hitler is the foe we have to beat."*) Winant brought Roosevelt's reply in which the US President promised that should the Germans attack Russia he would immediately support publicly "any announcement that the Prime Minister might make welcoming Russia as an Ally".**) Harry Hopkins, who was one of Roosevelt's trusted advisers, said in a conversation with Stalin that "Roosevelt decided to render aid to the Soviet Union because he regarded Hitler as an enemy not only of the Soviet Union and Britain but of the United States as well".***) He appreciated the Nazi threat to the United States and was aware that the war against Germany could not be won with Allies like British politicians who preferred to have others fight for them; and he did not for a moment doubt that eventually the USA would have to fight Germany. Roosevelt considered it was in the USA's interest to support Britain, but inasmuch as the struggle of the Soviet Union

* Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan. A Biography*, Vol. I, London, 1962, p. 335.

** Herbert Feis, *Churchill-Roosevelt-Stalin. The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought*, Princeton University Press, 1957, pp. 6, 8-9.

*** George F. Kennan, *Op. cit.*, p. 354.

*) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 330.

**) *Ibid.*

***) *International Affairs*, No. 3, 1961, p. 70.

against the German hordes was the best support, he felt it was wise to assist the Soviet Union. Lastly, he foresaw that in addition to fighting in Europe, the USA would have to fight a war against Japan. It was useless hoping for effective British aid in that war. In view of Japan's extreme hostility for the USSR, he did not rule out the possibility of the USA receiving Soviet help in the Far East at some future date.

The British Government's statement on support of the USSR in the war against Germany was made by force of necessity. It did not in any way imply that the Churchill Government intended fundamentally to change the policy pursued vis-à-vis the Soviet Union by the preceding British governments. The British ruling classes meant to help the USSR in the war because this conformed to their interest, but they continued to nurse their animosity for the USSR as for a socialist country. This animosity was a manifestation of class antagonism, which neither disappeared nor could disappear when the two countries with different socio-economic systems became Allies. This was underscored by none other than Churchill in his speech of June 22. "No one," he said, "has been a more consistent opponent of communism than I have for the last twenty-five years. I will unsay no word that I have spoken about it."* He adopted a similar stand in confidential talks with his closest associates. On June 22 when he told his private secretary John Rupert Colville that Britain would support the USSR, the latter asked whether this would not be a retreat in principle for him, one of the most bitter enemies of the Communists. To this Churchill replied: "Not at all. I have only one purpose, the destruction of Hitler, and my life is much simplified thereby. If Hitler invaded Hell I would make at least a favourable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons."** Churchill thus never departed from his principles nor retracted anything he had said against communism. This implied that the Churchill Government meant to get only what it wanted from its alliance with the USSR, i.e., use it in the war against Germany, and did not plan to break with the traditional hostility of British governments for the socialist state. Naturally, this complicated and hindered Allied relations between Britain and the USSR.

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 331-32.

** *Ibid.*, p. 331.

The first complication stemming from this hostility arose immediately after Churchill's speech. The British Government did not properly assess the prospects of the struggle on the Soviet-German Front or the Soviet Union's possibilities in the war against Germany. This was true of Churchill as well. Britain's leaders believed the Soviet Union would be crushed in several weeks and only optimists measured the duration of the Soviet-German war in terms of months. "Cripps, now our Ambassador in Moscow, was in London when the Germans attacked the Russians," Hugh Dalton writes in his memoirs. "He came to see me on June 23rd, and again next day. He did not think the Russians could hold out, in organised resistance to the Germans, for more than a few weeks. This was, at that time, official British military opinion."* This opinion was voiced by the British press.

The greatest inability to assess the Soviet Union's possibilities was displayed by British military leaders. General John Dill, Chief of the General Staff, believed the "Germans could go through them [i.e., the Soviet Union.—*U. T.*] like a hot knife through butter".** General John Kennedy, Director of Military Operations, later admitted he never thought "the Russians would stand up for long"*** Churchill writes: "Almost all responsible military opinion held that the Russian armies would soon be defeated and largely destroyed."*) True, he maintains that he had always assessed the ability of the Russians to resist more optimistically than his military advisers. But this is not borne out by facts.

Churchill's actions in the summer of 1941 tend to indicate that his views about the Soviet Union's potential did not differ from those of his military advisers. Michael Foot asserts that Churchill's efforts, in his memoirs, to dissociate himself from these views are thoroughly unconvincing for he offers no proof, which as far as Churchill is concerned is "a most uncharacteristic oversight").**)

The reasons lie chiefly in the traditional hostility of the British ruling circles for the Soviet Union, in their class prejudice towards the Soviet state. For a quarter of a century

* Hugh Dalton, *Op. cit.*, p. 365.

** *The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay*, p. 225.

*** John N. Kennedy, *Op. cit.*, p. 147.

*) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 350-51.

**) Michael Foot, *Op. cit.*, p. 340.

they had been exaggerating its difficulties and belittling or ignoring its achievements. In the end they fell victim to their own propaganda, and miscalculated the Soviet Union's power and vitality. "But, above all, a dislike of communism had led the West to deceive itself," D. F. Fleming observes.* The course of the war in the West likewise contributed to this self-deception. Poland, whom Chamberlain regarded as a stronger and more valuable Ally than the Soviet Union, had been crushed by the Germans in two weeks. France, whose army London believed to be the strongest in the world, had been defeated almost as quickly as Poland.

The important thing, however, was not so much the reasons for the British miscalculations of the Soviet potential for resistance as the fact that the British Government founded its relations with the USSR on these miscalculations. Its reasoning was as follows: the Soviet resistance to the Germans had to be prolonged as far as possible, but inasmuch as Russia would be defeated anyway, no military supplies should be sent to her because they would either not reach her in time or, if they were delivered, they would fall into the hands of the Germans. In this connection General Ismay wrote that "if this forecast was correct, Hitler, so far from being weakened by his attack on Russia, would in the long run be incomparably stronger. The help given to Stalin ... would have been wasted, and we ourselves would be in greater danger than ever."** Hence the conclusion: material aid should be promised but Britain should not go farther than to extend moral and political support. Under these conditions there, naturally, could be no question of military assistance. Consequently, in the summer of 1941 the destiny of the Anglo-Soviet alliance depended on the turn that the Soviet-German confrontation would take.

On June 27 Cripps returned to Moscow with a British military commission headed by Major-General Mason-Macfarlane. Parliament was informed that the mission was being sent "to co-ordinate our efforts in what is now, beyond doubt, a common task—the defeat of Germany".*** General John Kennedy provides some illuminating information about the

* D. F. Fleming, *Op. cit.*, p. 137.

** *The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay*, p. 225.

*** *Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons*, Vol. 372, col. 974.

purposes of the Macfarlane mission. He spoke to Eden about the mission and the latter told him: "There would be little or nothing that we could do, for some little time, in the way of sending in supplies; but a mission might be useful if it could have some influence on Russian strategy, or if it were to be allowed to do something towards keeping the war going in Russia."* In line with this course, Kennedy instructed Macfarlane: "We don't think this is anything more than an off-chance. But we can't afford to miss even a poor chance like this. Your job will be to do what you can to help to keep the Russian war going, and so exhaust the Boche. Even if we only manage to keep it going in Siberia, as we did with the White Russians after the last war, that will be something. Another job will be to do what you can to ensure that demolitions are carried out by the Russians as they go back—it would be especially important to demolish the Caucasus oilfields if they have to be given up. Another job, of course, will be to send us intelligence reports and let us know what is happening."**

In the June 22 speech Churchill said Britain would help the Soviet Union but he did not specify what kind of help it would be or how the relations between the countries would shape out. He spoke of giving "whatever help we can to Russia and the Russian people" and added, "we have offered the Government of Soviet Russia any technical or economic assistance which is in our power, and which is likely to be of service to them".*** In a personal message to Stalin on July 8, he wrote: "We shall do everything to help you that time, geography and our growing resources allow."*) In view of the nature of the problem, this was a very vague statement which gave the British Government complete freedom of action. Aneurin Bevan, Labour MP, stated in Parliament that Churchill's speech contained "an understatement which might be misunderstood in some quarters".**)

* John N. Kennedy, *Op. cit.*, p. 147.

** *Ibid.*, p. 148.

*** Winston S. Churchill, *Great War Speeches*, London, 1957, p. 139.

*) *Correspondence Between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain During the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1957, p. 11.

**) Michael Foot, *Op. cit.*, p. 336.

In Moscow Cripps was asked to explain the British offer, specify the nature of the proposed co-operation and say if the British Government had political co-operation in mind and would sign an agreement defining the basis on which such co-operation would develop. On June 30 the Soviet Ambassador in London asked Anthony Eden if the British Government had in mind only military or military and economic or military, economic and political co-operation. Eden replied that military and economic co-operation was meant; political co-operation was a much more difficult matter.

On July 8 Cripps was received by Stalin, to whom he handed a message from Churchill. Like previous British statements, this message spoke vaguely about assistance. Stalin proposed that the two countries sign an agreement on mutual assistance, without specifying its volume and nature, and undertake a commitment not to conclude a separate peace with Germany. The point on assistance was loosely worded to take into account the British Government's reluctance to specify its stand on this question.

A scrutiny of this proposal by the British Government revealed why Eden had spoken of difficulties in promoting political co-operation between Britain and the Soviet Union. On July 9, Churchill sent Eden the draft of a positive reply to the Soviet proposal. This draft included a paragraph to the effect that frontier issues would have to be settled at a peace conference "in which the United States would certainly be a leading party" and that on this question Britain would proceed from provisions she would lay down herself.* This paragraph directly affected the Soviet Union, and its inclusion was tantamount to telling the Soviet Union: we shall undertake to help you, but in return you must agree to a revision of your frontiers. In other words, it meant the wresting away from the USSR of all or most of the territories that had acceded to it after the outbreak of the Second World War (the Baltic Republics, Western Byelorussia, Western Ukraine, Bukovina and Bessarabia). The reference to the USA in this paragraph was not accidental. The British had discussed this question with the Americans and had agreed with them on the attitude to be taken to the German attack on the USSR. The US Ambassador in Moscow

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 152.

Laurence Steinhardt, whose stand was approved by the State Department, insisted on a "firm" line being taken towards the USSR. In his opinion the "Soviet leaders were ... apparently quite prepared to sacrifice future for immediate gains".* The words "sacrifice future" implied post-war Soviet frontiers. The British Government was, at the time, in full agreement with the American position.

Britain had no intention of helping the Soviet Union without receiving territorial concessions in return. In Eden's opinion, equitable and just relations with the Soviet Union, to whom Britain was offering support and co-operation, would be tantamount to "appeasement". So that there should be no "appeasement", in exchange for the promise of aid the Soviet Union had to agree to a revision of its frontier, i.e., to the eventual loss of territory after final victory had been won at the cost mainly of its blood. Ultimately the British War Cabinet deleted the paragraph on the territorial question from its reply to the Soviet Government, for it was felt that it might complicate negotiations between the Soviet Government and the Polish emigré Government in London. However, much was foreshadowed by the fact that Churchill, on his own initiative, formulated that paragraph as early as July 9, 1941 (no mention at all was made of frontiers in the talk Cripps had with Stalin on July 8). This circumstance, which accompanied the emergence of the Anglo-Soviet alliance, made itself felt throughout the war—first as an issue over the recognition of Soviet frontiers and then in the form of the Polish problem. This showed the contradictory nature of the British position with regard to the Soviet Union.

The Soviet proposal was accepted. An agreement on joint action by the Soviet Union and Britain in the war against Germany was signed in Moscow on July 12. Under this agreement, which came into force as soon as it was signed, for it was not subject to ratification, the two countries pledged to assist each other in the war and not to conduct negotiations or sign a separate armistice or peace with Germany.**

* William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *The Undeclared War, 1940-1941*, New York, 1953, p. 530.

** *Uneshnaya politika Sovetskogo Soyuza v period otechestvennoi voiny, Dokumenty i materialy* (Soviet Foreign Policy in the Period of the Great Patriotic War, Documents and Materials), Vol. I, Moscow, 1944, p. 116.

Although Germany's satellites—Rumania, Finland, Slovakia and Hungary—had also attacked the USSR, the agreement spoke only of assistance in the war with Germany, for at the time Britain refrained from declaring war on Germany's Eastern satellites.

The formula "assistance and support of all kind" was not concrete enough. It could mean very much or very little. Everything depended on how it was interpreted by the signatories.

Despite the British Government's discordant considerations in signing the agreement of July 12 and despite its insufficiently concrete wording, it was of major importance to Anglo-Soviet relations and to the conduct of the war. It laid the beginning for a powerful coalition, which four years later crushed Germany and her allies. The combined resources of the Soviet Union and Britain, and later of the USA, which declared its intention of assisting the USSR in the war against Germany, greatly exceeded those of the enemy. Victory now depended on how quickly these resources could be mobilised.

The Anglo-Soviet agreement put paid to the long-cherished imperialist plans of isolating the Soviet Union and creating a British imperialist-led united front of bourgeois states against it. The USSR gained an important Ally in Britain, which meant it was no longer alone. This had a powerful moral and psychological impact on the Soviet people during the initial period of the war. British material and military assistance, though it came later, was likewise important.

Germany, which had dreaded a war on the two fronts, now had such a war on her hands. Hitler's calculations that his attack on the USSR would end the war between Germany and Britain, and induce Britain to support him against the Soviet Union were not justified. Earlier, in August 1939, the British ruling circles had accused Hitler of "signal treachery" when he signed a treaty of non-aggression with the USSR, but now, after the signing of the Anglo-Soviet agreement of July 12 Hitler accused Britain of betraying the struggle against communism.* The world power balance underwent a change. A socialist country had joined with bourgeois-democratic countries in an alliance against nazi aggression.

* *Labour Monthly*, August 1943, p. 345.

An alliance with Britain to curb nazi aggression in Europe was what the Soviet Government had perseveringly worked for in the 1930s and what the peoples of Britain and the Soviet Union wanted. The summer of 1941, therefore, witnessed the birth of something more than an alliance of two states: a union of two peoples. That made the alliance so strong that it withstood all the trials of the Second World War. "At last," *Labour Monthly* wrote, "that alliance of the British and Soviet peoples, backing the peoples of Europe in the struggle for liberation against fascist aggression and enslavement; that alliance for which the working class and democratic movement in this country, in unity with the Soviet people, strove so many years in vain against the conspirators of world reaction; that alliance which could have prevented the present war."^{*}

The will of the British people was one of the key factors making the British Government enter into an alliance with the Soviet Union. During the first half of 1941, when German aggression mounted, the people of Britain saw that the threat to their country was steadily growing while the Government was unable to offer a satisfactory way out of the situation. The prestige of Churchill's Government was falling steadily; it was criticised in Parliament and began to lose popular support. This was convincingly expressed in the People's Convention movement. Mindful of the political situation in Britain Churchill urged assistance to the Soviet Union, and in signing the alliance with the USSR he did what the people wanted him to do and thereby considerably strengthened the position of his Government.

Unlike their Government, the British people entered into the alliance with the USSR with open hearts and intended honestly to bear their share of the burden of the struggle against the common enemy. They demanded a formal alliance with the Soviet Union as soon as it was attacked by Germany. The British Communist Party was the first to make this demand. Unlike the ruling classes, the British working people felt the USSR was a reliable and powerful Ally and believed in its ability to stand up to the enemy. Michael Foot says that in Britain in those days there "was a deep sense of relief about the war itself and Britain's

^{*} *Labour Monthly*, August 1941, p. 343.

chance of survival".* He points out that the response of the British people to the German invasion of the USSR "reflected the profound instinct of all the most politically active sections of the British working class that if Russia were allowed to be destroyed all else and all hope of victory would go down in her defeat".** Fleming writes that the people in the streets wore "an expression of almost incredulous relief". A large banner appeared in London saying: "Quiet Nights, Thanks to Russia."*** As the gigantic battle unfolded on the Soviet-German Front the British people saw with increasing clarity how immensely important the alliance with the USSR was to Britain. "Russia's toughness," Eric Estorick writes, "had been a tonic to the British people after the long series of defeats which they had.... Against the background of unrelieved disaster, the tremendous defence of the Soviet Union lit the sky with splendour and hope of victories to come."*) In this situation, at the signing of the agreement with the Soviet Union the Churchill Government obviously could not put forward the above-mentioned terms. Had it done so it would have had to contend with enormous difficulties in its own country.

The British people desired a lasting and honest alliance with the USSR and were prepared to do much to give their Ally effective assistance. Aneurin Bevan wrote in the newspaper *Tribune*: "There is only one question for us in these swift days: what can we do to help ourselves by coming to the aid of the Soviet armies?"***) The British workers substantially stepped up output, feeling that this was a key contribution to the joint struggle against the nazis. Thanks to these efforts tank production went up 50 per cent in the course of a week.***) The British started collections for a fund to assist the USSR. By mid-October 1941 this fund rose to £250,000, which were used for the purchase of medical equipment for the USSR. Existing organisations promoting friendship between Britain and the USSR were enlarged and new ones sprang into being.

* Michael Foot, Op. cit., p. 335.

** Ibid., p. 337.

*** D. F. Fleming, Op. cit., p. 136.

*) Eric Estorick, Op. cit., p. 261.

***) Michael Foot, Op. cit., p. 336.

****) Eric Estorick, Op. cit., p. 255.

These organisations helped to disseminate truthful information about the Soviet Union. In its turn, this led to a growth of the popularity of socialist ideas and to the development of Left sentiments among the British people. The British workers' awareness of the advantages of the socialist system greatly worried the ruling classes.

Political apathy, a product of the phoney war days, disappeared in Britain in the summer of 1941. The popular movement for a closer alliance with the USSR influenced the Right-wing trade union and Labour leaders as well. The people who had early in 1940 zealously helped Chamberlain in his efforts to "switch" the war from Germany to the Soviet Union now found themselves compelled to contribute towards strengthening the alliance with the USSR. The TUC passed a decision to form an Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee as a body directing co-operation between British and Soviet trade unions with the purpose of mobilising the effort of the working people to secure a speedy victory over the common enemy. During the early phase of its activities this committee fruitfully helped to combine the military effort of the working people of the two countries.

The Question of the Second Front in 1941

The Anglo-Soviet Agreement of July 12, 1941 called for joint actions of the two countries in the war against Germany. First and foremost, these had to be military actions inasmuch as it was a question of actions under definite conditions—in war. There are indisputable facts to show that the subject of the talks in June and July 1941 and of the agreement signed as a result of these talks covered such actions and not only economic and material assistance. On June 30 Eden declared co-operation was also considered in military questions.* Then followed the exchange of military missions,** whose purpose, the British Government said, was to co-ordinate efforts in order to ensure the defeat of Germany***; this was likewise a step taken to show Britain's commitments to render the Soviet Union military assistance.

This brought two questions to the fore: what this assist-

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 152.

** A Soviet military mission led by General F. I. Golikov arrived in London on July 8.

*** *Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons*, Vol. 372, col. 974.

ance was to be like and what its time-limits would be? The experience of history prompted that this assistance had to take the shape of a Second Front, i.e., an attack by the British Armed Forces on German-occupied territory in Western Europe to divert part of the German forces from the Soviet-German Front. In the First World War victory was won by forcing Germany to divide her forces. The Nazi bloc owed its successes in Europe primarily to the fact that it dealt with its victims one by one, operating on one front. *The Times* wrote in September 1941 that "full Western co-operation in the Russian resistance is his [Hitler's.—*U. T.*] greatest fear, for that would upset his process of dealing with his enemies one by one".* It was vitally important to deprive the aggressors of the possibility of continuing to operate by that method. For this there was only one means—a Second Front in Western Europe.

It was absolutely plain when that front had to be opened—immediately, in 1941. Firstly, the outcome of the fighting on the Soviet-German Front during the first few months of 1941 would decide whether Germany would succeed in conducting a lightning war in the USSR. Secondly, the British Government was certain that the USSR would hold out for only a few months and, consequently, if any British military assistance was forthcoming it had to be rendered when it could be useful. "The view taken by military authorities in Britain and in the United States was that the German Wehrmacht's Russian campaign would be a matter of a minimum of one month and a possible maximum of three months. But at least it diverted the immediate threat from Britain; and Churchill and Roosevelt proceeded to promise help to Russian resistance."** Thus, by virtue of this consideration, Churchill should have opened a Second Front in the course of these three months if he had any intention of honouring the commitment formally made by him to the Soviet Union on behalf of Britain.

In full conformity with these indisputable conditions the Soviet Government raised the question of a Second Front. In personal messages to Churchill on July 18 and September 3, Stalin requested a front against Hitler in the West which could "divert 30-40 German divisions from the East-

* *The Times*, Sept. 5, 1941, p. 4.

** *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, p. 428.

ern Front".* In these messages Stalin justifiably pointed out that a Second Front was needed "not only for the sake of our common cause, but also in Britain's own interest",** because the absence of such a front might cause the USSR to suffer defeat or to become weakened to such an extent as to lose for a long time its ability to help Britain in the war against Germany and her allies.***

The British public was well aware of the consequences of such a development and demanded the opening of a Second Front before this question was raised by the Soviet Union. In Parliament as early as June 24 Aneurin Bevan urged the Government to open a Second Front without delay. Similar statements were made in Parliament from time to time throughout the second half of 1941. MP Clement Davies said on September 9 that the British people were worried by the question: "When is the war to begin on the Second Front?"**** As the situation on the Eastern Front grew more and more tense, the British people became increasingly insistent in demanding a Second Front. This was demanded not only by the Communist Party, but also by the trade unions, the Co-operative Party, various public organisations, young people, the military and other sections of the population. In communications from Moscow Sir Stafford Cripps also urged his Government to open a Second Front if it did not wish to "lose the whole value of any Russian front, at any rate for a long time, and possibly for good".*) "The Soviet appeal," Churchill says, "was very naturally supported by our Ambassador in Moscow in the strongest terms."**) It was also supported by Lord Beaverbrook, Minister for Aircraft Production, member of the War Cabinet and a close friend of Churchill's. "There is today," he said, "only one military problem—how to help Russia ... the attack on Russia has brought us a new peril as well as a new opportunity. If we do not help them now the Russians may collapse. And, freed at last from anxiety about the East, Hitler will concentrate all his forces against us in the West."***)

* *Correspondence*... Vol. I, p. 21.

** *Ibid.*, p. 13.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 21.

**** *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, Vol. 374, col. 139.

*) Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 154.

**) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 409.

***) Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, pp. 393-94.

However, Churchill thought differently about the need to fulfil the commitment to the USSR and about the expediency of a Second Front. He turned down the appeals of the Soviet Government. Lack of scruples in the attitude towards the USSR was shown not only in the refusal to keep the promise of assistance but also in the motivation for the refusal. Churchill deliberately understated the strength of the British Armed Forces and the potential of the British war industry and overstated the strength of the German defences on the coast of Western Europe. Trumbull Higgins, the American historian, says in this connection: "Here the Prime Minister was on weak ground; German fortifications along most of the extended coasts of France were in their commander's own words, in large measure, a 'Propaganda Wall' conjured up by the nazis to deceive the German people as well as the Allies."* Michael Foot says: "Hitler's Europe at that time was not fortified as strongly as Churchill claimed in his notes to Stalin."** Churchill had to persuade not only the Soviet Government but also his own Ambassador in Moscow that Britain was unable to open a Second Front. He failed in both cases, and small wonder, because his arguments belied the facts.

Actually, in 1941 Britain's material and physical possibilities gave her a reasonable chance of successfully landing troops on the West European coast. She had sufficient troops for such an operation. On September 22, 1941, in a directive to the British delegation that was setting out for an Anglo-Soviet-US conference, which was drawn up to persuade the USSR that Britain was in no position to open a Second Front, Churchill wrote that on the British Isles there was an Army of over 2,000,000 effectives and a Home Guard of 1,500,000 men. The Army consisted of 20 mobile infantry divisions, nine semi-mobile divisions, six armoured divisions and five armoured brigades, not counting air and other units.*** Britain had the necessary air strength to support an invasion. "The British Air Force," Churchill wrote on October 25, 1941, "is already stronger than his [Hitler's.—U.T.], and, with American aid, increasing more rapidly."*) As

* Trumbull Higgins, *Winston Churchill and the Second Front, 1940-1943*, New York, 1957, p. 72.

** Michael Foot, *Op. cit.*, p. 339.

*** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 765-66.

*) *Ibid.*, p. 486.

regards the naval forces needed to cover a landing, Britain had overwhelming superiority over the enemy. At the time of their invasion of the USSR, the Germans had in Europe 46 divisions, of which eight were soon afterwards dispatched to the Eastern Front. Lord Beaverbrook was right when in the autumn of 1941 he said: "It is nonsense to say that we can do nothing for Russia. We can as soon as we decide to sacrifice long-term projects and a general view of the war which, though still cherished, became completely obsolete on the day when Russia was attacked."*

Britain had the physical possibility for opening a Second Front in 1941 and, as an Ally of the USSR, it was her duty to have effected a landing in Western Europe. Why had she failed to do so? There are several reasons. In the course of many decades the British imperialists had evolved a tradition, advantageous to them and disadvantageous to their Allies, of making others fight for them. In the given case the desire to shift the burden of sacrifice and suffering onto the shoulders of their Ally was heightened by the British bourgeois ruling classes' hatred of the socialist state. The British Government entered into an alliance with the Soviet Union not only to enable Britain to survive but also to use the rights and possibilities of an Ally to compel the Soviet Union to fight until it was exhausted. This, it believed, would greatly weaken Germany and lead to the collapse or at least the crippling of the socialist system in the USSR.

Churchill's Government took a great risk to achieve that purpose—it denied the USSR aid in the initial period of the war, fully conscious that this might force the socialist state out of the war and mortally endanger Britain. This was only one of many cases when class hatred and prejudice made the British ruling circles risk the vital interests of the nation.

The colonial nature of British imperialism explains the Government's morbidly heightened interest in the Mediterranean theatre of hostilities. Large numbers of troops and great quantities of military supplies were sent to the Middle East, with the result that the attention and efforts of the British political and military leaders turned from the struggle against Germany in Europe to the struggle against Germany and Italy in the Middle East. Churchill's passion for the Middle East reached such a high pitch that frequent-

* Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, p. 394.

ly his military advisers insisted on reducing the troop and supply movements to that region to avoid weakening the defences of Britain herself. Another factor was the lack of faith in the strength of the Soviet Union. This gave rise to the conviction that since the USSR was doomed anyway, any British troops landed in the European continent would find themselves in difficulties should the Soviet Union cease fighting. Lastly, there was the deep-rooted strategic concept which demanded that Britain fight on the continent not with her land armies but by creating and financing a coalition, whose members would provide the necessary land forces; Britain would contribute naval and air units.

Thus, had Britain fulfilled her Allied obligations to the letter, she would have effected a landing in Europe in 1941. However, in line with her traditional policy, she shifted the main burden of the war onto the shoulders of her Ally.

Anti-Soviet Forces in Britain

An event that had resounding repercussions took place in Britain on September 2, 1941. On that day the British Trades Union Congress passed a resolution to establish an Anglo-Russian Trade Union Council. Jack Tanner, President of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, in supporting the resolution, among other things said: "There is a point of view held in certain quarters which may result in a nullification of the whole war effort. There are people in high places who declare that they hope the Russian and German armies will exterminate each other, and while this is taking place we, the British Commonwealth of Nations, will so develop our Air Force and other armed forces that, if Russia and Germany do destroy each other, we shall have the dominating power in Europe. That point of view has been expressed quite recently by a Cabinet Minister—a member of the present Government—a gentleman who holds a very important position—none other than the Minister for Aircraft Production, Colonel Moore-Brabazon. I think every one will agree that such an attitude is a terrible danger, and it is a crime against the people of this country and the people of Russia."^{*}

Walter Citrine, a Right-wing trade union leader well-

^{*} W. P. and Zelda K. Coates, *Op. cit.*, pp. 684-85.

known for his anti-Soviet views, who presided at the Congress, tried to mitigate the impression made by Tanner's statement. He declared he had not heard anything of the kind from anybody and cast doubt on what Tanner said. But it was hopeless trying to shield Moore-Brabazon, for he had in fact made the statement in question at a luncheon given by John Simon, a well-known Munichite, at the Central Hotel in Manchester. Although a very select group was present, there were among them two officials of the Amalgamated Engineering Union who told Tanner what Moore-Brabazon said.

Normally, after a statement like that had become public property, Moore-Brabazon might have been expected to resign his Cabinet post. But nothing of the kind took place. Churchill publicly took him under his wing, doing it in a heavy-footed way. It was announced that his real views were not what he had said in Manchester but what he had expressed in his public speeches.

The Coates tell us that soon after the Moore-Brabazon scandal, a group of officers attended a reception where one of them, scion of a prominent Tory family, remarked: "We are all Moore-Brabazons here but he was a fool to blurt it out."* This remark met with universal approval from the officers present.

Moore-Brabazon remained in the Government for another six months through the efforts of Churchill and those whose views he had voiced. He finally turned in his resignation on February 21, 1942. He gives the reasons leading up to his resignation in his memoirs: "From that day [September 2, 1941.—*U.T.*] there was organised opposition in every works I visited, and people hooted and shouted and booed wherever I went. . . . Consequently, instead of being a help to the Prime Minister I was a definite drag on him."**

The Moore-Brabazon statement outlined the strategic political concept to which most of the British ruling circles adhered during the Second World War. They were, for the most part, Right-wing, rabidly reactionary political leaders—from out and out pro-nazis to Munichites of various hues. Their desire to see the Soviet Union and Germany become utterly exhausted in the war was shared by imperialist

* *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 7.

** *Ibid.*

circles, who considered that in order to gain supremacy in Europe and preserve the British Empire war with Germany was necessary. These circles were wholeheartedly behind Churchill. Consequently, the Moore-Brabazon statement reflected the Government's real policy, which was not publicised. The Coates point out that these views were "held very widely in influential circles in Great Britain at the time. Perhaps more important still, similar views were held by Prime Minister Churchill."* This unanimity of the British ruling classes derived from their class attitude towards the USSR. The Munichites and Churchill's supporters alike would have been glad to see the USSR destroyed or weakened.

In the period the anti-fascist coalition was in existence, anti-Soviet forces in Britain exerted considerable influence on state policy. The reason for this was that the switch from a search for agreement with nazi Germany to an armed struggle against her—the switch from Chamberlain to Churchill—was accomplished without an upheaval thanks to the political adroitness and experience of the British bourgeoisie. The Munichites took back seats, yielding some of the leading posts in the Government, including the post of Prime Minister, to Churchill and his supporters without a struggle that might have rocked the country. However, they retained their posts in the state apparatus and in industry, and only in deference to the changed situation they refrained from publicly stating their views, fearing to call down upon themselves the wrath of the people. Though they lost direct control of the Government, their indirect influence on British policy remained substantial.

The British working people suspected that this injurious activity was being promoted. At a conference of shop stewards on October 19, 1941 Walter Swanson declared: "We are sure that we all feel and share the great and justifiable alarm felt by the workers in every factory that the Government is not pulling its weight alongside Russia. It needs to be publicly stated that the factories are seething with suspicion, that 'the Government is letting Russia down', or that 'the presence of the Halifaxes, Moore-Brabazons and Margessons is the reason why there is no Second Front'. We warn the Government, the workers will never allow them

* W. P. and Zelda K. Coates, *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

to let Russia down, for they know it means we go down as well.”* Combined with the Soviet successes against the Nazi invasion and with Soviet policy aimed at strengthening the anti-Nazi coalition, the vigilance of the British working people and their struggle for an honest and effective alliance with the USSR played a key role in developing Allied relations between the two countries. The Churchill Government desired an alliance with the USSR in order to ensure victory over Germany, but it acted inconsistently and frequently jeopardised Allied relations with the USSR. In this situation the stand of the British people was of immense importance, and it increasingly determined the actions of the British Government as a member of the Grand Coalition.

A negative factor in the relations between Britain and the USSR was unquestionably that people hostile to the Soviet Union held influential positions in the leadership of the British Armed Forces and the Foreign Office, i.e., in those links of the British state apparatus on which depended Britain's practical fulfilment of her Allied obligations to the USSR. General John Kennedy writes that in June 1941, Field-Marshal John Dill, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, told him that “he regarded the Russians as so foul that he hated the idea of any close association with them” and that he had forced himself to be friendly to the Soviet Military Mission “out of a sense of duty”.** General Ismay, member of the Chiefs of Staffs Committee and a close associate of Churchill's, writes in his memoirs: “It must be admitted that the prospect of being Allies with the Bolsheviks was repugnant.”***

Sentiments of this kind predominated among British diplomats as well, among whom Cripps was obviously an exception. That was undoubtedly why Churchill replaced him as Ambassador to Moscow in January 1942 by Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, a career diplomat. Cripps' biographer, Eric Estorick, says that when the Ambassador arrived in Moscow in 1940 he found an atmosphere of hate and ignorance of the Soviet Union prevalent among British diplomats, whose express job was to maintain relations between Britain and the USSR. Three months after taking up

* *Labour Monthly*, November 1941, p. 457.

** John N. Kennedy, *Op. cit.*, pp. 147, 149.

*** *The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay*, pp. 223-24.

his duties in Moscow Cripps wrote in a letter: "The universal hymn of hate whenever a few Englishmen meet together against the Russians makes me rather depressed and cross. . . . The whole tradition and bias of the Foreign Office and diplomatic service is violently and unreasoningly anti-Russian. . . . It is this atmosphere which has made it impossible ever to have any reasonable agreement between a Conservative Government in Great Britain and Russia."* Naturally, with these sentiments pervading the British Foreign Office it was extremely difficult to regulate the alliance between Britain and the USSR.

Anglo-US Relations. Argentina Meeting

Throughout the second half of 1941 the USA moved steadily towards physical involvement in the war. It had not yet completed its preparations for war and elements opposing its involvement were still generally influential in the country. These two factors held the USA back from declaring war on Germany. However, the flow of armaments to Britain and the provision of US naval escorts for British convoys across the Atlantic from the USA to Iceland meant that until December 1941 "the United States was in reality engaged in an undeclared war in the Atlantic".** The USA had gone so far to assist Britain not from a desire to help a country close to it in language, traditions and culture but from considerations of its own interests. It was a struggle between leading imperialist powers for world domination. "In 1941," writes the American historian William Hardy McNeill, "the prospect that Britain and her Allies might be unable to prevent a victorious Germany from dominating Europe (and from Europe, perhaps, the world) brought the United States into war at Britain's side. . . . But the fear of a new and ruthless German world-master was surely the more potent motive."*** This was precisely what determined US policy when President Roosevelt declared US support for the Soviet Union against Germany.

Although both Britain and the USA were objectively interested in assisting the Soviet Union, there was consider-

* Eric Estorick, *Op. cit.*, p. 231.

** William Hardy McNeill, *America, Britain and Russia. Their Co-operation and Conflict, 1941-1946*, London, 1953, p. 7.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 6.

able friction between them on this question. Each wanted a larger share of the benefit from the alliance with the USSR. They kept a watchful eye on each other. In June 1941 Churchill took the initiative and proposed that the US Government support the USSR in the event it was attacked by Germany. The realisation of this proposal would inevitably have brought about the establishment of Allied relations between Britain and the USSR, which would have meant a substantial slackening of British dependence on US aid inasmuch as in the Soviet Union Britain would have had a reliable bastion. "The Anglo-Soviet Alliance strengthens the position of the British ruling class in relation to the American ruling class," *Labour Monthly* wrote in August 1941.* This was appreciated in Washington and, therefore, while consenting to the alliance the USA decided to keep Britain's actions in this sphere under strict surveillance. Firstly, Washington demanded that Britain adopt a "tough" line towards the USSR; this harmonised with the anti-Soviet feelings of the American ruling circles and would not facilitate a rapprochement between Britain and the USSR. Secondly, the USA was categorically opposed to British recognition of the Soviet 1941 frontiers.** This greatly complicated Anglo-Soviet relations and in subsequent years seriously hindered the strengthening of the Anglo-Soviet alliance. Thirdly, the USA demanded that in all matters pertaining to the USSR Britain should agree her actions with the US Government and that there should be no secrecy around these actions.*** US interference reached even details such as whether the document recording Allied relations between Britain and the Soviet Union should take the form of a treaty or an agreement. The Americans favoured the agreement variant.*)

The Soviet Union's entry into the war radically changed the entire situation in the world. Beginning in June 1941 all basic questions of Anglo-US war-time relations were decided with an eye to developments on the Eastern Front and to Anglo-Soviet and US-Soviet relations. The change in the balance of strength between the belligerents in June made it imperative for the governments of the USA and

* *Labour Monthly*, August 1941, p. 355.

** *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1941*, Vol. I, pp. 760-61.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 182.

*) Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 152.

Britain to discuss their plans for the future and co-ordinate their policies. Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's personal envoy, arrived in London in mid-July 1941 to prepare a conference to examine the situation. However, English sources say that "conferences in London were obviously incomplete until there was a much fuller Anglo-American understanding of the situation in Russia, her requirements, and the prospects of her survival".* The latter aspect was what interested the English and the Americans most. A month had passed since the German attack, i.e., the minimum time given by British and American strategists for the Soviet Union's collapse, yet heavy fighting continued to rage in the East with no sign of the Soviet Union being on the verge of knuckling under. It was necessary to puzzle out what was happening in that enigmatic Russia. Churchill decided to use Harry Hopkins for the purpose. With Roosevelt's consent Hopkins went to Moscow.

On July 30 and 31 he had talks with the Soviet leaders, telling them that "our Government and the British Government (Churchill having authorised me to say this) were willing to do everything that they possibly could during the succeeding weeks to send materiel to Russia".** Hopkins made this statement after he became convinced that the Soviet Union had no thought of surrender, that it was determined to continue the war. He was given an exhaustive report on the Soviet Armed Forces and Soviet war industry and economy. As a matter of fact, this gives the lie to the fabrications of bourgeois historians that the Soviet Union was not frank with its Allies.

However, it would be wrong to accept the above-mentioned statement by Hopkins at its face value. The words "during the succeeding weeks" are of particular interest. They must be interpreted to mean that in Moscow Hopkins saw that the Soviet Union needed immediate assistance and that it was the duty of the USA and Britain to extend that assistance without delay. Regrettably, neither Britain nor the USA had any intention of sending armaments and strategic materials to the Soviet Union "during the succeeding weeks", i.e., in August and September. Heavy fighting was in progress on Soviet soil, but Churchill and Roosevelt

* *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, p. 429.

** Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, p. 341.

meant to delay settling the question of assistance to the Soviet Union until the outcome of the German offensive of the summer of 1941 became known. It was planned to hold an Anglo-Soviet-American conference in Moscow to discuss the question of aid. Hopkins wrote in his report: "I was mindful of the importance that no conference be held in Moscow until we knew the outcome of the battles now in progress. I felt it very unwise to hold a conference while this battle was in the balance. Hence my suggestion to hold a conference at as late a date as was possible. Then we would know whether or not there was to be a front."^{*}

The outcome of the summer battles on the Eastern Front was thus to decide the question of assistance. Consequently, for the time being the Soviet Union's alliance with Britain and the USA was only of moral and political value; as for material assistance, it had yet to be won. Nonetheless, the Hopkins mission to Moscow had its positive aspects. To some extent it helped to elucidate the position and intentions of the Western Allies, strengthened the relations between the leading members of the anti-nazi coalition and enhanced the Soviet Union's prestige.

Churchill and Roosevelt met in Argentia Bay, Newfoundland, on August 9, 1941, and in their talks they took Hopkins's report into account. Roosevelt assessed the report more correctly than his partner. Evidently he was inclined to believe the Soviet Union would withstand the German onslaught and, therefore, displayed more readiness to send it armaments and strategic materials. Churchill, on the other hand, was still sceptical about the Soviet Union's ability to go on fighting in 1942.^{**} This was one of the reasons why he insisted on America giving the maximum quantity of armaments to Britain and as little as possible to the USSR.^{***}

In Moscow Hopkins had reached agreement that Churchill and Roosevelt would send Stalin a message from Argentia. The draft of this message was written by Cripps, and Hopkins took it with him when he left Moscow. The message was received in Moscow on August 15. It stated that Churchill and Roosevelt had consulted together "as to how best our two countries can help your country in the

^{*} Ibid.

^{**} Trumbull Higgins, *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

^{***} D. F. Fleming, *Op. cit.*, p. 140.

splendid defence that you are putting up against the nazi attack".* They suggested calling a conference in Moscow to examine this question, thereby postponing effective assistance to some future date. However, the very fact of the Anglo-US statement in support of the USSR—the text of the message from Roosevelt and Churchill was published—and the prospect of concrete discussion (regrettably, only discussion) were of positive value. It showed that the three Great Powers were steadily drawing closer together.

Churchill and Roosevelt scrutinised the further strategy to be employed in the war. The British spoke, while the Americans, being formally not involved in the war, listened in order to ascertain what their partner's real intentions were. British strategy envisaged the eventual defeat of Germany through the undermining of German economy and the morale of the German people by means of a blockade, bombing raids, subversive activity and propaganda. British military leaders believed Germany could be smashed by heavy air strikes, and an invasion of the continent by land forces would be required solely to occupy the territory of the defeated enemy. They, therefore, put in a request for the latest types of American heavy bombers, planning to start an air offensive on Germany.** In line with their strategy the British military leaders declared: "We do not foresee vast armies of infantry as in 1914-18. The forces we employ will be armoured divisions with the most modern equipment. To supplement their operations the local patriots must be secretly armed and equipped so that at the right moment they may rise in revolt."***

A major element of the British plan was that it paid special attention to the Middle East and Africa. The British sought to persuade the Americans that no means should be spared to keep a grip on Singapore and British Middle East positions and to seize the North African coast and a number of islands in the Atlantic.

A feature of the strategy proposed by the British was that for the first time in talks at the level of military leaders they openly raised the question of the US coming into the war.

* *Correspondence*. . . , Vol. I, p. 17.

** William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, pp. 665-66.

*** Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*, Washington, 1953, p. 55.

Britain's reluctance to mobilise a large army and invade the continent was extremely noteworthy. In view of the fact that Germany's principal strength lay in her land forces, the means by which British military leaders planned to defeat her were naive. But this was by no means naivete on the part of the British Government. It was a calculated line of shifting the main burden of the war and human sacrifice onto the shoulders of its Allies. Land forces were needed to crush the German land forces, and these had to be supplied by the Soviet Union. The British military did not speak openly of this but they obviously had it in mind, for that alone provided the key to the link between the strategy proposed by Churchill and his promise, given jointly with Roosevelt, of assisting the Soviet Union. "The most important of these morale-cracking forces was probably the Red Army, although wisely, the Prime Minister did not frankly discuss it as such," Higgins writes, and points out that "at that stage, and in its British version, Round-Up [i.e., implementation of the British strategy.—*U. T.*] was clearly designated not to create, but to take advantage of a German collapse."^{*}

The strategy outlined by the British meant they intended to stick to the strategy of indirect action, of avoiding decisive battles in the main theatre of the war, of securing the enemy's exhaustion by means other than direct confrontation with his main forces, fighting in secondary theatres and getting their Allies to shoulder the main burden of the struggle. The British Government's unwillingness to muster large armies of the type that operated in 1914-18 for an invasion of the continent meant it did not plan a Second Front in the sense it was envisaged by the Soviet Union. Naturally, not a word of this was said to the Soviet Government. On the contrary, efforts were made to convince it that in the long run, after she had completed the necessary preparations, Britain would invade Western Europe.

As far as the Soviet Union was concerned, the British intention of concentrating their own and the American effort in the Middle East and North African theatres did not hold out the promise of anything good either. Their proposals on this question charted the course for the military effort

* Trumbull Higgins, *Op. cit.*, pp. 67, 66.

of Britain and the USA, which for a long time evaded the issue of a Second Front in Europe.

The American military leaders did not subscribe to the British strategy. At the conference they did not give a definite reply to the British proposals, stating their considerations to the British later. They rightly felt Germany could not be defeated by the means suggested by the British, that powerful armies had to be used to smash her. This was not the only point on which Churchill and Roosevelt disagreed at the Atlantic Conference.

One of the reasons inducing the British and American leaders to meet in early August 1941 was the need to proclaim the official aims of the two countries in the war. Being *de jure* a non-belligerent, the USA could afford to take its time in proclaiming its objectives. However, Britain was in a different position. British public opinion had repeatedly voiced its dissatisfaction over the Government's silence on this matter. This was not an accidental silence. Chamberlain and then Churchill deliberately evaded proclaiming their war objectives, firstly because they could not state their true aims openly, for they were imperialist aims, and, secondly, because they desired to keep their hands free; there was no telling how the war would go and with whom and on what terms Britain would have to reach agreement.

The situation changed fundamentally after the Soviet Union, early in July 1941, declared that its aims in the war were to eradicate the menace hanging over it and help the European peoples win liberation from nazi slavery. The Soviet Union's aims of liberation were reinforced by the heroic struggle of the Soviet people and their Armed Forces against the German invaders. That steadily made the USSR the moral and political leader of the liberation struggle of the peoples against fascism. In London and Washington it was seen that mankind's hopes and sympathies were with the Soviet Union, and that something had to be done to counter this mood.

There was more to this than having to offer something that would outweigh the objectives proclaimed by the Soviet Union. It was necessary to proclaim aims which would conform to the interests of the peoples and win their support for the military effort of Britain and the USA. Inasmuch as the USA was not yet officially involved, while Britain was already fighting and losing the war, the British,

more than the Americans, desired to enlist the support of the peoples. Subsequently, at the beginning of 1945, when Roosevelt returned from the Yalta Conference, he remarked to correspondents: "The Atlantic Charter is a beautiful idea. When it was drawn up, the situation was that England was about to lose the war. They needed hope, and it gave it to them."*

That document, stating the official aims of Britain and the USA, consists essentially of two parts. One reflected the real aims of the USA and Britain, and the other, wholly propagandistic, contained provisions whose purpose was to persuade the peoples that the USA and Britain were pursuing just aims in the war.

When the first part of the Charter was examined it was found that there were points on which Britain and the USA were united and also those on which they did not see eye to eye. The two countries stated that their purpose was to stamp out nazi tyranny, because nazi Germany was a threat to both Britain and the USA. As far as the anti-fascist coalition was concerned this was the most important provision.

Further, the Charter envisaged that when peace was won all countries would have equal access to trade and world raw material sources, as well as to the free and unhindered use of seas and oceans. These provisions were included in the Charter in face of dogged resistance from Churchill because they were directed against Britain's old claims to a special status on the high seas and against the system of preferential customs tariffs protecting the British Empire from an influx of goods from other countries. The Americans were determined to break down the preferential tariffs barrier in order to enable US foreign trade to expand in countries of the British Empire. During the discussion of the draft Charter Churchill nervously asked the Americans if their demand for equal access to trade was directed against the 1932 Ottawa Agreements on preferential tariffs and received a pointedly positive reply. All his efforts to block the inclusion of this provision in the Charter came to nothing.

He had to give Roosevelt the firm assurance that Britain had neither previously nor would in future sign secret treaties with other countries relative to the post-war arrange-

* *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1944-1945*, New York, 1950, p. 564.

ment. The Americans put the question like this: since we are helping you and taking part in winning the war, we are resolved to have a share in victory's fruits, i.e., in the establishment of the post-war international order. They made it plain they did not want a repetition of the World War I experience, when the USA helped Britain to victory and at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 was unexpectedly confronted with a system of secret treaties signed by Britain regarding the future peace, with the result that Wilson found himself in a very difficult position.*

Such was the US response to the British request for more armaments and for "a definite American commitment to enter the war". Churchill now saw that Britain would have to pay a high price for US assistance and support. This was felt by many people in Britain. The British press responded irritably to the Atlantic Charter, arguing that the United States could not "hope to shape the future peace without first taking part in the war".**

Among the Atlantic Charter's propagandistic provisions, which subsequently were not applied in the policies of its architects but which unquestionably had a positive response, were that Britain and the USA sought no aggrandisement, territorial or other, that they desired to see no territorial changes that did not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned, and that they respected the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live. The Charter spoke of the need to give all nations social security and a higher standard of living and deliver them from fear and want. It called for the abandonment of the use of force in the maintenance of peace, the establishment of a reliable system of general security, the disarmament of nations that threatened, or might threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, and the deliverance of the peoples from the burden of armament.

On September 24, 1941, in view of the objectively positive nature of these provisions, the Soviet Government announced its agreement with the basic principles of the Atlantic Charter, making the reservation, however, that in some cases the wording might be interpreted in various ways and used, at will, to the detriment of the Soviet Union's legitimate

* William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, p. 681.

** *Ibid.*, pp. 691-92.

interests. Developments showed that the Soviet Government was right.

Although the Atlantic Charter proclaimed that Britain and the USA desired a just democratic peace, the leaders of these countries had no intention of carrying out the provisions of the Charter. Churchill himself provides evidence of the insincerity of the Charter authors. After agreeing the text of the Charter with Roosevelt, he informed the War Cabinet that the Charter was only "an interim and partial statement of war aims designed to assure all countries of our righteous purpose, and not the complete structure which we should build after victory".*

Thus not a word was said in the Charter about Britain's real war aims, yet they were very simple—the establishment of Anglo-US hegemony in the post-war world. In each of these countries the imperialist circles would have preferred, naturally, to dominate the world without sharing power with their Ally. However, the world power balance was such that even the USA, the strongest imperialist country, could not count on undivided domination. A kind of condominium had to be planned, in which Britain was accorded a clearly subordinate role, in conformity with her strength, but out of diplomatic courtesy nothing was said of this.

The British ruling circles adopted Anglo-US world domination as their main war aim when they lost France as an Ally and steered towards an alliance with the United States. In December 1940, speaking as British Ambassador in the USA for the last time, Lord Lothian said the United States and Britain would achieve a post-war arrangement to their liking only if they had more aircraft, warships and "key positions of world power than any possible totalitarian rival".**

A frank exchange on this subject took place at the Atlantic Conference when Churchill suggested including in the Charter a point about the creation of an international organisation of the League of Nations type. Roosevelt raised an objection to this and stated what he thought the post-war arrangement should be like. He said the creation of a

* Ruth B. Russell, *A History of the United Nations Charter. The Role of the United States, 1940-1945*, Washington, 1958, p. 40.

** *The American Speeches of Lord Lothian, July 1939 to December 1940*, London, 1941, p. 143.

new League of Nations should be preceded by a period in which an international police force composed of the United States and Britain had had an opportunity of functioning. In reply Churchill remarked that of course he was wholeheartedly in favour of it and shared the President's view.*

These designs were linked up with the Charter's provision stating the resolve of the USA and Britain to secure the disarmament of aggressor states. At first glance no exception could be taken to this point, provided the meaning which the authors of the Charter had put into it was not taken into consideration. In a telegram to London from Argentina on August 11 Churchill defined this point as "most remarkable for its realism. The President undoubtedly contemplates the disarmament of the guilty nations, coupled with the maintenance of strong united British and American armaments both by sea and air for a long indefinite period."** Two days later he jubilantly cabled London that the "Joint Declaration proposing final destruction of nazi power and disarmament of aggressive nations while Britain and the United States remain armed is an event of first magnitude".*** One may legitimately ask why Britain and the USA should remain armed after the aggressive nations had been disarmed and, consequently, the danger of war had been eliminated? They needed armaments for international police functions as stated above, i.e, for the establishment and maintenance of Anglo-US supremacy in the post-war world. There is no other answer.

While these plans were being hatched, the Soviet Union was fighting Germany and her satellites and doing more than anybody else to destroy the might of the nazis. What role were the participants in the Atlantic Conference prepared to accord to the Soviet Union in a post-war world directed by Anglo-US police? The American historian William A. Williams writes that "Roosevelt's extension of Lend Lease to Russia did not signify any fundamental awareness of Moscow's important role in any plans for the future. The character of the Atlantic Conference between Churchill and Roosevelt in August 1941 bears strong witness to that fact. For implicit in the Atlantic Charter—drafted

* William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, p. 685.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 391.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 398.

by Churchill and Roosevelt *before* the entrance of the United States into the war but *after* the nazi attack on Russia—was the assumption that Britain and the United States would make the post-war settlement for ‘all men in all lands’.”* The Soviet Union’s future place and role in the post-war world was thus to depend on Britain and the USA. In token of special gratitude for the blood shed by the Soviet people in defeating Germany and her satellites, Britain and the USA possibly meant to disarm the USSR, like the defeated fascist powers. This was what was meant when at the Atlantic Conference US Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles told Roosevelt that it might be a matter of commitment on the part of the United States and, consequently, of Britain “to disarm not only Germany but possibly also Japan and at least theoretically the Soviet Union”.** The only reason these imperialist plans were not destined to be fulfilled was that when the war ended the strength of the Soviet Union was such that in both theory and practice the politicians in London and Washington had to relinquish their designs and recognise its legitimate rights and role in the post-war settlement.

The Atlantic Charter and the Colonial Peoples

In the Atlantic Charter the USA and Britain declared they desired to restore the sovereign rights and self-government of the nations that had been deprived of them by force. For the governments of Britain and the USA the inclusion of these and other provisions in the Charter was nothing more than a piece of propaganda. They had no intention at all of renouncing their plan of preserving, strengthening and enlarging their colonial positions. The following facts are evidence that the peoples of the colonies and dependent countries could not count on receiving freedom from the British and American imperialists after the defeat of the nazi bloc. On September 9, 1941 Churchill published an official declaration excluding “India, Burma and other parts of the British Empire” from the sphere

* William A. Williams, *American-Russian Relations, 1781-1947*, New York, 1952, p. 262.

** William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, p. 686.

embraced by the Atlantic Charter. This declaration said that at "the Atlantic meeting, we had in mind, primarily, the restoration of the sovereignty, self-government and national life of the states and nations of Europe now under the nazi yoke".* The British Government thus officially stated that despite the Atlantic Charter it would continue to deny freedom and national independence to the many peoples in the British Empire.

The British limited interpretation of the Charter was not accepted in the USA. On February 22, 1942 Roosevelt rejected Churchill's interpretation, saying "the Atlantic Charter applies not only to the parts of the world that border the Atlantic but to the whole world".** This did not imply that the USA was championing the freedom of enslaved nations. US imperialism was out to undermine the British Empire and use the slogan of "granting independence" to take over some of the British colonial possessions by economic penetration. US policy was hostile not only to the British colonialists but also to the peoples of all colonial and dependent countries, for its aim was to replace British, French, Dutch and Belgian rule by if not open then at least disguised American domination.

In the colonial question Britain's policy was clear-cut—she was determined to retain her grip on all the colonies and dependent territories in the British Empire. Her uncompromising stand on this question was expressed by Churchill in the well-known words: "I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire."*** But in order to create the impression that in London they were thinking of bettering the lot of the colonial peoples the British Government now and then made vague statements on the colonial question. In early 1943 Colonel Oliver Stanley, Secretary of State for the Colonies, publicly explained British policy as being "animated by three general principles: the establishment of the rule of law, the provision of incorruptible administration, and the prevention of exploitation". The administration of British colonies would remain the sole responsibility of the British Government. This fully dovetailed with

* *Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons*, Vol. 374, col. 69.

** R. Palme Dutt, *The Crisis of Britain and the British Empire*, London, 1957, p. 92.

*** *The Times*, Nov. II, 1942.

Churchill's views and with the views of the Conservative Party, which he headed. The stand of the Liberal Party was somewhat different. It suggested that all dependent areas should come under the supervision of an international body, whose guiding principles would be the well-being of colonial peoples, the "open door", and the training of natives in the development of free institutions so they could progressively manage their own affairs. The Labour Party advocated a generalised system of international administration based on the extension of the mandates system to all colonial territories.* Liberal and Labour opinion had no practical significance because the policy of the Churchill Government was laid down by the Tories. Nonetheless, it reflected the British people's growing awareness of the need for a change in the colonial empire in accordance with the changing world situation. Neither the Liberals nor the Labour men, it should be noted, urged the restoration to the colonial peoples of the freedom of which they had been dispossessed by the colonialists, thereby demonstrating no essential disagreement with Tory policy.

A fundamentally different attitude was adopted by the Soviet Union to the Atlantic Charter's proclamation that all nations should have the right to arrange their life in their own way. In September 1941 the Soviet Government stated its agreement with the basic provisions of the Charter, giving them a broader interpretation. It declared that the Second World War was deciding the destiny not only of Europe but of all mankind for many decades to come and that after victory was won the foundations had to be laid for international co-operation and friendship which would mirror the desires and ideals of freedom-loving nations. "In its foreign policy," the Soviet declaration pointed out, "the Soviet Union has unswervingly implemented the lofty principle of respect of the sovereign rights of nations. It has been guided by the principle of the self-determination of nations. In its nationalities policy, which underlies the Soviet state system, the Soviet Union proceeds from this principle, which is founded on the recognition of the sovereignty and equality of nations. In line with this principle, the Soviet Union champions the right of every nation to state independence and territorial inviolability, and its

* Ruth B. Russell, *Op. cit.*, pp. 86-87.

right to establish a social system and choose the form of administration which it feels is most expedient and necessary for its country's economic and cultural advancement."** Thus, with regard to the Atlantic Charter the Soviet stand wholly and completely conformed to the interests of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America. This blunted the colonial aspirations of the USA and Britain and helped to activate the national liberation struggle, especially as the Soviet Government unequivocally stated its support for that struggle. Nicholas Mansergh writes that "by reason of doctrine" the Soviet Union was "anti-colonial in principle", that it held the "conviction that the ending of colonialism was something to be desired and to be hastened".**

The colonial people's rejection of the British interpretation of the Charter was due largely to the Soviet statement. Neither in Asia, "nor indeed in many parts of the Commonwealth," Mansergh points out, "was this restricted interpretation of the Atlantic Charter accepted or welcomed ... in practice Mr. Churchill's assertions paid too little regard to the experience of the war and the climate of world opinion."*** The colonial peoples became more and more determined to see the fulfilment of the promises in the Charter.

The Main Front of the War Shifts to the East

It would seem that today, after the publication of numerous documents, memoirs and researches, nobody would dispute the Soviet Union's decisive role in the war and in saving Britain from defeat. Yet that is not the case. It can be traced to Churchill himself, who knew the truth; he wrote: "The entry of Russia into the war was welcome but not immediately helpful to us."*)

Churchill was a past master at evading the truth and spreading concepts that were a far cry from reality, particularly where it concerned the USSR. In his war memoirs misrepresentation gets along very well with accuracy. Truth

* *Uneshnaya politika Sovetskogo Soyuz. . .*, Vol. I, p. 146.

** N. Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, London, 1958, pp. 191-92.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 193.

*) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 350.

is used to convince the reader of the author's objectivity and make him believe what Churchill wants him to believe, in the given case the spurious version that during the second half of 1941 the struggle waged by the USSR was of little importance to Britain.

The fact that the German invasion of the USSR removed the threat of an invasion of the British Isles does not require proof. Nobody disclaims it. Yet, according to Churchill, the Soviet Union's entry into the war was not immediately helpful to Britain.

The real state of affairs was that since the British no longer had to prepare to fight back German invasion forces, they were able to concentrate their effort in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and North Africa.

What was the situation in these theatres?

In the fighting for sea communications in the Atlantic the situation changed in Britain's favour in mid-1941. This was due not to any radical change achieved by Britain by military force but to the transfer to the East of the German bombers that had been sinking British merchant and naval vessels in the Atlantic and striking at wharves in Britain. Now these bombers were used to attack Soviet towns, and the British could, with little hindrance, build new ships to replace losses and transfer many naval vessels from shore patrol to convoy escort duty. The results made themselves felt at once. In April 1941 the Germans sank 154 merchant ships (Allied and neutral) aggregating 653,960 tons; in July these losses dropped to 43 vessels (120,975 tons) and in November to 34 vessels (104,212 tons). True, in December 1941 the losses grew, but this was due to the fact that the Japanese began sinking British ships in the Far East.*

Similarly, the Eastern Front influenced the situation in the Mediterranean. The Germans withdrew their aircraft from that area and threw them against the USSR. That gave the British the possibility of strengthening their positions in the Mediterranean and almost completely cut the enemy's lines of communication between Italy and the German and Italian troops operating in North Africa. The Germans were compelled to return part of their air strength from the East and bring some of their submarines into the

* Ibid., p. 697.

Mediterranean from the Atlantic. In November and December the British naval forces were seriously weakened by a series of heavy attacks against the British fleet and naval bases in the Mediterranean.

The land fighting in that area proceeded with variable success. "The campaign [in the East]," J. F. C. Fuller says, "gave Britain the breathing space she required, both at home and in the Middle East, wherein to set her military house in order. Egypt was relieved from the threat of war on two fronts. . . . Hitler and his Staff looked upon the Libyan war as a sideshow, and of so little consequence that it did not warrant a diversion of forces which might possibly be of use in Russia."** In the autumn of 1941 there were 10 German and Italian divisions (about 100,000 effectives) in North Africa, and of these only three were German divisions. The British had the 8th Army (150,000 men) in that area.** On November 18, 1941, after building up numerical superiority, the British Command ordered the 8th Army to take the offensive. Churchill portrayed this offensive, which was insignificant in scale, as a major battle. "The Desert Army," he said in a message to all ranks, "may add a page in history which may well rank with Blenheim and Waterloo." This "heroic passage", which roused "optimism to boiling point", is regarded as "unfortunate" by Fuller.*** With their numerical superiority the British made some headway, pushing to Cyrenaica. But in January 1942 the German and Italian troops, which were commanded by General Erwin Rommel, counter-attacked and forced the 8th Army to fall back. "Thus," Fuller sums up, "instead of the Fourth Libyan Campaign adding a page to history ranking with Blenheim and Waterloo, its postscript added one more British disaster to the many at this time tumbling in from the Far East."**)

These setbacks only stressed that victory over Germany was being moulded not in North Africa or the Mediterranean but on the Eastern Front. On that front the Soviet Army was faced with a formidable array of 190 fully complemented, excellently equipped and well-trained German

* J. F. C. Fuller, *Op. cit.*, pp. 125, 155.

** *Ōtoraya mirovaya voina 1939-1945. Uoyenno-istorichesky ocherk* (Second World War 1939-1945. A Military-Historical Outline), Ed. by S. P. Platonov and others, Moscow, 1958, pp. 344-45.

*** J. F. C. Fuller, *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

*) *Ibid.*, p. 163.

and satellite divisions armed with many thousands of field guns, aircraft and tanks.*

Incredibly heavy fighting raged on the Eastern Front where the adversaries were suffering huge losses in men and materiel. By virtue of their numerical and armaments superiority the enemy forced the Soviet troops to retreat. In the course of the summer and autumn the Red Army, fighting defensive actions, retreated to Leningrad, Moscow and Rostov-on-Don. Mortal danger loomed over the Soviet Union. But the greater this danger became the firmer grew the Soviet people's determination to defeat the enemy.

The Eastern Front steadily drained the German reserves, manpower and materiel, which were being ground to dust in the battles against the Soviet Army. Correspondingly, there was a diminution of the forces which maintained German rule in the conquered territories. This opened the door to a liberation struggle by the enslaved peoples and to military action against Germany in the West. The world was beginning to realise that the centre of the struggle had shifted to the East and that the outcome of the Second World War was being decided on the Eastern Front.

The Soviet Union was, singlehanded, engaged in titanic combat with Germany. Its Allies were giving it moral and political support, nothing more. Eric Estorick says the following of that terrible summer: "Kiev fell and the Russian line had to bend again. Throughout this tremendous drama, in which the Russians were being strained to the limit of endurance, and in which more of them were slaughtered than their Allies lost in six years of war, no relief action came from the Allies."** The Allies were waiting for the outcome of the summer campaign. Evidence of this is to be found in the books of British publicists and historians and in the statements of those who were at the helm of the British Government in those days. Cripps and General Macfarlane complained to London of the "inadequate co-operation" they were getting in Moscow. On one of these complaints, Anthony Eden remarked: "I am doubtful if we ought to make too much fuss. We are not giving all that amount of help."***

* *Istoria Velikoi otechestvennoi voiny*. . . , Vol. II, p. 9.

** Eric Estorick, *Op. cit.*, p. 255.

*** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

Churchill and some British historians chafe at the restrained replies he (Churchill) received to his loquacious and frequently totally abstract messages to Moscow in the summer and autumn of 1941. Behind this "displeasure" is the irritation caused by the knowledge that these verbose messages failed to delude the Soviet Government about the reasons the British Government was reluctant to provide the Soviet Union with effective assistance during those difficult summer months of 1941. Touching on the events of September 1941, Churchill says: "I was well aware that in the early days of our alliance there was little we could do, and I tried to fill the void by civilities."** The fact that Stalin did not go into raptures over this method of honouring Allied commitments is regarded as gross ingratitude.

Anglo-Soviet-US Conference in Moscow

At the Atlantic Conference Churchill and Roosevelt decided to convene a conference in Moscow to settle the question of British and US armaments deliveries to the Soviet Union. As week followed week, the firing lines drew ever closer to Moscow, but still no date was set for the conference. In September, it was decided in London and Washington that "Hitler seemed unlikely to attain his objectives by October" and "the chances of continued Soviet resistance were sufficiently good to warrant a commitment to provide large-scale aid over a long term".**

The Soviet Government took steps to hurry its sluggish Allies. In a message of September 3, Stalin pointed out that the loss of a number of industrial areas as a result of the German summer offensive had brought the Soviet Union face to face with mortal danger. This was the stern truth. The message stated that Britain could help by opening a Second Front and by supplying aluminium, tanks and aircraft.***

While rejecting the idea of a Second Front, the British Government agreed to help with supplies. By now it had become more optimistic about the possibility of continued Soviet resistance to the German onslaught. Cripps was

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 345.

** William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, pp. 788-89.

*** *Correspondence...*, Vol. I, p. 21.

confident the Soviet Union would withstand the onslaught provided it received assistance. But this optimism of the British Government did not go very far. Although it decided that "the game was worth the candle" it was not very sure that the Soviet Union would stand the strain. Therefore, as Churchill put it, in regard to supplies it was decided: "If they keep fighting it is worth it; if they don't we don't have to send it."**

Stalin's message had an effect. Churchill discussed it with his War Cabinet and cabled Roosevelt, suggesting an early date for the conference in Moscow. The Americans appreciated the significance of the Soviet military effort more than the British. Roosevelt adopted a more definite and clear-headed stand with regard to material assistance to the USSR, saying he deemed "it to be of paramount importance for the safety and security of America that all reasonable munitions help be provided for Russia".**

The British delegation to the Moscow Conference was led by Lord Beaverbrook, Minister of Supply, and the American delegation was headed by Averell Harriman, who was directing Lend Lease aid to Britain. The departure of the delegations to Moscow was preceded by talks in London, where the British and Americans agreed on a common line at the conference. It laid the beginning for the tradition of separate Anglo-US meetings before important negotiations with the USSR.

The conference was in session from September 29 to October 1, 1941. Churchill instructed his delegation to discuss with the Soviet Government the question of supplies and military strategy.

The question of supplies was settled quite easily and quickly. A protocol was signed under which Britain and the USA undertook to supply the Soviet Union with a definite quantity of tanks, aircraft, aluminium, lead, tin and other armaments and strategic raw materials every month in the period from October 10, 1941 to June 1942. For its part the Soviet Government pledged to study British and American requirements with the view to supplying them with various materials from the USSR.***

* Winston S. Churchill, Op. cit., Vol. III, p. 438.

** William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, Op. cit., p. 792.

*** *Soviet Supply Protocol*, Washington, pp. 3-8.

Though falling short of what the Soviet Government had requested and of what the Soviet Union actually needed, this was a massive programme of material aid to the Soviet Union. It substantially strengthened the nascent anti-fascist coalition and the relations between the principal members of that coalition—the USSR, Britain and the USA—and placed the question of material aid to the Soviet Union on a practical footing. This was the key achievement of the Moscow Conference.

Beaverbrook was very favourably inclined to meet Soviet requirements where supplies were concerned. To some extent this pliability was due to his realistic assessment of the significance of the Soviet war effort to Britain's destiny and to the fact that the supplies were to come mainly from American and not British resources. "For the moment Britain could do little from her own resources, at any rate until the middle or end of 1942."* Therefore, Beaverbrook, writes Estorick, made "the maximum of promises, much in the spirit of Father Christmas".** Less than half of these promises were kept. In 1941 Britain and the USA sent the USSR 750 aircraft (of which only five were bombers), 501 tanks and eight anti-aircraft guns. Under the First Supply Protocol, in the period October-December 1941 they had to send the USSR 1,200 aircraft (including 300 bombers), 1,500 tanks and roughly 50 anti-aircraft guns.***

The protocol stipulated that the supplies would "be made available at British and United States centres of production" and "an undertaking was given that we would help in their transportation to Russia".*) This was an unreasonable provision, to say the least. The British and Americans knew that the USSR did not have the merchant or naval vessels to transport the stipulated supplies of armaments and raw materials from the USA and Britain. If the means of transportation were not provided there was no sense in making the supplies available at the centres of production; the Soviet Union simply had no facilities for getting them. In the obtaining situation the inclusion of this point in the protocol

* *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, p. 431.

** Eric Estorick, *Op. cit.*, pp. 255-56.

*** P. N. Pospelov, *Istoricheskiye itogi i uroki Velikoi otechestvennoi voyny* (Historical Results and Lessons of the Great Patriotic War), Moscow, 1965, p. 11.

*) *The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay*, p. 232.

could only have meant that the Western Allies undertook to provide the means of transportation and that the Soviet Union would help as far as it was physically able to do so. In a message to Stalin on October 6 Churchill recorded his delight over the success of the conference and added: "We intend to run a continuous cycle of convoys leaving every ten days."*

One may legitimately ask why the protocol did not specify what the conference participants had in mind, what the Allies really promised and what Churchill wrote about in his message of October 6. The answer is that by giving an ambiguous meaning to the point on transportation, the British provided themselves with a loophole to halt supplies on the pretext that they had promised the supplies but had not definitely committed themselves to transporting them. To some extent this method was used in the wording of the Anglo-Soviet Agreement of July 12, 1941, and was strikingly manifested in 1942 in the documents on the Second Front. In the case of the supplies the real meaning of the vague wording was revealed in 1942 when Britain halted supplies, giving transportation difficulties as the excuse. Lord Ismay, who participated in the 1941 Moscow Conference, observes in his memoirs: "Here was the chance for the Prime Minister to point out very forcibly that our contract was limited to *helping* with the transport of supplies to Russia."** Ismay labours under a delusion if he imagines his statement justifies the action of his Government. It only underscores the ambiguous stand which the British Government adopted on this question at the Moscow Conference.

Churchill's directive to Beaverbrook contained instructions to examine military problems with Soviet representatives. General Ismay was included in the British delegation expressly for that purpose. However, this part of the directive remained essentially unfulfilled. The memoirs of Churchill and Ismay are replete with obviously unfounded charges that the Soviet Government showed no inclination to discuss military problems with Ismay.

The Soviet stand on this question was rational and reasonable. There would have been sense in discussing military matters with Ismay if the British Government had

* *Correspondence...*, Vol. I, p. 30.

** *The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay*, p. 233.

been prepared to co-operate in that sphere, i.e., open a Second Front. But from Churchill's messages to Stalin it was clear that Britain was not planning a Second Front. This was confirmed in a conversation which Beaverbrook had with Stalin on September 28. In that conversation he said that General Ismay was prepared to hold "strategic discussions".* From this conversation it became obvious that no Second Front would be opened in the immediate future. True, Beaverbrook mentioned that in Iran Britain was building up forces and would be prepared to send them to the Caucasus, but he was told that the war was raging not in the Caucasus but in the Ukraine and in the North. He did not subscribe to the idea of sending British troops to those areas. This left the Soviet Government in no doubt that the purpose of these "strategic discussions" was to persuade it that Britain was in no position to help the Soviet Union militarily. In the directive to the Beaverbrook delegation Churchill wrote: "All ideas of twenty or thirty divisions being launched by Great Britain against the western shores of the Continent or sent round by sea for service in Russia have no foundation of reality on which to rest. This should be made clear."** Ismay's job was thus to make the Soviet Government see that Britain could not open a Second Front until 1942. It is important to bear this in mind when the Anglo-Soviet talks on a Second Front in 1942 are discussed. The directive said: "We have every intention of intervening on land next spring, if it can be done. All the possibilities are being studied."*** Here we find another example of Churchill's manner of making ambiguous statements on crucial matters. In the given case the promise to open the Second Front "next spring" was designed to satisfy the Soviet Government. The "if" allowed Britain to break her promise. Double-dealing policy gave birth to ambiguous wordings.

Joint Anglo-Soviet Action in Iran

Beaverbrook did not accidentally mention Iran as the place from where the British Government was prepared to move troops to the Caucasus despite the fact that there was

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 766.

*** *Ibid.*

no direct threat to the Caucasus. In Iran at the time there were British (in the south) and Soviet (in the north) troops.

German capital had been penetrating Iran over a period of many years. In 1939 Iranian trade with Germany was heavier than with any other country. Some 2,000 Germans in the guise of technical advisers and tourists were working to turn Iran into a springboard for an attack on the USSR from the south and to undermine British positions in the Middle East.

In February 1941 Britain warned Iran about the anti-British activities of the Germans in that country. She was worried about the security of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company's oilfields and refineries in the south of Iran which were supplying fuel for the British fleet in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean as well as for the British Army in the Middle East. The Iranian Government ignored the British warning.

British apprehensions were seriously aroused in the spring of 1941 when a nationalistic, pro-German coup took place in Iraq. True, the coup was crushed by military force, but there was no guarantee that the Iraq developments would not be repeated in Iran with far more dangerous consequences to Britain. On July 10, 1941 General Archibald Wavell, British Commander-in-Chief in India, warned his Government of the German threat in Iran, saying "it is essential we should join hands with Russia through Iran".*

On July 16 the USSR and Britain requested the Iranian Government to expel the German agents from Iran. This request was ignored, and the two countries were compelled to examine the question of using force to break up the nazi intrigues in Iran.

On August 8 the British informed the Americans of the Anglo-Soviet talks on this question. The Americans were asked to pressure the Shah of Iran to heed the British and Soviet representations. Ambassador Winant's telegram informing Washington of this request came "as a distinct shock to the State Department".** It put the Americans on their guard. They feared Britain was out to gain additional privileges in Iran and would conclude an independent agreement on Iran with the Soviet Union. There could, therefore,

* Ibid., p. 424.

** William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, p. 803.

be no question of US pressure on the Shah in the sense proposed by the British.

The problem was resolved on August 25 when Soviet troops moved into the northern provinces of Iran and 19,000 British troops entered the southern provinces. The German agents were rendered harmless and the Allies obtained the use of the railways and motor roads for the transportation of supplies to the USSR. On January 29, 1942 the USSR, Britain and Iran signed a treaty of alliance, which permitted Britain and the Soviet Union to use Iran's communications and guaranteed Iran's territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence.* The joint Anglo-Soviet action in Iran was evidence of the fruitful Allied relations between the two countries, and showed that these relations conformed to the interests of the peoples, to the interests of the struggle against fascism.

British Far Eastern Policy

The German attack on the Soviet Union changed the situation in the Far East as well, but this change did not manifest itself as quickly as the British Government believed it would. In London it was felt the German attack on the USSR would relieve the pressure on Britain not only in Europe and the Middle East but also in the Far East. Most British and American political and military leaders believed this would stop Japan, for a time at any rate, from moving southwards. They were certain she would attack the Soviet Union. There was much in favour of this assumption. For many decades Japan had had her eye on the Russian Far East. She meant to seize large territories in that area and in the 1930s had unleashed hostilities time and again to achieve that objective. It would seem that now, with the main Soviet forces engaged against Germany, Japan would not miss the opportunity to carry out her plans with regard to the Soviet Union. One of the objectives of the Axis, it will be recalled, was joint action against the USSR. Besides, the German leaders were beginning to see that their eastward drive was not the picnic they had believed it would be, and they brought increasing pressure to bear on their Japanese ally to attack the USSR. However, like the Germans, the British and Americans erred in their surmises.

* *Uneshnaya politika Sovetskogo Soyuza...*, Vol. I, pp. 190-97.

When war broke out between the Soviet Union and Germany, the Japanese ruling circles made up their minds to direct their aggression southwards, even if it meant risking war with Britain and the United States. As regards the USSR, they decided to refrain from attacking it for the time being but to build up their forces in the north in order to come in for the kill and seize Soviet territory right up to the Urals when Germany defeated the Soviet Union. This decision was adopted by the Imperial Council on July 2, 1941.*

In reply to the numerous proddings from Germany, the Japanese Ambassador in Berlin Oshima was instructed to tell the German Government: "By moving southwards at present we do not intend by any means to relax our pressure on the Soviet Union. However, we feel that the present moment is most propitious for an advance to the south, and for a time we have decided to refrain from a direct advance to the north."** Indeed, the strength of the Japanese Kwantung Army, poised on the Soviet frontier, was at first increased from 300,000 to 600,000 men, and by 1942 it rose to 1,100,000 effectives.*** In building up these forces, Japan prepared for the future, but in the meantime she moved southwards.

There were a number of considerations which impelled Japanese aggression in that direction. Her ultimate plan was to seize vast territories in Asia along a line running, as the Japanese newspaper *Nippon kogno* wrote on July 9, 1941, from the Kara Sea along the Urals to the Caspian, the Caucasus, the Kurdistan Mountains and the Persian Gulf, and then across Saudi Arabia to the south to Aden.^{*)} With respect to Siberia the German claims were not dangerous to Japan, but this was not the case as regards the Middle East, the region of the Persian Gulf and farther in Southeast Asia, areas which Germany was obviously out to seize. The two predators, who were out to win as much as possible, would have inevitably clashed in the latter regions. Japan was

* *Istoriya voyny na Tikhom okeane* (A History of the Pacific War), Vol. III, Moscow, 1957, pp. 379-81.

** D. I. Goldberg, *Uneshnaya politika Yaponii* (Japanese Foreign Policy), September 1939-December 1941, Moscow, 1959, p. 173.

*** S. A. Golunsky, *Sud nad glavnymi yaponskimi voyennymi prestupnikami* (Trial of the Major Japanese War Criminals), Moscow, 1947, p. 22.

*) V. N. Yegorov, *Politika Anglii na Dalnem Uostokeye* (British Far Eastern Policy), September 1939-October 1941, Moscow, 1960, p. 160.

determined to occupy these territories before they could be reached by the Germans and she therefore continued her southward expansion. Besides, with France and the Netherlands knocked out of the war and with Britain struggling to keep her head above water, real resistance in these areas could be expected only from the United States. Japan felt she might never again have such a favourable opportunity for the conquest of Southeast Asia. Her motive for starting a war "was as much to forestall possible German encroachments in Eastern Asia as to eradicate American and British influence there".* Naturally, in the situation obtaining in 1941 top priority in Japan's plans was given to the removal of Britain and the USA from East Asia. The Germans were geographically far from that region and it was not yet clear if they would ever get to it.

On July 24, 1941 the Japanese occupied South Indochina with the "agreement" of the Vichy Government. A similar fate was overtaking Siam. It became obvious that Japan had every intention of continuing her southward expansion.

This intensified old British fears. What if the Japanese decided to seize French, Dutch and then British possessions in Southeast Asia one by one, without provoking the United States? Would the US strike at Japan in that case? Everything depended on this, for Britain did not have the necessary strength to defend her colonial possessions against the Japanese with any hope of success. She could not count on the United States going to war against Japan to defend the British, French and Dutch Far Eastern colonies. True, Japan's growing strength might alarm the Americans and compel them to go to war against the Japanese before they seized British and Dutch possessions. With this in mind the British sought American assurances that they would support Britain if Japan attacked her possessions. However, these efforts bore no fruit. In reply to the overtures of the British Government, which acted under pressure also from Australia and New Zealand, who were extremely worried about their own security, the Americans replied that they could not give any preliminary pledges to support Britain in the Far East and would act in accordance with the situation. British and American military leaders failed to work out a

* *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, p. 440.

mutually acceptable plan of military operations against Japan in the event of war with her.

In retaliation for the Japanese occupation of South Indochina, the USA froze Japanese assets and reduced trade with Japan. Britain, the British Dominions and the Netherlands took similar action. It is interesting to note that when the USA showed some firmness, the London politicians wavered. They followed the USA's example reluctantly, feeling, as Bryant points out, "bound" to join in the embargo.* The reason for the wavering was that Britain was still hoping Japan would attack the Soviet Union and did not desire to place any obstacle in her path by aggravating relations with her.

When Churchill set out for Argentina in early August 1941 to confer with Roosevelt, he was determined to obtain from him a firm assurance that the USA would declare war on Japan in the event of a Japanese attack on British or Dutch possessions. Later he wrote that in Argentina he discussed with Roosevelt the probability "that the United States, even if not herself attacked, would come into a war in the Far East".** In a conversation with US Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles at this conference, British Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Alexander Cadogan said that what Churchill wanted was a pledge from Roosevelt that if Japan attacked the Dutch East Indies and Britain went to its assistance, he would request the US Congress to endorse military assistance to Britain, the British Dominions and the Dutch East Indies against Japanese aggression.*** Welles' reaction to this was plainly negative.

As a result, in the talks with Roosevelt, Churchill advanced a somewhat different idea. He suggested that the USA, Britain and the Soviet Union send Japan an ultimatum stating that if she advanced into Malaya or the Dutch East Indies, the three powers would employ such means as were necessary to force her to withdraw.† This, like many other actions of the British Government, was designed to hasten a clash between Japan and the USA. But there was much more to this than bringing the United States immediately

* Arthur Bryant, *Op. cit.*, p. 273.

** Winston S. Churchill, *War Speeches. The End of the Beginning*, Boston, 1943, p. 33.

*** William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, p. 673.

†) *Ibid.*

into the defence of British colonies and Dominions in the Far East and Asia. Japan was an ally of Germany and Italy, and the outbreak of war between Japan and the USA would automatically be followed by German and Italian declarations of war on the United States. Thereby, the British would achieve their cherished goal of having the United States as a military ally.

But Roosevelt was in no hurry. He knew that war with Japan was inevitable and wanted to win at least another month for the further build up of his armed forces. He realised that Britain could not pursue an independent policy in the Far East and would co-operate fully with the United States. Moreover, he wished to avoid giving anybody grounds for accusing him of having provoked a conflict. This was important for considerations of domestic politics. He therefore did not go further than promising to speak firmly with the Japanese Ambassador in Washington Kichisaburo Nomura. Churchill obligingly drew up a statement of two points which Roosevelt would make to Nomura, but he laboured in vain. At the Atlantic Conference the USA did not undertake any commitments in the Far East, while Roosevelt's actual statement to the Japanese Ambassador was "less forceful and explicit than Mr. Churchill had proposed".*

After the setback in Argentina the British Government decided that its only alternative was to follow in the wake of American policy. Naturally, it realised that US intractability was due to Britain's weakness. "There was no means," Bryant says, "by which a solitary Britain, her hands already full in Europe, could afford naval protection to the British and Dutch East Indies."** In order to increase her strength in the Far East, at least symbolically, Britain sent to Singapore her latest fast battleship *Prince of Wales*, on which Churchill had gone to Argentina for his talks with Roosevelt, and also the heavy cruiser *Repulse* and an aircraft-carrier. It was calculated that this gesture would impress both the Japanese and the Americans, and what allowed Britain to make it was that the transfer of German troops to the Eastern Front had relaxed the threat in the Atlantic.

In addition, the British Government made a number of

* William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *Op. cit.*, p. 677.

** Arthur Bryant, *Op. cit.*, p. 274.

public statements to the effect that "Great Britain would be at America's side if she became involved in a war with Japan". These words were spoken by Churchill in a broadcast on August 24, 1941.* On November 10, 1941 he declared publicly that "should the United States become involved in war with Japan, the British declaration will follow within the hour".** The purpose of these statements was somehow to bind the USA, morally at least, in the event Japan attacked British possessions and not the United States.

In the meantime the US Government was negotiating with Japan, causing nerve-racking anxiety in London. If a Far Eastern Munich was agreed on, Britain herself would be the victim, and in that case US involvement in the war in Europe would be less probable. In this period of despondent brooding the British Government went on hoping Japan would stop her southward expansion after all and attack the USSR. At the end of October 1941 Churchill telegraphed the prime ministers of Australia and New Zealand: "I am still inclined to think that Japan will not run into war with ABCD (American-British-Chinese-Dutch) Powers unless or until Russia is decisively broken."***

Meanwhile, at a meeting of the Japanese Imperial Council as early as September 6, 1941, it was determined that "in case there is no prospect of attaining our purpose in the diplomatic negotiations by the early part of October, we will decide to open hostilities against the United States, Great Britain and the Netherlands".*) The final decision to attack these countries was taken by the Imperial Council on December 1.

In the night of December 7-8, 1941, Japan attacked the British in Malaya and bombed Singapore. At the same time Japanese aircraft bombed US naval units at the Pearl Harbour base in Hawaii. As soon as Churchill heard the news over the radio he telephoned Roosevelt to check if it was true. "It is quite true," the US President replied. "They have attacked us at Pearl Harbour. We are all in the same boat now."***)

* S. Woodburn Kirby, *Op. cit.*, p. 73.

** Winston S. Churchill, *The Unrelenting Struggle*, Boston, 1942, p. 297.

*** Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. III, p. 525.

*) Masuo Kato, *The Lost War*, New York, 1946, p. 48.

***) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 538.

The British Government was jubilant, but for the sake of propriety it forebore showing its feelings to the Americans. Developments had taken a turn the British Government could only have dreamt of. Churchill told his senior military officers that now they could drop their caution in their dealings with the Americans, that Britain would now talk to them "quite differently".* This exaggeration of Britain's potentialities was a typical trait of Churchill's, and it betrayed his feelings. US Senator Gerald P. Nye described Pearl Harbour on December 7 as "just what Britain had planned for us".** On December 8 both Houses of the British Parliament voted in favour of declaring war on Japan. On December 11 Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.

The creation of the anti-fascist coalition was completed with the USA's entry into the war. The USSR, Britain and the USA became Allies in the struggle against nazi Germany and her satellites in Europe.

* Arthur Bryant, *Op. cit.*, p. 282.

** William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

Chapter Four

THE TURNING POINT

(December 1941-February 1943)

The Battle for Moscow

Churchill and Roosevelt delayed the three-power conference in Moscow on supplies to the Soviet Union until the situation on the Eastern Front cleared up. However, the fighting continued, and the conference had to be convened without waiting for the front to become stabilised. At this very moment the Germans began an offensive spearheaded directly at Moscow. Most of the British leaders believed the Germans would capture the Soviet capital. Lord Ismay says Churchill even wagered that Moscow would fall.* Indeed, the situation was extremely grave. In November along some sectors of the front the Germans got to within 25-30 kilometres of Moscow.

The Germans made deep inroads into Soviet territory in the summer and autumn of 1941, but the war did not turn out to be the blitzkrieg called for by Operation Barbarossa, the directive for which stated: "The German Armed Forces must be prepared ... to crush Soviet Russia in a rapid campaign."** The Soviet Army had blunted the edge of their assault and Germany now faced the prospect of a long war for which she was not prepared. The German Command was determined to capture Moscow before the winter set in, counting that this would force the Soviet Union to surrender. Its calculations were that since Moscow was the capital of the USSR and its largest industrial centre and railway

* *The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay*, London, 1960, p. 235.

** *Hitler's War Directives 1939-1945*, London, 1964, p. 49.

junction the Soviet Army would defend it at all costs, and therefore the seizure of Moscow would be accompanied by the smashing of the Soviet Army's main forces.

However, the German offensive against Moscow was brought to a standstill at the close of November, and on December 6 the Soviet Army launched a counter-offensive, pushing the German troops back 400 kilometres and inflicting huge losses on them. The German general Günther Blumentritt writes that "Moscow marked the first great German reversal, both in the political and in the military fields".* The failure of the blitzkrieg and the defeat suffered by the Germans at Moscow caused the first cracks to appear in the nazi coalition of aggressor states, aggravating the contradictions operating within that coalition. Japan postponed her attack on the Soviet Union. "Neutral" Turkey likewise refrained from any action against the USSR. The resistance movement in the countries occupied by Germany and Italy was activated.

The victory at Moscow and the Soviet Army's successful counter-offensive in January-April 1942 strengthened the Soviet Union's international position and enhanced its importance as the leading force of the anti-fascist coalition. This was the first turning point in the Second World War and it created realistic prerequisites for basically reversing the tide of the war. It "was the first visible turning in the war; and as a matter of fact it was decisive, although its decisiveness was not apparent at the time".**

In Britain there was mixed reaction to the battle for Moscow. When the fighting was at its bitterest the British people were wholeheartedly behind the Soviet people, wishing them victory and eager to help them. The Soviet military success greatly fortified the British people's faith that the nazis would eventually be defeated.

Among the ruling circles the reaction was different. Naturally, they realised that the German defeat was in Britain's interests and improved her position in the struggle against Germany. However, their anti-Soviet prejudices prevented them from appreciating the full significance of the victory at Moscow. Even after this victory they still believed that in the long run the Soviet Union would be

* *The Fatal Decisions*, New York, 1956, p. 82.

** *The Initial Triumph of the Axis*, p. 431.

defeated.* They spread the story, given prominence in the works of bourgeois historians to this day, that at Moscow the Germans were beaten not so much in battle with Soviet troops as by the Russian frosts.

The section of the ruling circles which saw in the battle for Moscow evidence of the Soviet Union's ability to withstand in the struggle against Germany were filled with gloomy forebodings. What would the defeat of Germany by the Soviet Union mean to the capitalist system? However, in those days it was obvious to everybody that victory over Germany was still a matter of the distant future, while the battle raging on Soviet soil convincingly showed the colossal might of Germany and her satellites and how important it was for Britain to have the Soviet Union as an Ally.

Eden's Talks in Moscow

In the late autumn of 1941 the enemy was at the gates of Moscow and, naturally, this compelled the Soviet Government to ponder over its relations with Britain. She had promised armaments assistance not at once but in future months; no other military aid was pledged. The Atlantic Conference had shown that Britain was discussing problems of a post-war arrangement with a non-belligerent, America, and had no desire to conduct talks on that subject with the USSR, which was her Ally. This could only mean one thing, namely, that the British Government was hatching plans for a post-war settlement which would in one way or another be directed against the interests of the Soviet Union. Lastly, for several months the Soviet Union had been fighting Germany's satellites, while its Ally, Britain, was not even inclined to declare war on them. It was an abnormal situation.

When Beaverbrook came to Moscow in September 1941 he was asked whether it would not be expedient to extend the Anglo-Soviet Agreement of July 12 and turn it into a political agreement that would embrace the post-war period as well. He agreed with this idea and said he would discuss it with other members of the British Government when he returned to London.** This idea was energetically backed by

* *The Economist*, Dec. 27, 1941, p. 764.

** *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, Vol. III, Europe*, pp. 305-06.

Sir Stafford Cripps, who recognised it as a legitimate desire of the Soviet Union and as an important factor that would enable Britain to maintain normal Allied relations with the USSR. The British Foreign Office adopted a negative attitude to the Soviet proposal and maintained a silence in the course of October and November. Woodward says that "Sir Stafford Cripps repeated his intention to resign if we did not agree to discuss with Stalin questions of post-war collaboration and planning".*

While avoiding a discussion of cardinal problems of its relations with the USSR, the British Government did its utmost to impose on the Soviet Government talks with British military leaders with the aim of convincing the Soviet leaders that Britain was unable to provide the USSR with military assistance and, at the same time, obtaining information on the state of the Soviet Armed Forces. After Ismay had failed to achieve his objective in Moscow, Churchill sent the Soviet Government a message on November 4, in which he suggested sending General Wavell, Commander-in-Chief in India, Persia and Iraq, and General Paget, Commander-in-Chief in the Far East, to Moscow "to clear things up".** The reply to this proposal stated that if the generals were sent to Moscow to sign an agreement on the basic questions of Anglo-Soviet relations the Soviet Government would be prepared to negotiate with them, but if they had only secondary business it would be better for them to remain at their posts.*** The substance of the British proposal had been correctly assessed in Moscow. The generals never went to Moscow, for which Churchill and British historians bear a grudge. It is an unfounded grudge. Even Woodward agrees that the talks would have been fruitless and to back up this conclusion he quotes a letter from Churchill to Eden, in which it is stated that "these conversations . . . would have made no difference in fact, since there was at present no practical step of any serious importance open to us".*) The grudge was thus incurred because the Soviet Government did not desire to be occupied with futile and clearly insincere talks while the great battle for Moscow was being fought.

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 158.

** *Correspondence* . . . , Vol. I, p. 31.

*** *Ibid.*

*) Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 159.

In all probability it did not know what Churchill and Roosevelt discussed at the Atlantic Conference, when they planned how Britain and the USA would devise the post-war settlement without Soviet participation and to the detriment of Soviet interests. This was suggested by the very fact that the USSR was not invited to the conference. Besides, these plans were not only mooted at a closed conference, they were spoken of openly. The Canadian Prime Minister McKenzie King, for instance, publicly declared on September 4, 1941 that "a new world order . . . can only be effective through the leadership of the British Commonwealth of Nations and the United States of America".* The implication was that after the war Britain and the USA intended to act without taking the interests of the Soviet Union into account.

The Soviet Government did not know that when the agreement of July 12 was at the stage of discussion Churchill intended to raise the question of wresting some western territories away from the USSR. As we have already stated, he went so far as to suggest including this point in the draft message to the Soviet Government but the War Cabinet did not feel it was expedient to raise this question.

However, some other actions by Britain, which were undoubtedly known to the Soviet Government, indicated that plans were afoot to implement the post-war settlement at the expense of the USSR. Evidence of these plans lay in the British stand during the Soviet-Polish talks in July 1941. The British favourable attitude to the anti-Soviet claims of the Polish reactionaries showed that given the chance the British Government would not hesitate to support these claims and pressure the USSR with the purpose of depriving it of a number of territories (Western Byelorussia and Western Ukraine). It was no secret to the Soviet Government that on that issue the USA supported the British stand. The situation was that after a terrible life-and-death struggle with Germany the Soviet Union would, by the will of its Allies, face the prospect of losing some of its territories. Naturally, during the difficult autumn of 1941 this induced the Soviet Government to pay attention to questions of the post-war settlement.

All these issues, which threw Anglo-Soviet relations out

* *Labour Monthly*, July 1942, p. 204.

of gear and, consequently, adversely affected the common struggle against Nazi Germany, could only be settled by an appropriate treaty between the USSR and Britain. The Soviet Government therefore made an official representation to the British Government in November 1941, in which it once again raised the question of the state of the relations between the two countries. "We need clarity," Stalin wrote to Churchill on November 8, 1941, "which at the moment is lacking in relations between the USSR and Great Britain. The unclarity is due to two circumstances: first, there is no definite understanding between our two countries concerning war aims and plans for the post-war organisation of peace; secondly, there is no treaty between the USSR and Great Britain on mutual military aid in Europe against Hitler. Until understanding is reached on these two main points, not only will there be no clarity in Anglo-Soviet relations, but, if we are to speak frankly, there will be no mutual trust."* At the same time it was stated that Britain had created an intolerable situation relative to a declaration of war on Finland, Hungary and Rumania.

The British Government was greatly alarmed by this formulation of the question, especially as the Soviet Government's dissatisfaction over the obtaining situation was wholly and completely well-founded. In London it was realised that the Soviet Government suspected what its Allies' real relations were to it. Woodward tells us the "Foreign Office considered that Stalin's proposal was due to his fear that . . . we and the Americans now wanted to make an Anglo-American peace from which the USSR—exhausted by the war—would be excluded".** Moreover, the British Government was disturbed by the British people's mounting discontent with its ineffective aid to its Ally and the absence of sufficiently energetic steps to improve and strengthen relations with the USSR. It therefore decided to satisfy the Soviet Union's demand for a declaration of war on Germany's satellites and sent Eden for talks in Moscow.***

* *Correspondence* . . . , Vol. I, p. 33.

** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 160.

*** A declaration of war on Germany's satellites in the war against the USSR was demanded not only by the Soviet Government but also by progressive opinion in Britain. Britain declared war on Finland, Hungary and Rumania on December 6, 1941. "I was most reluctant," Churchill writes, "to be forced into this position" (*The Second World War*, Vol. III, London, 1950, p. 473).

In January 1943, Winant reported to the US Secretary of State: "I personally believe Eden's trip was necessary because strained relations had been building up between the British and the Soviets. While at the same time there has been growing popular appreciation here because of Russian war efforts ... and respect for a power that had been underrated and was meeting the test of stopping the German war machine."* Eden, as he informed the US Ambassador in London, intended "to smooth out relations in general, to explore the possibility of some kind of political agreement and to discuss certain post-war problems".**

The situation at the front was extremely tense for the Soviet Union and Churchill feared that this in combination with the absence of Allied assistance might knock the USSR out of the war and turn the German hordes against the British Isles. These apprehensions may be appreciated because in the situation obtaining at the time no other country was in a position to continue the struggle. This is pointed out by Churchill himself, who later wrote: "Thus in the six months' campaign the Germans had achieved formidable results and had inflicted losses on their enemy which no other nation could have survived.*** He cannot be blamed for his inability in the autumn of 1941 to see the strength of the socialist state and the determination of the Soviet people, and for applying his own yardstick to the Soviet Union.

In this light one can appreciate why Churchill felt it was necessary to placate the Soviet Government, especially as it was expected that the Japanese would start a war against Britain and the USA at any time and Soviet assistance might prove to be vital to Britain. On this score we have, among other things, the evidence of Herbert Feis, who wrote: "Churchill and the British Cabinet had known, as they were considering how far they might go to satisfy Russia, that war might come in the Pacific any day."*)

By sending Eden to Moscow, the British Government acted insincerely. On the eve of his departure for the USSR, Eden told the US Ambassador in London that the purpose of

* *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, Vol. III, Washington, 1961, p. 494.

** *Ibid.*, p. 506.

*** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 476.

*) Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.

his visit "would be to dispel Soviet distrust and, without entering upon definite commitments, to give Stalin maximum satisfaction".* For this very same reason Churchill wrote in a message to Stalin on November 22: "... When the war is won, as I am sure it will be, we expect that Soviet Russia, Great Britain and the USA will meet at the council table of victory as the three principal partners and as the agencies by which nazism will have been destroyed."** In reality, however, as mentioned above, he calculated that the war would exhaust the Soviet Union and the Anglo-Saxon partners would force their own peace terms on it. On January 8, 1942, in a telegram to Eden commenting on the report of the latter's mission to Moscow, he wrote: "No one can foresee how the balance of power will lie or where the winning armies will stand at the end of the war. It seems probable, however, that the United States and the British Empire, far from being exhausted, will be the most powerfully armed and economic bloc the world has ever seen, and that the Soviet Union will need our aid for reconstruction far more than we shall then need theirs."*** In other words, Churchill was still clinging to the line laid down at the Atlantic Conference, and his message of November 22 to Stalin was meant to calm the Soviet Government with deliberately insincere assurances. This objective predetermined the outcome of the Eden mission.

He had talks with the Soviet Government in Moscow in December 1941, submitting a vaguely worded draft for an Anglo-Soviet agreement. Its provisions were that the two governments would reiterate their endorsement of the Atlantic Charter and undertake "to collaborate in every possible way until the German military power has been so broken as to render it incapable of further threatening the peace of the world"; Britain and the USSR would undertake not to sign peace with any government of Germany that did not unequivocally renounce all aggressive designs; the two countries would co-operate after the war in restoring peace and making it impossible for Germany ever again to violate peace; the two countries would co-operate in the post-war reconstruction of Europe and would refrain from signing

* Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

** *Correspondence*... Vol. I, p. 35.

*** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 616.

secret treaties on this question with third powers; there would be reciprocal economic aid after the war and the two countries would recognise that as in the period of the war co-operation between them after the war would be useful not only to their peoples but to the future of the whole world; territorial questions would be settled in accordance with the Atlantic Charter.*

The vague wording of the British draft was not its only drawback. The British people and the Soviet Government wanted a formal treaty of alliance between the two countries, but the Eden draft only provided for an *agreement*, containing no word about an alliance. It left open the question of the nature and time-limit of the assistance which Britain would render the USSR. The wording on this point did not go beyond the agreement of July 12, 1941 and left the specific decision of the question wholly to the discretion of the British Government. This was particularly significant because for a long time the Soviet Government and British public opinion had been insisting on a Second Front in Europe. In one sense the draft was even a step back compared with the agreement of July 12; it did not envisage the commitment to refrain from signing a separate peace. It referred territorial questions to the Atlantic Charter, i.e., left these questions open and, essentially, subject to a decision by Britain and the USA, the architects and, consequently, interpreters of the Charter.

Instead of an agreement the Soviet Government proposed a formal treaty of alliance and mutual military assistance in the war against Germany. The Soviet draft contained the provision that for victory over Germany it was necessary to form an alliance between the USSR and Britain, who would assist each other. Accordingly, the draft stated: "An alliance is formed between the Soviet Union and Great Britain, and both Allied Powers mutually undertake to afford one another military assistance and support of all kinds in the war", and the two Governments pledged not to enter into separate negotiations or conclude any armistice or peace treaty with Germany and not to enter into alliances or participate in coalitions directed against the other signatory of the treaty.**

* *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, Vol. III, pp. 496-98.

** *Ibid.*, pp. 497-98.

The second Soviet draft provided for the signing of a treaty which would create "mutual understanding between the Soviet Union and Great Britain in regard to the solution of post-war questions". In the solution of these questions both countries would "act by mutual agreement" and after the war they would take steps to make it impossible for Germany to violate the peace again.* Eden declined to accept the Soviet proposal for the conclusion of a treaty instead of an agreement, giving as his excuse that approval of the Dominions would be required. His reluctance to obtain this approval without delay made it plain that the British Government did not desire a treaty of alliance with the Soviet Union.

The sharpest arguments revolved around the Soviet Union's 1941 frontiers. Eden was asked what guarantees the British Government could give that in the post-war settlement it would support the Soviet Union's demand for recognition of its 1941 frontiers. The discussion showed that the Soviet Government had every ground for alarm and that it had opportunely raised this question before the British Government. Eden declared he could not give the Soviet Union the necessary assurances and referred to the Atlantic Charter. He later telegraphed Halifax in Washington: "I used the Atlantic Charter as an argument against him" [Stalin.—*U. T.*].** This argument brought to light the monstrous fact that Churchill and Roosevelt had worded the Atlantic Charter in such a way as to be officially directed against the Axis powers and, in some measure, against the Soviet Union as well.

This caused Stalin to remark: "I thought that the Atlantic Charter was directed against those people who were trying to establish world dominion. It now looks as if the Atlantic Charter was directed against the USSR."*** Eden tried to wriggle out of the difficulty by stating that this was not the case. Then he was asked: "Why does the restoration of our frontiers come into conflict with the Atlantic Charter?" To which he replied: "I never said that it did."*) The esteemed Minister was driven into a corner and he deliberately

* *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, Vol. III, p. 498.

** *Ibid.*, p. 515.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 502.

*) *Ibid.*

did not tell the truth, testimony of which is to be found in the above-mentioned telegram to Halifax.

Stalin told him: "All we ask for is to restore our country to its former frontiers. We must have these for our security and safety. . . . I want to emphasise the point that if you decline to do this, it looks as if you were creating a possibility for the dismemberment of the Soviet Union," and stated he was "surprised and amazed at Mr. Churchill's Government taking up this position. It is practically the same as that of the Chamberlain Government."*

Eden pleaded that without the agreement of the US Government and the governments of the British Dominions he could not enter into any commitments on this question, and promised to put it before the governments concerned and his own Government.

The Moscow talks yielded nothing. It could not have been otherwise, for the stand of the British Government ran counter to the legitimate interests of the Soviet Union.

The British magazine *Nineteenth Century and After* wrote at the time: "It is particularly important that Great Britain make no concessions, that are not essential to victory over the Germans, in Eastern Europe. This is true even of the three Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. . . . No one can tell what frontiers . . . will be in the interests of England and most favourable to the balance of power, because the condition of Eastern Europe as it will be at the end of the war is unpredictable."** The striving of the British ruling circles to compel the Soviet Union to accept frontiers benefiting Britain meant that after the war they proposed to deprive it of part of its territory, place it in a difficult strategic position and restrict its future defence capability. They completely ignored the will of the population of the territories in question which had voted for accession to the Soviet Union. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Soviet Government was concerned over the post-war settlement.

In this issue the British had the wholehearted backing of the US Government. Before Eden set out for Moscow he was informed by the US Secretary of State Cordell Hull through the American Ambassador in London that the

* Ibid.

** *Labour Monthly*, July 1942, p. 211.

United States was categorically opposed to accepting the Soviet proposals and concluding a treaty on this question with the Soviet Union.*

The British were aware that this attitude would seriously strain Anglo-Soviet relations, and inasmuch as an alliance with the USSR was vital to Britain Eden tried to alleviate the situation by promising to discuss the question with the governments concerned. But he was only playing for time. Whenever the British Government wanted to evade an issue it said it had to consult with the Dominions. Eden recalls in his *Memoirs* an evening during the Teheran Conference in 1943 when in a restricted circle of the leaders of the three countries Harry Hopkins teased Churchill and him about British constitutional practices. "We have a little more experience of the British than you have, Marshal Stalin," Hopkins remarked. 'Would you like to know how the constitution works?' 'I would,' said Stalin. 'It depends,' said Hopkins, 'rather on the result that they want to get. If the British want to agree quickly, they manage it all right. If, however, they are not so sure, or they want a delay, they will tell you they have to consult the Dominions and that until they have the answers from all of them they cannot give you a clear reply.' ** That was the line taken by the British Government in the negotiations with the USSR at the close of 1941. However, the issue was much too important to be brushed aside so easily. After Eden's departure the talks on the conclusion of a treaty continued in London between the British Government and the Soviet Embassy in Britain.

Although the Eden mission in Moscow did not result in a settlement of outstanding issues, it was, nevertheless, useful as a further step towards a rapprochement between the USSR and Britain. The talks with him enabled the Soviet Government to specify its insight into the British position on a number of important questions. These talks were evidently an inevitable stage in the preparations for the Anglo-Soviet treaty of alliance, which was signed in the following spring. At the same time, the Eden mission showed the complex conditions under which the anti-fascist coalition

* Cordell Hull, *Memoirs*, Vol. II, New York, 1948, pp. 1165-66.

** *The Memoirs of Anthony Eden. Full Circle*, Boston, 1960, p. 372.

was taking shape and what enormous difficulties Soviet foreign policy had to surmount in order to establish a united front of states and peoples.

Churchill-Roosevelt Conference, December 1941-January 1942

Though they were attended by difficulties, Allied relations between Britain and the USA emerged with less trouble than the Anglo-Soviet alliance. This was due to the absence of class contradictions between them; instead there were imperialist contradictions, but these were not so pronounced. The Arcadia Conference, held from December 22 to January 14 in Washington, was an important landmark in the formation of the Anglo-American alliance. Some bourgeois authors have dubbed it the Arcadian idyll, but that was far from being the case.* At the conference there was a sharp struggle over all the discussed issues.

As soon as the USA entered the war Churchill proposed a meeting with Roosevelt so that they "could review the whole war plan".** He was in a hurry because he wanted a conference with Roosevelt before the Americans completed their own plans and thus made it impossible for him to influence American strategic planning. Roosevelt did not respond very enthusiastically to Churchill's haste, but agreed to a meeting. En route to the USA in the latest British battleship, *Duke of York*, Churchill and his military and political advisers, in the established British tradition of securing the adoption of a British document as the basis for discussion, drew up a large number of memoranda on questions of strategy and the distribution of armaments. These questions were of particular interest to him, but in the beginning he found he had to occupy himself with other matters.

When the United States entered the war it at once put in a claim to political leadership of its Allies. Roosevelt proposed that the countries in a state of war with Germany, Italy and Japan should sign a declaration prepared beforehand by the State Department. The Soviet Union was represented in the discussions by its Ambassador in Wash-

* Trumbull Higgins, *Op. cit.*, p. 81.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 541.

ington M. M. Litvinov. The Declaration was signed on January 1, 1942 by representatives of the USA, Britain, the USSR and China and then, in alphabetic order, by 22 other countries. The USSR's growing role in the coalition was the result of the Soviet Army's victory at Moscow.

The signatories pledged to use all their resources against those members of the Tripartite Pact and countries alligned with it with whom they were in a state of war and to refrain from concluding a separate armistice or peace treaty with the enemy.* This declaration subsequently became known as the Declaration of the United Nations (the name was proposed by Roosevelt). It was the equivalent of a military-political alliance and consummated the anti-fascist coalition. It was coldly received by the British, either because it contained a reference to the Atlantic Charter or because it was an American initiative. Churchill signed it, but subsequently snorted: "The Declaration could not by itself win battles."**

Questions of strategy worried him most of all. He feared that as a result of the Japanese attack, the USA would concentrate all its attention in the Far East. He need not have had these fears for the USA was steering towards world domination and could not therefore afford to underrate Europe. Another thought tormenting Churchill was that the USA, whose territory was not directly menaced, would adopt a wait-and-see attitude and calmly build up its armed forces, while Britain and the USSR did the actual fighting, in other words, he feared the USA would adopt the same position with regard to Britain as Britain had adopted with regard to the Soviet Union.*** But here, too, his apprehensions were groundless. The USA had considerable forces and was determined to use them so that later it would have more grounds for dictating the terms of the post-war settlement.

The strategic decisions taken by Churchill and Roosevelt met with the desires of the British Government. It was decided to regard Germany as enemy No. 1 and concentrate the main effort in the war against her and Italy. As regards Japan it was agreed that for the time being the strategy

* *Uneshnaya politika Sovetskogo Soyuz...*, Vol. I, pp. 170-71.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 605.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 581.

against her would be a defensive one. The USA agreed to begin active operations in Europe without delay, and sent troops to Northern Ireland. This enabled Britain to dispatch part of her forces to the Middle East without fearing for her own security. Churchill was particularly delighted that the Americans had consented to study plans for an Anglo-American invasion of French North Africa. Thus, instead of thinking of a landing in Western Europe (i.e., a Second Front to assist the Soviet Union) they decided to direct their military effort towards the colonial outskirts. McNeill says the Americans agreed to start an African campaign because "Roosevelt was personally attracted to the North Africa scheme".* The implication is that colonialist motives were behind not only British but also American policy.

Although the Americans quickly fell in with the British on questions of strategy, Churchill and his advisers were seriously alarmed when the discussion turned to how the leadership of the joint military operations would be implemented. The US Chief-of-Staff General George C. Marshall demanded that in each theatre there should be one commander-in-chief and that all forces regardless of nationality should be subordinated to him. This obviously did not suit the British. They wanted to preserve individual national commands even in an operation like the invasion of the European continent. Churchill justifiably feared that the American principle would adversely affect the unity of the British Empire and the British influence in the Far East. On this point McNeill says: "Combined staffs and unified command over British, American and other Allied contingents would at the least blur British control in such areas, and might lead to the substitution of American for British influence in important and extensive regions of the world."** Churchill raised objections but in the end was forced to meet the demand of the US Chief-of-Staff, who was supported by Roosevelt.

A Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee consisting of representatives of the armed forces of Britain and the USA with headquarters in Washington was set up as the supreme body

* William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 104.

** *Ibid.*, p. 107.

directing military operations. The US contribution in troops and armaments would be much larger than the British, hence the headquarters in Washington. Subsequently, this circumstance determined the choice of the commanders-in-chief for various theatres and major operations. Churchill was greatly worried but could do nothing. Need had made him helpless. Britain was growing increasingly dependent on American supplies of armaments and on US strategic plans.

The problem of distributing the armaments produced in the USA and Britain provoked a heated argument. The Americans wanted a single distribution centre for the two countries, which would use their resources in accordance with the plans of the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee. Taking into consideration the fact of the Committee's location in the USA and that America was producing by far the larger share of armaments, such a centre would give the Americans the decisive say in military planning in any part of the world. The British raised categorical objections with the result that two centres were set up—one for the USA and the other for Britain. The Americans at once stated they would consider their distribution centre as a subcommittee of the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee, thus greatly enhancing the role of their centre.

The British had good reason for congratulating themselves on the results of the Churchill-Roosevelt meeting in Washington. They had obtained the assurance that American forces would be used first and foremost against Germany and that the flow of American supplies to Britain would continue. On the other hand, the conference had set up a mechanism of joint command in which the decisive role was accorded to the United States. "The Combined Chiefs being located in America undoubtedly weighed heavily in favour of American policy," says Air Vice-Marshal Kingston-McCloughry.* The Arcadia Conference ended with the establishment of the Anglo-US alliance, which the British Government had been seeking. At the same time, it showed that in this alliance Britain was in no position to pursue a really independent policy. The power balance was plainly not in her favour.

* E. J. Kingston-McCloughry, *The Direction of War*, New York, 1955, p. 109.

Transitional Stage of the Economic War

At the Arcadia Conference Roosevelt and Churchill discussed possible plans for winning the war. In the various war theatres, particularly in the Far East, the situation was growing more and more dismal. The British Government's bleak assessment of immediate prospects is shown in its plans of economic warfare.

In early 1942 the British Ministry of Economic Warfare was assailed by gloomy apprehensions over the possibility that further military successes by Germany, Italy and Japan would enable these countries to establish direct contact. It was felt that such contact would be established if German and Italian troops reached the Middle East and Japanese troops approached this region from Southeast Asia via India. The cause of these apprehensions, Medlicott says, was that in the opinion of the British leaders "in March 1942 a Russian collapse and an extension of Japanese conquest were possibilities still".* "The extent of this danger," he writes, "had been brought home to everyone in the spring of 1942", which must be taken to mean that both the Ministry of Economic Warfare and the Government saw eye to eye on the immediate prospects of the war.**

On March 21, 1942, Lord Selborne, who had replaced Hugh Dalton as Minister of Economic Warfare, submitted to the Government a memorandum on the immediate aims and problems of Anglo-US strategy in the economic war. It pointed out that the former objective of depriving the enemy of access to the resources of neutral countries had been superseded by the objective of preventing one enemy gaining access to supplies in the territory held by another enemy. This task had to be assigned mainly to the naval forces.

Selborne suggested that the strategy of the economic war should have six main objectives: preventing the enemies from establishing an exchange of resources in the territories under their control; increasing pressure on neutral countries adjoining Germany and on the French colonies administered by the Vichy Government with the purpose of obtaining certain supplies from them and preventing these supplies

* W. N. Medlicott, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 14.

** *Ibid.*, p. 12.

from reaching the Germans; sustaining in enemy-held territory passive and active resistance to the economic measures taken there: undermining the German potential by air raids; carrying out combined operations against key economic and transport targets in enemy-occupied territory; and protecting important sources of supply and access to them, including Latin America.”*

The Selborne memorandum was testimony that although the British Government had heaved a sigh of relief when it obtained such powerful Allies as the USSR and the USA, it still feared the Axis powers would achieve major successes before the Allied forces attained their full strength. Moreover, it showed that the economic war still figured prominently in British overall strategic planning.

From the standpoint of the British economic war, the positive aspect of the Soviet Union's involvement in the war was that it cut short economic relations between the USSR and Germany and, consequently, the British no longer had to worry about blockading the Germans in the East. In addition, the five remaining *de jure* neutral countries in Europe—Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Portugal and Spain—had become more tractable in relation to Britain. Formerly, their actions had been largely motivated by fear of the powerful German military machine. Now, although that machine still existed it was fettered on the Eastern Front, and for that reason Germany was careful not to provoke a deterioration of her relations with the neutral countries. This gave Britain more scope in her dealings with neutrals.

In the Far East Britain and the US had begun to co-operate in bringing economic pressure to bear on Japan long before war with that country broke out. The object of this pressure, to which the Dutch Government contributed, was to induce Japan to come to terms with the Western Allies. The situation was radically changed by the Japanese attack on the USA and Britain. Following this attack the two Western Allies worked hand in glove in the conduct of the economic war against the common enemy. This collaboration was cemented in the course of 1942 when the Western Allies suffered a series of painful setbacks. However, after 1942, when the war began to go against the Axis powers it became possible to hit Japan's trade with neutral countries with

* Ibid., p. 15.

telling effect. But as long as the Japanese Armed Forces were making headway the Allied economic blockade was limited mainly to hindering Japan's trade with Latin America and running down blockade-runners carrying supplies from the European Axis powers to their Far Eastern partner. This was a difficult task and the Ministry of Economic Warfare could do nothing save hope that Japan's shortage of tonnage would not permit her to build up considerable reserves.

When the United States entered the war the American Government, much to the satisfaction of the British, accepted their blockade system, only modifying it slightly to meet the changed situation. The American point of departure was that the British had vast experience in this field and knew how to enforce a blockade better than anybody else. That was indeed the case. Hence the American willingness to let the British continue directing the blockade. The term "British blockade" is used by the American historian William L. Langer, who expounds the views of the US State Department in his review of the period beginning eight months after Pearl Harbour.* The system of special licenses for the transportation of freight to neutral states from the USA, introduced into that country by the British with the consent of the American authorities, was changed by mutual agreement in the spring of 1942. As of April 1 the British licenses were replaced by American export licenses.

However, the Anglo-US partnership in the economic war was not free of considerable friction. Some American business circles felt, probably not without good reason, that in playing the main role in imposing the blockade the British were using it not only against the enemy but also to provide British businessmen with certain foreign trade privileges, while denying these privileges to American business.

The United States wanted a more stringent and consistent blockade of the European neutrals. The Americans were on the whole justified in maintaining that the relaxations permitted by Britain ultimately benefited only Germany and Italy. The British Government used the blockade to deprive its adversary of sources of supply and to influence the policies of neutral countries both during and after the war. The Americans did not have such firm ties with Europe or such

* William L. Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble*, New York, 1947, p. 266.

ramified and far-reaching European plans as the British and were annoyed by the British intrigues. One of the causes of this annoyance was the consciousness that in relation to Europe Britain was laying her plans with an eye to ensuring her own predominance there.

The official motives given by the British for their milder treatment of the European neutrals was that Britain needed certain materials which they could supply. Moreover, British Intelligence was very active in these countries. Another argument was that harder pressure on the neutrals with the purpose of forcing them to break off their economic relations with Germany was fraught with the danger of German occupation, which would only harm Allied interests. It was said that "the British Government had committed itself to certain longer-term and more constructive policies than those of the war trade agreements and compulsory rationing". Spain was the most conspicuous example of this "longer-term" policy, which, Medlicott says, was "not easy to reconcile with sudden demands from Washington for British acquiescence in an embargo on oil or hides or wheat".* Among the pretexts offered by the British were their treaties of alliance with Portugal and Turkey and Switzerland's commitment to protect British interests in territory administered by Germany and Italy.

In Latin America the roles were reversed. There the Americans urged a milder economic blockade in order to extend and strengthen their influence on neutral countries. The British, on the other hand, insisted on more resolute and definite measures which would ensure a complete rupture of economic relations between Latin America and the enemy.

However, as in the preceding periods, the results of the economic war during the transition period were, on the whole, insignificant.

Anglo-Soviet Relations in the First Half of 1942. The Second Front Issue

The course of hostilities was still giving the Allies little comfort. The turning point had yet to be reached.

* W. N. Medlicott, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 23.

The year 1942 brought the Allies severe trials. Robert Sherwood calls the first months of that year "a winter of disasters" for the USA and Britain. The British, he says, were compelled to bear "some of the most humiliating and inexplicable disasters in their entire history".* Churchill subsequently noted that Britain entered 1942 in a new situation, with "two mighty Allies"—the USSR and the USA—at her side. "This combination," he wrote, "made final victory certain unless it broke in pieces under the strain."** The anti-fascist coalition stood the test of 1942 and did not break in pieces, mainly because the Soviet Union bore the brunt of these trials and coped with them, thereby rendering its Allies inestimable assistance in the struggle against the common enemy. The sound foreign policy pursued by the Soviet Union and the determination of the peoples of the Allied countries to defeat the enemy contributed towards the strengthening of this coalition.

The reverses suffered in Libya and the Far East alarmed Washington and London. Assessing the strategic situation of those days, Churchill wrote to Roosevelt on March 5, 1942: "The whole of the Levant-Caspian front now depends entirely upon the success of the Russian Armies."*** In these months of the close of 1941 and the beginning of 1942, Robert Sherwood says, "the only source of good news was the Russian Front".*)

These appraisals of the Soviet Union's effort against Nazi Germany and her accomplices provides additional evidence of the fact that the principal battles of the war were fought on the Eastern Front. On the basis of this estimation, which is the only correct one, of the general picture of the war, it must be recognised that towards the spring the military and political situation was, in the main, favourable to the USA and Britain. The Nazi armies had suffered crushing defeats in the Soviet Union and the Nazi command had been compelled to transfer an additional large number of combat-worthy troops from Western Europe to the Eastern Front. This had greatly weakened German military strength in Western Europe. Another factor which must be borne in mind is that in the course of the first year of the Soviet

* Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, p. 490.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 3.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 191.

*) Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, p. 495.

Union's Great Patriotic War Britain and the USA had the possibility of organising the mass production of armaments and mobilising and training their armed forces. The weakening of the German bloc and the growing might of the anti-fascist coalition combined with the activation of the anti-nazi liberation movement in enemy-occupied territories were factors which created the possibility of bringing the war to an early victorious end. To realise this possibility Britain and the USA had to begin active military operations against Germany in Europe, i.e., open a Second Front.

This was what the Soviet Union continued to insist upon, and in this it was supported by the peoples of Britain and the United States. This support mirrored the desire of these peoples to hasten the end of the war and help the heroic struggle of the Soviet people.

Some sections of the British ruling class likewise insisted on a Second Front. These sections soberly assessed the situation and correctly understood the vital interests of their country. Among them were the former Prime Minister David Lloyd George, Lord Beaverbrook and the British Ambassador in the USSR Sir Stafford Cripps.

Had Lord Beaverbrook's views been shared by the ruling circles of Britain as a whole the Second Front would probably have been opened in time. But this was far from being the case. The Government with Churchill at its head was against opening the Second Front opportunely, desiring others to fight the war and bear the losses. These politicians counted on the Soviet Union and Germany exhausting each other and thereby allowing British imperialism to maintain the much-coveted "equilibrium" in Europe.

In the United States, too, considerable influence was wielded by circles opposed to opening a Second Front in Europe in 1942. Some American adversaries of the Second Front desired to avert or, at least, delay the defeat of Nazi Germany, considering that her forces had to be preserved in order to combat the revolutionary movement in Europe. Others argued that Japan was the chief enemy of the United States, that all American forces should be thrown against her and that the conduct of the war in Europe should be left to the Russians and the British. Both these groups actively opposed Roosevelt, who considered Germany as the principal enemy of the United States. However, they did not have as much influence as Roosevelt's supporters, and

that explains why the US Government and military leaders displayed greater readiness to open a Second Front in Europe than Churchill, who gave priority to the struggle for the preservation of the British colonies and dependent countries, hoping that the most difficult task, that of smashing the German military machine, would be carried out for Britain by her Allies.

All these factors affected the attitude which the governments of Churchill and Roosevelt adopted towards the question of the Second Front in 1942.

In reply to a message from Stalin, Churchill wrote in September 1941: "Whether British armies will be strong enough to invade the mainland of Europe during 1942 must depend on unforeseeable events."* It was believed these words would sustain the Soviet Government's expectation that the Second Front would be opened in 1942. But as early as December 1941—at the Arcadia Conference—Churchill handed Roosevelt a memorandum on Anglo-US strategy, which envisaged "the mass invasion of the continent of Europe as the goal for 1943".** That betrayed the duplicity of Churchill's deliberately vague message, from which the Soviet Government might have concluded that the British Premier had not ruled out the possibility of the Second Front being opened in 1942. However, even the plan for an invasion of the European continent in 1943 was wrapped up in so many reservations that it, too, became extremely problematical.

In effect, the British strategic plan thus ignored the demand of the Soviet Union and the British people that Britain go over to decisive military action in Europe. In Washington it was believed that this would be much too hazardous, and the American strategic plan, completed early in 1942, differed somewhat from its English counterpart. Like Churchill, the authors of that plan felt the invasion of Western Europe—Operation Round-Up—should be undertaken by the Anglo-American forces not earlier than 1943. However, unlike the British Premier, they envisaged a limited operation—Sledgehammer—in 1942 (approximately September 15), which, the plan stated, "would be justified only in case (1) the situation on the Russian Front becomes desperate, i.e., the success of German arms becomes so

* *Correspondence...*, Vol. I, p. 23.

** Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Op. cit.*, p. 100.

complete as to threaten the imminent collapse of Russian resistance ... (2) the German situation in Eastern Europe becomes critically weakened".*

Obviously this was a plan to wait until Germany and the Soviet Union exhausted one another or to help the USSR only, to use the wording of the American document, when "the situation on the Russian Front becomes desperate". "The desirability of meeting the Russian demands for a Second Front was the last in the priority list of arguments in favour of the proposal," writes Robert Sherwood.** As regards the second condition, the purpose of an Anglo-US landing, as was demonstrated in 1944, was not to help the Soviet Union but to occupy Western Europe before it could be reached by the Soviet Army.

In declaring their stand on the question of assistance to the Soviet Union, the Americans had in mind chiefly their own interests. In the US Army's Operations Department it was considered: "We've got to keep Russia in the war. . . . Then we can get ready to crack Germany through England."***

Before the Germans launched their campaign in the spring of 1942 on the Eastern Front, Roosevelt felt it was necessary to give the Soviet Union a definite assurance that it could count on military assistance from the Western Allies as early as 1942. This, he calculated, would calm not only the Soviet Union but also public opinion, which was demanding a Second Front.

On April 1, 1942, Roosevelt approved the American strategic plan and at once sent Hopkins and Marshall to London to co-ordinate it with the British, and telegraphed Churchill: "When I have heard from you after your talks with Harry [Hopkins] and Marshall, I propose to ask Stalin to send immediately two special representatives. It is my hope that the Russians will greet these plans with enthusiasm. . . . They can be worked out in full accord with the trends of British and American public opinion."*)

Hopkins and Marshall arrived in London on April 8, and their talks with the British ended on April 14. At a meeting

* Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, p. 520.

** Ibid.

*** Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

*) Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, pp. 534-35.

of the Operations Department of the War Cabinet's Defence Committee with the participation of the two American envoys and leading members of the British Government, Churchill formally endorsed the American plan calling for Operation Round-Up in 1943 and Operation Sledgehammer in 1942. It would seem that the decision had been taken and that the approved plans would be carried out. Hopkins sent Roosevelt a jubilantly worded telegram.

The decisions of the London Conference, even if they had been carried out, made no provision for what the Soviet Government desired and what Britain and the United States had to do to help their Ally. With all the main German forces concentrated on the Eastern Front in 1942, the Soviet Union needed immediate military assistance. But its Allies decided to extend that assistance only in 1943; the landing of five or six divisions in 1942 (Sledgehammer) would only have amounted to symbolic assistance. However, the Soviet Union received neither symbolic assistance in 1942 nor real assistance in 1943.

Had Hopkins and Marshall had a better understanding of the British Government's policies they would have been more sceptical about the results of their mission. Their apprehensions should have been aroused when, in supporting the American proposal, Churchill spoke at length of the "ominous threat" to the Allies in the Middle East, India, Burma, Ceylon and the Indian Ocean and of the need to use their resources in those areas.* Other British leaders spoke in the same vein. Robert E. Sherwood says "the discussions at this meeting produced the contradictory circumstance of the American representatives constantly sticking to the main topic of the war against Germany while the British representatives were repeatedly bringing up reminders of the war against Japan."**

From Churchill's memoirs and other sources we now know that his approval on April 14, 1942 of Round-Up and Sledgehammer was insincere and that he had had no intention of carrying out the adopted decision. He writes that he "by no means rejected the idea at the outset, but there were other alternatives which lay in my mind. The first was the descent on French Northwest Africa.... I had a second

* Ibid., pp. 534-35.

** Ibid., p. 536.

alternative plan. . . . This was Jupiter, namely, the liberation of Northern Norway. . . . If it had been in my power to give orders I would have settled upon Torch and Jupiter" (i.e., the landing in Africa and Norway.—*U.T.*).* Asked why he had not insisted on his alternatives, he replied: "I had to work by influence and diplomacy in order to secure agreed and harmonious action with our cherished Ally. . . . I did not therefore open any of these alternatives at our meeting on the 14th."***

How did Churchill hope to evade fulfilling the decision adopted on April 14? "I was however very ready," he said, "to give Sledgehammer, as the Cherbourg assault was called, a fair run with other suggestions before the Planning Committees. I was almost certain the more it was looked at the less it would be liked. . . . But I had little doubt myself that study of details—landing-craft and all that—and also reflection on the main strategy of the war, would rule out Sledgehammer."****

Churchill and the British military leaders thus played a double game at the talks with the Americans in April 1942. This is admitted by General Ismay, a man who knew a great deal because he was Churchill's Chief-of-Staff and a member of his inner circle. Regarding the talks with Marshall and Hopkins in April 1942, Ismay notes: "Everyone at the meeting was enthusiastic. . . . Everyone agreed that the death-blow to Germany must be delivered across the Channel. In fact everyone seemed to agree with the American proposals in their entirety. No doubts were expressed; no discordant note struck. . . . Our American friends went happily homewards under the mistaken impression that we had committed ourselves to both Round-Up and Sledgehammer."* The impression Marshall and Hopkins took away with them was not the result of some unfortunate misunderstanding, of one side not understanding the other. It was a deliberate deception on the part of Churchill and his associates. This also is admitted by Ismay. He says that when subsequently the British opposed Sledgehammer the Americans "felt we had broken faith with them. Worse still, they got it into

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol IV, p. 289.

** *Ibid.*, pp. 289-90.

*** *Ibid.*

*) *The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay*, pp. 249-50.

their heads that our opposition to Sledgehammer would later extend to Round-Up as well".*

That, of course, is exactly what transpired. Ismay notes that the Americans would not have felt Churchill was perfidious "if the British had expressed their views more frankly" at the April talks.** This is an admission of the duplicity practised by the Churchill Government in the talks with the Americans over the opening of a Second Front. As far as we are concerned this episode is important not only because it illustrates the foreign policy methods of the British ruling circles but also because it gives a deeper insight into the perfidy of the British representatives in the talks on a Second Front with the Soviet Union in May 1942 in London.

At the April conference Churchill acted the hypocrite because he feared a change in American plans would draw most of the US war effort to the Far East. After a conversation with General George Marshall at the time of the April conference, the British Field-Marshal Alan Brooke made the following entry in his diary: "He [Marshall] has found that King, the American Naval Chief-of-Staff, is proving more and more of a drain on his military resources, continually calling for land forces to capture and hold land-bases in the Pacific. . . . MacArthur in Australia constitutes another threat by asking for forces to develop an offensive from Australia. To counter these moves Marshall has started the European offensive plan and is going one hundred per cent all out on it. It is a clever move which fits in with present political opinion and the desire to help Russia."*** Explaining his stand at the conference, Churchill remarks: "We might so easily . . . have been confronted with American plans to assign the major priority to helping China and crushing Japan."*) The preservation of American priority for the European theatre strengthened the military position of the British Isles, for it signified that large numbers of American troops and great quantities of US war supplies would arrive in England. This allowed Britain to fight a war for colonies in the Middle and Far East, a war

* Ibid., p. 250.

** Ibid., p. 249.

*** Arthur Bryant, *Op. cit.*, p. 358.

*) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 290.

so dear to the hearts of the British imperialists, without fearing for the safety of London. Moreover, it gave the British the hope that the Americans would move their troops to Africa and the Middle East and thereby still further extend the struggle for the protection of the British colonial possessions against Hitler and Mussolini. Churchill remembered the interest Roosevelt had shown at the Arcadia Conference in Operation Gymnast, which envisaged a campaign in North Africa. Lastly, the American presence in Europe was regarded by Churchill as a vital guarantee in the event the German successes on the Eastern Front exceeded what he felt was useful and safe for Britain and gave Hitler the possibility to turn westwards again and bring to life his Sea Lion plan. It must be borne in mind that in April 1942 Churchill was as yet unable to foresee clearly which way the fighting on the Eastern Front would swing.

On April 12, without waiting for the London Conference's decision, Roosevelt sent the Soviet Government a message requesting the presence as soon as possible in Washington of the Soviet Foreign Minister and a senior military officer. "I have in mind," he wrote, "a very important military proposal involving the utilisation of our armed forces in a manner to relieve your critical Western Front."^{*}

On April 20 the Soviet Government replied it would send its Foreign Minister to Washington for an exchange of views with the President "on the question of organising a Second Front in Europe in the immediate future".^{**} Roosevelt was informed that the Soviet Foreign Minister would stop over in London, where he would have talks with the British Government.

The People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs V. M. Molotov arrived in London in May 1942. In his talks there he asked the British Government how it regarded the prospect of diverting at least 40 German divisions from the Eastern Front in 1942. In reply Churchill and Eden enlarged on the conditions of a landing in Western Europe, said that it was expedient to carry out such a landing in the region of Pas-de-Calais, Cherbourg and Brest and spoke of control of the high seas and of the importance of aircraft in a landing operation, but doggedly evaded concrete commitments

^{*} *Correspondence...*, Vol. II, p. 23.

^{**} *Ibid.*

regarding the time and scale of a landing. At these talks (May 21-26), the American historian Herbert Feis points out, "Churchill was cautiously indefinite. He refrained from direct and positive answers to Molotov's urgent inquiries as to whether and when the United States and Britain would start an operation against Germany in the West."* He did not tell Molotov the truth, which was that the British Government had no intention of opening a Second Front in 1942. He knew Molotov was on his way to Washington and suggested that he stop in London on his return journey, promising that "a more concrete reply could be rendered in the light of the Washington discussions".**

On May 28 Churchill sent a telegram to Roosevelt in which he informed the US President of his talks with the Soviet Foreign Minister and said his representative Admiral Mountbatten would soon go to Washington to inform the President and the Chiefs-of-Staff of the difficulties that had arisen in planning Round-Up and Sledgehammer and make a new proposal regarding Operation Jupiter, the landing in Northern Norway. This signified that the British meant to repudiate the agreement reached in London in April 1942 and, correspondingly, influence Roosevelt's stand in the talks with Molotov.

On May 30 Molotov raised before Roosevelt, Hopkins, Marshall and King the question of a Second Front in 1942. "The President," say the notes of Samuel H. Cross, Professor of Slavic Languages and Literature at Harvard University, who acted as interpreter at the talks, "then put to General Marshall the query whether developments were clear enough so that we could say to Mr. Stalin that we are preparing a Second Front. 'Yes,' replied the General. The President then authorised Mr. Molotov to inform Mr. Stalin that we expect the formation of a Second Front this year."*** In the course of further negotiations with the Americans and, later, with the British, agreement was reached on the text of a communiqué stating that the USA and Britain would open the Second Front in Europe in 1942. The fact that such was the outcome of the May 1942 talks in Washington is not called in question even by approved

* Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, p. 51.

** *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, Vol. III, p. 567.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 577.

American histories of the Second World War. Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell write that the Soviet Union was given a strong pledge that a Second Front would be opened in 1942.* Explaining to Churchill why he gave that pledge, Roosevelt said he wanted Molotov to return home with tangible results and give Stalin a favourable report.** The motives behind this are made clear in another telegram from Roosevelt to Churchill on June 6, in which he said: "I confess that I view with great concern the Russian Front."***

Churchill, too, followed the titanic battle on the Eastern Front with anxiety, hence his decision to "help" the Soviet Union with a spurious promise of military assistance in 1942. When Molotov stopped over at London on his way home from Washington, the British Government agreed to open the Second Front in 1942. This was confirmed in the Anglo-Soviet communiqué, which stated that "complete agreement was reached on the urgent task of opening a Second Front in Europe in 1942".*) The Soviet-US communiqué contained a similar phrase. Both communiqués were published on June 11, 1942, after Molotov returned to Moscow. The USA and Britain thus entered into a clear and definite commitment to open the Second Front in 1942, giving this commitment broad publicity.

That Churchill had no intention of honouring the pledge he had given on behalf of Britain is borne out by the fact that when the Anglo-Soviet communiqué was being drawn up he handed Molotov a memorandum, which was later widely used to justify the British Government's unscrupulous attitude to its commitments regarding the Second Front. This document left it a loophole. It stated: "We are making preparations for a landing on the continent in August or September 1942. . . . It is impossible to say in advance whether the situation will be such as to make this operation feasible when the time comes. We can therefore give no promise in the matter, but provided that it appears sound and sensible we shall not hesitate to put our plans into effect."**)

These words could only be understood literally: the British Government was making preparations—it was not

* Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Op. cit.*, p. 270.

** *Ibid.*, p. 189.

*** *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, Vol. III, p. 590.

*) *History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-1945*, Moscow, 1969, p. 439.

***) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 342.

merely promising to take steps to open a Second Front or studying the possibilities for such an operation, or intending to plan it; it was making preparations for an invasion of the European continent provided no unforeseen circumstances (hence the words "impossible to say in advance") hampered that invasion. The words "we can therefore give no promise in the matter" referred to circumstances which might arise in August and September 1942 and which, naturally, did not depend on the British Government. In the event they were such as could be foreseen when this memorandum was submitted (as was the case), the British Government would "not hesitate to put our plans into effect". When Churchill handed the memorandum to Molotov he indisputably knew that in August and September 1942 circumstances would make it possible to open a Second Front. Firstly, had he thought otherwise he would have said so openly and definitely in the memorandum and, secondly, he would not have prepared for an operation that was not "sound and sensible"; from the memorandum it appears that such preparations were being made. Consequently, Churchill's reservation that "we can therefore give no promise" to open the Second Front if circumstances make such an operation useless and unfeasible was a statement of fact and could not mean that the British Government did not undertake to open the Second Front in 1942. This wording might have had the significance Churchill sought belatedly to attribute to it if it alone had existed in the memorandum. But the memorandum begins with the phrase: "We are making preparations for a landing on the continent in August or September 1942", and ends with the words: "we shall not hesitate to put our plans into effect." In this context, Churchill's reservation cannot be accepted as grounds for releasing the British Government from its commitment, and the entire memorandum must be regarded as a document confirming this commitment, which was formulated in the communiqué and in the memorandum itself. The American historian William L. Neumann, for instance, says: "The British had given Molotov a memorandum stating that preparations were being made for a landing on the continent of Europe in August or September 1942."^{*}

^{*} William L. Neumann, *Making the Peace, 1941-1945*, Washington, 1950, pp. 35-36.

The Churchill memorandum cannot be considered in isolation from the other documents agreed on and signed by representatives of the USSR and Britain. In interpreting it one must take into account not only the Anglo-Soviet communiqué envisaging a Second Front in 1942, but also the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of Alliance. Neither must it be considered in isolation from the Soviet-US communiqué or from what the Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs was told in Washington, for Churchill himself had suggested giving the Soviet Government a final reply on the Second Front after the American Government had stated its position on that issue. What Churchill said amounted to: "We shall do as the Americans do." The Americans had without any reservations declared and recorded in the communiqué that the Second Front would be opened in 1942. After receiving these assurances, the Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs went to London where he raised the question: What will now be your last word about the Second Front? In reply the British Government agreed to the publication of a communiqué on the Second Front, containing the same words as the Soviet-US communiqué. This meant that both the British and US governments had equally committed themselves to opening a Second Front. This, stated in more definite terms, is to be found in the Churchill memorandum: "We are making preparations for a landing on the continent in August or September 1942. . . . We shall not hesitate to put our plans into effect." The reservations in the memorandum are thus reduced to nothing. It should be borne in mind that when Churchill and his defenders refer to the reservation in the memorandum they completely ignore the above two phrases, which reiterate the British Government's commitment to open the Second Front in 1942.

Inasmuch as Churchill and the historians who shield him single out as important in this document only the reservation and regard the part reiterating the commitment to open a Second Front as having no significance, the only conclusion one can draw is that the memorandum was deliberately worded in such a way as to justify breaking the pledge given in the Anglo-Soviet communiqué. In other words, the British Government adopted an unprincipled stand on the question of the Second Front, in both May and June 1942.

Lenin had noted that the British imperialists "have broken all records not only in the number of colonies they have grabbed, but also in the subtlety of their disgusting hypocrisy".* This feature of British policy was particularly conspicuous in the talks on the Second Front. The US General Albert C. Wedemeyer, who with Hopkins and Marshall took part in the April 1942 talks on the Second Front, writes: "The British were masters in negotiations—particularly were they adept in the use of phrases or words which were capable of more than one meaning or interpretation. Here was the setting, with all the trappings of a classical Machiavellian scene. I am not suggesting that the will to deceive was a personal characteristic of any of the participants. But when matters of state were involved, our British opposite numbers had elastic scruples. . . . What I witnessed was the British power of diplomatic finesse in its finest hour, a power that had been developed over centuries of successful international intrigue, cajollery, and tacit compulsions."**

One can understand the meaning of the Churchill memorandum and the further use of that document by Churchill and other British leaders only when one bears in mind the "elastic scruples" mentioned by Wedemeyer. That is precisely why serious American and British historians disregard Churchill's subterfuge with the memorandum and consider that in the spring of 1942 Britain and the USA had pledged to open a Second Front that same year. Neumann says the Soviet Union had been promised that a Second Front "could be expected in 1942".*** Feis writes that Churchill had given Molotov the impression that a landing across the English Channel would be undertaken possibly even in 1942 and handed him the above-mentioned memorandum to confirm that impression.†) Medlicott gives the same assessment of the pledge made to the USSR by Britain and the United States in the spring of 1942. In the journal *International Affairs* he wrote of "the Second Front that had been promised to the Russians in 1942".**) In April 1959, in the same journal, he pointed out that in 1942 there was "the

* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 64.

** Albert C. Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, New York, 1958, pp. 105-06.

*** William L. Neumann, *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

†) Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.

**) *International Affairs*, October 1958, Vol. 34, No. 4, p. 509.

obvious, immediate, and imperative need, on which both Churchill and Roosevelt were agreed, for a Second Front".*

Despite the British Government's insincerity on the question of the Second Front in 1942 the agreement was of great significance. It contributed towards the further strengthening of the anti-fascist coalition. This was a major achievement of Soviet foreign policy, which with the support of the British and American peoples secured from the governments of Britain and the USA formal agreement to active military operations against nazi Germany in the European continent. This agreement gave impetus to the struggle of the peoples against the nazis and fortified their confidence that the invaders would ultimately be beaten.

The struggle of the Soviet and all other freedom-loving peoples for a Second Front entered a new phase following the publication of the Anglo-Soviet and Soviet-US communiqués on that issue. Henceforth it was a struggle against the efforts of the British Government to evade the precise and timely fulfilment of its commitments.

Anglo-Soviet Treaty of Alliance

When Roosevelt sent his invitation to the Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, he wanted him to come to Washington first and to go to London from there. The Soviet Government, however, decided otherwise. Its motive for sending the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs first to London was that a Second Front could be opened only from Britain and with the active participation of the British Armed Forces. It felt the stand of the British Government on this question had to be clarified before the talks in Washington were started. Moreover, it was important to consummate, as quickly as possible, the protracted negotiations on the conclusion of an Anglo-Soviet Treaty of Alliance.

The most disputed point in these negotiations was that of the Soviet Union's western frontiers. When Eden was in Moscow he said both Britain and the USA considered the question of frontiers, including the Soviet Union's western frontiers, should be settled at the future peace conference. In seeking to persuade the Soviet Government to postpone the issue until the peace conference, Churchill

* *International Affairs*, April 1959, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 279-80.

calculated that the USSR would come to that conference in a state of exhaustion enabling Britain and the USA to impose anything they wished on it, including frontiers that met with their interests. In a book published under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, the American historian William Hardy McNeill notes that Churchill and "some British officials" desired to put off the question of the Soviet western frontiers "to some future peace conference, when the constellation of military and economic power emerging from the war might be expected to favour the Anglo-Americans as against the Russians". In Churchill's "advocacy of postponement he was vigorously supported by the United States. At least some of the Poles [i.e., members of the emigré Government.—*U. T.*] too, were well content to leave the boundary questions to the future, when, they imagined, a war-weakened or defeated Russia would be unable to oppose the materialisation of at least a part of Polish ambitions".* That, in fact, was how the British ruling circles planned to take Soviet interests "into consideration" at the future peace conference.

However, in the spring of 1942 the military and political situation compelled Britain to think of modifying her attitudes. She began to realise that the Allied victory depended on the successes of the Soviet Union. The setbacks of the British Armed Forces were so catastrophic that even the very restrained British journal *The Economist* found it necessary, on February 21, 1942, to give the following appraisal of Britain's military position: "The British people have been wonderfully patient under the long string of disasters and disappointments. But they are getting very tired of always losing—and usually losing so badly. In the whole history of the war, the British Army has not a single success of any importance to its credit—unless it be the very Pyrrhic triumph of Dunkirk or the very temporary gains in Libya. . . . For at the moment, Britain is losing the war. Hitler may be losing it too, Russia may be winning it and America may be preparing to win it—but Britain is losing it."**

This fitted in with the estimate of the situation by British and American military leaders. The words "together we shall win final victory over our common enemy" in the

* William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.

** *The Economist*, Feb. 21, 1942, p. 242.

message of greeting sent on Red Army Day in February 1942 by Chief of the Imperial General Staff Alan Brooke and Air Marshal Charles Portal, Chief of Air Staff, to Marshal Boris Shaposhnikov, Chief of the Red Army's General Staff, were not a piece of formal, protocol courtesy. They reflected the realistic thinking of British political and military leaders in 1942. On that day, February 23, a telegram was received in Moscow from General Douglas MacArthur in the Pacific. It stated in part: "The hopes of civilisation rest on the worthy banners of the courageous Russian Army. . . . The scale and grandeur of this effort [the Battle of Moscow.—*U.T.*] marks it as the greatest military achievement in all history."* Objectively estimating the situation, they drew the correct conclusion that their countries could not afford to ignore the Soviet efforts to improve Anglo-Soviet relations and thereby strengthen the anti-fascist coalition.

That made Churchill doubt the worth of clinging to the objective of revising the Soviet western frontiers which the British Government had adopted at the time of Eden's visit to Moscow in December 1941 and later. "But now, three months later," he writes, "under the pressure of events, I did not feel that this moral position could be physically maintained. In a deadly struggle it is not right to assume more burdens than those who are fighting for a great cause can bear. My opinions about the Baltic states were, and are, unaltered, but I felt that I could not carry them farther forward at this time."**

On March 7, 1942, in a message to Roosevelt on this question, he wrote: "If Winant is with you now, he will no doubt explain the Foreign Office view about Russia. The increasing gravity of the war has led me to feel that the principles of the Atlantic Charter ought not to be constructed so as to deny Russia the frontiers she occupied when Germany attacked her. This was the basis on which Russia acceded to the Charter."*** It took the "increasing gravity of the war" to bring Churchill round to thinking of the need to respect the legitimate interests of the Soviet people. He asked the Americans for "a free hand" to sign a treaty with

* Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, p. 497.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 327.

*** *Ibid.*

the Soviet Union, and then noted: "Everything portends an immense renewal of the German invasion of Russia in the spring, and there is very little we can do to help."*

The documents covering the January-May 1942 talks on this question between London and Washington, published by the US State Department, provide evidence that the British Government was in some measure inclined to meet the legitimate demand of the Soviet Government. In London it was appreciated that the Soviet demand regarding the 1941 frontiers was just. On January 10, 1942, Winant, who saw Eden when the latter returned from Moscow, telegraphed the State Department: "I think Eden was personally impressed with the reasonableness of the Russian demand."** But it was certainly not because it was reasonable that the British were inclined to satisfy it.

They gave the Americans four reasons: (a) relations had to be strengthened with the USSR to ensure its effective participation in the war against Germany and, later, possibly against Japan; (b) the USSR was justly dissatisfied with the Allies' reluctance to render it tangible assistance by opening a Second Front and it had to be calmed; (c) Soviet support had to be secured to contain Germany after the war; and, lastly, (d) it was not possible to ignore the British people's resolute pressure for an immediate and radical improvement of Anglo-Soviet relations.

In its talks with the US Government, the British Government offered arguments which showed that in general it understood the Soviet position. On February 18 Lord Halifax gave Sumner Welles a telegram from the Foreign Office, which stated: "There is little doubt that the Soviet Government is suspicious lest our policy of close collaboration with the United States Government will be pursued at the expense of Russian interests and that we aim at an Anglo-American peace and post-war world."*** It was felt, therefore, that the Soviet Government would regard the British stand on the question of the Soviet frontiers as a test of Anglo-American relations vis-à-vis the USSR. Shortly afterwards, returning to this question, Halifax said at the State Department that "one of the chief aims of Soviet

* Ibid.

** *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, Vol. III, p. 492.

*** Ibid., p. 518.

policy has been and no doubt still is to obtain the maximum guarantees of Russia's security so that the Soviet Government can work out their own social and economic experiment without danger of foreign intervention or war".* This was a noteworthy admission of the peaceful nature of Soviet foreign policy.

"We must face the fact that our present relations with Russia are definitely unsatisfactory,"** Eden telegraphed Halifax in March with instructions to convey this message to the Americans. But in order to improve these relations a favourable reply on the frontier question had to be given to the Soviet Government. This step was necessary to induce the USSR to take British and American opinion into account in issues concerning the conduct of the war and to heed any possible proposal for Soviet involvement in the war against Japan.*** In a telegram on March 13 the US Chargé d'Affaires dotted his i's. He reported that the British leadership were apprehensive lest Britain's behaviour at the 1939 negotiations and "the long-standing dislike of the British ruling classes for all he [Stalin] has stood for" made the Soviet Union revise its policy and conclude peace with Germany.*) Eden was aware that refusal to satisfy the Soviet Union's legitimate demand would confirm its suspicion that it "can expect no real consideration for Russian interests from ourselves or the United States; that we wish Russia to continue fighting the war for British and American ends; and that we would not mind seeing Russia and Germany mutually exhaust each other".**)

On March 30 Halifax took to Sumner Welles another telegram from Eden offering additional arguments and considerations why Britain felt it was necessary to recognise the 1940 Soviet frontiers, with the exception of the Soviet-Polish frontier.***) "Under present conditions," the telegram stated, "Great Britain is unable to give military aid and assistance to Stalin in the sense of a Second Front or even

* *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, Vol. III, pp. 524-25.*

** *Ibid.*, p. 532.

*** *Ibid.*

*) *Ibid.*, p. 533.

***) *Ibid.*, p. 532.

****) The question of the Soviet-Polish frontier was not raised before Britain at the time. The Soviet Union meant to settle it by direct negotiations with the Polish Government.

in the sense of any considerable supply of materiel. . . . And in view of the pressure of British public opinion, Great Britain is forced to conclude this treaty with Stalin as a political substitute for material military assistance"* [my italics.—U.T.].

The British Government repeatedly stated that relations with the USSR had to be improved to ensure Soviet support in the war with Germany and to utilise the Soviet Union after the war as a counter-balance to Germany. "Continued Russian co-operation with Great Britain in Europe and with the United States after the war was over," Halifax held, "was necessary in order that a balance might be maintained as a safeguard on the East against German activity."*** The calculation behind this view was that the war might end not in Germany's total defeat but in some sort of compromise that would leave Germany as a formidable force in Europe. That would make Soviet assistance a restraining factor against Germany.

The Foreign Office considered that while the USSR was still in a difficult position militarily and its future foreign policy potentialities were dependent on the further course of the war and, therefore, still unclear, it was expedient to establish "close relations with Russia . . . in order to exercise as much influence as possible on her future course of action".*** Here it was taken into account that the Soviet Union would not be defeated or prostrated in the war as the British Government believed it might be. An unmistakable indication of this was the smashing defeat inflicted on the Germans at Moscow. "We cannot be certain," it was felt at the Foreign Office, "that Germany's defeat may not be brought about in principle by Russian action before our own and American war potentiality is fully developed."*) And further: "It would be unsafe to gamble on Russia emerging so exhausted from the war that she will be forced to collaborate with us without our having to make any concessions to her."**) The fact that these considerations date from February 1942 is evidence in favour of the foresight of some of the people in the Foreign Office.

* *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, Vol. III, p. 537.

** Ibid., p. 513.

*** Ibid., p. 518.

*) Ibid., p. 517.

**) Ibid., p. 518.

Another powerful stimulus was British public opinion which was categorically pressing for better relations with the USSR, for a just and worthy attitude to Britain's Ally.

On March 5 the US Chargé d'Affaires in Britain asked the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Alexander Cadogan what the reaction in Britain would be if the Soviet Union's wishes were met. Cadogan replied that "soundings in the House of Commons indicated that sentiment there would be largely favourable and that certainly in the country's present enthusiastically pro-Russia mood acceptance would be welcomed by the public at large".* On February 18 Sir Stafford Cripps addressed an unofficial conference attended by about 300 MPs representing all political parties. He urged that Britain should meet Soviet Union's desires regarding its western frontiers and offered mostly the same arguments which the British Government had proffered at the talks with the USA. The Americans were interested in this conference, and the Chargé d'Affaires requested Richard Law, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, for information on Cripps's speech. At this conversation Law said that as a whole the House of Commons favoured the acceptance of the Soviet proposals. As for the public at large, Law said, he felt "that agreement with Russia would be highly acceptable".*

On March 30 Halifax informed Welles of the contents of a telegram from Eden, who wrote that "British public opinion must be considered". If relations between the Soviet Union and Britain became antagonistic and if it became known that this had come about as a result of the British Government's obstinacy in refusing to recognise the Soviet 1940 frontiers, "the situation in Great Britain will be catastrophic". In explaining this statement by Eden, Halifax remarked that if such a situation took shape, "Mr. Churchill's Government would probably fall and, in that event, Sir Stafford Cripps would replace him, with the probability that under such a government a frankly Communist, pro-Moscow policy would be pursued".*** Although there was an element of exaggeration in this Eden-Halifax assertion, it convincingly showed two things: firstly, the British people

* *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, Vol. III, p. 528.*

** *Ibid.*, p. 531.

*** *Ibid.*, pp. 537-38.

were firmly determined to secure better relations with the USSR and, secondly, the Soviet Union's demand regarding its frontiers was reasonable and well-founded and British public opinion would unanimously support an Anglo-Soviet settlement of that issue.

American opposition to an Anglo-Soviet agreement on this question alarmed the British Government, and on April 3 Adolf A. Berle, US Assistant Secretary of State, wrote "of the almost frantic pressure by the British upon us to secure our assent to this".* London's "frantic pressure" was easily explained. The British were aware that the Americans did not want a radical improvement of relations between Britain and the USSR as that would have inevitably strengthened Britain's position with regard to the USA. The Americans were determined to take an active part in the settlement of questions of this kind and were set on preventing anything that might strengthen the position of their British partners.

President Roosevelt made it plain that he was against an Anglo-Soviet agreement on the frontier issue and informed the British that he would personally discuss the question with the head of the Soviet Government.** This seriously perturbed the British, who were worried that once the Americans took the settlement of the issue into their own hands they would simply be pushed aside. Halifax at once requested the President to keep the British informed of his talks with Moscow on this issue and to give the British an opportunity to state their considerations to the Americans. He expressed the fear that if the President alone discussed the issue with Stalin the latter would be led into the belief that the British Government had no interest in it. He declared that this was "an issue of equal interest to the United States and ourselves, and therefore it would seem that all three Powers should get together to discuss this difficulty"***

Britain informed the Soviet Union that like the USA she preferred to put off the frontier question to the future peace conference, at which the Soviet demand would be satisfied. However, published diplomatic documents provide irrefutable evidence that neither Britain nor the USA considered

* Ibid., p. 539.

** Ibid., p. 521.

*** Ibid., p. 526.

it necessary to satisfy the Soviet Union's legitimate demand.* They hoped they would be able to dodge the issue after the war.

Such was the situation when the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs arrived in London in May 1942 for talks on the Second Front and a treaty of alliance. Naturally, the talks on the treaty immediately reached a deadlock.

When on May 21 Cordell Hull received Eden's message on the British stand in the talks with the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs he "seemed to spin with agitation".**

The US Government took steps to block the conclusion of an Anglo-Soviet treaty founded on unqualified respect for Soviet rights and interests. It used the promise to open a Second Front in 1942 to induce the Soviet Government not to insist on the immediate settlement of the frontier issue. As we have already noted, Roosevelt sent Stalin a message inviting the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs to Washington for talks on a Second Front before Hopkins and Marshall had reached agreement on this question with the British in London. "For this haste he had another major reason," writes Feis. "He had hoped that by giving the Soviet Government satisfaction in this vital military matter, he could cause it to desist in its efforts to have Soviet frontiers dealt with in the Treaty of Alliance with Britain."***

When the Anglo-Soviet talks got under way in London, the Americans sought to divert them by bringing into play the promise of post-war economic aid to the Soviet Union. Winant saw Molotov on the evening of May 24, Feis says, and "after referring to the relief programme for Russia which the American Government had in mind and to the Second Front" he "emphasised how strongly Roosevelt and Hull were opposed to introducing frontier problems at this time".*) Winant, we learn from Cordell Hull, informed Molotov "that we were preparing to discuss commercial policy with the Russians and were also attempting to evolve a relief programme including Russia. Winant expressed our interest in a Second Front. . . . He emphasised . . . that the

* *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, Vol. III, pp. 511-12, 520, 541.

** Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 58.

*) *Ibid.*, p. 63.

President and I were both opposed to introducing frontier problems at this time.”*

In the talks with the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs the British Government adhered to the line laid down by the Americans, deciding to evade the frontier question by referring to US objections. It did not find this difficult to do inasmuch as in principle it too had no desire to satisfy the Soviet demand, having contemplated changing its stand on this question (during the talks with the USA in January-May) only as a result of pressure of circumstances.

This stand by the British and United States leaders placed the Soviet Government in a dilemma: should it continue to insist on its just demands and thereby jeopardise agreement on the Second Front and the immediate conclusion of a treaty of alliance with Britain, or should it sign the treaty and drop the frontier issue? It took the second course in order to strengthen the anti-fascist coalition and consolidate relations with Britain and the USA, thereby displaying good will and a spirit of co-operation. This has always been a feature of Soviet foreign policy. “In fact, on almost every political problem,” writes Admiral William D. Leahy, who accompanied Roosevelt to international conferences during the war, “the Russians made sufficient concessions for an agreement to be reached.”** Cordell Hull says it was “a definite concession”*** on the part of the Soviet Union when it agreed to drop the frontier question from the text of the treaty with Britain.

The Treaty of Alliance in the War Against Hitlerite Germany and Her Associates in Europe and of Collaboration and Mutual Assistance Thereafter was signed by the Soviet Union and Britain at the British Foreign Office on May 26. It consisted of two parts, the first recording the commitment of the USSR and Britain to afford one another military and other assistance and support of all kinds in the war against Germany and her satellites. The signatories undertook not to enter into any negotiations with the Nazi Government or any other government in Germany that did not clearly renounce all aggressive intentions, and not to negotiate or conclude except by mutual consent any armi-

* Cordell Hull, Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 1173.

** William D. Leahy, *I Was There*, New York, 1950, p. 318.

*** Cordell Hull, Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 1173.

stice or peace treaty with Germany or any other state associated with her in acts of aggression in Europe.

The second part of the treaty defined the relations between the two countries after the war. It provided for post-war collaboration and mutual assistance and recorded a pledge to co-operate with other countries in establishing an international body with the purpose of strengthening peace and averting aggression, and in the organisation of security and economic prosperity in Europe. Britain and the Soviet Union agreed that after the termination of hostilities they would take all measures in their power to render impossible a repetition of aggression and violation of the peace by Germany or any of the states associated with her in acts of aggression in Europe. It was stated that should one of the signatories during the post-war period become involved in hostilities with Germany or any of her accomplices in Europe the other signatory would at once give him all the military and other support and assistance in his power. The USSR and Britain undertook not to conclude any alliance and not to take part in any coalition directed against each other. The first part of the treaty was to remain in force until peace with Germany and her satellites was re-established. The second part was set to remain in force for a period of twenty years.*

While in the main repeating the contents of the Anglo-Soviet Agreement of July 12, 1941, the first part of the treaty specified an important point. While the 1941 agreement had spoken of mutual military and other assistance only against Germany, the treaty spoke of a joint struggle not only against Germany herself but also against her allies in Europe. The second part of the treaty was totally new, and was the first document laying down the basic principles for friendly post-war relations between the USSR and Britain and for co-operation with other members of the anti-fascist coalition in the future peace settlement.

Some Soviet proposals were not included in the treaty due to British opposition, but in spite of that the treaty strengthened relations between the USSR and Britain and helped to consolidate the anti-fascist coalition. That is precisely why it was met with enthusiastic approbation in the USSR, Britain and other countries of the anti-fascist front. The

* *Uneshnaya politika Sovetskogo Soyuza...*, Vol. I, pp. 270-73.

Munichites were dealt a crippling blow, for by signing this treaty the British Government willy nilly recognised the collapse of the Munich policy, a policy founded on a joint struggle by Britain and Germany against the USSR.

Also extremely important was the fact that the treaty obstructed a deal with Germany for those reactionary circles in Britain who preferred peace with the nazis to war with them.

In order to underscore the immense importance which the Soviet Union attached to this treaty it was ratified not by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR but by a specially convened session of the Supreme Soviet on June 18. It was ratified by Britain on June 24, 1942.

The British Government took the step of signing a treaty of alliance with the USSR because by the spring of 1942 it realised that without the Soviet Union Britain would not win the war even with the USA on her side. In a radio broadcast from New York on April 23 Lord Beaverbrook declared: "Russia may win victory in 1942. . . . That is a chance, an opportunity to bring war to an end here and now. But if the Russians are defeated and driven out of the war, never will such a chance come to us again."* Later, on June 21, 1942, speaking in Birmingham at a 30,000-strong rally in support of the Anglo-Soviet alliance, he warned: "The German Army would now be invading Britain if the Russian Army had broken down last autumn. For the future we must work together in the war and in the peace."** These were not idle words. Beaverbrook said what he really thought, and in assessing the significance of his speeches it must not be forgotten that he was one of the most influential of the British capitalists.

By providing for a post-war alliance with the USSR, the treaty secured Britain against a possible threat from Germany, as was clearly stated in the treaty, and gave her a stronger hand in her dealings with the United States, on whom to a certain extent she now found herself dependent. It was already quite obvious that after the war Britain would encounter a further powerful and decisive American offensive against her interests.

Reports of the battles on the Eastern Front removed from

* W. P. and Zelda K. Coates, *Op. cit.*, p. 709.

** *Ibid.*, p. 721.

the eyes of the British people the web of lies and falsifications that the reactionary circles had woven over long years of anti-Soviet propaganda. By the time of Pearl Harbour, McNeill writes, "the British people had almost forgotten the hostility towards Russia" which had been planted over a period of many years, and "in its place came admiration".*

However, there were people in Britain who did not welcome this establishment of long-term Allied relations with the USSR. They belonged to the section of the British ruling class whose animosity towards the Soviet Union was so overriding that in their indulgence of their hate they were prepared to sacrifice the country's national interests. For the time being they were forced to melt into the background, but their activities continued to be dangerous and harmful with the end result that the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of Alliance gave much less to the struggle for victory and the post-war settlement than it otherwise might have done.

The Soviet-British-American agreement on the Second Front and the Treaty of Alliance with Britain, both signed in May 1942, were tokens of international recognition of the strength and successes of the Soviet Army and the Soviet people in the struggle against the common enemy of all freedom-loving nations. It was an achievement of Soviet foreign policy aimed at promoting and strengthening friendly relations with the USA, Britain and other members of the united front of nations in the armed struggle against nazi aggression, a policy of peaceful coexistence of countries with different socio-economic systems which made it possible to establish military and political co-operation between the Soviet Union, the United States of America and Britain during the war.

Britain and the USA Break Their Second Front Commitment

The agreement between the Soviet Union, Britain and the United States on a Second Front in Europe in 1942 opened up tremendous potentialities for the anti-fascist coalition. Had this agreement been fulfilled, the war might

* William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 51.

have ended much sooner and much of the sacrifice and suffering might have been avoided.

The possibility for a successful landing existed. The Red Army's winter offensive had put the enemy armed forces in an immensely difficult position. In the course of a year, while the Red Army was bearing the entire burden of the struggle against the nazi hordes, Britain and the USA had built up the armed forces and technical means necessary for an invasion of the European continent. The poor fortifications in Western Europe were manned by second-rate German units. Lastly, the people of Western Europe were prepared to meet the Allied forces and join them in fighting the German invaders. In April Admiral Leahy, US Ambassador to the Vichy Government, reported to his Government: "We are given to understand that the majority of the French people in the Occupied Zone are counting on this possibility [i.e., an Allied invasion of Europe.—*U. T.*], and from the Unoccupied Zone we receive a great number of letters and expressions of opinion upholding this view. I believe there is no doubt that in the French mind the feeling exists that such a move is absolutely necessary and that it must be undertaken at an early date."*

However, the action taken by the governments of Britain and the United States ran counter to the hopes of the peoples of Britain, the USA, the Soviet Union and the occupied countries and to the formal pledges which the US and British governments had given to the USSR.

Even before the Anglo-Soviet-US communiqué on the British and American commitment to effect a landing in Europe in 1942 was published, the British Government embarked on a series of diplomatic manoeuvres to secure US agreement to the non-fulfilment of that commitment. Before the communiqué was published Churchill sent Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten to Washington as his personal envoy. General Wedemeyer describes Mountbatten as "by all odds the most colourful on the British Chiefs of Staff level. . . . He was a cousin of the King and, no doubt about it, a great favourite of the Prime Minister."** Churchill's pet "presented to the President and Hopkins the British case

* Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, pp. 539-40.

** Albert C. Wedemeyer, *Op. cit.*, p. 108.

against trying to gain a foothold across the English Channel in 1942".*

The communiqué was published on June 11, and eight days later, on June 19, Churchill, accompanied by British military leaders, arrived in the USA to discuss with Roosevelt how to evade landing troops in Europe in 1942. In a memorandum to Roosevelt Churchill wrote that the British Government did not approve this operation and that no landing in France should be undertaken in 1942. But if there would not be a Second Front, "what else are we going to do? Can we afford to stand idle in the Atlantic theatre during the whole of 1942? ... It is in this setting and on this background that the French Northwest Africa operation should be studied," the memorandum said.** Churchill and Roosevelt conferred at Hyde Park, the Roosevelt family estate situated 200 kilometres away from New York, and at the same time British military leaders had talks with their American opposite numbers in Washington. "The President," American historians tell us, "responded as readily to the approach of the Prime Minister as the American Staff in Washington had to the approach of the British Chiefs of Staff."***

The news of the unexpected British surrender of the strong fortress of Tobruk in Libya came while these talks were in progress. "This," Churchill writes, "was one of the heaviest blows I can recall during the war. Not only were its military effects grievous, but it had affected the reputation of the British armies. At Singapore 85,000 men had surrendered to inferior numbers of Japanese. Now in Tobruk a garrison of ... 33,000 seasoned soldiers had laid down their arms to perhaps one-half of their number."*)

The fall of Tobruk forced Churchill to cut short his talks and urgently return to Britain. Although no final decision for a Second Front in 1942 had been taken at the Churchill-Roosevelt talks, the conviction spread in well-informed circles after the Prime Minister's return to London that no invasion of France would be undertaken that year.

Churchill arrived in Britain to find a powerful wave of indignation sweeping the country. A resolution stating "that

* Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Op. cit.*, p. 235.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 382.

*** Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Op. cit.*, p. 240.

*) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 383.

this House, while paying tribute to the heroism and endurance of the Armed Forces of the Crown in circumstances of exceptional difficulty, has no confidence in the central direction of the war" was put on the agenda of the House of Commons.* The possibility of a political crisis was mooted in the press and in Parliament lobbies. In the debate of a motion of no confidence in the Government, Lord Winterton demanded that Churchill resign as Prime Minister. One of the MPs suggested temporarily transferring the command of the British troops to Czech, Polish and French generals, who were in Britain at the time. He declared: "I say that it is far better to win battles and save British soldiers' lives under the leadership of other members of the United Nations than to lose them under our own inefficient officers."** On the whole Churchill weathered the parliamentary storm; the motion of no confidence gained only 25 votes and was not passed. However, this was a serious demonstration of British public dissatisfaction with the Government's military leadership.

The parliamentary storm made Churchill realise that something urgent had to be done to save the British troops in Libya and restore the reputation of the British Army. An Anglo-American landing in North Africa would serve the purpose. At the same time, it would hold up the opening of a Second Front in Europe, protract the Soviet Union's singlehanded confrontation with Germany and confuse British public opinion, which was demanding the fulfilment of the promises made to the Soviet Union. Churchill formulated his policy in this period as follows: "During the month of July, when I was politically at my weakest and without a gleam of military success, I had to procure from the United States the decisions which ... dominated the next two years of the war. This was the abandonment of all plans for crossing the Channel in 1942 and the occupation of French North Africa in the autumn or winter by a large Anglo-American expedition."*** It soon became evident that such decisions were not difficult to procure.

Roosevelt was becoming more and more inclined towards a landing in Africa, and the factors that finally, in July, made him decide in favour of such an operation were pres-

* Ibid., pp. 392-93.

** Ibid., p. 400.

*** Ibid., pp. 432-33.

sure from the reactionaries in the US Government who wanted to see the USSR exhausted in the war with Germany, the growing confidence that the Soviet Union would withstand the campaign of the summer of 1942, and the interest of the American monopolies in the French North African colonies, which, it was felt, could be easily made sure of provided the opportunity was not lost and the British were prevented from getting there first.

First and foremost, it was necessary to end the languid argument with the British over where the landing should be made. For this purpose Roosevelt sent Hopkins and Marshall post-haste to Britain. On the eve of their departure, on July 15, Roosevelt discussed the pending London talks with Hopkins. From the minutes of this conversation it is evident that Roosevelt had made up his mind to go ahead with the African operation in 1942. He said: "Even though we must reluctantly agree to no Sledgehammer in 1942, I still think we should press forward vigorously for the 1943 enterprise. . . . Gymnast has the great advantage of being a purely American enterprise."*

In a directive to Hopkins and Marshall, written on the next day, Roosevelt gave them a week in which to reach agreement with the British on joint operations in 1942 and 1943. He instructed them carefully to study the possibility of carrying out Sledgehammer, which "would definitely sustain Russia this year. It might be the turning point which would save Russia this year."** In the event this operation was removed from the agenda, Hopkins and Marshall were to "determine upon another place for US troops to fight in 1942".*** Further, arguments were offered in favour of maintaining a strong hold on the Middle East. "In reality," Higgins says, "Sledgehammer was dead even before the arrival of the second Hopkins-Marshall mission in Britain on July 18."*)

The main reason for the decision taken at the London talks to postpone the Second Front was that both the British and the Americans believed neither the Soviet Union nor Germany would be defeated in 1942. The British stand at

* Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, pp. 602-03.

** *Ibid.*, p. 604.

*** *Ibid.*

*) Trumbull Higgins, *Op. cit.*, p. 142.

these talks was formulated by Churchill in the following words: "We have hitherto discussed Sledgehammer on the basis that Russia is either triumphant or crushed. It is more probable that an intermediate situation will confront us. The Russian battle may long hang in the balance; or, again, the result may be indeterminate, and the Russian Front will be maintained, though somewhat farther to the east."* Since that was the case, the participants in the talks argued, let the Soviet Union and Germany bleed themselves white.

After a brief exchange of opinion, Hopkins and Marshall informed Roosevelt of the British reluctance to open a Second Front and requested instructions. Roosevelt had not expected any other result, and in his reply, sent without delay, he instructed his envoys to reach agreement on some other operations as soon as possible. "This was the really conclusive order from the Commander-in-Chief," Robert E. Sherwood notes.** Fearing that his envoys might not have understood him properly Roosevelt sent another telegram on the next day "repeating that he favoured the launching of the North African operation in 1942"*** Agreement was reached without further procrastination. Higgins writes that "by nightfall of the twenty-fifth Hopkins was able to send the President a cable which may be cited as a model of triumphant brevity. It consisted of the single word, 'Africa'. 'Thank God!' was President Roosevelt's scarcely more verbose reply".*)

Churchill, it goes without saying, was jubilant, and, quite apparently, Roosevelt was pleased. The decision adopted in London meant that an Anglo-American landing would be launched in North Africa in 1942 instead of a Second Front in Europe. But the London decision did not stop there. Inasmuch as the African operation would absorb the men and means lined up for an invasion of Europe, it was hardly likely that a Second Front would be opened in 1943 either. This was clear to the British and US governments. Field-Marshal Sir John Dill, the British representative on the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee in Washington, wrote to Churchill on August 1, 1942: "In the American mind, Round-Up [i.e.,

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 445.

** Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, p. 610.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 611.

*) Trumbull Higgins, *Op. cit.*, p. 147.

the invasion of Western Europe.—U. T.] in 1943 is excluded by acceptance of Torch [the invasion of North Africa]. We need not argue about that.”* Such was the content of the London decision, which was a flagrant violation of the promise given to the Soviet Union two months earlier that military assistance would be rendered in the shape of a Second Front in Europe in 1942.

Intimation of the British and American intention to break their promise was received by the Soviet Government as early as mid-July. It lodged a strong protest. “As to opening a Second Front in Europe,” Stalin said in a message to Churchill, “I fear the matter is taking an improper turn. In view of the situation on the Soviet-German Front, I state most emphatically that the Soviet Government cannot tolerate the Second Front in Europe being postponed till 1943.”**

This protest was ignored in both London and Washington. The British and American ruling circles thereby disregarded the destiny of the Soviet Union and gambled with the destinies of their own countries, because had the Soviet Union not stood its ground it would have gone hard with Britain and the USA. “Without a Second Front this year,” Alexander Werth wrote, “it will depend entirely on Russian guts, reserves and organisation, whether or not we lose this war.”***

Churchill's First Visit to Moscow

After the British and Americans had broken their word to the Soviet Union they began to think how to convey this news to the Soviet Government. It was decided that this would be done by Churchill, who undertook a trip to Moscow specifically for that purpose.

He arrived in Moscow on August 12, 1942, accompanied by diplomatic advisers and senior military officers. Also with him was Averell Harriman as President Roosevelt's personal representative. Churchill had requested Roosevelt to send Harriman to make it clear to the Soviet Government

* Winston S. Churchill, Op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 451.

** *Correspondence...*, Vol. I, p. 56.

*** Alexander Werth, *The Year of Stalingrad*, London, 1946, p. 123.

that the British and Americans were acting in close co-operation.

Churchill had a difficult mission. He had to show he was a conscientious and honest Ally of the USSR, a country he implacably hated. In his memoirs he tells us that en route to Moscow "I pondered on my mission to this sullen, sinister Bolshevik State I had once tried so hard to strangle at its birth, and which, until Hitler appeared, I had regarded as the mortal foe of civilised freedom. What was it my duty to say to them now? General Wavell . . . summed it all up in a poem. . . . There were several verses, and the last line of each was, 'No Second Front in nineteen forty-two'".*

The talks with Soviet leaders began on August 12. Churchill informed them that no Second Front would be opened in Europe in 1942 despite the promises that had been made two and a half months earlier. On the next day Stalin handed him a memorandum summing up the talks of the previous day. It stated that Churchill considered it was impossible to organise a Second Front in Europe in 1942 although the decision to open such a front "was reached and found expression in the agreed Anglo-Soviet communiqué released on June 12 last". The purpose of the Second Front, the memorandum pointed out, was to divert German forces from the Eastern Front to the West and thus alleviate the situation on that front in 1942. Naturally, the Soviet Command had planned its operations for that year on the assumption that the Allies would discharge their commitment. The refusal to open a Second Front was, therefore, "a moral blow to Soviet public opinion, which had hoped that the Second Front would be opened, complicates the position of the Red Army at the Front and injures the plans of the Soviet High Command". In conclusion, the memorandum said the Soviet Government believed "it is possible and necessary to open a Second Front in Europe in 1942".**

In a memorandum to Stalin on the next day and in the further talks with him Churchill sought to prove that by refusing to open a Second Front the British Government was not breaking its word. His only argument was his reference to the memorandum handed to the Soviet Foreign Minister in London. This reference showed, firstly, the aim

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 475.

** *Correspondence. . .*, Vol. I, pp. 60-61.

of that double-bottomed document, which reaffirmed the pledge to open a Second Front in 1942 and, at the same time, provided grounds for an assertion that no pledge had been made, and secondly, that as late as May and June Churchill had made provision for the possibility of deceiving the Soviet Government.

In the light of the documents published after the war Soviet historians are not the only ones who do not question the fact that the British Government had violated its commitment to the USSR. The American historian Trumbull Higgins ridicules Churchill's statement that "his conscience is 'clear', since he did 'not deceive or mislead Stalin' ", and states plainly that Churchill "deliberately deceived his Russian ally".*

In order to soften the impression made by the decision he had conveyed to the Soviet Union, Churchill declared that the Second Front in Europe was being put off only until 1943, that a "great operation" would be launched in a year's time, that already now the "British and American governments . . . were preparing for a very great operation in 1943. For this purpose a million American troops were now scheduled to reach the United Kingdom at their point of assembly in the spring of 1943, making an expeditionary force of twenty-seven divisions, to which the British Government were prepared to add twenty-one divisions. Nearly half of this force would be armoured."** This communication, made by Churchill jointly with Harriman, meant that Britain and the USA were giving the Soviet Union another pledge to open a Second Front, this time in 1943. Later, having this pledge in mind, Stalin wrote to Churchill: "You told me that a large-scale invasion of Europe by Anglo-American troops would be effected in 1943."***

It will be recalled that this pledge was not honoured either, despite the fact that the Allies had the means for keeping their word. Moreover, doubts are raised about the sincerity behind it. In August 1942 the British and American leaders were aware that the landing in Africa in the autumn of 1942 ruled out the invasion of Europe in 1943. On this point Higgins says: "One can well understand the

* Trumbull Higgins, *Op. cit.*, p. 173.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 478.

*** *Correspondence. . .*, Vol. I, p. 136.

Prime Minister's desire to minimise the shock of the loss of Sledgehammer by not mentioning the possible loss of Round-Up to boot."^{*}

Churchill informed the Soviet Government of the Anglo-American decision to effect a landing in North Africa in October 1942. The Soviet Government reacted favourably to this decision, for an Allied action in Africa would to some extent complicate matters for the common enemy.

One of the arguments Churchill used to prove that the Allies could not invade Western Europe in 1942 was that they were short of landing-craft and that strong German forces were deployed in that theatre. This was obviously not true. The landing in Africa required a larger number of landing-craft, which, it will be recalled, were made available in 1942. Consequently, the necessary landing-craft were on hand and they should have been used in Europe instead of in Africa. "During the war, as after it," writes Higgins, "the Prime Minister gave the shortage of landing-craft as the primary reason for the impossibility of an invasion across the Channel in 1942. This is, at best, no more than an explanation why Sledgehammer was not carried out, and hardly an explanation for its replacement by Torch. . . . At the end of 1942, when landing-craft production was so drastically cut back, the shortage of such craft could hardly have been employed as a serious argument against Round-Up."^{**} Actually, had they wanted to open a Second Front in 1942 the Allies could have supplied themselves with all the landing-craft they needed. "In March 1942," Sherwood says, "landing-craft were tenth on the Navy's shipbuilding Precedence List. By October, just before the North African landings, they had gone up to second place, preceded only by aircraft-carriers, but the next month they dropped to twelfth place."^{***} "The landing-craft shortage," Higgins adds, "so often to be represented as a cause for Mr. Churchill's strategy, was actually in large measure a reflection of it."[†]

Churchill's argument about the strength of the German forces along the Atlantic seaboard was equally unfounded. The Soviet memorandum to Churchill pointed out that in the summer of 1942 "nearly all the German forces—and

^{*} Trumbull Higgins, *Op. cit.*, p. 160.

^{**} *Ibid.*, p. 155.

^{***} Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, p. 554.

[†] Trumbull Higgins, *Op. cit.*, p. 166.

their crack troops, too—are tied down on the Eastern Front, while only negligible forces, and the poorest, too, are left in Europe”.* After the war this estimate was corroborated by the German generals themselves. Lieutenant-General Bodo Zimmermann writes that “by the summer of 1942 the German setbacks in the war against Russia began to have a very negative effect on the Western Army as well. A large number of troops suitable for use on the Eastern Front was ‘combed’ out of second-echelon and reserve units. . . . Combat-worthy formations were sent to the East, and the replacements were inferior troops. As soon as these troops became fit for action they were likewise sent to Russia.”** For the Anglo-American forces the system of fortifications in Western Europe, known as the Atlantic Wall, was not an insuperable barrier either. Its construction was started only in the spring of 1942. German generals admit that “the much-publicised Atlantic Wall was more a product of Goebbels’s bluff propaganda than a really unassailable fortification”***.

The British and American governments were apprehensive over the outcome of the Churchill mission. They feared that inasmuch as Churchill had to inform the Soviet Government that the Allies would not keep their promise of assistance the Soviet Union, which was contending with incredible difficulties, might decide that a compromise peace with Germany would meet its interests more than a continuation of the war. However, in Moscow Churchill found no sign of an inclination to relax the struggle. “There was never at any time,” he reported to the War Cabinet on August 14, “the slightest suggestion of their not fighting on.”*) King George VI sent Churchill a message of congratulations, in which he wrote: “As a bearer of unwelcome news your task was a very disagreeable one, but I congratulate you heartily on the skill with which you accomplished it.” Having in mind the strain under which Churchill had laboured on the eve of his visit to Moscow, the king noted:

* *Correspondence*. . . , Vol I, p. 61.

** *Utoraya mirovaya voina 1939-1945* (The Second World War 1939-1945), Moscow, 1958, p. 60.

*** Kurt von Tippelskirch, *Geschichte des zweiten Weltkriegs*, Athenäum-Verlag, Bonn, 1954, p. 412.

*) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 489-90.

"You will be able to take things more easily now."* Field-Marshal Jan Smuts, Premier of the Union of South Africa, telegraphed: "I congratulate you on a really great achievement."** These congratulations were unmerited.

By breaking their Second Front pledge the British and US governments administered a vicious blow on their Allied relations with the USSR and on the entire anti-fascist coalition. Had any other country been in the position in which the Soviet Union found itself in the summer of 1942 it would most probably have looked for a way out by signing a separate peace with the enemy. But the nature and might of the Soviet Union were such that it could not even think of halting the war until final victory was won. The Communist Party and the Soviet Government mobilised all the strength of the Soviet people in order to liberate the country and deliver all other nations from nazi slavery. In so doing they discharged their sacred duty to their country and fulfilled their internationalist duty to the working people of the whole world and to the cause of socialism. Despite the blow inflicted on the anti-fascist coalition in July-August 1942 by London and Washington the Soviet Government was able to preserve that coalition. In this it displayed restraint, calmness and unwavering faith in the justness of its cause and in the strength of its people.

In contrast to Churchill's insincerity at the talks in Moscow, the Soviet Government demonstrated a truly Allied attitude to Britain. In Moscow Churchill was exhaustively informed on the situation on the Eastern Front, the state of the Red Army and, most important of all, on the Red Army's preparations for a counter-offensive, which led to the great victory at Stalingrad and turned the tide in favour of the anti-fascist coalition. On August 15 Churchill sent messages to London and to Roosevelt stating: "In my private conversation with Stalin he revealed to me . . . a counter-offensive on a great scale."*** On the next day he telegraphed that he had received from the Soviet Government "a full account of the Russian position".*) These telegrams give the lie to Churchill's subsequent allegations, repeated by not very

* Ibid., pp. 503-04.

** Ibid., p. 504.

*** Ibid., p. 495.

*) Ibid., p. 501.

scrupulous historians, that the Soviet Government had not been very frank with its Allies and had not informed them of the situation at the front.

Anglo-US Relations in 1942

The mechanism of Anglo-US military co-operation was specified, improved and enlarged after the Arcadia Conference which had created it. The joint agencies set up by the conference for the distribution of armaments and raw materials and for the direction of merchant shipping were supplemented on June 9, 1942 with joint bodies directing production, resources and food supplies. The organisation mechanism of the Anglo-US military alliance was finally regulated by the close of 1942, and in this shape it existed with slight modifications until the end of the war.

The combined Production and Resources Board headed by a representative of the British Ministry of Supply and a representative of the US Government was extremely active. It estimated orders for raw materials, and planned the output and consumption of raw materials on territory administered by the two governments. Raw materials were a sphere where Britain enjoyed equality with her partner, thanks to her huge reserves and sources of these materials. The situation was different in other spheres, where the British were the supplicants and the Americans the givers and thus played first fiddle in the corresponding combined agencies. This was strikingly to be seen in the distribution of armaments and merchant shipping.

A task of supreme importance was assigned to the Combined Production and Resources Board, that of combining the production programmes of the United States and Britain into a single integrated programme, geared to the strategic requirements of the war, as indicated to the Board by the Combined Chiefs of Staff.* But nothing came of this plan. The Board's activity was reduced to the collection of statistics and the surmounting of certain shortages. Generally speaking, none of the combined agencies lived up to what was expected of them. This is quite understandable, for it is extremely difficult to plan and direct capitalist economy, which is anarchic by nature. In the long run the final deci-

* William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 135.

sions on all key problems within the jurisdiction of the combined organs were taken by the governments.

The manner in which Britain received Lend Lease aid underwent a drastic change in 1942. Immediately after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour the American authorities held up the dispatch of Lend Lease supplies located on American territory on the grounds that they might be needed by the US Armed Forces. This shocked and angered the British. Soon afterwards, however, the supplies were resumed,* but some of the stocks earmarked for Britain were later used for the US Armed Forces.

On February 23, 1942, Britain and the USA signed an agreement to cover Lend Lease supplies and payment for them. This agreement substantially changed the very principle underlying Lend Lease. Before the USA entered the war it was planned that Lend Lease would come solely from the USA, but after the USA became a belligerent Lend Lease turned into a bilateral project, in effect taking the shape of multilateral assistance. The US troops in Britain, Australia, New Zealand and India, for example, were supplied with uniforms and food from the local resources of the British Empire. These same resources were drawn upon to pay for the building of barracks, airfields and warehouses, and for the transportation of US Armed Forces on the territory of Britain and the British Empire. The principle of mutual assistance was formulated in the agreement of February 23 and then finally recorded in the Anglo-US Agreement of September 3, 1942, which also stipulated the types of goods and services Britain had to provide the United States. It is noteworthy that raw materials were left out, for at the time American payment for raw materials originating in the British Empire was the only important source of dollars available to Britain. These were needed to complete payment on munitions which had been ordered before the Lend Lease Act came into force.** One of the provisions of the agreement of February 23 was that after the war Britain had to return to the USA Lend Lease supplies that had not been utilised or destroyed and which, in the opinion of the US President, might be useful to the United States. In 1942

* Edward R. Stettinius, *Lend-Lease, Weapon for Victory*, New York, 1944, p. 155.

** William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 142.

the British Empire received a total of 4,757 million dollars' worth of US Lend Lease aid, or three times as much as in 1941.*

The development of Lend Lease in 1942 mirrored not only co-operation between Britain and the USA but also the exacerbation of the contradictions between them. From the very outbreak of the war the American ruling circles steadfastly pursued a policy of using Britain's dependence on American supplies to force her to open the markets of the British Empire to American goods and abolish preferential customs tariffs. US Secretary of State Cordell Hull was the most consistent exponent of this policy. He maintained that in the talks with Britain on a bilateral agreement to cover Lend Lease supplies she had to be made to yield on the preferential tariffs issue. He raised this question in July 1941 and then at the Atlantic Conference, as a result of which a compromise paragraph appeared in the Atlantic Charter. The Arcadia idyll was broken by Hull's return to this question. Churchill was furious and declared he would never agree to the abolition of the Imperial preference. Bad blood came between Churchill and Hull, but in the end the British had to give in.

The agreement of February 23, 1942 contained the principle under which the final account for Lend Lease would be settled. In particular, Article 7 envisaged the removal of all discrimination in international trade and the lowering of tariffs and other barriers hindering trade. Although Churchill agreed to this American demand he clearly had no intention of fulfilling it. His reasoning was that at the moment Britain needed American supplies, but when the war ended they would find some way of wriggling out of this commitment.

Hull knew that Churchill was only manoeuvring. In his memoirs we find the words: "Thereafter, however, it frequently became apparent to me that Prime Minister Churchill, despite this pledge, was determined to hold on to Imperial preference."** The attacks of the US imperialists against the British Empire during the war and their alliance with Britain forced the British Government to resort to subterfuge and retreat.

* *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, London, 1946, Part III, p. 250.

** Cordell Hull, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 1476.

The USA used the Lend Lease agreement also to reduce British exports. Britain was not allowed to export goods whose manufacture required more than 10 per cent of the materials supplied by the USA under Lend Lease. The US monopolies hoped that in this way they would expel Britain from a number of foreign markets and substitute US for British goods in these markets.

This sharp clash of British and American economic interests was accompanied by a similarly sharp struggle on colonial issues. During the war the situation was such that the USA did not feel it was expedient to seize foreign colonial possessions openly. It used the striving of the enslaved peoples for freedom and independence and demanded "self-determination" for them. What this really meant was that the USA wanted the British colonies to shake off British colonial rule, after which, utilising the policy of "equal opportunity" and depending on its economic might, the USA would establish its own economic domination and political influence over them.

India had a special attraction for the Americans. They sought to weaken British rule in that country and increase their own influence in it. They had mostly India in mind when they spoke of the "self-determination" of peoples. For Churchill the Arcadia idyll was spoilt when Roosevelt mentioned India. Harry Hopkins, Robert E. Sherwood writes, "did not think that any suggestions from the President to the Prime Minister in the entire war were so wrathfully received as those relating to the solution of the Indian problem".* Ignoring Churchill's wrath, the Americans perseveringly gave him "advice" on the Indian problem. Whether it liked it or not the British Government was compelled to heed this advice. On March 10, 1942 Churchill wrote to the Viceroy of India when the Cripps mission was on its way to that country: "It would be impossible, owing to unfortunate rumours and publicity and the general American outlook, to stand on a purely negative attitude."** On April 12, 1942, after the Cripps mission had ended in failure (as Churchill had desired), Roosevelt once more stated to Churchill his considerations on how the Indian problem should be settled.

* Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, p. 512.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 215.

The Anglo-US struggle over the colonial question was not confined to the British Empire. Both Britain and the USA had their eye on the colonial heritage of the European powers defeated by Germany, i.e., France, Belgium and the Netherlands. At the back of the heightened interest Churchill and Roosevelt showed for North Africa was the desire of the British and American imperialists to take advantage of France's defeat and consequent inability to protect her colonial interests, and to gain control of the French colonial possessions.

A feature of Anglo-US relations in 1939-42 was the predominance of contradictions in military strategy, economy and on the issue of colonies. Political contradictions over the post-war settlement came to the fore after 1942, when it had become obvious that the Allies were going to win the war.

Problems of Home Policy

The year 1942 witnessed an activation of the patriotic, progressive forces of the British people and a certain restraint in the actions of the ruling classes, which tended to bridle the liberative nature of the people's anti-fascist war and to cramp Britain's Allied relations with the Soviet Union.

In their desire to give all possible assistance to the Soviet people and hasten the end of the war, the British workers worked as they had never worked before. This labour enthusiasm was engendered by proletarian internationalist solidarity with the Soviet Union, which the British workers associated with their patriotic duty.

They knew that by helping the Soviet Union they were protecting their class interests and their motherland. And they did their utmost to step up war production. They soon discovered that lack of organisation and the inefficiency of the management of many war plants and of the officials of a number of government institutions were hindering the further growth of output. In some cases this lack of organisation was not accidental; Munichites operating in British industry deliberately did nothing to contribute to the defeat of the nazis, whom they admired.

This obstruction angered the workers and they sent numerous delegations of shop stewards to Lord Beaverbrook, the Minister of Aviation, Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour

and National Service, and to their MPs. Ministers visited factories and sometimes even investigated cases of inefficient management, but this did not yield practical results. In this situation aircraft industry workers proposed the setting up at factories of combined production committees of workers and management representatives, which would take steps to remove everything that prevented increasing war production. These production committees were organised at many war industrial enterprises in 1942.

One of the highlights of 1942 was the struggle to lift the ban on the communist newspaper *Daily Worker*. The Government's action in this question was regarded by the British people as an encroachment on their democratic rights, as a continuation of the intrigues of reactionary elements who sought to obstruct the war against the nazi bloc. That gave the struggle against the suppression of the *Daily Worker* immense political significance.

The Government resisted as long as possible, and lifted the ban on the *Daily Worker* only on August 26, 1942, after a Labour Party Conference came out against the Government on this issue and it was found that similar action would be taken by the pending Trades Union Congress. The Government could not afford to risk antagonising the entire organised working-class movement.

The desire for a radical change of the internal situation, which mounted steadily as the war progressed, was one of the most striking manifestations of the British people's swing to the Left. The slogan that there must be no return to pre-war days became immensely popular. The people's desire for change was so strong that the Government found it necessary to demonstrate its agreement. It proposed to satisfy this desire by reforms, a classical British method. As early as January 1941 it announced the formation of a Labour Party Post-war Reconstruction Committee under Arthur Greenwood. Thus this activity was started much earlier than in the period of the First World War. Besides, its scale was much more ambitious.

Social problems were prominent in the reconstruction programmes. A plan to reorganise the social insurance system in Britain was drawn up by the Liberal reformer Sir William Henry Beveridge. This plan envisaged a considerable improvement of the system and was, for that reason, supported by broad sections of the British people, including

the Communist Party. The Government was displeased with Beveridge's "excessive radicalism" and somewhat trimmed his suggestions, using them as the basis for its own plan of reorganising the social insurance system. Reforms in the health service and public education were planned at the same time.

The British monopolies, too, gave serious thought to post-war problems. They were mainly worried by the post-war prospect of narrower markets and smaller spheres of investments due to American competition. As early as 1942 the Federation of British Industries sent the Government a carefully worded document under the heading *Reconstruction*. This was a programme of action of the British monopolies after the war. It was submitted to the Government so that the monopolies' intentions would be taken into consideration during the war and implemented in the future. The monopolies wanted the state apparatus to be used more fully in their interests and demanded greater assistance from the Government for their struggle for world markets. They did not conceal their intention of surmounting their post-war difficulties at the expense of the workers, by intensifying exploitation of the workers. They pressed for a reinforcement of state capitalism and the preservation of limited state control over the country's economy after the war, demanding closer consultations with themselves on the practical ways and means of implementing these measures. They wanted the price control and tax system, established during the war, to be revised in favour of the bourgeoisie, arguing that this was necessary in order to allow for greater profits, which they claimed had to be used to resolve Britain's post-war economic problems.

Britain and the Governments in Exile

The Soviet victory at Moscow and the Red Army's successful counter-offensive in the winter of 1941-42 brought British politicians round to the conclusion that the Soviet Union would withstand and hurl back the German onslaught. True, they could not as yet say definitely whether this would happen, but being foresighted they began to prepare for the eventuality that despite all their previous calculations the Soviet Union would emerge victorious from the war. Servants of their class, they did not plan for understanding and

co-operation with the USSR in a post-war world, where its influence and role would undoubtedly be enhanced. Instead, they took recourse to the old, tested and futile idea of creating a *cordon sanitaire* along the Soviet western frontiers, which would isolate the Soviet Union from Europe.

For this purpose they used the émigré governments of a number of European countries conquered by the Germans. McNeill writes that "the European governments in exile were in much the same relationship to the British as were the British to the Americans; indeed, their dependence on British bounty was even greater".* This dependence was utilised to induce the governments in exile to take the slippery road of anti-Soviet intrigue. The efforts of the British were facilitated by the fact that these governments (particularly the Polish Government) consisted mainly of rabidly reactionary politicians who were prepared to take part in these intrigues.

The British Government got busy on plans of forming an anti-Soviet bloc of East and Central European states from the Baltic to the Black Sea and from the Aegean to the Adriatic. In early 1942 it set up a special group headed by experts G. H. N. Seton-Watson and Frederick White to bring the governments in exile in London into these plans.

These efforts resulted in the signing on January 15, 1942 of a Greek-Yugoslav Treaty of Alliance as a first step towards the formation of a Balkan Federation. A week later an agreement was signed creating a Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation, which, *The Economist* pointed out, "goes a little bit further than the Greek-Yugoslav pact".** Under this agreement the signatories pledged to act in unison in the economic, political, social and military spheres. Military co-operation was to be so close that provision was made for a joint General Staff. It was noted that "Poland and Czechoslovakia are anxious to include all European states with which their 'vital interests . . . are linked up'".*** In reporting the formation of the Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation, *The Economist* divulged its anti-Soviet orientation, writing: "A great opportunity for practising the principles of the

* William Hardy McNeill, Op. cit., p. 115.

** *The Economist*, Jan. 31, 1942, p. 141.

*** Ibid.

agreement was missed when Poland and Czechoslovakia chose to conduct separate negotiations with Russia.”*

Britain's plans of forming alliances and federations in Europe were directed not only against the USSR. On the basis of these alliances she planned “creating an effective European political unit which could hold a balance between Russian and American power”.** This unit, naturally, was to be headed by Britain.

The War in the Far East. Sino-British Relations

The most disastrous setbacks were suffered by the USA and Britain during the early months of 1942 in the Far East, where the Japanese offensive, launched in December 1941, was making rapid headway. “Before May 1942, the Allied resistance had been helpless. . . . Tokyo also was surprised by the ease with which the rich and strategic territories of the Pacific basin had been conquered.”** During these first months of 1942 Japan seized the islands in the Central Pacific and her troops moved south up to Australia and west up to the frontiers of India, occupying a territory with a population totalling some 130 millions. In the first six months of the war they occupied Thailand, British Malaya, Singapore, the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), the Philippines, Burma and the Andaman Islands, and penetrated Southeast China through Burma.

The fall of Singapore, a powerful fortress that had been built in the course of two decades as the main British stronghold in the Far East, was a painful military, political and moral blow to Britain. It fell despite the numerical superiority of its defenders. Churchill regarded Singapore as “the worst disaster and largest capitulation of British history”.*)

Britain rocked with indignation. A week after the fall of Singapore, *The Economist*, which was not given to nervousness, wrote: “Now the accidents of war have produced such a catalogue of catastrophes that the Prime Minister . . .

* *The Economist*, Jan. 31, 1942, p. 142.

** William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 322.

*** H. F. Macnair and D. F. Lach, *Modern Far Eastern International Relations*, New York, 1951, p. 551.

*) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 92.

has to face something approaching a political crisis.”* This was not an accident such as might be encountered in war, the journal said, but a disaster that occurred for a number of objective reasons: incapacity and poor training of the British troops, lack of resourcefulness and initiative on the part of the officers, poor strategy, inefficient administration, and indifference of the local population. “The faults in the Malayan campaign,” *The Economist* said, “seem to fall into two categories: the errors and mistakes of the civilian administration and the ineptitudes of the military.”**

In Burma the situation was analogous. Field-Marshal Harold Alexander, then commander of the British forces in Burma, subsequently wrote: “The evacuation of Burma was a complete military defeat—and we had been beaten in a straightforward fight by an enemy who was not greatly superior in numbers.”***

The British disasters in the Far East were thus due not so much to enemy superiority as to poor training and inept leadership, which was unable to make proper use of the means at its disposal. This circumstance greatly increased the impact of the British defeats on the peoples of Southeast Asia. Sherwood justifiably notes that these defeats “were the first of a series of irreparable blows to British imperial prestige in Asia”.*) Their effect was felt after the Second World War, when the disintegration of the British colonial empire began. The Americans likewise suffered reverses in the Far East which hit them politically and morally.

The Allied mechanism set up at the Arcadia Conference to direct the war in the Far East crumbled under the assault of the advancing Japanese. The Americans who had been pressing for the adoption of an integrated command for each theatre of the war, unexpectedly proposed that the supreme command of the US, British, Dutch and Australian forces operating in the Far East should be given to the British General Archibald Wavell. It did not take the British Chiefs of Staff long to see through this “courtesy”, and they decided they could not accept it. Behind this “courtesy” was the cal-

* *The Economist*, Feb. 21, 1942, p. 241.

** Ibid., p. 247.

*** *The Alexander Memoirs*, p. 93.

*) Robert E. Sherwood, Op. cit., p. 442.

culuation that since in this theatre the balance of forces was such that the Allies would at first inevitably suffer a series of paralysing defeats, the blame for them would fall mainly on Wavell and the British. Churchill, however, decided otherwise, and Wavell accepted the post, taking over his duties at Batavia, Java, on January 10, 1942.

This command was not destined to operate effectively. The Dutch, with whom the question was not agreed on beforehand, co-operated reluctantly. The Australians were preoccupied with the defence of their own territory and did not propose to be guided by the general tasks of the struggle throughout the Far Eastern theatre, considering the British officers inefficient and incompetent. "As a result," McNeill writes, "the Supreme Headquarters never worked very well, especially after the fall of Singapore had seriously discredited British military prestige and with it General Wavell's authority."* The integrated command officially ceased to exist on March 1.

The failure of the integrated command and the defeat of British arms predetermined a change in the leadership of the Allied military effort in the Far East. On March 9, 1942 Roosevelt proposed to Churchill that henceforth the entire responsibility for the conduct of the war in the Pacific should be borne by the Americans, and military operations should be directed from Washington. The British would be responsible for the region west of Singapore, including India, the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, Libya and the Mediterranean. The British were thus, in effect, removed from the direction of the war in the Pacific, and concern for their possessions there, including the Dominions of Australia and New Zealand, was taken over by the USA. The Australians and New Zealanders raised no objections. Convinced of Britain's weakness, they now saw America as their only hope of salvation from the Japanese threat. The British and the Dutch were irritated, but there was nothing they could do about it.

The fall of Singapore dealt a resounding blow to Britain's relations with her Pacific Dominions—Australia and New Zealand. Until 1940 both Australia and New Zealand had insignificant links with the USA; for their security they had depended wholly and entirely on Britain and reckoned that

* William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 152.

in the event of war they would be reliably protected by the British Armed Forces. But Britain's crushing defeats during the very first few weeks of the war in the Far East so changed the situation that the Australian Prime Minister John Curtin found it possible to write the following in an article published on December 27, 1941: "Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links with the United Kingdom."* The changed balance of strength made the Pacific Dominions shift their gaze from Britain to the USA. "The realities of power," says McNeill, "tended to bring the Dominions into a new relationship with the United States. After 1941 it was to the United States more than to Britain that both Canada and the two Pacific Dominions had to look for help as far as the immediate task of self-defence was concerned."**

Eventually four independent commands were set up in the Far East and Asia: three American—the Pacific, the South-western Pacific and China-Burma-India; and one British—India. The American principle of an integrated command was thereby renounced. The new pattern of military leadership and the situation in the Far East did not foster better Anglo-American co-operation in that area. Even in naval matters, where it might have been expected, co-operation between the two countries was to all intents and purposes absent. The British Admiralty had no desire to help the Americans, who gave it no voice in the planning of naval operations, while the Americans, whose naval strength was steadily growing, became less and less interested in British assistance. Anglo-American friction complicated the Allied war effort in the Far East, but this was not the only negative political factor.

British colonial policy was a formidable obstacle to the mobilisation of the Asian peoples for the struggle against Japanese aggression. This was stated quite openly by the British press. *The Economist*, for instance, wrote that a key factor contributing to the British defeat in Malaya was "the indifference with which the native peoples watched the struggle. Clearly the British colonial system of planters and civil servants had struck no roots and roused no

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 8.

** William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

loyalty. . . . The Asiatics did not feel it was their war. Quite apart from the depressing effect of this on morale, it had serious economic consequences. The workers faded away from the war zone. Soldiers had to be diverted from fighting to do a labourer's job."*

Japan's advance deep into Asia seriously weakened Britain's position in India. The Hindustan peninsula was directly threatened. Besides, the Indian anti-British national liberation movement became extremely active. In this situation the British Government decided to reinforce its garrisons in India against a possible uprising, and to send for talks with the Indian political parties a mission headed by Sir Stafford Cripps, who was known as a Left-wing politician. Cripps had instructions to promise India Dominion status as soon as the war ended. No agreement was or could have been achieved between the British Government and the leaders of the Indian political parties because even in the critical year of 1942 British imperialism refused to make concessions to the Indian people. The Cripps mission was only a ruse. Churchill himself said that "the Cripps mission is indispensable to prove our honesty of purpose and to gain time for the necessary consultations".** Naturally, nobody in India believed in the British Government's "honesty of purpose", for it was obviously only playing for time. This greatly limited Britain's possibilities of utilising India's resources for the war.

Anglo-American relations were strained by the Indian problem. Roosevelt closely watched developments in India, and the Cripps mission was followed to India by the US President's personal representative Louis Johnson. In India Johnson, to Britain's foaming indignation, made statements in favour of granting India immediate self-administration if even as a temporary measure. The British Government regarded Johnson's statements as testimony of the American intention to torpedo British rule in India.

The situation in China and friction between Britain and the USA over the Chinese issue were an important political factor negatively affecting the Allied war effort in the Far East. Chiang Kai-shek and his clique regarded the entry of the USA and Britain into the war in the Pacific and the

* *The Economist*, Feb. 2, 1942, p. 247.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 215.

formation of the anti-fascist coalition as predetermining Japan's defeat. They therefore switched their effort, inadequate as it was, from the struggle against Japan to a struggle against the revolutionary movement and the Chinese Communist Party, i.e., against the only force that was really fighting Japanese aggression. Moreover, the Chinese Government pressed Britain and the USA with greater urgency than before for military supplies, which it intended to use not for the war against Japan but for preparations for a war against its own people, a war which was inevitable after the Japanese were driven out.

Sino-British relations seriously deteriorated in 1942, and the cause was not Chiang Kai-shek's counter-revolutionary designs but US policy of turning China into the principal American bastion in the Far East. What the Americans had in mind was that they would supply the weapons for the war against Japan, and China would provide the manpower. American policy in the Far East, states a US Government document, had "but one immediate objective: the defeat of Japan in the shortest possible time with the least expenditure of American lives".* After the war the Americans planned to accord China the role of the principal guardian of US interests in the Far East and the main force in the struggle against the national liberation movement in that area.

As soon as the USA entered the war it began to prepare China for that double role, declaring that if she was not a Great Power already, she would be one when the war ended. That explained why along with the USA, the USSR and Britain, China headed the list of signatories of the United Nations Declaration on January 1, 1942. Walter Lippmann, the noted US columnist, wrote that "the emergence of China as a Great Power will change the whole order of power within which lie the Philippines, the Indies, Australasia, Malaya, and the immense and awakening sub-continent of India".**

The British Government, naturally, recoiled from the idea of China playing the second role in the Far East and Britain being relegated to third place. It did its best to per-

* *United States Relations with China. With Special Reference to the Period 1944-1949*, Washington, 1949, p. 575.

** Walter Lippmann, *US Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic*, Boston, 1943, pp. 158-59.

suade its American partners that China would not be "an effective Great Power in the near future", that she was hardly likely to "become a stabilising influence in Asia", warning them that the "chances were rather that the aggressive nationalism of Japan would be succeeded by an equally aggressive nationalism on the part of the Chinese".* It emphasised the corruption, incompetence and unpopularity of the Chiang Kai-shek regime. The British had good grounds for stressing this point as well as for suspecting possible Chinese expansion in the future.

They were greatly annoyed by Chiang Kai-shek's interference in Indian affairs. Feeling US support in the question of China's Great Power status, Chiang Kai-shek decided to consolidate his claims to that status by acting as mediator between the British and the leaders of the political parties in India. At the close of January 1942 he announced his intention of visiting India and Burma and meeting Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. This visit only aggravated his relations with the British, who sought to persuade him that the situation did not allow granting India self-administration. He understood the game the British colonialists were playing and, as Woodward points out, "remained convinced that the responsibility for preventing a settlement lay entirely with the British Government".** He proposed to Roosevelt that with the exception of Britain all the United Nations should guarantee the fulfilment of the British promises to India and thereby make possible a compromise agreement during the war between the British Government and the Indian National Congress. Moreover, Chiang Kai-shek sent the US President a message denouncing the British action of incarcerating the Congress leaders in prison. Roosevelt showed this message to Churchill, obviously with the aim of pressuring the British in the Indian problem. In a sharply worded message to Chiang Kai-shek, Churchill told him to keep out of British internal affairs.

In spite of everything the British Government did not consider it possible to adopt a totally negative attitude towards China. Such an attitude would have given the USA complete control of China. Therefore, in December 1941 when China requested Britain and the USA to grant her a

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 420.

** *Ibid.*, p. 421.

loan of £100,000,000 and \$500,000,000 respectively, Britain offered £50,000,000 on condition this money was used solely for war requirements and spent in the sterling zone. The Americans gave Chiang Kai-shek the full \$500,000,000 without laying down any conditions.

While the talks on the loan were in progress, the British Foreign Office mooted the question whether it would be advisable for Britain to offer China a treaty under which the British would renounce their extra-territorial rights in China. This had been promised China as long ago as 1929. The promise was repeated on July 18, 1940 by Churchill in a speech in the House of Commons. On June 11 and July 4, 1941 a similar promise was made by Eden.* The more difficult Britain's position became the more promises she made. The treaty was finally signed on January 11, 1943, simultaneously with an identical Sino-US treaty. The Foreign Office expected the Chinese to shower it with expressions of gratitude for the return of some of the rights forcibly wrested from them. Quite naturally the Chinese did not overflow with gratitude. Instead, they raised the question of the return of Kowloon, a peninsula adjoining Hongkong, which Britain had seized under the guise of leasing it. This "ingratitude" on the part of the Chinese infuriated Government circles in London.

Anglo-French Relations

Churchill greatly overestimated the operation of political factors and underrated the importance of military ones in crushing Germany, Japan and their allies. This was mirrored in British strategy founded on the calculation that the peoples of the occupied countries would rise in rebellion and cope with the invaders by themselves, with the British assisting only with air and tank strikes, and in their overestimation of the USA's official entry into the war (it was hoped the Germans would immediately sue for peace without starting decisive battles). Also a reflection of this strategy were Churchill's vain calculations in relation to the Vichy Government. He believed the US entry into the war would bring about "a change of mind—and heart—at Vichy". With his mind on the North African invasion, he was inclined to

* Ibid.

think "a sudden change of attitude" on the part of the Petain Government "not wholly out of the question". He felt this change might be so radical "that the French fleet might sail to Africa" from France and the Petain Government might invite "British or French troops to enter French North Africa". He seriously considered the Vichy Government might "bring France actively in the war on our side", for on this depended "the lives as well as the interests of the Vichy leaders".*

This line of thinking made Churchill advocate courting Petain with a softer policy. The Foreign Office, on the other hand, felt there were no grounds for presuming that France might be drawn into the war on Britain's side, that the weight of evidence was "against any sudden decisive action by the Vichy Government to bring France actively in the war on our side".**

Nothing came of the argument between Churchill and the Foreign Office, and Britain's relations with Vichy underwent no change. No direct contact with the Vichy Government could be established. The Germans put every obstacle they could in the way, and, besides, Laval, who was in charge of affairs at Vichy, was counting on a German victory and refused to establish relations with Britain in the spirit proposed by Churchill. As a result, Woodward says, "we could not go beyond our policy of agreeing that the Americans should maintain contact with Vichy".*** This significant statement upsets the attempts of some historians to draw a distinction between the British attitude towards Vichy and the American stand. "The difference between British and American treatment of Vichy in 1942 was," Woodward points out, "mainly one of emphasis and 'degree'."*) Neither the Americans nor the British wanted a complete rupture with Vichy, because they felt that with the Axis powers steadily losing the war the Vichy Government would become increasingly more complaisant; de Gaulle, on the contrary, would defend the French colonial empire against encroachment by his Allies with growing determination.

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, pp. 111-14.

** *Ibid.*, p. 113.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 114.

*) *Ibid.*, p. 112.

The moves of the British Government to reconsider its policy towards Vichy in 1942 affected relations with de Gaulle. By that time the British had finally realised that their gamble on de Gaulle had failed. They had counted on their support of the Free French Movement enabling them to put their hands on the French colonies. But de Gaulle, frequently disregarding the military situation, doggedly opposed all the attempts of the British to entrench themselves in the French possessions.

There was a notable contradiction in the British attitude to the Free French Movement. Britain was willing to support de Gaulle so long as his actions conformed to basic British strategy and foreign policy. However, inasmuch as the aim of this strategy and policy was not only to defeat the Axis powers but also to seize the French heritage it could not but clash with de Gaulle's objectives and encounter energetic opposition from him. It was this that lay at the back of the strained relations between the Churchill Government and the movement headed by de Gaulle, and not the Free French leader's obduracy as Churchill and British historians would have us believe.

In 1942 the relations between de Gaulle and the British Government deteriorated to the extent that the British began to think of replacing him with some other, more pliable, personality as the head of the Free French Movement. Churchill suggested that de Gaulle was not contributing much to the war effort, but when the British Government looked about for a candidate to replace him it could find none. This unquestionably induced Churchill to contemplate the usefulness of contacts with the Vichy Government.

Unable to break with the Free French Movement without completely exposing its real policy towards France, the Churchill Government continued to make it difficult for de Gaulle to establish control over the French colonial possessions and increase the armed forces at his disposal. It was to foster this policy that in the spring of 1942 the British and also the United States Government refused to recognise the French National Committee as the Provisional Government of France. Matters went from bad to worse, so much so that in the summer of 1942 it seemed as if there would be a final rupture with the British Government, and de Gaulle asked, in the event that happened, "if the Soviet

Government would give him and his troops asylum on its territory".*

This aggravation sprang from a clash over the British landing in May 1942 on Madagascar, a French possession in the Indian Ocean. The official motive was that this landing was undertaken to prevent the Japanese from seizing the island, but there was more to it than that. De Gaulle had earlier suggested the occupation of the island by Free French forces, but the British had raised objections. The British operation on Madagascar was prepared and carried out without de Gaulle's knowledge and participation. On top of that, the British had informed the island's Vichy-appointed governor that if he did not resist the landing he and his staff would be permitted to remain in office and would not be required to co-operate with the Free French. This was an attempt by the British to reach agreement on co-operation with local representatives of the Vichy Government. De Gaulle had grounds for fearing similar steps by the Churchill Government in other French possessions in Africa.

Churchill's excuse to de Gaulle was that the Free French had not been asked to participate in the Madagascar landing because it was felt that if the British acted alone there would be less resistance from the Vichy administration. The same excuse was offered on other occasions, and it showed how far the attitude of the British Government had changed towards de Gaulle in the course of two years. In 1940 it had officially supported him to enable the Free French to control French colonial possessions and thereby save Britain from having to use military force to prevent the Germans from using these possessions. Now, in 1942, the British kept the Free French away from operations against the Vichy forces in the French colonies and offered arguments which clashed with what they had officially declared two years before.

Matters reached a point where the British Government simply refused to permit de Gaulle to leave London when in the spring of 1942 he planned a tour of Syria and the Lebanon, countries officially under his control. He managed

* *Sovietsko-frantsuzskiye otnosheniya vo vremya Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny 1941-1945. Dokumenty i materialy* (Soviet-French Relations During the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. Documents and Materials), Moscow, 1959, p. 82.

to go to the Middle East only at the end of July. Churchill endeavoured to keep him in London, fearing that in Syria and the Lebanon he would see for himself that the British military presence in those countries was being used to oust French influence. That is exactly what was happening there. Particular zeal in this respect was displayed by General Sir Edward Spears, Churchill's personal representative and official British envoy to the governments of Syria and the Lebanon.

On August 14 de Gaulle sent Churchill a telegram from Beirut stating that he regretted to note that Britain was not fulfilling her pledge "not to pursue political objectives in the Levant States or to infringe upon French interests in this area". He wrote of unceasing British interference in the internal affairs of the Levant and in the relations between the countries of that area and France. At the same time he informed his representatives in London that "the complications are due to the policy of the British Government itself" and not to Spears' personal qualities as was claimed by the British Foreign Office.* Churchill sent de Gaulle a testy answer written for form only, in which he claimed British actions were motivated by military considerations.

De Gaulle's presence in Syria and the Lebanon embarrassed the British and an attempt was made to lure him to Cairo on the pretext of inviting him to a conference in that city. When de Gaulle refused to go to Egypt, Churchill summoned him to London. Prior to this summons de Gaulle had told the US Consul-General in Beirut that if British agents did not cease their anti-French activities in the Levant he would demand a British withdrawal from that territory, and if they refused he would throw them out by force. This conversation reached the ears of the British and they discussed the question of reducing their monthly subsidy of £500,000-600,000 to de Gaulle for the upkeep of his administration and troops in Syria and the Lebanon. This threat was retracted when de Gaulle agreed to return to London. He had a meeting with Churchill and Eden on September 30, and both sides openly hurled accusations at each other. The British told de Gaulle that if he continued to be obstinate over Syria and the Lebanon he would be kept out of the

* Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de Guerre, L'Unité, 1942-1944*, Paris, 1956, pp. 354-55.

administration of Madagascar. "The meeting with General de Gaulle," Woodward writes, "ended in something near to a breach of relations."* But neither side could afford a final rupture. De Gaulle could not exist without British support, and Churchill could not turn away from de Gaulle in face of the imminent clash with the Americans over North Africa, a clash that was inevitable after the Anglo-American landing in that region.

The War in the Middle East. The Allied Landing in North Africa

At the beginning of 1942 the British suffered a series of military reverses in North Africa. The British offensive started in the second half of November 1941 with the objective of clearing the German-Italian forces out of Libya was brought to a halt in January. The German-Italian forces mounted a counter-offensive on January 21 and moved forward successfully until mid-February. "My hopes that General Auchinleck would clear Libya in February 1942 were disappointed. He underwent a series of grievous reverses," Churchill subsequently wrote.**

The defeats in Libya and the Far East seriously alarmed London and Washington, where in those weeks some of the leaders feared a German break-through to the Middle East and a Japanese advance across India which would ultimately lead to a link-up between the German and Japanese armed forces and resources.***

At the time of his meeting with Roosevelt in December 1941 Churchill was confident that the British forces advancing in a westerly direction in Egypt would make considerable headway and facilitate the Allied landing in French North Africa. However, it soon became evident that such a landing was needed to save the British forces from total annihilation.

In the second half of July 1942, after the British and American governments had decided on the invasion of North Africa in violation of their commitment to the Soviet Union to undertake a landing in Europe, Roosevelt began

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 122.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 585.

*** Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, pp. 534-35.

to hurry the preparations for the North Africa operation, insisting that it should begin not later than October 30.*

He had good reasons for this. The Congressional elections were due in November and Roosevelt wanted to be able to tell the American people on election day that his Democratic Administration was energetically conducting the war against the nazis and actively assisting the USSR. This, he knew, would enable the Democratic Party to carry the elections.

However, arguments with the British over the place of the landing and over the composition of the landing force prevented Roosevelt from carrying out this intention. Churchill wanted the North Africa landing chiefly to alleviate the position of Montgomery's 8th Army, which was ineffectively operating in Egypt against Rommel's German-Italian forces, and it was of prime importance to him that the landing should be effected as far east as possible on the Mediterranean coast of Africa. He insisted on a landing at Algiers, which he called "the softest and most paying spot".** The Americans, on the other hand, feared that a landing on the Mediterranean coast would endanger communications if Gibraltar was closed by the Spaniards or by the Germans, who in retaliation might occupy Spain. The dispute ended in a compromise. It was agreed to land one task force on the Atlantic coast of Africa, at Casablanca, and two task forces on the Mediterranean coast, one of them at Algiers.

The composition of the landing force was likewise the subject of long argument. The Americans maintained their troops would, unlike the British and Free French, encounter no resistance from the French forces in North Africa, and on these grounds insisted on making the first landings an exclusively American operation. At this stage of the landing the British would thus have had to rest content with participating in the transportation of the landing forces and providing air and naval support.

This was an obvious attempt to push the British into the background and thereby establish American influence on the territory that would be occupied. The British were aware of this and doggedly opposed the American suggestions, and at the close of August they went so far as to stop the move-

* Ibid., p. 491.

** Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

ment of landing-craft to the assembly points. This held up the preparations for the operation.

Agreement was finally reached on November 5. American troops would form the vanguard of the force, consisting mostly of British units, to be landed at Algiers. The troops to be landed at Oran and Casablanca would be almost entirely American; at Oran they would be supported by British naval and air forces.* General Dwight D. Eisenhower, appointed Commander-in-Chief of the invasion of North Africa, was unable to name a date earlier than November 8 for the operation.

The Anglo-US plan for the operation was that the landing would be preceded by an offensive by the British 8th Army from Egypt as far west as possible towards the landing points. At the close of October and the beginning of November 1942 the 8th Army advanced successfully, driving the German-Italian troops from Egypt and then from Cyrenaica and Tripolitania.

On November 8, while the 8th Army was pursuing Rommel's forces, seven Allied divisions (six American and one British) began the landing at Algiers, Oran and Casablanca. This was an army of 110,000 effectives for whose transportation some 650 naval craft and large transports were used. The Vichy troops in North Africa offered hardly any opposition, and what resistance there was was halted on November 11 on orders from Admiral Darlan, the French Commander-in-Chief in North Africa, who was in Algiers at the time. In the course of three weeks the Allies occupied Morocco and Algeria and entered Tunisia. Rommel received reinforcements from Western Europe. This and the hesitation of the Western Allied Command to start offensive operation in Tunisia enabled the German-Italian forces to hold out for several months. The fighting dragged out until May 1943, when the whole of North Africa was cleared of German-Italian troops.

The Germans responded to the Allied landing not only by sending reinforcements to North Africa but also by occupying the part of France which they had not occupied previously. They were determined to seize the French naval units at Toulon. The French sailors, however, were just as determined not to surrender. Unable to take their warships

* William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, pp. 202-03.

out to sea, the French sailors scuttled or blew up three battleships, an aircraft-carrier, four heavy cruisers, three light cruisers, 25 destroyers, 26 submarines and a number of other vessels. At the same time that the Germans marched into Vichy-administered French territory, the Italians occupied Nice, Savoy and the island of Corsica.

The invasion and occupation of North Africa was a victory of the anti-fascist coalition. In this operation the Allies destroyed several German and Italian divisions with the result that the Germans and Italians lost their strongpoints in North Africa and the possibility of obtaining strategic and other raw materials from French African possessions. The Allies substantially strengthened their position in Africa and in the Mediterranean.

Despite its successful outcome, the African operation was of little assistance to the Soviet Union for it was not the "true Second Front of 1942" Churchill claimed it was.* Moreover, it absorbed considerable Allied forces and means and gave the British and Americans the pretext to evade opening a Second Front in 1943. Medlicott is quite right in saying that the North Africa landing "certainly delayed the build-up of forces for the invasion of France",** and his American counterpart Trumbull Higgins says that "all the Allied resources were henceforth so tied up in the Mediterranean that even a cross-Channel operation in 1944 was becoming difficult to mount"***

The invasion of North Africa did not compel the Germans to relax their pressure on the Soviet Army. In fact, it convinced them that they were not threatened with a Second Front and could calmly transfer divisions from Western Europe to the Eastern Front. "Instead of pulling German troops out of Russia," Higgins writes, "the disclosure of the Allied hand with Torch enabled the Germans to strengthen their army in Russia. . . . This fact," he adds, "is contrary to the constant claims in Britain to this day to the effect that Torch was designed to bring aid to Russia."*) The same point is stressed by General L. Koeltz, who commanded the French 19th Army Corps in the campaign against the German-Italian forces in Tunisia in 1942-43. "Obsessed with the idea

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 434.

** *International Affairs*, April 1959, Vol. 35, No. 2, p. 280.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 278.

*) *Ibid.*, p. 279.

of securing a decisive victory over the Soviet armies," he writes, "Hitler refused to give his attention to the Central Mediterranean theatre." As a result of Hitler's obstinate reluctance to send reinforcements to North Africa at the expense of his forces on the Eastern Front, the Allied landing in Africa "did not bring any relief to the Soviet Armies".*

On American insistence, the French National Committee headed by de Gaulle was given no advance notice of the North Africa landing. The Americans brought to North Africa the French General Henri Giraud, regarding him a more suitable figure for the post of head of the French North Africa territories. However, after the landing it was found that the Vichy troops and civilian administration in North Africa were more inclined to accept the leadership of Admiral Darlan, with whom likewise the Americans had maintained preliminary contact. The Americans, through their representative Clark, therefore signed an agreement with Darlan on November 22, 1942, under which they recognised Darlan's authority in the French North African possessions, while Darlan undertook to create for the US Command in this territory the conditions for military operations against the German-Italian forces and enable the USA to penetrate the economy of North Africa.** US capital used this agreement to tighten its economic hold on North Africa, particularly on Morocco.

As soon as the landing was effected, the US authorities took steps to get a grip on the economy of that region, including the supply of vital necessities for the population, the acquisition of strategic raw materials and control of the financial system, transport, the health service and industry.*** Cordell Hull instructed his representatives in North Africa to implement these steps in such a way as to leave the responsibility in American hands, which meant ousting the British from equal participation in the fulfilment of this programme.

In addition to seizing strong economic positions in French North Africa the Americans planned to build military bases

* L. Koeltz, *Une campagne que nous avons gagnée. Tunisie, 1942-1943*, Paris, 1959, p. 383.

** *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, Vol. II, pp. 453-57.

*** Waverley Root, *The Secret History of the War*, Vol. III, New York, 1946, p. 450.

there as springboards for US expansion in Africa, the Mediterranean and the Middle East. In an analysis of the North African situation prepared for Wendell Willkie, the Republican presidential candidate, the American correspondent Waverley Root noted the strong trend in American politics "in favour of obtaining bases" in North Africa and also the desire, though not as strong, "of acquiring colonies" in that region.*

Darlan was assassinated by a terrorist on December 24, 1942, and the Americans put Giraud in his place. De Gaulle continued to be unacceptable to them because he considered the French Empire had to be preserved in its entirety, was to some extent linked with the British and was believed to be more democratic than the Americans wanted. De Gaulle's democratism was, of course, magnified. The grounds for this was that the movement headed by him enjoyed the support of democratic forces in France, including the Communist Party. Lastly, an important reason why the Americans desired to have nothing to do with de Gaulle was, as Root points out, that he "has been on good terms with Russia. Therefore, it is desired to put into power men who are distinguished chiefly by an anti-Russian attitude."**

Behind the British dissatisfaction with the American deal with Darlan and with other American actions in North Africa was the clash between their desire to gain control over French possessions in Africa and the American desire to consolidate their position in North Africa, i.e., on Britain's Mediterranean communications and in direct proximity to her vital interests (Egypt and the Middle East).

Churchill opposed the deal with Darlan, maintaining that the peoples of Europe would feel that "we are ready to make terms with local Quislings".*** The British Ambassador in Washington was instructed to try to persuade the Americans that "there is above all our own moral position. We are fighting for international decency and Darlan is the antithesis of this."*) But morals had nothing to do with it. Churchill had himself worked hard to reach agreement with

* Ibid., p. 192.

** Ibid., p. 193.

*** *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, Vol. II, p. 445.

*) Ibid., p. 446.

the Vichy leaders, and Darlan was neither the best nor the worst of them. What really mattered was that the deal benefited the USA instead of Britain. Darlan did not suit the British because he was an American creature, and any terms with him would threaten the British stake on de Gaulle. The British had been prepared to give Darlan a "seat on the band-wagon" provided he "could bring over the French fleet from Toulon".* At the close of December 1942 the US Chargé d'Affaires in London reported to the State Department that he had to listen to allusions to "the inexperience of the State Department and of American generals' in handling French affairs and of our lack of 'real understanding of the French state of mind' ". The reason for these allusions, as the Chargé d'Affaires correctly noted, was that the Foreign Office was "unhappy at what they consider the secondary role they have had to play in the North African negotiations".** The energy displayed by the Americans made up for their lack of experience, and they clearly pushed their British Allies away from North Africa. In order to preserve Allied unity, both sides did their best to conceal their annoyance over each other's actions, but this did not blunt the contradictions between them.

In addition to Darlan, the US Government accepted the services of all more or less prominent Vichy leaders who happened to be in North Africa and expressed their readiness to co-operate with the American ruling circles. On territory occupied by the Allies, the Americans preserved the nazi laws introduced by the Vichy Government, and progressive forces continued to be persecuted.

By enlisting the services of French reactionaries in North Africa the Americans wanted more than to become entrenched in the French African possessions. They preserved the reactionary laws in French North Africa with the view to enforcing them in France after she was liberated. This was aimed against the French people and French national interests. In a conversation with the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister on February 1, 1943, head of the Free French Mission to the USSR Garreau Roger said: "The impression one gets is that the American Government is intent on preserving in France the Vichy regime—the Petain regime . . . its entire administrative, military and propaganda machine, and turn

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 209.

** *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942*, Vol. II, p. 496.

it over to Giraud, who with his army is supposed to spear-head the landing in France. With his assistance the USA will seize the entire state apparatus in order to prevent the French people from freely stating their will.”*

El Alamein-Stalingrad

Churchill must be given his due for having been able to make a correct estimate of the situation at some of the important stages of the war. That, incidentally, was the case in August 1942, when in Moscow he was informed of the imminent Soviet counter-offensive. Upon receipt of that information he felt, long before the rout of the Germans at Stalingrad, that Germany would lose the war. He was greatly alarmed, and his apprehensions grew as the war developed.

In 1942 there were no longer any doubts in anybody's mind that the Eastern Front was the main theatre of the war. What Churchill learned in Moscow meant that the turning point in the war might likewise be achieved on that front. This was a grave political threat to Britain's ruling circles, because once the peoples realised that the Soviet Union had turned the tide of the war it would entirely discredit the political and military strategists who had been telling the world that the defeat of the Soviet Union was inevitable, and moreover, it would foster a tremendous growth of sympathy for socialism. The peoples would see that it was only the socialist state that had been able to save them from nazi slavery. In its turn, this might have a far-reaching effect on the revolutionary movement after the war and on the peace settlement.

True, in August, September and October the Germans were still advancing in the Soviet Union and the bleak prospect haunting Churchill was not very close at hand. Nonetheless he decided to take additional steps to make sure the Soviet Union was sufficiently enfeebled by the war. The first step was, in effect, to halt supplies of armaments to the USSR (the Soviet Government had been officially informed that there would be no Second Front in 1942). The second step was to expel Rommel from Egypt.

Churchill needed a British victory, even a small one, before the turning point was achieved on the Eastern Front. When

* *Sovietsko-Frantsuzskiy otnosheniya* . . . , p. 108.

that victory, a secondary one, was won at El Alamein it was hailed as the turning point of the war, while the great Soviet victory at Stalingrad was relegated to the background. This line is maintained in Churchill's memoirs with amazing insistence, and from these memoirs it migrated to British and American bourgeois historiography where it burst into gorgeous blossom.

What really happened at El Alamein? In October 1942 Rommel had eight infantry and four panzer divisions—altogether 96,000 men and 500-600 tanks.* He could not receive reinforcements because the Eastern Front was swallowing all the reserves of Germany and her satellites. Under General Alexander, the British Middle East Commander-in-Chief, and Field-Marshal Montgomery, British 8th Army commander, there were seven infantry divisions, three armoured divisions and seven armoured brigades—altogether 150,000 men and 1,114 tanks.** With numerical and armaments superiority on their side the British started an offensive on October 23 and within several days put the German-Italian army to flight. A total of 59,000 Germans and Italians were killed, wounded or captured.*** The 8th Army offensive was deliberately played up by Churchill long before it started. On October 20 he wrote to General Alexander: "All our hopes are centred upon the battle you and Montgomery are going to fight. It may well be the key to the future."**** On October 28 he telegraphed the prime ministers of Canada, New Zealand and Australia: "The great battle in Egypt has opened."*) In a telegram to General Alexander on November 4 he informed him that "it is evident that an event of the first magnitude has occurred which will play its part in the whole future course of the World War. . . . I propose to ring the bells all over Britain for the first time this war."**) Citing all these estimates in his memoirs, Churchill sums up that the Battle of El Alamein "marked in fact the turning of the 'Hinge of Fate'"***) This was seized upon by bourgeois historiography, which began to repeat

* J. F. C. Fuller, *Op. cit.*, p. 234.

** *Ibid.*

*** *Ibid.*, p. 238.

**** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 588.

*) *Ibid.*, p. 595.

**) *Ibid.*, p. 600.

***) *Ibid.*, p. 603.

over and over again that El Alamein was "the most decisive land battle yet won for the Allied cause".*

The truth is stretched not only to belittle Soviet military achievements but also to whitewash the British ruling circles responsible for the Munich sell-out. To exaggerate the importance of El Alamein is tantamount to telling the world: Yes, Britain had pursued the disgraceful Munich policy, a policy of striking a bargain with Hitler, but the British victory over the German and Italian forces had atoned for and buried the past. In 1963 the English publicist John Mander wrote that the feeling now about the appeasement policy is: "Whatever unrealism Britain displayed in the thirties, the British people made up for it by their stand against Hitler. . . . That is the official version. It is flattering enough. It admits the stain of Munich. But it argues that it was wiped out by the Battle of Britain and Alamein. Britain has purged herself. Let foreigners divert their attention from her hour of shame to her hour of glory."**

British arms did not win any special glory at El Alamein. General Albert C. Wedemeyer of the USA writes that "Churchill grossly exaggerated the magnitude of the Allied victory in Africa. Montgomery had an overwhelming force—manpower, firepower, and air support—a marked advantage over Rommel. Nevertheless, the German Desert Fox was able to outsmart the British for a considerable length of time. His generalship was so outstanding that the British troops who fought him carried pictures of Rommel in their knapsacks."***

Some British authors seek to equate El Alamein to the Battle of Stalingrad. "Since Alamein and Stalingrad," Bryant says, "the Germans had stopped thinking in terms of 1940 and had begun to recall 1918."^{*)} There are no grounds whatever for this assertion. Stalingrad was the culminating point of the titanic battle fought on the Eastern Front in 1942. In

* J. F. C. Fuller, *Op. cit.*, p. 238.

** John Mander, *Great Britain or Little England?*, Boston, 1964, p. 76.

*** Albert C. Wedemeyer, *Op. cit.*, pp. 233-34. After the war Montgomery bought a suburban house and in the garden he set up the van which he had used as headquarters during the war. A large portrait of Rommel hung on the wall of the van (*The Sunday Times*, Dec. 14, 1958).

*) Arthur Bryant, *Op. cit.*, p. 593.

November 1942 Germany had 3, 405, 000 effectives or 70 per cent of her land forces on the Eastern Front. A total of 127.5 German and 72.5 satellite divisions operated on Soviet territory.* Exclusive of the casualties suffered by the Germans in their summer-autumn offensive on the Eastern Front, Soviet troops wiped out five enemy armies during their counter-offensive from November 19, 1942 to February 2, 1943. The enemy lost 32 divisions and three brigades, and 16 of his divisions were heavily mauled.**

The Soviet Union fought this colossal battle without military (Second Front) and, essentially speaking, material assistance from its Allies.

Until June 30, 1942 deliveries to the USSR were made under the so-called First Russian Protocol signed in Moscow in October 1941. The terms of this protocol were fulfilled unsatisfactorily. When war broke out in the Pacific the materiel and naval vessels earmarked for transfer to the USSR were turned over to the US forces. President Roosevelt ordered the deficit to be made good by April 1, 1942, but these orders were not carried out and the supply of war equipment to the USSR continued to dwindle. "There was a small increase in the tonnage shipped in January and February 1942," write Matloff and Snell, "but shipments remained at less than 100,000 long tons a month, instead of the 200,000 long tons required to meet commitments."***

In March the deliveries from the USA to the USSR increased to 200,000 tons, and in April to nearly 450,000 tons, "bringing the cumulative total to over 1,000,000 tons. This was still only about half of what the United States had undertaken to export by the end of June."*) By that time the USA and Britain had shipped only four-fifths of the tonnage required by the Protocol, but much of that had failed of delivery.**)

Despite the delays and losses due to action by German U-boats, the Soviet Union received tanks, aircraft and other armaments as well as strategic raw materials, including aluminium, nickel and rubber. Naturally this was a useful addition to the armaments and supplies which the Soviet

* *Utoraya mirovaya voina.* . . , p. 378.

** Ibid., p. 401.

*** Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Op. cit.*, p. 205.

*) Ibid., p. 206.

***) William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 145.

people made available to their Armed Forces. However, it was a very small addition, a fact which the Allies admitted from time to time. In a radio broadcast on February 15, Churchill said: "It is little enough we have done for Russia considering all she had done to beat Hitler and for the common cause."*

In the summer of 1942 the German offensive put the Soviet Armed Forces in a difficult position and, consequently, greater importance was attached to Allied military supplies. But that was precisely when Britain and the USA stopped all deliveries. The excuse was that large losses had been suffered by the PQ17 convoy that had set out for Archangel from Iceland on June 27.

The convoy consisted of 34 freighters, most of them American. It was protected by naval units under Rear-Admiral Hamilton, and among them were cruisers, destroyers, submarines and other vessels. Cover was provided by battleships and aircraft carriers. When the convoy reached Medvezhy Island the British Admiralty suddenly found it had "grounds for presuming" that German naval vessels might attack it, with the result that on July 4, Admiral Dudley Pound, Chief of Naval Staff, instructed Admiral Hamilton to withdraw the cruiser force to the westward at high speed and to order the convoy to disperse and proceed singly to Russian ports. The destroyers in the escort, Churchill says, likewise withdrew.** As a result of this flight, caused not by a German attack but by orders from London springing from a presumption that the enemy might appear, the merchant ships were left to the mercy of fate, without any protection. German aircraft and U-boats operating from Norwegian bases sank without hindrance all the ships they could find. Twenty-three ships perished; the rest reached Archangel, bringing 70,000 tons of the 200,000 tons of freight originally sent.

German surface vessels never left their bases to intercept the convoy. Consequently, the presumption of the British Admiralty had no foundation.*** The responsibility for the PQ17 disaster quite obviously devolves on the British Admiralty. This was clear to the British Government, which ordered an inquiry. Churchill says he "awaited the results

* W. P. and Zelda K. Coates, *Op. cit.*, p. 700.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 263.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 265.

of the inquiry into the conduct of those concerned. This took a considerable time, and assigned no blame to anyone.”** This was very surprising in view of what Churchill himself says of the disaster.

It would seem that after a tragedy of this dimension those responsible would be punished and steps taken to prevent a repetition. But something very different happened. “In view of the disaster to PQ17,” we read in Churchill’s memoirs, “the Admiralty proposed to suspend the Arctic convoys.”** The fact that the inquiry “assigned no blame to anyone” and that the Admiralty, the agency directly responsible for the loss of the convoy, made this proposal, brings one round to the conclusion that somebody in Britain deliberately engineered the convoy’s destruction in order to fabricate an excuse for putting a long halt to the delivery of armaments to the Soviet Union.

On July 18 Churchill notified the Soviet Government of the suspension of convoys to the USSR. Five days later a strong Soviet protest was lodged with the British Government. In a message to Churchill, Stalin pointed out that Soviet naval experts considered as untenable the arguments of British naval experts on the necessity of stopping the delivery of war supplies to the Northern harbours of the USSR. “They are convinced that, given goodwill and readiness to honour obligations, steady deliveries could be effected, with heavy loss to the Germans. The British Admiralty’s order to the PQ17 convoy to abandon the supply ships and return to Britain, and to the supply ships to disperse and make for Soviet harbours singly, without escort, is, in the view of our experts, puzzling and inexplicable. . . . I never imagined that the British Government would deny us delivery of war materials precisely now, when the Soviet Union is badly in need of them in view of the grave situation on the Soviet-German Front.”***

This denial of supplies during the crucial summer months of 1942 without serious grounds must be regarded as a flagrant violation of the Allied commitments to the USSR. “The news that convoys to Russia would be suspended,” McNeill writes, “must have come as a severe shock to Stalin. The relentless German advance in the South was then in full

* Ibid., p. 266.

** Ibid.

*** *Correspondence*. . . , Vol. I, p. 56.

swing, and Russian morale was already strained to the limit. By mid-July hope of succour from the West was gone, at least in any near future; and it now appeared that the promised supplies and munitions would not be forthcoming on schedule.”* Churchill admits that at the time “the Russian armies were suffering fearfully and the campaign was at its crisis”.** Without offering any objections to the arguments in Stalin’s message Churchill informed the latter that the British Government was “making preliminary arrangements for another effort to run a large convoy through to Archangel in the first week of September”.*** This meant the Allies intended to leave the Soviet Union without material assistance during the critical summer months.

Material assistance was denied almost simultaneously with the abandonment of the Second Front project, as a result of which the situation was still further aggravated. To soften the impression made by these unloyal actions of the Allies, Churchill, with Roosevelt’s consent, said in Moscow on August 12 that the Allies proposed “placing an Anglo-American Air Force on the southern flank of the Russian armies in order to defend the Caspian and the Caucasian Mountains and generally to fight in this theatre”.*) This met with the approval of the Soviet Government, but since this was only a proposal it had little effect in 1942 because before it was put into practice, as Churchill declared, “we had to win our battle in Egypt first”.**) The fulfilment of this promise was thus postponed indefinitely.

After the summer interval, another convoy, PQ18, was sent to the USSR. Of the 39 supply ships that set out for the Soviet Union, 27 reached their destination safely. The losses did not exceed the anticipated level. In fact, in sending convoys to Soviet northern ports the British made allowance for the loss of forty per cent of the supply ships. The PQ18 was thus a successful operation and it would seem the Soviet Union could now expect regular shipments of supplies.

But that was not to be. The British and American governments decided they needed the merchant ships for the North

* William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 190.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 272.

*** *Correspondence. . .*, Vol. I, p. 57.

*) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 483.

**) *Ibid.*

Africa landing and again suspended supplies to the USSR via the northern route.* "Churchill," writes the American historian William L. Neumann, "late in September 1942, suggested dropping the Murmansk convoy of Lend Lease aid because it tied up too many ships in convoy duty. Roosevelt agreed, but suggested keeping Stalin ignorant of this decision as long as possible."*** As a result, the next convoy set out for the USSR only at the close of December, reaching Soviet ports with the loss of only one destroyer and with light damage to one supply ship.***

The Allied landing in North Africa deprived the Soviet Union of supplies in October and November. Actually, as McNeill points out, "it was not until the beginning of 1943 that regular convoys were resumed"**** As a result of the Allies not meeting their commitments "the rate of delivery fell far behind the schedule of the Second Protocol".*)

The difficulties of transportation, though they were indisputable, were not the main reason. In a war no operation can be carried out without risk and losses. The losses sustained by the northern convoys were not greater, and in some cases even less, than those suffered by the British convoys in the Atlantic and Mediterranean. The main obstruction to the shipment of supplies to the USSR was the hostility of anti-Soviet circles, who did their utmost to hinder the normal functioning of the anti-fascist coalition. In a speech on June 21, 1942, Lord Beaverbrook said that in Britain there was a small group "who opposed the shipment of munitions to Russia".**) This group included some military leaders and statesmen. Michael Foot, for example, says General Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, maintained that the shipment of supplies to the Soviet Union was "absolute madness".***) The intrigues of that group, which was evidently small but influential, were most likely at the bottom of the British Admiralty's puzzling behaviour over the PQ17 convoy and the British Government's failure

* Robert E. Sherwood, Op. cit., p. 611.

** William L. Neumann, Op. cit., p. 40.

*** Winston S. Churchill, Op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 275.

**** William Hardy McNeill, Op. cit., p. 146.

*) Ibid.

**) *The Times*, June 22, 1942.

***) Michael Foot, Op. cit., p. 392.

to meet its obligations regarding the schedule and volume of shipments.

Similar elements operated in the United States, and for that reason more US assistance was sent to Britain, which was doing little against the enemy in 1942, than to the USSR, which was bearing the entire burden of the war.

All this, naturally, added to the strain to which the Soviet Union was being subjected in 1942 when furious battles raged on the Eastern Front. The British journalist Alexander Werth, who was in the Soviet Union at the time, asked what the Allies were doing "to meet the insatiable appetite of the war machine that was still fighting, almost alone on land, against Hitler's Europe? Stuff was coming in through the North from England and America; but was it not a drop in the bucket, compared with what the Red Army needed?" That was indeed the case. Werth correctly says: "Until the Battle of Stalingrad was already in full swing, lamentably little was reaching Russia by the North during those critical summer months of 1942."* It was "the year in which the Soviet Union, still insufficiently helped by her Allies, fought her Battle of Survival, and won it".**

El Alamein can in no way be compared with Stalingrad, not only for the number of troops involved in the fighting. These battles were poles asunder for the impact made by them on the further course of the war. The Germans and Italians easily recovered from the losses sustained by them at El Alamein, but they never recouped their strength after Stalingrad. The Red Army seized the strategic initiative and never relinquished it until final victory was won. The offensive started on the Volga was the beginning of the end for the nazi Wehrmacht.

The losses sustained by Germany on the Eastern Front in 1942 undermined her military strength to the extent that the course of the war changed irreversibly in favour of the Allies. This is admitted by German authors and also by those British and American historians who try to arrive even approximately at a correct estimate of the turning point that was reached in the war at the close of 1942 and beginning of 1943. Walter Görlitz writes that on the Volga the "Ger-

* Alexander Werth, *Op. cit.*, pp. 79, 53.

** *Ibid.*, p. 53.

man Army suffered its most overwhelming defeat in history".* H. S. Commager of the USA notes that "after Stalingrad it was all ebb-tide for the Germans".** A publication sponsored by the Royal Institute of International Affairs says that the autumn of 1942 "had seen the beginning of the end of Hitler's Europe"***

The enormous international significance of the Battle of Stalingrad was that it radically changed the world situation. The powers waiting for an opportune moment to join the war on Germany's side and attack the USSR (Turkey, Spain and Japan), renounced their intentions, and the countries allied with Germany (Italy, Rumania, Hungary and Finland) began to think of withdrawing from the war. The peoples of the countries occupied by Germany were given another powerful impetus—confidence in ultimate victory over nazism—and activated their struggle against the invaders.

For Britain the Stalingrad victory signified a change in the course of the war in favour of the Allies, and, consequently, of Britain. That was why the Soviet victory was hailed with so much admiration by the British people. For the British Government the question of how long the Soviet Union would hold out was at last decided. It was obvious that the USSR would fight to the finish. This led the British Government to two conclusions. The first was that no Second Front would have to be opened in 1943 despite the fact that only in August Churchill had solemnly promised that such a front would be opened. Britain could now continue the advance eastwards from North Africa in the direction of Italy and Southeast Europe. Alan Brooke wrote that early in December 1942 "I was quite clear in my own mind that the moment for the opening of a Western Front ... would not present itself during 1943. ... This plan, of course, depended on Russia holding on. Although in the early stages of the war I had the most serious doubts whether she would do so, by the end of 1942 ... it seemed a safe bet that she would last out."*) The second conclusion was that insofar

* Walter Görlitz. *Der deutsche Generalstab*, Frankfurt am Main, 1950, S. 610.

** *The Story of the Second World War*, Ed. by H. S. Commager, Boston, 1945, p. 365.

*** *The Realignment of Europe*, Ed. by Arnold and Veronica M. Toynbee, London, 1955, p. 2.

*) Arthur Bryant, *Op. cit.*, p. 530.

as it was now certain that Russia would hold out it was necessary to tackle problems of the post-war arrangement so that by the time the war ended the conditions would have been created to make it possible to terminate the war with benefit for Britain's imperialist interests, prevent the Soviet Union from taking advantage of victory won at the cost mainly of its own blood, and restrict and hold back the growth of the revolutionary movement which would inevitably acquire a large scale as a result of the defeat of fascism.

Chapter Five

FROM STALINGRAD TO NORMANDY

(February 1943-June 1944)

More Commitments to the USSR Are Not Honoured

On the eve of 1943 Churchill wrote to Stalin: "We are deeply encouraged by the growing magnitude of your victories in the South. They bear out all that you told me at Moscow. The results may be very far-reaching indeed."^{*} This was a significant message on two counts. It showed that on August 1, 1942 when Churchill visited Moscow the Soviet Government had exhaustively informed him of the planned Soviet counter-offensive. Secondly, it was an indication that the import of Stalingrad was appreciated in London.

The Soviet military successes at the close of 1942 and beginning of 1943 radically changed the relations between the leading members of the anti-fascist coalition. Previously Britain and the USA were certain that the USSR would be either crushed or weakened to the extent that they could establish new frontiers for it and determine its place in the post-war world. Stalingrad changed everything. It was now obvious that the Soviet Union would emerge victorious from the war. It suited the Allies to see the Soviet Union smash the German military machine and win the war for them, but now the post-war future and the political repercussions of a Soviet victory in the war burdened them with torturing anxiety. "By 1943," writes *Labour Monthly*, "panic seized the Western rulers at the prospect of the fall of fascism and the victory of communism."^{**}

^{*} *Correspondence*. . . , Vol. I, p. 83.

^{**} *Labour Monthly*, March 1963, p. 103.

Churchill was panic-stricken long before the outcome of the great Battle of Stalingrad became known. In October 1942, two months before sending the above-mentioned message to Stalin, he wrote and circulated a memorandum among the members of the War Cabinet. In that memorandum he pointed out: "My thoughts rest primarily in Europe—the revival of the glory of Europe—the parent continent of the modern nations and of civilisation. It would be a measureless disaster if Russian barbarism overlaid the culture and independence of the ancient states of Europe. Hard as it is to say now I trust that the European family may act unitedly as one under a Council of Europe."* How he must have hated the Soviet people and their country to have written these words when the Battle of Stalingrad was being fought. They bring to mind other words, namely: "If [Bolshevik] methods succeed . . . European culture . . . would be superseded by the most frightful barbarism of all times."** Similar as they are they were written by different people. The latter extract is from a statement made by Adolf Hitler at the National-Socialist Party Congress in Nuremberg in 1936.

The immense importance of this memorandum is that it provided the pivot for British war-time and post-war foreign policy. "I hope," Churchill wrote, "to see a Council consisting of perhaps ten units, including the former Great Powers, Sweden, Norwegians, Danes, Dutchmen, Belgians, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Poles, Czechs and Turks."*** By "former Great Powers" he meant an anti-Soviet European directorate which would include Germany and Italy. He excluded France, giving the French special mention. Thus was laid down British post-war foreign policy which aimed at an alliance with Germany, Italy and a number of other countries against the Soviet Union. This policy was charted long before the Axis powers were smashed and forced to surrender. The world first learned of the Churchill memorandum in 1949 from Harold Macmillan, but it is significant that to this day British and other historiography make believe the memorandum never existed. The reason for this is that British

* *The Autobiography of D. N. Pritt* . . , London, 1965, p. 281.

** Ibid.

*** Ibid.

historians go out of their way to persuade the reader that the Soviet Union was to blame for the crack-up of the anti-fascist coalition as soon as the war was over. However, their long-winded "evidence" melts as soon as one reads only a few lines of this document written by the then head of the British Government.

In *The Struggle for Europe*, which caused a sensation in the West, the Australian publicist Chester Wilmot writes: "During 1943, although he was still primarily interested in the problem of destroying Hitler's power, Churchill became increasingly concerned about the necessity of restraining Stalin. . . . Accordingly, while continuing to put the defeat of Hitler first, the Prime Minister sought to devise a plan of campaign which would not only bring military success, but would ensure that victory did not leave the democratic [read *capitalist*.—U. T.] cause politically weaker in any vital sphere."*

These considerations above all determined subsequent British strategy and foreign policy. In the course of the war the British Government could not afford to break with and come out against the USSR in order to uphold capitalism and preserve fascism (although an attempt in this direction was made by Churchill in 1945) because it would have inevitably brought about Britain's defeat in the war with her imperialist rivals. McNeill writes that by the beginning of 1943 "there could no longer be much doubt that victory would rest with the Allies. Only the rupture of the Grand Alliance could have seriously endangered its victory; and the realisation of that fact both in Russia and in Britain and America helped to keep Allied differences within manageable proportions."**

Insofar as it was considered ill-advised to break the Alliance, the British Government did its utmost firstly to shift the burden of the war onto the USSR in order to weaken it as much as possible and, secondly, to compel the Soviet Union to subscribe to a post-war arrangement which would not only satisfy Britain's imperialist interests but also preserve the positions of capitalism and undermine the revolutionary movement in Europe. Prior to 1943 the British and Americans had insisted on postponing the discussion of the post-war

* Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe*, London, 1953, p. 130.

** William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 216.

settlement to the end of the war, but now they attached special importance to this problem.

In military strategy, a result of the changed military and political situation was that the British Government continued, with greater doggedness than before, to evade fulfilling its commitment to open a Second Front. At the same time, every effort was made to bring British and American troops into Southeastern and Eastern Europe from the south, via the Balkans, and thereby close the road to Europe for the Soviet Army. Churchill and Britain's military leaders sought to achieve this object throughout the whole of 1943.

After the victory at Stalingrad, the Second Front issue lost much of its importance to the Soviet Union. Until the close of 1942 the Second Front could be regarded as aid to enable the Soviet Union to fight Germany, but now, after it had withstood the German onslaught unaided, the Second Front could lighten the Soviet Union's burden of the struggle against the common enemy, hasten the end of the war and reduce the sacrifices necessary to achieve victory. The Second Front was thus no longer a pressing problem for the Soviet Union and, consequently, in its relations with its Allies it found itself in a much stronger position.

In 1943, with the strategic and political situation changing swiftly, Churchill and Roosevelt met frequently to discuss Allied strategy. The first of these meetings took place at Casablanca on January 14-25. A decision to postpone the invasion of Western Europe indefinitely and concentrate all Allied forces in the Mediterranean would have suited the British most. However, they could not say this openly for it would have been tantamount to a formal invitation to the Americans to fight for British colonial interests instead of fighting the common enemy—Germany. Moreover, influential forces in the USA, chiefly in naval circles, felt American troops should be used in the Far East to achieve American colonial objectives rather than to secure British colonial aims. Churchill had, therefore, to pretend he was not against a direct assault of Germany, i.e., a Second Front, but argued that this should be preceded by a series of operations in the Mediterranean where powerful Anglo-US forces were already concentrated. This led to a compromise decision at Casablanca.

It was agreed that after the fighting in Tunisia ended an operation would be launched with the purpose of seizing

the Italian island of Sicily. This operation would be accompanied by a determined hunt for German U-boats in the Atlantic, the bombing of Germany and the drawing up of plans for a landing in Western Europe "if Germany neared collapse".* The Mediterranean strategy was thus adopted and the Second Front was made dependent on whether the USSR would bring Germany to her knees. Wilmot writes it "was not now a matter of making a desperate diversion to relieve the Russians, but of landing in Northern France in such strength that the invading armies could liberate Western Europe and strike on into the heart of Germany".** "The decision to invade Sicily," writes General Wedemeyer, who was present at the conference, "...inevitably sidetracked the main Normandy commitment, the really decisive operation, until 1944."*** In practice the Casablanca decisions meant "that the Soviet forces ... were going to have to continue to bear the main brunt of the land fighting in Europe during 1943".*)

In effect, by taking these decisions the Allies violated their commitments to the USSR. That explains the vague wording of the Churchill-Roosevelt message to the Soviet Government on January 27 informing it of the Casablanca conference.***) However, in Moscow they had learned to see through courteous, veiled messages of this kind, and therefore on January 30 in a message of reply Stalin wrote: "Assuming that your decisions on Germany are designed to defeat her by opening a Second Front in Europe in 1943, I should be grateful if you would inform me of the concrete operations planned and of their timing."****) Churchill had to reply in more specific terms. On February 9 he wrote that the Allies had in mind an operation for the seizure of Sicily and the Dodecanese Islands and were preparing to cross the English Channel in August provided the conditions were favourable. This reservation was repeated by him on March 11. He was quite obviously evading a direct reply and wriggling out of the commitment he had made on behalf of Britain.

* Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, p. 106.

** Chester Wilmot, *Op. cit.*, p. 117.

*** Albert C. Wedemeyer, *Op. cit.*, p. 169.

*) Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, p. 108.

***) *Correspondence*... Vol. I, pp. 84-86.

****) *Ibid.*, p. 89.

Churchill's promise of February 9 to cross the English Channel in August 1943 was hollow through and through as was shown by his next meeting with Roosevelt on May 12-25 in Washington. At that meeting it was decided that the invasion of Western Europe would be launched in 1944, and even the date for it was named—May 1—but it was to be preceded by operations against Italy.* However, even at this stage the British did not regard the date for the invasion of France as final. In other words, they planned to call off the invasion in 1944 if they found it suited their purpose to do so.

From a Roosevelt message of June 5 the Soviet Government learned the Second Front would not be opened in 1943. In messages of June 11 and 24 it protested firstly against the Anglo-American decision to postpone this operation without any attempt to discuss this crucial question with the Soviet Union and, secondly, against their violation of their definite pledge to open a Second Front not later than in 1943. The message of June 24 stated "that the point here is not just the disappointment of the Soviet Government, but the preservation of its confidence in its Allies".** Churchill realised that the Soviet Government had seen through his double-dealing. He could only reply irritably with the threat that he would present his "case to the British Parliament and the nation".***

Tension between the USSR and its Allies on the question of a Second Front reached its highest point in June 1943 as is shown by the exchange of messages. The Soviet Union's military position was still further strengthened and, correspondingly, the importance of a Second Front receded after the Battle of Kursk (which began on July 5, 1943), where a crushing defeat was inflicted on the German armies. However, while the Soviet Union found itself requiring less and less military aid from the Allies, the latter came to regard a Second Front as an increasingly important means of preserving reactionary regimes in Europe and strengthening British and American influence there. This came to the fore at the next Churchill-Roosevelt meeting on August 14-24 in Quebec, Canada.

* Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

** *Correspondence...*, Vol. II, p. 76.

*** *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 140.

At Quebec the Americans insisted on reaffirming the Washington decision to effect a landing in Northern France on May 1, 1944. It was settled that 29 divisions would take part in the operation. Churchill had his eyes on the Balkans and his agreement to this decision contained a number of reservations concerning the situation that might arise in the landing area in the spring of 1944.* The Americans were aware that Churchill was again acting the hypocrite. Wedemeyer, who was at the Quebec Conference, writes that when Churchill gave his agreement to the landing in France General Marshall told the British Prime Minister he "could not agree to the past British position of supporting Bolero-Overlord and at the same time taking major resources away from it to undertake operations in the Mediterranean. That has been our experience all the way through."**

Nothing definite about the Quebec decision was communicated to the Soviet Government. The Churchill-Roosevelt message of August 26 spoke in general terms of the bombing of Germany and the creation of a bridgehead on the continent without giving the time-table for the operation or stating the strength of the forces to be used.*** The Soviet Government left this message without a reply, for the correspondence on the issue was becoming useless.

The decisions of the inter-Allied conferences in 1943 provided testimony of some differences between Britain and the USA on the question of a Second Front. While Churchill doggedly opposed opening the Second Front at the stipulated time, Roosevelt and his military advisers (mainly General Marshall, Army Chief-of-Staff) insisted, without much spirit it is true, on the invasion of Europe.

Behind the American stand there was more than President Roosevelt's greater sense of responsibility towards his Ally than Churchill's, although this undoubtedly played its role. More important was the fact that the Americans believed it was to their advantage to open the Second Front as soon as possible. There were several reasons for this.

One was that the US Government wanted the earliest possible termination of the war against Germany in order to use all its forces against Japan. The only way to defeat

* Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, pp. 149-50.

** Albert C. Wedemeyer, *Op. cit.*, p. 244.

*** *Correspondence...*, Vol. I, pp. 150-51.

Germany quickly was to launch an invasion of Western Europe.

Another reason was that Roosevelt and his Administration felt the USA had to make a tangible contribution towards Germany's defeat in order to have the moral and political right to determine the post-war arrangement. In line with this reasoning they held it was undesirable for the war to be won by the Soviet Union alone. They were afraid the Soviet Union would bring the European peoples liberation from nazism with the result that socialism's prestige would be enhanced. Wedemeyer relates that in 1943 he told one of his colleagues: "We should realise that the Russians might soon be moving westward and could be well into Western Europe and the Balkans before we could get there. Even if Russia had not been able to hold out at Stalingrad, it was militarily necessary and politically expedient for us to get into the Continent while the bulk of the nazis were tied down far to the East."* Further, he explains that "in relying upon the land forces of the Soviet Union to deliver the knockout blow, we were storing up infinite trouble for ourselves at the peace table. At the war's end the Communists would be in a favourable position to deliver mighty blows in political, economic, and psychological fields against their Allies."**

Yet another reason, the Mediterranean strategy was not attractive to the Americans because its purpose was to consolidate the British Empire. The Americans wanted something quite different. Wedemeyer tells us that in 1943 the Americans felt the British were insisting on "periphery-pecking operations in the Mediterranean to improve their over-all Empire position".*** He was of the opinion that at "Casablanca and subsequently, we surrendered to British demands which entailed the perversion of American strategy for the sake of preserving British imperial interests".*) For similar reasons the Americans opposed Churchill's Balkan strategy. They had no desire to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for Britain.

The official objective of the Balkan strategy was that Eastern Europe would be occupied as soon as possible by

* Albert C. Wedemeyer, *Op. cit.*, p. 211.

** *Ibid.*, p. 241.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 177.

*) *Ibid.*, pp. 189-90.

British and United States forces who would, thereby, block the Red Army's road to the west. This fitted in with the designs of the American leaders, but they considered firstly that the adoption of this strategy would strengthen Britain's position in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the Middle East, which they felt was undesirable, and, secondly, that a landing in the Balkans would not enable Anglo-US troops to cut off the road of the Soviet Army in time and that this would defeat the purpose of the operation. The rough, mountainous terrain in the Balkans coupled with the absence of port installations would have held up the operation suggested by Churchill. "The terrain," says Wedemeyer, "was against it."* The Americans therefore did not support Churchill's plan of striking at the "soft underbelly of Europe", feeling that an invasion of Western Europe would enable their troops to reach Central and perhaps even Eastern Europe earlier than the Soviet Army.

Anglo-French Relations

In 1943 contact between Britain and France was, for all practical purposes, reduced to relations with the Gaullist Free French Movement, but there were a number of complicating aspects. One cause of complication was the differences between Britain and the USA over the French issue; moreover, on this issue Britain had to take the Soviet stand into consideration.

The agreement signed by the US Government with Darlan in North Africa was a clear indication that through a bargain with Vichy elements it sought to create for the liberated French possessions an administration that would be an obedient tool in its hands and replace the British-backed Gaullist authorities, and when France proper was liberated it would serve as the nucleus for a future reactionary and pro-American French Government. This was clearly understood by Churchill and de Gaulle, and both were interested in preventing the Americans from carrying out their designs. Hence the solidarity between Churchill and de Gaulle on this issue at the close of December 1942 and beginning of January 1943.

Even before the assassination of Darlan, de Gaulle had

* Ibid., p. 229.

desired agreement with General Henri Giraud. He redoubled his efforts in this direction after Giraud succeeded Darlan. On December 25 he suggested that Giraud meet with him to agree on setting up a single French administration which would unite the apparatus created by de Gaulle and the apparatus which the Americans were so energetically creating in North Africa under Giraud. The British approved this idea, but the Americans opposed it. They wanted to consolidate the position of Giraud and his supporters and, pleading military considerations (the passive fighting against the remnants of German and Italian forces in North Africa), denied de Gaulle entry into North Africa. Giraud, therefore, declined the meeting suggested by de Gaulle.

At the same time, the British Foreign Office made every effort to obtain US agreement to the establishment of a single French authority based on the French National Committee in London and General Giraud's administration in Algiers. On January 2, 1943 Eden instructed Halifax to negotiate with the US Government in order to obtain its agreement to the setting up in Algeria of a single administration to supersede the London-based French National Committee and General Giraud's Algerian administration. It was not proposed that such an authority should be recognised as a *de facto* government. It was to be treated as an Allied power, as a member of the United Nations. The British considered such an arrangement necessary in order to remove friction between Britain and the USA over the French problem.*

This idea was clearly not to the liking of the US State Department, and in subsequent negotiations the British had to prove that de Gaulle enjoyed the support of the Resistance in France herself and of world public opinion, which considered he was making a useful contribution towards victory and therefore could not be ignored. Hull, however, was adamant and no decision was reached at the Churchill-Roosevelt meeting in Casablanca.

Churchill realised he would not get US consent to the establishment of a single French authority as defined in the talks between the Foreign Office and the State Department. He therefore decided to seek Roosevelt's agreement to a gradual solution of this problem. In line with British tradition, Churchill displayed initiative in this issue, suggesting

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 215.

that de Gaulle should be invited to Casablanca to meet Giraud, and drew up the terms for an Anglo-US agreement. While taking Roosevelt's stand into account these terms made no provision for any immediate integration of the French National Committee and the Giraud administration. All they called for was the reorganisation of these bodies so that each would include representatives of the other. Moreover, it was suggested that British and American observers should be appointed to both bodies.

Churchill was infuriated to learn that after he had secured this compromise de Gaulle refused to go to Casablanca. This was de Gaulle's revenge for Giraud's earlier refusal to meet him. Churchill instructed Anthony Eden to tell de Gaulle that if he did not go to Casablanca the British Government would consider "his removal from the headship of the Free French Movement is essential to the further support of this movement by HMG".* The unseemliness of this flagrant pressure was felt by Harold Macmillan, the British political representative at Eisenhower's headquarters. On two occasions he suggested that in reply to de Gaulle's earlier proposal Giraud should invite him to Casablanca. But Churchill was determined to compel de Gaulle to toe the line. This de Gaulle had to do, but all these circumstances accompanying his arrival in Casablanca hardly improved the relations between him and the British Government. Later the Foreign Office considered that Churchill had made a mistake by turning down Macmillan's suggestion.**

De Gaulle's meeting with Giraud and with Roosevelt at Casablanca did not yield the results expected by Churchill. The head of the Free French Mission in Moscow Roger Garreau told the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister that Giraud had refused to discuss the question of political co-operation in spite of the fact that de Gaulle had offered him the supreme command of the French Armed Forces.

All that was achieved was a temporary agreement on the reciprocal appointment of liaison officers to co-ordinate military and economic efforts.*** Giraud's obstinacy was due to the backing he was getting from the Americans. The British tried to play the role of mediator, but so far they were unsuccessful.

* Winston S. Churchill, Op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 681.

** Llewellyn Woodward, Op.cit., p. 217.

*** *Sovietsko-frantsuzskiye otnosheniya*. . . , p. 107.

In a conversation with A. Y. Bogomolov, the Soviet Ambassador to the Allied governments in exile in London, on May 11, 1943 de Gaulle said: "My differences with Giraud are differences between France and the United States." "What is the role of the British in these differences?" Bogomolov asked. De Gaulle replied: "As you are aware, the British treat me with a certain amount of distrust, but at the same time they support me, hoping to gain something for Britain in the event of my return to France."*

Time, however, was working for de Gaulle and, consequently, to some extent for the British as well. Despite all-out American backing, Giraud's position in North Africa grew steadily weaker in the next four months following the Casablanca meeting. The reason for this was that Giraud represented Vichy elements and Vichy policy, which was founded on collaboration with the Germans. Necessity and circumstances had compelled him to serve the Americans. His star waned in proportion to the approach of the Allied victory and the collapse of Vichy policy. He had no support whatever in the Resistance movement in France and there was no sympathy for him in Britain, least of all in the USSR. On the other hand, de Gaulle's position grew stronger. The French people and the rest of the world saw that he was working along correct lines and their sympathy was on his side. The Soviet Government gave the French National Committee every support. The Committee enjoyed the backing of the French Resistance and the Communist Party of France. This was one of the reasons for the hostility of the American Government and for Churchill's dissatisfaction with de Gaulle.** "The support given to de Gaulle by the British Foreign Office," writes McNeill, "helped to counter-balance American support for Giraud."*** When the French National Committee's influence in North Africa began to grow, the Americans realised they had miscalculated by staking on Giraud and that it would not be a simple matter to ignore de Gaulle. This cleared the ground for agreement between the two rival French authorities outside France.

De Gaulle arrived in Algiers on May 30, 1943, and on June 3 reached agreement with Giraud on the formation of

* Ibid., p. 131.

** William D. Leahy, *Op. cit.*, p. 175.

*** William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 259.

a French Committee of National Liberation in Algeria to replace the French National Committee in London and the military command and civil administration in Algeria. The declaration announcing this agreement stated that as the central French authority the Committee would implement French sovereignty in all territories unoccupied by the enemy and ensure leadership and protection of French interests throughout the world. De Gaulle and Giraud were named as co-chairmen of the Committee.*

Britain had to declare her attitude to the new Committee. In Parliament on June 8 Churchill welcomed the agreement but showed no enthusiasm over the establishment of the Committee. "There is," he said, "a further and larger question—namely, the degree of recognition of this Committee as representative of France. This question requires consideration from the British and United States governments."**

This statement reveals not only the extremely cool attitude to the agreement reached in Algiers but also the intention to ignore the Soviet Union in working out the Allied attitude to the new Committee. This was evident in all the Anglo-American talks on the French issue after the Allied landing in North Africa. The Soviet Government was not even informed of these talks. This disloyal attitude by Britain towards the USSR must be borne in mind when we come to the British Government's arbitrary action in seeking to interfere in the Soviet Union's relations with the governments of East European countries liberated from German occupation by Soviet forces.

Although Churchill declared that Britain and the USA had to formulate the Allied attitude towards the de Gaulle-Giraud Committee, he was in the long run unable to eliminate the USSR from the decision on this issue. The Soviet Union welcomed the new French Committee of National Liberation, regarding it as a vehicle helping to unite the forces capable of fighting the common enemy. The Soviet Union could recognise the new Committee and thereby confront Britain with difficulties in studying "the degree of recognition". The Committee requested British recognition as early as June 7. Therefore, in order to avoid finding itself in difficulties, the British Government on June 15 requested

* *Sovietsko-frantsuzskiyе otnosheniya*. . . , p. 158.

** *The Times*, June 9, 1943.

the Soviet Government to refrain from answering the Committee on the question of recognition without consultations with Britain.* The reply to this request stated that "the Soviet Government does not find it expedient to postpone recognition of the Committee, for such postponement by no means facilitates the unity of the anti-fascist French forces".** This was a just attitude, but it hobbled the British who were hoping to get some concession from the Committee in return for recognition.

On June 23 Churchill wrote to Stalin, saying that it was not likely that the British Government would recognise the Committee in the immediate future and requesting the Soviet Government to withhold recognition. In view of the fact that in their juggling over the French issue Britain and the USA had been ignoring the USSR, this was a strange request, to say the least. However, Churchill was told that the Soviet Government had no information corroborating the British Government's present attitude towards the French Committee (which implied it did not consider this attitude well-founded) but inasmuch as the British Government had requested a postponement of Soviet recognition of the Committee and had, through its Ambassador, assured the Soviet Government it would take no decision on the French problem without consultations with the Soviet Union, it was prepared to meet the British request.***

The British Government, meanwhile, was making up its mind whether or not to recognise the new Committee. This was a tormenting problem for it. If recognition was to be granted it had to decide on the terms and how to agree these terms with the Americans. This compelled it to re-examine American policy towards France and weigh de Gaulle's "reliability" from the standpoint of British interests. There was a new factor to be considered: in London nobody now doubted that the Soviet Union would win the war.

In a memorandum of July 13 Eden pointed out that the USA did not desire a strong French Government or the integrity of the French colonial empire. The US President had unofficially advanced the idea that Indochina and some of the French islands in the Pacific should come under the

* *Sovetsko-frantsuzskiy otnosheniya* . . . , pp. 151-52.

** *Ibid.*, p. 164.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 173.

trusteeship of the United Nations, while Dakar and Bizerta should be turned over to the USA and Britain respectively as military bases. Eden wrote that this ran counter to British interests, for Britain did not want any French territory and did not approve of policies aimed at the disintegration of colonial empires.* British policy thus underwent a metamorphosis. Not long before the British had wanted to seize some French possessions, but now, seeing they would get little out of a division, they opposed the "disintegration of colonial empires". Moreover, by participating in the division of the French Empire they would have helped to create a most dangerous precedent that might later be applied to their own empire.

They adopted a somewhat modified attitude towards France herself. The USSR had held out against Germany and now Britain needed a strong France, which could oppose the Soviet Union in Europe after the war. The Eden memorandum put this plainly, stating: "... We also needed a powerful France in the West."**

Woodward presents the Eden memorandum in such a way as to make the reader believe Britain wanted a powerful France as a counterbalance to Germany. This is, however, calculated for naive minds only. McNeill correctly notes that "British support for de Gaulle was motivated largely by the wish to see a strong Government ready to take over the administration of France as soon as it was liberated from German control: a Government which might be expected to show a modicum of gratitude to Great Britain and which might help to provide a counterweight on the Continent to the Russian colossus"***

Churchill agreed with all this but was disquieted about General de Gaulle's future attitude towards Britain.*) But the British Government had no choice in the matter and, as Woodward points out, "force of circumstances" led it towards recognition of the Committee.**)

Key circumstances were the stand of the Soviet Union and the attitude of the French people to the Committee.

Allied recognition of the Committee was granted on

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 222.

** *Ibid.*, pp. 222-23.

*** William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 316.

*) Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 223.

**) *Ibid.*, pp. 223-24.

August 26, 1943. The British failed to agree with the Americans on an integral formula of recognition, and the two governments published different statements on this count. The Soviet formula was the most brief and most fully satisfied the Committee's desires.

Churchill had sufficient ground for doubting de Gaulle's "tractability". As soon as the Committee was recognised there was another flare-up between the British and the French, this time over Syria and the Lebanon. Through British pressure, the long-delayed local parliamentary elections in Syria were held in July, while in August 1943 the British envoy to the Lebanon General Sir Edward Spears, with Churchill's approval, incited the local authorities to take action against the French. The Foreign Office, it must be pointed out, was not always pleased with this excessive and clumsy activity.

In November 1943, when the Lebanese Government implemented a series of constitutional measures restricting French rights and influence, the French arrested the President and all the ministers they could lay their hands on. The British lodged a protest with the French Committee, demanding the release of the ministers and the automatic reinstatement of the Lebanese Government. The French had to yield.

Although the Committee had been set up under the dual chairmanship of de Gaulle and Giraud in June 1943, this dual power could not last long. De Gaulle wanted to rid himself of his undesirable co-chairman, and developments helped him to achieve this end. Giraud had to resign as early as November 9, 1943, but he remained Commander-in-Chief of the French Army. However, on April 9, 1944, he had to relinquish this post as well.

Italy's Unconditional Surrender and Withdrawal from the War

At a press conference on January 24, 1943 Roosevelt called Casablanca the "unconditional surrender" meeting.* This was an allusion to his agreement with Churchill that the war against Germany, Italy and Japan would end not in

* Chester Wilmot, *Op. cit.*, p. 121.

a compromise peace but in the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers.*

Here Roosevelt had several objectives. First and foremost he wanted himself or his successor to have freedom of action at the future peace conference. He was anxious to avoid a situation, such as had taken shape after the First World War, when the armistice with Germany was signed on the basis of Wilson's 14 points, and the Germans later kept accusing the Allies that the Versailles Peace was a violation of those points. In addition, the Roosevelt statement on unconditional surrender was meant to show the Soviet Union that although the USA and Britain had not honoured their pledge of opening a Second Front they were determined to fight the war, side by side with the USSR, until final victory was won.

These considerations made the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers acceptable to Churchill as well, but though he had agreed with Roosevelt he was by no means delighted over the principle proclaimed at Casablanca. He had no stomach for this principle for it presupposed the complete defeat of Germany, Italy and Japan and, consequently, the downfall of fascism in these countries. He feared the proletarian revolution too much to strive for such an outcome. He would very much have liked to see a considerable weakening of Britain's rivals as a result of which the present odious rulers and governments would be replaced by other reactionary governments, with which Britain could conclude peace without fighting the war to the end. Higgins quite rightly notes that "essentially the military doctrines of Winston Churchill... made sense only in terms of a mediated peace".**

By force of these circumstances Churchill made haste to appraise the principle of unconditional surrender negatively, maintaining that by proclaiming this principle the USA and Britain compelled the German people to support Hitler to the very end and fight to the last ditch, as a result of which Soviet troops entered into the heart of Germany. "Roosevelt," Walter Lippmann writes, "went over to unconditional surrender, and thus not only prolonged the war but made

* *War and Peace Aims of the United Nations*, Vol. II, Washington, 1945, p. 2.

** Trumbull Higgins, *Op. cit.*, p. 194.

it insoluble by bringing the Russians into Europe.”* Wil-mot points out that by “doing this, the Anglo-Saxon powers denied themselves any freedom of diplomatic manoeuvre and denied the German people any avenue of escape from Hitler”.** These assertions contain an undertone of regret that the war ended in Germany’s defeat and not in a compromise peace with her, a peace which, these authors feel, would have averted the growth of the proletarian revolution in European countries.

The example of Italy provides convincing testimony that the principle of unconditional surrender did not have the consequences ascribed to it.

In the night of June 9-10, 1943 Anglo-American troops landed in Sicily. Although they had numerical superiority over the enemy, they made extremely slow progress. Nonetheless, Italy’s rulers realised that the war was lost. Properly speaking, this had become evident after the rout of the Italian troops on the Eastern Front in 1942. The Allied invasion was only the coup de grâce. The top echelon of the fascist party and military and palace circles accomplished a coup in Rome on July 25. Mussolini was stripped of power and arrested. The new Government was formed by Marshal Pietro Badoglio, a prominent fascist leader and commander of Italian troops in the war against Abyssinia.

The developments in Rome forced the British and US governments hastily to draw up the document for Italy’s withdrawal from the war. Britain’s stand was formulated quite clearly by Churchill in a speech in Parliament on July 27. “It would be a grave mistake,” he said, “for Britain and the United States so to act as to break down the whole structure and expression of the Italian State.”*** Italy had a fascist state structure and, consequently, Churchill took care to save as much of it as possible.

This stand was determined by the class interests of the British bourgeoisie. The break-down of the fascist structure would mean its replacement by some other system. Roosevelt hoped it would be a bourgeois-democratic system of the Anglo-Saxon type. Churchill was not so hopeful. He was afraid that after their liberation from fascist tyranny the

* *New York Herald Tribune*, October 30, 1962.

** Chester Wilmot, *Op. cit.*, p. 123.

*** *Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons*, Vol. 391, col. 1399.

Italian people would turn their gaze to socialism. To prevent this happening he was prepared to preserve the Italian monarchy, which had co-operated with the fascists, keep the Badoglio Government in power and sign an armistice with it. He feared that "if the framework of monarchy and conservatism, represented by men like Badoglio, once gave way, Italy would soon turn towards communist revolution".* He did not conceal these apprehensions. In a message to Roosevelt on July 31 he wrote he was "not in the least afraid . . . to recognise the House of Savoy or Badoglio . . . for our war purpose", because this purpose "would certainly be hindered by chaos, Bolshevisation, or civil war. We have no right to lay undue burdens on our troops."** The last sentence is extremely significant. It shows that if necessary the British Government would not have scrupled to use its troops in liberated territories to prevent "Bolshevisation", i.e., forcibly to prevent the peoples from taking the road of socialism if they so desired. Thus, among other things, British military doctrine pursued counter-revolutionary objectives. In the light of the above message one can clearly see Britain's real attitude to the Atlantic Charter provision about the right of nations to choose their own form of government.

Badoglio was an Italian Darlan, and Churchill's readiness to co-operate with him betrays the hypocrisy of the arguments which nine months previously the British Government had proffered to show that the US deal with Darlan was morally unacceptable. One of the reasons Churchill was prepared to reach agreement with the Italian monarchy and Badoglio was that at heart he was a monarchist himself. Moreover, he felt that such an agreement would open up additional possibilities for the military operations he was so eager to start in the Aegean Sea and in the Balkans.

As soon as Badoglio came to power he tried to persuade the Germans that nothing had happened that would harm them, that Italy was a true ally of Germany. At the same time, he looked for channels through which to negotiate peace with the Allies. He failed to deceive Hitler. The Germans wasted no time in preparing to send fresh divisions to Italy to prevent her from withdrawing from the war, or, if that

* William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 291.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 59.

proved to be impossible, to occupy her. Mussolini's removal gave the Anglo-American Command an extremely favourable opportunity for landing troops in Italy and occupying most of that country without much difficulty before the Germans could strengthen their position in the new situation. On July 27, at a meeting with his military leaders called to discuss measures to be taken in Italy, Hitler said "the English won't wait a week while we consider and prepare for action". However, as Shirer points out, the "Allies waited not a week, but six weeks. By then Hitler had his plans and the forces to carry them out ready."* Had the Allies taken advantage of the situation they would not have found themselves bogged down in Italy. Captain H. C. Butcher, Eisenhower's naval aide, subsequently wrote that at the time the British and American military leadership were dissatisfied with Eisenhower's lack of energy and initiative in conducting the war against Italy.** Initiative and energy were needed to prevent the Germans from occupying Italy.

As regards Italy, the Badoglio Government entered into negotiations with the British on a cease-fire at the very beginning of August. This was not a request for peace but a proposal to strike a bargain which would turn Italy from an enemy of the United Nations into an ally.*** The Italians insisted that the Allies land more troops in Italy to protect them from the wrath of the Germans. The drawn-out bargaining ended on September 3, when the Allies began landing troops on the tip of the Italian boot and the Italians signed the armistice terms. This was not unconditional surrender in the proper sense. At the same time, Italy's withdrawal from the war showed that the proclamation of the principle of unconditional surrender did not lengthen out her resistance. This was equally true of Germany.

The coup in Italy and her withdrawal from the war followed on the heels of Germany's abortive attempt to launch an offensive on the Eastern Front in the summer of 1943, the overwhelming defeat suffered by the German troops in the Kursk Bulge, and the successful Soviet counter-offensive, which irrevocably turned the war in favour of the United Nations.

* William L. Shirer, *Op. cit.*, p. 1000.

** H. C. Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower*, New York, 1946, pp. 407-25.

*** Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, p. 162.

This Soviet military success still further enhanced the USSR's prestige and its role in the anti-fascist coalition. In London they began to realise that the Soviet Union could no longer be safely ignored in the decision of issues concerning the anti-fascist coalition as a whole. The days when the Atlantic Charter was drawn up without Soviet participation had receded into the past. The time was drawing nearer when the Soviet Union would liberate European countries from fascism.

That was why in the conversation which Eden had with the American Ambassador in Britain Winant on July 28, he stressed that the Soviet Union would have to be consulted on the terms of the armistice with Italy. Reporting this conversation to Washington Winant observed: "When the tide turns and the Russian armies are able to advance we might well want to influence their terms of capitulation and occupancy in Allied and enemy territory."* The role which the USSR was playing in the struggle against the Axis compelled Britain and the USA to change their attitude to it, for it was doing more than any other United Nation to defeat the enemy. The Soviet Government correctly assessed the situation and the Soviet Union's moral rights, and drew the corresponding conclusions. In a message to Churchill and Roosevelt on August 22, Stalin wrote: "To date it has been like this: the USA and Britain reach agreement between themselves while the USSR is informed of the agreement between the two Powers as a third party looking passively on. I must say that this situation cannot be tolerated any longer."**

This influenced the actions of the Allies. The terms of Italy's surrender were agreed upon with the Soviet Union and signed by Eisenhower's representative on behalf not only of the USA and Britain but also of the USSR. This convincingly showed that formerly in the decision of such issues the USSR had not been treated justly by its Allies, and that the question raised by Stalin in his message of August 22 on the need to co-ordinate Allied action was both legitimate and well-founded.

However, in the Italian issue the Allies did not manifest absolute good-will towards the Soviet Union or a desire to

* Ibid., Op. cit., p. 167.

** *Correspondence...*, Vol. I, p. 149.

co-operate fully with it. "Yet it was not a part of Churchill's plans for Italy," writes McNeill, "to accord the Russians an equal share with British and American officials in directing Allied policy in that country."* Naturally, under these conditions the Soviet suggestion to set up an agency to direct Allied policy in Italy, an agency which along with US and Britain representatives would have a Soviet representative, was not very much fancied by Britain and the USA. It was not openly rejected, but to emasculate it an Allied Control Commission for Italy was set up with Soviet participation. This Commission, however, did not play any substantial role. The real power remained in the hands of the Anglo-American Command.

By denying the USSR any practical participation in implementing Allied policy in Italy, Britain and the USA lost all claim to participation in deciding issues relating to the countries being liberated by the Soviet Army. This is noted by the more unbiased historians. McNeill, for instance, writes: "Having excluded Russia from any but nominal participation in Italian affairs, the Western Powers prepared the way for their own exclusion from any but a marginal share in the affairs of Eastern Europe."**

By agreement between Churchill and Roosevelt the British were accorded the leading role in Italian affairs, while the Americans took over the main role in the affairs of French North Africa. Correspondingly, a British general headed the Allied Military Government of Occupied Territory, which was the real master in Italy. On October 13, 1943 Italy declared war on Germany, and the governments of the USSR, Britain and the USA granted her recognition as a joint belligerent against Germany.*** Italy's participation in the war did not play any substantial role in defeating Germany. Besides, her ruling circles did not aspire to play such a role. All they wanted was Anglo-US support against progressive forces in their own country in order, with Anglo-US assistance, to preserve a reactionary regime in Italy and, if possible, have more say at the future peace conference.

* William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 308.

** *Ibid.*, p. 310.

*** *Uneshnaya politika Sovetskogo Soyuza...*, Vol. I, p. 353.

Britain Supports the Anti-Soviet Stand of the Polish Reactionaries

Anglo-Polish relations underwent a decided change under the impact of the developments on the Eastern Front. The Polish Government in exile, formed after Poland's defeat in 1939, was set up in Paris, but after France's fall in 1940 it moved to London. In it were extremely reactionary, chauvinistic elements, who had brought about Poland's downfall in 1939 and were now nurturing plans of creating a Greater Poland, pinning their hopes on the war weakening Germany and the Soviet Union. Some of them regarded not only Germany but also the USSR as their enemy, others hated the Soviet Union even more than they did Nazi Germany. Although the USSR had established diplomatic relations with the Polish emigré Government in 1941 the latter remained viciously hostile. It steadfastly violated the agreement it had signed with the Soviet Union on co-operation and mutual assistance in the war against Germany. The Polish Army formed on Soviet territory refused to fight shoulder to shoulder with Soviet troops against the Germans, and in the summer of 1942, when the German offensive against the USSR was in full swing, it withdrew to the Middle East, where it was placed under British command. McNeill writes that to the Soviet people the Anders army, because of this action, inevitably "looked like rats abandoning a sinking ship, for the Battle of Stalingrad was then just beginning".* As far as the USSR was concerned, he adds, this army was "an alien and potentially hostile military body".**

The British Government exercised absolute control over the Polish Government in exile, which subsisted on British money. The British needed this Government not so much as a means for utilising the Polish military units subordinated to it in the war against Germany and Italy as a weapon for pressuring the USSR and a guarantee that a reactionary regime would be restored in Poland after she was liberated. As we have already pointed out, the British Government gave its wholehearted backing to the claims of the London-based Poles to Soviet territory—Western Byelorussia and

* William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 211.

** *Ibid.*

Western Ukraine. The Polish Government's unwillingness to recognise the just return of these territories to the Soviet Union, from which they had been forcibly wrested in 1920-21 by squire-ruled Poland, complicated matters in organising a joint struggle of the Soviet and Polish peoples against Germany. To iron out these complications the USSR, beginning in 1941, endeavoured to smooth out this issue. But nothing came of this because the British and US governments flatly refused to settle the frontier problem in a manner that would take the legitimate rights of the USSR into consideration. Officially they suggested postponing the issue until the peace conference was convened, hoping that by then it would be settled at the expense and against the USSR. This anti-Soviet stand of the British and Americans, naturally, whetted the appetites of the London-based Poles, who began to devise megalomaniac plans.

General Sikorski, Prime Minister of the London-based Polish Government, was a more realistic politician than many of his colleagues, but nonetheless he was not averse to associating himself with clearly unrealistic anti-Soviet schemes. He visited the USA in January 1943 and during a meeting with US Assistant Secretary of State Sumner Welles he expounded a plan of creating "an Eastern European union running from Poland in the North down to Turkey in the South" of which "Poland would be the anchor in the North and Turkey the anchor in the South".* This union would be spearheaded against the USSR. Welles remarked that it "could only be interpreted by the Soviet Union as a cordon sanitaire of a purely military character directed squarely against the Soviet Union". In a record of this conversation, made by Welles, it is stated: "General Sikorski said that he was forced to agree with my point of view", i.e., with Welles's assessment of the nature of the proposed union.** During a visit to the USA in March 1943 Anthony Eden told Roosevelt that the Polish Government in exile "has very large ambitions after the war". Privately the London-based Poles, Eden declared, "say that Russia will be so weakened and Germany crushed that Poland will emerge as the most powerful state in that part of the world". For a start they demanded not only Western Byelorussia and

* *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943*, Vol. III, p. 317.

** *Ibid.*, pp. 317-18.

Western Ukraine but also East Prussia.* This was all a result of Anglo-American backing and incitement. The anti-Soviet claims were supplemented by an unbridled propaganda campaign started in Britain by the British-financed Polish press with British knowledge and permission. In February 1943 the US Chargé d'Affaires in Britain reported to Washington that even at the Foreign Office it was considered that the "‘Polish opposition press’ in London would continue to be a disturbing factor" in Soviet-Polish relations.** This was happening in spite of the war-time press censorship and other measures taken by the Churchill Government to control the press. It will be remembered that it closed the *Daily Worker* in 1941 and threatened to do the same to *The Daily Mirror* for demanding the removal of the Munichmen from the Government. The only explanation for the British Government's failure to take similar measures against the Polish press is that Churchill did not consider its line as clashing with British policy.

In early 1943 the military situation changed, and this forced the Churchill Government, as well as the US Government, somewhat to modify their attitude towards the Soviet Union's western frontiers. In both London and Washington it was realised that the Soviet Union would liberate its territory and restore its frontiers unassisted. "The Foreign Office therefore," Woodward says, "had to consider whether, in spite of our previous unwillingness to commit ourselves to any territory changes during the war, it might not be wise to try to get a general settlement of the Russian frontier."*** After pondering the situation, Eden went to the USA in March and found that President Roosevelt considered this a wise move.*)

It would seem that now the British Government could be expected to make the Polish Government see the necessity for a just settlement of the Soviet Union's western frontier and that these two governments would jointly propose such a settlement. But nothing of the kind happened. In April 1943, when for provocative purposes the nazis announced that at Katyn, near Smolensk, they had discovered the

* Ibid., p. 15.

** Ibid., p. 335.

*** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

*) *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943*, Vol. III, pp. 14-15.

graves of several thousand captive Polish officers allegedly killed by Soviet authorities, the Sikorski Government avidly seized upon this provocation in order to pressure the Soviet Government and force it to make concessions in the frontier issue. In this it had the complete support of the British Government. Churchill personally incited the Poles. On April 15, when Sikorski told him of the German Katyn announcement, Churchill's comment was: "The facts are pretty grim."* Thus encouraged, the Polish Government published a communiqué two days later, in which it said it had requested the International Red Cross in Geneva to conduct an investigation. The British and Polish politicians tried to use the nazi propaganda provocation to bring pressure to bear on the USSR and inflict a moral and political blow on it. They calculated that in this manner they would make the USSR agree to unjust concessions in the frontier issue.

To the great consternation of the British and Polish governments their provocation did not yield the results they expected. On April 25 the Soviet Government severed relations with the Polish Government in exile, declaring: "While the peoples of the Soviet Union shed their blood in the bitter struggle against nazi Germany and strain all their strength to defeat the common enemy of the Russian and Polish peoples and of all freedom-loving democratic countries, the Polish Government deals the Soviet Union a perfidious blow to please the Hitler tyranny."**

Churchill was thoroughly alarmed. At first he asked the Soviet Government not to break off relations with the Polish Government in London and then, on April 30, he sent a message stating that the "Cabinet here is determined to have proper discipline in the Polish press in Great Britain".*** At the same time, he could not hold himself back from threatening the USSR, hinting that on the Soviet Government's attitude towards the London-based Poles depended "closer co-operation and understanding" of the USSR, the United States and Britain "not only in the deepening war struggle, but after the war".*) To this he received a reply which

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

** *Uneshnaya politika Sovetskogo Soyuza...*, Vol. I, pp. 301-03.

*** *Correspondence...*, Vol. I, p. 125.

*) *Ibid.*

made it clear that the Soviet Government was fully aware that the responsibility for the rupture of Soviet-Polish relations devolved not only on the Sikorski Government but also on the Churchill Government. "... The notorious anti-Soviet press campaign," the Soviet reply said, "launched by the Poles as early as April 15... had not encountered any opposition in London; ... it is hard to imagine that the British Government was not informed of the contemplated campaign."*

The British Government's open backing of the London-based Poles in the April conflict with the USSR encouraged the Poles to take further action. On July 4, 1943 Sikorski was killed in an air crash in mysterious circumstances. His death, it is believed, was not an accident but engineered by those who wanted a tougher line towards the USSR in the Polish question. The premiership of the Government in exile was taken over by Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, but despite all of that Government's efforts it clearly did not represent the Polish people.

During the war the people in Poland had the opportunity of giving plenty of thought to the destiny of their country and came more and more to the conclusion that Poland's future could be secured only through co-operation and normal relations with the Soviet Union. In Poland patriots formed partisan detachments which fought the German invaders. They set up a League of Polish Patriots in the USSR in 1943 and with the Soviet Government's permission formed a Polish division, naming it after Tadeusz Kosciuszko.

This gave rise to serious apprehensions in London. The emigré Government started forming its own underground armed forces in Poland, counting on using them against the USSR. In the meantime these forces fought not so much the Germans as the partisan detachments consisting of people with progressive views. The British and Mikolajczyk governments were worried lest the progressive forces in Poland would see how hopelessly reactionary the London-based Poles were and supplant them with a democratic patriotic government.

To preclude this possibility the British Government returned to the question of the Soviet-Polish frontier in mid-

* Ibid., p. 127.

August, i.e., after the Battle of Kursk. The Foreign Office now urged that the Poles recognise the Curzon Line as their eastern frontier, and receive as compensation Danzig, East Prussia and Oppeln Province of Upper Silesia.* Eden suggested to the War Cabinet that in return for Britain's and the London-based Poles' recognition of the Curzon Line as the Soviet-Polish frontier, the Soviet Government should be required to restore relations with the Polish Government in exile "and to co-operate with them and with us in finding a satisfactory solution to questions concerning Polish underground Resistance" and to the problem of the democratic Polish organisations and army created on Soviet territory.** The British Government was thus prepared to recognise Western Byelorussia and Western Ukraine as Soviet territory but in return the Soviet Union would have to withdraw its support for the revolutionary and progressive forces of the Polish people and help to impose on them, after their liberation, the reactionary emigré Government, i.e., help to instal an extremely reactionary and rabidly anti-Soviet regime in Poland.

With this aim in view Churchill and Eden went to Tehran (November 28-December 1, 1943) for a conference with Stalin and Roosevelt. There on December 1, Churchill proposed the adoption of the following formula on the Polish problem: "It was agreed in principle that the hearth of the Polish state and people must be situated between the so-called Curzon Line and the line of the Oder River, including Eastern Prussia and the Oppeln Province as part of Poland."*** Stalin and Roosevelt agreed to this formula and, as the American notes of the sitting state, "it was apparent that the British were going to take this suggestion back to London to the Poles".*) At the Tehran Conference, the British Government thus agreed to recognise the Soviet-Polish frontier as running along the Curzon Line.

Churchill did not keep the promise he made at Tehran. True, in a speech in Parliament on February 22, 1944, he spoke in favour of the Curzon Line as the Soviet-Polish frontier and agreed that the inclusion in the USSR of terri-

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 250.

** *Ibid.*, p. 251.

*** *International Affairs*, No. 8, 1961, p. 122.

*) *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943*, Washington, 1961, p. 604.

tories east of that line was reasonable and just.* He thereby admitted that the Soviet stand on this question was just and confirmed the promise he had made at Tehran.

The Polish emigré Government, however, refused to accept the decision of the Tehran Conference, with the result that Churchill repudiated his pledge. On February 27 he informed the Soviet Government that the frontier question could be agreed only "when the victorious Powers are gathered round the table at the time of an armistice or peace".** In the same message he demanded that the Polish territory liberated by the Soviet Army, including part of Lithuania and Western Ukraine, should be administered by the Polish emigré Government in London; the rest of Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia "should be administered by Soviet military authorities with the assistance of representatives of the United Nations"***

This outrageous proposal was given a worthy rebuff. On March 3 the Soviet Government sent Churchill a reply in which it stated that it was now convinced that the leaders of the Polish Government in exile were incapable of establishing normal relations with the USSR. "As regards the desire to place certain Soviet territories under foreign control," the reply declared, "we cannot agree to discuss such encroachments, for, as we see it, the mere posing of the question is an affront to the Soviet Union."*)

Churchill replied four days later, on March 7. In his letter he withdrew his suggestion of United Nations participation in the administration of Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia, but repeated the demand that the USSR should, in effect, agree to the London-based Poles' stand on the frontier issue, and once more ended with the warning that disagreement on this issue was threatening "the friendship and co-operation of the Western democracies and Soviet Russia".**)

Sir Archibald Clark-Kerr, the British Ambassador in Moscow, was instructed to hand this reply to the Soviet Government and say that if it refused to satisfy the British demands the Poles would be informed of the general con-

* *Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons*, Vol. 397, col. 697-98.

** *Correspondence...*, Vol. I, p. 202.

*** *Ibid.*

*) *Ibid.*, p. 207.

**) *Ibid.*, p. 208.

tent of its reply, that the Soviet reply would be made public, that Churchill would make a statement on this point in Parliament, and that a divergence between the USSR and the two Western Powers on the Polish issue "would affect the operations which all three were about to undertake".* This was an obvious threat to abandon the plan to open the Second Front. Kerr conscientiously carried out his instructions.

Naturally, this blackmail and intimidation could not but have had the reverse effect. Churchill was told that his "messages and particularly Kerr's statement bristle with threats against the Soviet Union", that "threats as a method are not only out of place in relations between Allies, but also harmful, for they may lead to opposite results". His attention was drawn to the fact that at Tehran he had agreed to the Curzon Line and was now pressing for something quite different in contravention of the Tehran agreement.**

Churchill was thus again caught violating a pledge he had made on behalf of Britain. In the British Government it was also considered that the Tehran agreement had been broken by Britain. Even the Foreign Office, Woodward tells us, considered that the Soviet Government had grounds for maintaining that the British had given their agreement to the Curzon Line. "We," he says, "were indeed committed, both at Tehran and in our subsequent messages, to the Curzon Line as part of a general agreement."***

By repudiating the pledge given at Tehran, the British Government, in effect, returned to its stand of 1941-42, demanding that the Soviet Union relinquish part of its territory. This stand, naturally, made the Soviet Union doubt the intention of the British Government to co-operate with it on a just basis.

Britain, Governments in Exile and the Resistance Movements

The changing situation in 1943 and the first half of 1944 caused Britain to modify her relations with the emigré governments and her policy towards the Resistance movement.

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 286.

** *Ibid.*, p. 287.

*** *Correspondence...*, Vol. I, p. 212.

This was regulated by Britain's immediate and long-term objectives.

In this period the immediate objectives, i.e., Britain's desire for military support from the governments in exile and the Resistance movement, gradually lost their significance because the Allies' ultimate victory was becoming more and more certain. The nearing victory brought Britain's long-term objectives to the fore. These were to use the governments in exile and the Resistance movement to prevent revolutions in Europe and strengthen Britain's hand at the future peace conference and in the post-war world. Britain had powerful means of influencing the governments in exile. They were almost entirely dependent on her subsidies and on her war supplies.

In 1943-44 Britain made wide use of governments in exile in her attempts to set up various federations spearheaded against the USSR and the cause of progress. As we have already noted, the leading role in the attempt to form a "federation" of Eastern Europe was played by the Polish emigré Government. A similar federation of Western Europe was strongly urged by Paul Henri Spaak, a minister in the Belgian emigré Government, who had the support of his own Government and of the Dutch and Norwegian governments. He peddled the idea of forming a bloc embracing all countries from Norway to the Iberian states.

The emigré governments of Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway were in a somewhat better position than the emigré governments of other countries. For one thing they were recognised by the Allies as the only authority in their respective countries and they were closely linked with the Resistance movements in their countries. The relations between these governments and the Allied military command became an increasingly important problem as the day of the Anglo-American invasion of Western Europe drew nearer. This problem was settled on May 16, 1944 with the signing of an agreement between these governments and General Dwight D. Eisenhower of the United States who was appointed to the command of the Allied armies poised for the invasion of Western Europe.*

The British Government did all in its power to hold up the spread of the Resistance movement in Western Europe.

* H. C. Butcher, *Op. cit.*, p. 541.

The British were not conducting active military operations in that area and, consequently, were not particularly interested in direct armed support from the local population. They were quite content with the network of agents which the Special Operations Executive had infiltrated into these countries mainly for intelligence purposes and wrecking activities. It was planned to make full use of this network when the Allies landed in Western Europe. "The task of SOE in Europe," writes the British professor F. W. Deakin, "from the end of 1942 to the autumn of 1943 was conditioned entirely by the top-level strategic planning of the British and American Chiefs-of-Staff, and logically the main attention was concentrated in Western Europe on preparation for an eventual massive Allied intervention in these regions."*

The network set up by SOE was not large at all. At the close of 1942 in the occupied part of France it had six organisers, one courier and two wireless-operators. These agents had no arms or supplies caches at their disposal. In the unoccupied part of France there were 25 organisers, 19 local agents, six wireless-operators and a number of small caches. "By 1944, however," Deakin says, "some 900 British and French agents had been parachuted into France, not counting those who had arrived by land and sea."**

The forces making up the French and every other Resistance movement fell mostly into two categories: progressive and reactionary. The Communists were prominent in organising the Resistance and exercised immense influence among progressive elements. The logic of the struggle inexorably gave these elements a steadily stronger position in the Resistance inasmuch as they were the most active and dedicated fighters against the Nazi invaders. This trend markedly disturbed the British Government and the reactionary circles in the countries concerned. They were aware that the growth of the Left forces would hinder the restoration of the former reactionary regimes in Europe and stimulate the maturing of a revolutionary situation.

The British Government used mainly three methods to check this development. It supplied arms and equipment

* F. W. Deakin, "Great Britain and European Resistance. European Resistance Movements 1939-45", *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the History of the Resistance Movements Held at Milan, March 26-29, 1961*, Oxford, 1964, p. 106.

** Ibid., p. 108.

chiefly to Resistance elements whose political views and objectives were closest to those of British imperialism. The opinion, as Deakin says, was that the "weapons furnished by SOE must inevitably affect the balance of political forces within any given Resistance movement".* The British used reactionary organisations in the Resistance to suppress progressive organisations in the Resistance by means of armed force, if necessary. Lastly, wherever the military situation allowed it, they held the Resistance in leash, calling upon it to wait and accumulate strength, to refrain from actively fighting the nazi invaders.

This latter method was practised extensively in France, in particular. In March 1943, when anti-German action was intensified in France under the impact of the nazi defeat on the Volga, the British Special Operations Executive, according to a memorandum of March 22 from the British Government to the French National Committee, warned those people in France with whom it maintained contact that they had to do everything in their power to prevent the spread of the Resistance wave. The British Government called upon the Committee to advise elements with whom it had direct contact to exercise the same restraint. De Gaulle had asked the British for greater assistance to the French Resistance and in this connection the memorandum said that assistance on the scale desired by de Gaulle ran counter to the British Government's policy of preventing the spread of the wave of uprisings, for it would lead to a situation which it [the British Government.—*U.T.*] was seeking to avert.**

It was calculated that passive tactics would check the class struggle in the various countries and prevent the Communists from increasing their influence in the Resistance.

In Greece and Yugoslavia the situation was different than in France, and there the British Government employed somewhat different tactics towards the Resistance. In these countries it desired active resistance to the nazis, for the railways supplying the German forces operating against the British Army in North Africa ran through these countries. Trains transported war supplies to Piraeus (whence they were sent on by sea), and on their return journey they were loaded with Rumanian oil and wheat and Yugoslav bauxite,

* *Ibid.*, p. 107.

** *Sovietsko-Frantsuzskiy otnosheniya...*, pp. 123-24.

which was vital to the German aircraft industry. The British Government considered it important to halt or at least diminish this traffic. In October 1942 the first group of British paratroopers was landed in Greece to organise wrecking on the railway carrying 80 per cent of the supplies for Rommel's army.*

The British paratroopers and the British military mission sent to Greece found they had to deal with two Resistance organisations. According to British figures, ELAS (People's National Army of Liberation) had nearly 15,000 men. It was directed by the National Liberation Front representing a coalition of Leftist parties, among which a prominent role was played by the Communist Party. ELAS was waging an active fight against the invaders and was opposed to the return, after the war, of the Greek king and the British-backed Government in exile. The king had compromised himself in the eyes of the people by his support of the pre-war semi-fascist regime in Greece. Also operating in Greece was an organisation known as EDES (National Democratic Army), which, headed by the pro-British Colonel Xervas, was an asylum for reactionary elements. EDES had a force of nearly 5,000 men, but instead of fighting the Germans it concentrated on undermining ELAS influence.

The British wanted to see the Greek Resistance united, and that it should fight the Germans like ELAS but thought like the EDES leaders. To achieve this aim repeated attempts were made to integrate the two organisations under reactionary leaders, compel them to recognise the emigré Government and agree to its return, together with the king, after the country was liberated from the Germans. The British arranged talks between the two organisations. None of these attempts yielded positive results, and pressed by military necessity the British Government had no alternative but to supply arms and assist both EDES and ELAS. The British military leaders were most persistent in urging assistance for all Greeks fighting the Germans. They had to take the requirements of the Middle East Command into account. Churchill was inclined to side with them. On the other hand, the Foreign Office under Anthony Eden wanted Britain to cut off aid to ELAS. They cared little for current military requirements, being concerned chiefly with post-war

* F. W. Deakin, *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

prospects. Eden feared that the Greek people would associate themselves with ELAS and establish a democratic regime after the war.

During the first six months of 1943, while fighting raged in North Africa, the viewpoint of the military unquestionably held the upper hand. A Foreign Office directive of March 1943 stated: "In view of the operational importance attached to subversive activities in Greece there can be no question of SOE refusing to have dealing with a given group merely on the grounds that the political sentiments of the group are opposed to the King and Government."*

But after the Germans and Italians were driven out of North Africa, Churchill's Balkan strategy began to have a telling effect on the British attitude to the Greek Resistance. Consequently, on November 11, 1943, in their recommendations to Churchill on the further strategy of the war the British military leaders wrote: "Yugoslavia, Greece and Albania. Our policy should be to place on a regular military basis and to intensify our measures to nourish the partisan and irregular forces in these countries."** However, here military considerations clashed with the political objectives of the British Government.

Churchill was extremely partial to monarchies and ardently desired to restore the Greek king to his throne after liberation. He and his Cabinet were impressed by the Greek king's obviously reactionary views. But this was the very thing that did not suit the Greek people, on whose behalf ELAS categorically opposed the king's return. To facilitate their task the British tried to get the king to show a more democratic attitude, in words at least. He was required to make a statement declaring that he would not return to Greece if he was not invited by a representative Greek Government after liberation. In return for this statement the British promised him that they would suspend aid to ELAS. The king remained adamant.

On March 13, 1944 the National Liberation Front set up a Political Committee of Liberation for the express purpose of convening a National Council consisting of freely elected people's representatives. The people started forming organs

* Ibid., p. 18.

** Arthur Bryant, *Triumph in the West, 1943-1946*, London, 1959, p. 66.

of power. Hatred for the British-backed king and sympathy for the National Liberation Front spread even among the emigré Government's troops in Cairo. The Greek brigade in Egypt mutinied in mid-April 1944. In the civil war that was starting in Greece the British Government, naturally, sided with the reactionaries: the mutineers were disarmed by the British Army.

The British followed this up by bringing more diplomatic pressure to bear in order to force the progressive section of the Greek Resistance to recognise the reactionary Government and the king. The emigré Government was reorganised and from May 17 to 21, 1944 a conference was held in the Lebanon with the objective of achieving unity between the different groups in the Greek Resistance and the emigré Government. A formal decision was passed but it did not lead to real unity.

In Greece the British Government unswervingly followed a policy of suppressing the Leftist forces in the Resistance and restoring the king and his Government to power, but in Yugoslavia it adopted a different stand. On May 24, 1944 Churchill stated in Parliament that "in one place we support a king, in another a Communist".* He had in mind British support for the Yugoslav partisan movement led by Josip Broz Tito. This support was given reluctantly, under pressure from the Soviet Union.

A powerful partisan movement in which the leading role was played by Communists was operating in Yugoslavia, as in Greece. In addition, there were cetnik units commanded by Colonel Draza Mihajlovič, the War Minister of the Yugoslav Government in exile in London.

The partisans were waging a dedicated national liberation struggle against German and Italian occupation forces. From the very outset of the war the Soviet Union steadfastly supported the national liberation movement in Yugoslavia. Britain maintained a diametrically opposite stand, supporting Mihajlovič's cetniks, who fought the partisans instead of the invaders, thereby preparing the soil for the restoration of a reactionary regime after Yugoslavia was liberated. These cetniks hated the partisans so much that they collaborated with the invaders, joining them in their operations against the partisans. In this way they discredited their

* *The Times*, May 25, 1944.

Government in London, of which Mihajlovič was nominally a member, and created an impassable abyss between themselves and the Yugoslav people. The partisan ranks swelled rapidly, while those of Mihajlovič's cetniks dwindled. This showed that the situation in Yugoslavia was changing to Britain's disadvantage.

To stop this trend, Britain suggested that the partisan forces and the cetniks should unite under Mihajlovič. Britain expounded her views on this issue fairly comprehensively in a memorandum to the USSR on March 9. The memorandum recalled that as early as November 1941 the British Government, through its Ambassador in Moscow Sir Stafford Cripps, had drawn the Soviet Government's attention to the desirability of a united front of partisans and cetniks in Yugoslavia. It was suggested that the Soviet Government might be inclined to persuade Communist elements in Yugoslavia to place themselves at the disposal of General Mihajlovič as the national leader. Such a united front and recognition of Mihajlovič as the leader of that front would have put an end to the partisan movement. This was obvious to the Soviet Government, with the result that a negative reply, couched in courteous terms, was sent to the British Government. The Soviet Government stated that it had no links with Yugoslavia and could not influence the partisans.*

Subsequently the British Government suggested "that broadcasts to the partisans should be arranged from Moscow, urging them to co-operate with General Mihajlovič".** This time, in July 1942, the Soviet Government replied unequivocally that it had no intention of joining the British Government in pressuring the partisans and that it did not trust General Mihajlovič because of his ties with collaborationists. The British Government stubbornly stuck to its stand, and in a letter to the Soviet Ambassador in London it twisted facts in an attempt to prove that Mihajlovič could be trusted. Inasmuch as it had already communicated its stand on this question to the British Government, the Soviet Government left this letter unanswered.***

In its Yugoslav policy of this period the British Government sought to kill three birds with one stone. It hoped

* *International Affairs*, No. 8, 1958, pp. 124-25.

** Ibid., p. 124.

*** Ibid., p. 125.

that by securing conciliation between the partisans and the cetnik forces and their integration under Mihajlovič it would have at its disposal a military force operating against the enemy, make sure that a people's government would not come to power after the war and prepare the conditions for the return to Yugoslavia of the king and the emigré Government from London.*

A British military mission was sent to Mihajlovič at the close of 1942. However, the latter made a hash of things for himself by flatly refusing to fight the invaders.** As a consequence of this, on the insistence of the British Command in Cairo, steps were taken to elucidate the situation in the camp of the partisans. The British Foreign Office, guided by post-war considerations, was hostile to the demands of the military. The stand of the British diplomatic leaders lacked logic: on the one hand, they maintained that the military were overrating the forces and potentialities of the partisans and, on the other, voiced the apprehension that when the war ended the partisan leaders might stir the people to a struggle for a proletarian revolution.

On March 9, 1943 the British Government sent the Soviet Government a memorandum on the Yugoslav question in which, on the whole, it confirmed the Soviet Government's assessment of Mihajlovič's behaviour, pointing out that "during the last few months Mihajlovič has been displaying little activity against Axis forces. . . . The partisans have undoubtedly undertaken operations against the Axis, but at the same time fighting has occurred between their forces and those of General Mihajlovič." Despite this admission, the British Government suggested that the Soviet Government act with it in securing a united front of the partisan and the Mihajlovič forces. "It is realised," the memorandum said, "that it would be of great advantage to the common war effort if the present dissensions between these rival elements could be removed and a common front against the Axis established in Yugoslavia, with which both Great Britain and the Soviet Union could co-operate. With this end in view, His Majesty's Government are anxious to harmonise so far as possible their own policy towards Yugoslavia with that

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 335.

** F. W. Deakin, *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

of the Soviet Union, and of seeking with them ways and means of putting an end to the present unsatisfactory situation.”* Declaring that it was prepared “to support *all*... elements of Resistance”, the British Government requested the Soviet Government “to exert their influence with the partisans in order to achieve a common front” with the Mihajlovič forces. The British Government had no means of compelling the partisans to integrate with the Mihajlovič units and, therefore, felt it was imperative that “both the British and Soviet governments should co-operate” in uniting and reorganising the partisan and Mihajlovič forces.**

On what terms was this integration to take place? On those proposed in November 1941, i.e., that the partisans should accept Mihajlovič's leadership. The British Government did not conceal the fact that it was backing Mihajlovič because it felt he was the force capable of fighting a revolutionary movement. This was the undertone of the statement that “it has been decided to continue to support General Mihajlovič, since it is felt that his organisation affords the best chances of preventing an outbreak of anarchy and chaos in Yugoslavia on the withdrawal of the Axis forces”. To leave no doubt about what was meant by the words “anarchy” and “chaos”, the memorandum specified: “The situation in Yugoslavia is serious and has the makings of a civil war.”*** It was thus suggested that the Soviet Government should support measures aimed at suppressing progressive, revolutionary forces in Yugoslavia and strengthening the forces of counter-revolution and reaction. The Soviet Union naturally could not subscribe to this, and it was useless trying to explain why to the British Government. No answer was therefore given to the British memorandum.†)

Military considerations ultimately gained the upper hand and in May 1943 the British Government sent several military missions to Tito. One of them was headed by Captain F. W. Deakin.*†) The British officers reported to Churchill

* *International Affairs*, No. 8, 1958, pp. 124-25.

** *Ibid.*, p. 125.

*** *Ibid.*

†) I. Zemskov, “The ‘Division’ of Yugoslavia Into ‘Spheres of Influence’”, *International Affairs*, No. 8, Moscow, 1958.

*†) After the war Deakin became a professor of history. His report is quoted in this book. It is published in full in *La resistenza europea e gli Alleati*, Milan, 1962.

that the forces of the partisans were much stronger than had been thought. Besides being able to do much in the struggle against the Germans, they would be a powerful revolutionary force after the war. Ignoring this factor and acting against Eden's judgement Churchill decided to supply arms to the partisans. On July 4, 1943 the British Ambassador in Moscow informed the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs that "as a result of these new connections and of recent events my Government has decided to re-examine its former policy and in future lend its support to all Resistance elements in Yugoslavia irrespective of their political trends". The Soviet Government replied that it would take note of this statement.*

At first glance it seemed that the unbelievable had happened when the British Government decided to help the Communist-led partisan movement in Yugoslavia. But Churchill had his own calculations. Deakin writes: "It was becoming increasingly clear that the post-war balance of power in the countries of liberated Europe would be conditioned by the final dispositions on the map severally of the Anglo-American and Russian armies."** The Balkan strategy had become an obsession with Churchill. He reckoned that in the end he would gain control of the Balkans, and for this he had to have a force in the Balkans that would facilitate an Anglo-American invasion in that area.*** The Yugoslav partisans could be that force. Since the Balkans would in that way be occupied by the British and Americans he had no reason to fear any political consequences from co-operation with the partisans, who could be disarmed at any time if they tried to act in opposition to British plans.

In November 1943 the partisans set up a National Committee of Liberation, which fulfilled the functions of a Provisional Government. This seriously alarmed the British. They refused to recognise the National Committee and took energetic steps to secure its integration with the emigré Government, reorganised and adapted for this purpose, and obtain the consent of the leaders of Yugoslavia's People's Liberation Army, which had been formed from partisan units, to the king's return to the country.

* *International Affairs*, No. 8, 1958, p. 61.

** F. W. Deakin, *Op. cit.*, p. 112.

*** Arthur Bryant, *Op. cit.*, p. 66.

The Soviet Union's unfaltering support of the national liberation movement in Yugoslavia, the successes of this movement in the struggle against the nazi invaders, and the world-wide odium earned by Mihajlovič through his collaboration with the nazis compelled Britain to pay more attention to her relations with the partisans and cut short aid to Mihajlovič in January 1944. On January 8, 1944, Churchill informed the leaders of the partisan movement of the British Government's decision to halt military assistance to Mihajlovič and channel all aid to the partisans. At the same time, he made it clear that Britain was still backing King Peter and the Yugoslav Government in exile.*

In April 1944 in order to reconcile the partisan leaders to the Yugoslav Government in exile Churchill advised King Peter to "form a small administration composed of people not particularly obnoxious to Marshal Tito".** In May 1944 King Peter instructed Subasič, a proponent of co-operation with the liberation movement, to form such an administration.

Meanwhile the Germans raided Tito's headquarters, and Tito had to seek the shelter on Vis Island off the Adriatic coast. The General Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army was transported to Vis Island by Soviet Aircraft, and British troops were landed on the island to ensure its safety.***

On June 16, 1944 Subasič signed an agreement with Tito on the setting up of a coalition government which would recognise the role played by the national liberation movement. This government was formed on July 7, 1944. The British had made every effort to facilitate the Subasič-Tito agreement, the reason being, as McNeill says, that Churchill hoped an acceptable compromise could be arrived at in Yugoslavia between the remodelled Government in exile and the leaders of the Resistance movement; and that the government emergent from such a compromise would be well disposed towards Great Britain.*)

Churchill's compromise with the Yugoslav liberation movement in early 1944 was largely due to the support this move-

* *International Affairs*, No. 8, 1958, p. 61.

** Ibid.

*** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 344.

*) William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 389.

ment was getting from the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union and its Western Allies recognised the National Committee of Liberation of Yugoslavia in December 1943. A Soviet military mission was sent to the Yugoslav partisans in February 1944, and the Soviet weapons and other military supplies that began to arrive in large quantities gave the leaders of the Yugoslav liberation movement a stronger position in their talks with the British Government. E. Kardelj, one of the leaders of that movement, said at a rally in Ljubljana on June 12, 1945: "The Soviet Union was the country that helped us selflessly from the very outset, requiring nothing in return and binding us to nothing that would clash with our national interests."*

Anglo-Turkish Relations

Britain regarded Turkey as a potential ally capable of putting a certain number of divisions in the field (their battleworthiness was an unknown quantity) and as a barrier on Germany's road to the Middle East. Another factor in which Britain was interested was that being hostile to the USSR Turkey could be used as a springboard for anti-Soviet provocations. During the war Turkey had an agreement on mutual assistance with Britain but did not align herself with Britain against Germany and Italy. In fact, three days before Germany attacked the USSR she signed a friendship pact with the nazis. Formally she was a neutral in the war, but actually she helped Germany substantially and planned to attack the USSR as soon as its military position became desperate. All this was well known in London, but nothing was done to pressure Turkey, to demand that she fulfil the terms of the mutual assistance agreement for fear that she would irrevocably go over to Germany's side. The British looked through their fingers even at Turkish supplies of chromium to Germany, despite the fact that these supplies were strategically important.

Anglo-Turkish relations underwent a fundamental change after the Battle of Stalingrad. Turkey had not attacked the Soviet Union, and this made the British hope they would be able to draw Turkey over to their side completely. The situation was making this a very pressing issue indeed. In 1943

* *Izvestia*, June 17, 1945.

Churchill and other British leaders were preoccupied with their Balkan strategy in which a key role was assigned to Turkey. They wanted Turkish troops to move into Southeast Europe ahead of the Soviet Army, under British leadership and with British military support. To achieve this aim they had to compel Turkey to enter the war on the side of the Allies. The efforts of the British Government in this direction determined its policy vis-à-vis Turkey in 1943 and 1944.

At the very beginning of 1943 Churchill felt he had to try to secure Turkey's entry into the war in the spring of the same year. He felt there was need for haste, for an invasion of the Balkans would have to be undertaken in the immediate future. In January he wrote: "We are not counting on an early or sudden collapse [of Germany.—*Ü. T.*], but of course no one can be sure that it will not come suddenly.... We must be ready, both for the worst and for the best."* To be prepared for any eventuality, he agreed with Roosevelt (at Casablanca) that he would forthwith make an attempt to persuade the Turkish leaders to enter the war.

The Americans were sceptical about this idea. They did not like it because it was closely intertwined with the British Balkan strategy, which, in addition to being spearheaded against the Soviet Union, aimed at strengthening British influence in Southeast Europe. "Churchill's strategic plan," McNeill writes, "required the Turks to join the Allies, but the Americans were reluctant to do anything positive to bring this about... and some Americans also suspected that Churchill was trying to use American men and material to build up a British sphere of influence in the Mediterranean as a make-weight against the Russians."**

On January 30-31 Churchill had a meeting with Turkish leaders at Adana to explore the possibility of Turkey joining the Allies. The document which he handed to the Turkish leaders stated that the "danger to Turkey on her Northern flank has been removed for the time being by the shattering victory of the Russians over the Germans".*** He informed

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 709.

** William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 272.

*** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 706.

the Turks of the agreement he had reached with Roosevelt at Casablanca regarding the steps to bring about Italy's defeat. Then he enlarged on the idea that the "breaking down of Italy would lead to contact with the Western Balkans and with the highly hopeful resistance maintained both by General Mihajlović in Serbia and the partisans in Croatia and Slovenia". He said "the summer months will see in the Mediterranean the largest operations.... These operations ... will cause the very greatest agitation throughout the Balkans."* Turkey was offered a share in Churchill's reactionary plans for the Balkans, in return for which she was promised fresh deliveries of weapons, immediate support from special units of British troops and, ultimately, the support of the British armies in Iraq and Iran. Turkey agreed to accept the weapons but declined to make any pledge to enter the war. Churchill had to rest content with the setting up of a Joint Anglo-Turkish Commission to handle the question of British arms deliveries to Turkey.

British pressure on Turkey was maintained after the Adana meeting. Britain threatened to suspend arms deliveries and withhold political support, which, as the British tried hard to convince the Turks, Turkey needed as a shield against the Soviet Union. Churchill and the Foreign Office were at loggerheads as regards how far Britain should go in pressuring Turkey. The Foreign Office warned Churchill that if he went too far the Turks might come to an agreement with the Soviet Union.**

The game that Britain played with anti-Soviet cards was made all the easier by the fact that the Turkish leaders were extremely hostile to the Soviet Union, devising anti-Soviet plans and, to a certain extent, helping Germany against the USSR.

The question of Turkey entering the war was scrutinised at the Moscow Conference of Soviet, British and US Foreign Ministers in October 1943. The Soviet Foreign Minister asked why Britain and the USA were supplying arms to Turkey who had no desire to use these arms for the Allied cause. "Soviet representatives at the Moscow Conference," writes the American historian William L. Neumann, "had reason to suspect their Allies of wanting to maintain Turkey

* *Ibid.*, p. 708.

** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 324.

as a future British-American outpost; and their suspicions were later confirmed.”*

On November 5-8, after the Moscow Conference, Eden had a meeting with the Turkish Foreign Minister in Cairo. On behalf of Britain, the USSR and the USA he asked whether Turkey would enter the war. A negative reply was received from Turkey on November 15. A significant point, as Woodward says, is that Eden’s briefing was “that the entry of Turkey into the war was desirable as the best, if not the only way to prevent the Balkan countries from falling entirely under Russian influence. If the Turks maintained their neutrality, British forces would probably be unable to get into the Balkans before the Russians had established themselves there.”** The Turkish trump was thus used in an effort to prevent the liberation of the Balkan countries by the Soviet Union and to replace German by British domination in that area.

In line with his Balkan strategy, at the Tehran Conference Churchill sought Stalin’s and Roosevelt’s agreement to Turkey’s entry into the war. Roosevelt showed no particular enthusiasm for the idea, and Stalin said he believed the Turks would not fight Germany.

It is interesting to note that on November 30, 1943 Churchill, as recorded in American documents, on his own initiative declared that “such a large land mass as Russia deserved access to warm water ports. He said that the question would of course form part of the peace settlement, and he observed that it could be settled agreeably and as between friends.” “Marshal Stalin,” the American notes state, “replied that at the proper time that question could be discussed, but since Mr. Churchill had raised the question he would like to inquire as to the regime of the Dardanelles. He said that since England no longer objected, it would be well to relax that regime.

“The Prime Minister replied that England had now no objections to Russia’s access to warm water ports, although he admitted that in the past she had. . . .

“Marshal Stalin said there was not need to hurry about that question, but that he was merely interested in discussing it here in general.

* William L. Neumann, *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 326.

"The Prime Minister replied that Great Britain saw no objections to this legitimate question....

"Marshal Stalin said that Lord Curzon had had other ideas.

"The Prime Minister replied that that was true, and that it would be idle to deny that in those days Russia and England did not see eye to eye.

"Marshal Stalin replied that Russia also was quite different in those days."*

The British Government thus raised this question on its own initiative and felt it wise to review the Straits regime with due consideration for the Soviet Union's legitimate interests, which had been encroached upon in a period when the USSR was weak. When at Tehran the Soviet Foreign Minister asked Churchill what he had in mind about the Straits, the latter said "he could not commit the War Cabinet, but that he thought that the regime of the Straits should be reviewed"*** to take Soviet interests into account. This discussion on the Straits, *started on Churchill's initiative*, did not lead to the adoption of any decision.

The Tehran Conference gave Churchill and Roosevelt the authorisation to demand Turkey's entry into the war against Germany.*** Churchill and Roosevelt had a conference with Turkish leaders in Cairo in early December 1943, but failed to persuade them to come into the war. Further pressure was brought to bear on Turkey in March and April 1944, with the sole result that Turkey severed diplomatic relations with Germany on August 2, 1944. Turkey declared war on Germany only in February 1945 as a symbolical gesture calculated to ensure a seat in the United Nations Organisation.*)

Britain's Relations with Spain and Portugal

Britain's apprehensions that Franco Spain might join Hitler or that Germany might occupy Spain and attack the British fortress of Gibraltar from the rear were dispelled in

* *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943*, pp. 566-67.

** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 327.

*** *International Affairs*, No. 8, 1961, p. 120.

*) William L. Neumann, *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

early 1943. The Germans did not take that step at the time of the Allied landing in North Africa—they were bound hand and foot on the Eastern Front—and much less were they in a position to undertake such an operation after 1942. This determined the change in Anglo-Spanish relations.

The Spanish Government took a series of diplomatic steps to induce Britain to initiate a compromise peace with Germany and Italy. A relevant note was delivered to the British Foreign Office by the Duke of Alba, the Spanish Ambassador in London, on October 12, 1942. In January 1943 Franco sent Churchill a letter in which he pointed out that by rejecting a compromise peace Britain was creating a situation favourable to "revolutionary tendencies", to "communism and Russian control" of Europe.* Franco knew what cards to play, but he laboured in vain because at the time Churchill was unable and it was not in his interests to steer towards a compromise peace with Germany and Italy. Nonetheless, Franco derived some advantage from his flirtation with Britain. This flirtation must have been taken note of by the British Government because subsequently it made Churchill decide to preserve the Franco regime in Spain.

After Italy withdrew from the war the British and Americans increased their pressure on Spain without fearing any further rapprochement on her part with Germany. Franco was told he would have to stop his tungsten deliveries to Germany, expel German agents from Spain and turn over all Italian ships in Spanish ports to the Allies. Franco had no alternative but to satisfy these demands, although where possible he tried to procrastinate. In January 1944, when the Allies stopped oil deliveries to Spain, he was forced to become more tractable.

At the same time the British Government pressured Franco on matters of Spanish home policy. Having decided that the reactionary fascist regime would be preserved in Spain after the war, the British tried to get the Franco regime to acquire a more or less democratic look, externally at least. This was necessary chiefly to save Franco himself. British historians complain that Franco had other ideas, being confident of his future.** In February 1944 Sir Samuel Hoare,

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 365.

** *Ibid.*, p. 367.

the British Ambassador in Madrid, asked Franco whether he did not think the Falange, the fascist party, should be disbanded. This did not alarm Franco. He merely ignored the question, being aware that Churchill would not go beyond these vague wishes. This was soon confirmed by Churchill personally. On May 24, 1944 he told Parliament he expected that after the war Spain would co-operate in ensuring peace in the Western Mediterranean and that internal political problems in Spain were a matter for the Spaniards themselves.* The British Government thereby officially made known its intention to do nothing to harm the Franco regime and recorded its hope of co-operating with Franco after the war. When Eden and Sir Samuel Hoare, who considered this a much too direct approach, declared it would be well to induce Franco to improve his administration, Churchill sharply replied that he would not like to see a Communist-controlled Spain. Eden replied that he too had no intention of sparking revolution in Spain, but if the Franco regime did not draw closer to the people civil war might break out. These dissensions between Churchill and the Foreign Office concerned, naturally, only the method by which to preserve the fascist regime in Spain. Churchill and Eden saw eye to eye on the need to do everything to prevent the Spanish people from seizing power.

Britain's relations were much simpler with the other fascist dictator in the Iberian Peninsula—Salazar, dictator of Portugal. There was no problem over the preservation of that regime. The British had no doubts that Salazar would remain in power because his dictatorship had been established under different conditions than the Franco dictatorship, and was not hated so much in the world. Besides, Portugal was aiding the Axis on an incomparably smaller scale than Spain.

True, Portugal supplied Germany with a vital strategic raw material like tungsten, despite having a treaty of alliance with Britain (signed as far back as 1380) and despite having proclaimed her neutrality in the war. Throughout the war Britain sought to make Portugal stop her tungsten deliveries to the Germans and sell this strategic material only to the Allies. Salazar reduced these deliveries to Germany in proportion to the Allied successes, but refused to

* *Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons*, Vol. 400, col. 771.

suspend them altogether. Not even Churchill's personal message of March 15, 1944 helped. He put an embargo on the export of tungsten to Germany only on June 5, 1944, the day before the Allies landed in France.

Another important problem in Anglo-Portuguese relations was the Azores Islands, which the Allies wanted as a naval and air base. These islands were militarily important in the struggle against German U-boats and in protecting shipping en route from Britain to the United States across the Atlantic. In February 1941 when the British Government believed a German invasion of Portugal was possible, it advised the Portuguese Government, in the event such an invasion took place, to put up only a symbolic resistance and evacuate to the Azores. This would enable the British to use the islands for their own purposes under the pretence of defending the Portuguese Government in exile.

Salazar agreed to this plan, but the Germans did not invade Portugal. In 1943 the Allies again turned their gaze on the Azores. Churchill was prepared to take them by force if Salazar resisted. But that did not happen. On August 18, 1943, Britain and Portugal signed an agreement, which, within the framework of Britain's ancient alliance with Portugal, gave her the use of the islands as a war base.*

However, the situation soon became complicated. The Americans demanded to be allowed to station 10,000 troops on the islands. This alarmed both Portugal and Britain. The British Government feared that once the Americans got the use of the Azores they would never leave them. A conflict flared up "between friends", and it ended with the understanding that US troops would use the islands on the terms of the Anglo-Portuguese Agreement of August 18, 1943.

Anglo-US Contradictions Become Aggravated

The year 1943 was marked not only by a radical change in the balance of power between Britain and the USSR in favour of the latter as a result of the mounting Soviet military effort and the enhancement of the Soviet Union's role in ensuring the ultimate victory of the United Nations. Britain's position changed in the Anglo-US alliance as well. Greater US aid under Lend Lease increased Britain's fight-

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 381.

ing capacity at the time, but in the long term it made Britain more dependent on the USA. US Lend Lease aid to Britain amounted to 662 million dollars in 1941, 2,391 million dollars in 1942 and 4,579 million dollars in 1943. The corresponding figures for the British Empire were 1,082, 4,757 and 9,031 million dollars.* The USA's entry into the war and its role in joint military operations likewise changed the general power balance to Britain's disadvantage.

The USA was aware of its rapidly mounting advantages and planned to waste no time in making use of them in order to oust its Ally and rival from some spheres. This could not help but aggravate the contradictions between the two countries. In 1943 and during the first six months of 1944 these contradictions made themselves felt in a number of fields.

The British Government was extremely worried by the continued shift of the balance of strength in merchant shipping away from Britain, which had, by virtue of economic and strategic considerations, always sought to have a large merchant marine. But now the Germans were sinking a large number of British vessels and Britain was unable to replace these losses by herself. The USA was building many merchant ships but refused to turn them over to permanent British ownership, agreeing only to their use for the transportation of freight to Britain. This threatened to place British shipping at a great disadvantage in the post-war competition. The problem was so serious that Churchill raised it at his talks with Roosevelt in Washington in May 1943. He could not, of course, state his real reasons. His argument was that the Americans did not have trained crews, while the British had, and, therefore, the Americans should hand over most of the monthly output of ships to the British. Roosevelt ordered the monthly transfer of some ships to the British, but since the USA remained the legal owner of these vessels this measure alleviated the current difficulties experienced by British shipping but could not improve its post-war position.

In 1943 the USA launched an energetic offensive against Britain's financial positions. Under the Lend Lease Agreement signed in 1942, Britain supplied the USA with raw

* R. G. D. Allen, *Mutual Aid*, London, 1953, p. 250.

materials not as mutual aid but for dollars because she had to pay for the orders placed by her in America before the Lend Lease Act was passed. By 1943 these payments were ended and Britain's currency reserves began to grow rapidly, partially as a result of spending by US troops stationed in Britain and other countries of the British Empire. In May 1941 Britain's gold and dollar reserves amounted to 430 million dollars; the British asserted that for the normal functioning of finances these reserves had to total not less than 600 million dollars. On November 30, 1942 they rose to 928 million dollars and by November 1943 to 1,200 million dollars.*

This accumulation of gold and dollar reserves greatly improved Britain's financial position, a development which did not suit the USA. On January 1, 1943 the Inter-departmental Committee set up by the US President submitted a report stating that "the balances now held by the United Kingdom are adequate" and that "the United Kingdom's gold and dollar balances should not be permitted to be less than about 600 million dollars nor above about 1,000 million dollars".** The US Government thus felt it could decide such issues for the British Government without preliminary consultation.

In this situation, as the Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson wrote on October 16, 1943, the US Government "pushed the British to agree to give us raw materials on reverse Lend Lease".*** Britain finally had to give in although the talks were dragged out from May to December. The relevant agreement was signed on December 17, 1943.

Research into the manufacture of the atom bomb caused considerable friction. After 1939 laboratory work in this field was organised on a large scale both in Britain and the USA. The scientists of both countries began exchanging information on this question in September 1940, when a delegation of British scientists led by Henry Tizard visited the USA. The prospect was that the research would show results at some remote date in the future and current military requirements did not seem to indicate the advisability of allocating large funds for this research. However, the fear that the

* *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943*, Vol. III, pp. 49, 98.

** *Ibid.*, p. 49.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 90.

Germans might be the first to produce the new weapon compelled the British to continue work in this field. In June 1942, in order to accelerate this work, Britain and the USA agreed to combine their efforts. Churchill gave his consent to halting parallel work in Britain so that it could be concentrated entirely in the USA. He promised that British scientists would be sent to the USA. In return Roosevelt promised to share information on the results of the research.

Some information trickled to the British as long as the work was in the laboratory stage. But the situation changed on May 1, 1943, when the Engineering Department of the US Army took over. On the pretext that it was a top secret project the British were refused further information. Churchill protested and threatened that the British would start parallel work in Canada or somewhere else. In May 1943 he managed to persuade Roosevelt to renew transmitting information to British scientists.* This could hardly be qualified as a British success, for the agreement that had been signed put an end to independent British work on the manufacture of the atom bomb.** Friction over this issue was temporarily removed, but Anglo-US contradictions in the sphere of nuclear armaments were to become further aggravated in the near future.

Until 1943 no sharp clashes took place between Britain and the USA in Latin America. The steps which the USA took officially to strengthen the defences of the Western Hemisphere and actually also to enhance its influence in Latin America did not run counter to British interests where the conduct of the war was concerned. Inasmuch as military requirements were given top priority, Britain did not oppose US actions in Latin America. With the exception of Argentina, all the Latin American countries accepted US leadership.

After the question of survival was removed from the agenda and an Allied victory became a certainty, Britain felt she could, at least timidly, go to the defence of her economic positions in South America. This was confined to protests against US actions to force Argentina to accept Washington's leadership.

During the war Argentina was legally a neutral country, and she substantially expanded her ties with both the anti-

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 723.

** Ronald W. Clark, *The Birth of the Bomb*, London, 1961, p. 187.

fascist coalition and the Axis powers. US attempts to pressure Argentina into suspending her economic and diplomatic relations with the Axis were resisted by the Argentinian Government. In Argentina the British had more capital investments than the Americans, and in its resistance to American pressure the Argentinian Government tried to rely on Britain. This was understood in the USA, and the US State Department sought British support.

Politically, the US official stand held the balance in its favour. The USA wanted Argentina to join the struggle against the Axis, and this was appreciated by the peoples and conformed to their desires. The British Government maintained that, firstly, the USA was overrating the significance of Argentinian collaboration with the Axis powers, secondly, pressure on Argentina would only increase resistance by her, and, thirdly, Britain could not afford the luxury of severing commercial relations with Argentina. However, in view of Britain's dependence on the USA she had to accede to pressure from Washington. Besides, in this issue Churchill showed a much greater willingness to meet the American demands than Eden. On February 27, 1944 he wrote to Eden: "When you consider the formidable questions on which we may have difficulty with the United States, oil, dollar balances, shipping, policy to France, Italy, Spain, the Balkans, etc., I feel that we ought to try to make them feel we are their friends and helpers in the American sphere."*

Earlier, on December 31, 1942, the Foreign Office had published a statement declaring that trade with Argentina could not continue if the Argentinian Government failed to take steps against the German agents in Argentina who kept German U-boats informed of the movements of British merchant ships. The Argentinian Government satisfied this demand in some measure, but in February 1943 reiterated its intention to remain neutral. A coup was accomplished in Argentina in June 1943, but it did not bring about a change in that country's foreign policy.

In January 1944, when victory over the fascist bloc was obviously drawing near, Argentina broke off diplomatic and economic relations with the Axis powers.** Another coup

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 413.

** *Annual Register. A Review of Public Events at Home and Abroad for the Year 1944*, London, 1945, p. 316.

took place in Argentina in February of the same year. The US State Department announced that the new Government would be recognised only if it satisfied US demands. The Argentinians showed no desire to co-operate, with the result that the USA called on Britain to join with it in recalling her Ambassador from Buenos Aires. After prolonged wrangling the British acceded and in early July the ambassadors were recalled for consultations.* This was effected only after Roosevelt had sent a personal message to Churchill.

Although the British Government recalled its Ambassador it negotiated a four-year agreement on the purchase of all Argentinian meat exports. In the obtaining situation this was obvious support for Argentina, and the US State Department was quick to lodge a protest. The British replied that 40 per cent of their meat came from Argentina and they could not jeopardise that source of supply. Roosevelt had to intervene again. He demanded that the British refrain from signing a long-term agreement, and negotiate monthly supplies of meat instead. Once again the British had to yield to American pressure.

Britain and the Arab Middle East

During the First World War the British had organised Arab uprisings in Middle Eastern territories ruled by Turkey. Officially, this was done on the pretext of helping the Arabs win liberation, but in reality the purpose was to drive out the Turks and seize these territories. On the eve of the Second World War the Arab countries were burning with anger at British duplicity. Dissatisfaction was rife not only among the people but also among the feudal nobility, many of whom had not received the thrones or high-placed positions promised them by Britain. This dissatisfaction was skilfully utilised by Germany, which now came forward as the "champion" of Arab freedom. The Germans strove to incite the Arabs against Britain. London was well aware of this, particularly after the pro-German, nationalist and anti-British coup brought about by Rashid Ali al-Qilani in Iraq.

* *Annual Register. A Review of Public Events at Home and Abroad for the Year 1944*, London, 1945, p. 317.

Knowledge of the enormous threat to British imperialism in the Middle East, a threat springing from the growth of liberation aspirations among the Arabs, compelled the British to manoeuvre and flirt with the Arabs. Britain's actions were facilitated by the fact that after British and Gaullist troops had occupied Syria and the Lebanon in 1941, British troops marched into all other Arab territories with the exception of Saudi Arabia and the Yemen. The three British armies stationed in the Middle East were used for this purpose.

In May 1941 the British formed the Arab Telegraph Agency to handle news dissemination in the Arab world. Early in 1942 they opened a radio station at Jaffa, Palestine.* In April 1941 they set up the Middle East Supply Centre (in which the Americans took a hand beginning in 1942) which controlled the supply of food and prime necessities to that region. All Middle Eastern countries were brought into the sterling bloc, which enabled Britain to control the local economy and its foreign ties.**

These measures to integrate the Arab territories economically were undertaken to facilitate British control over them and satisfy the Arabs. The British-backed projects for an Arab federation in the Middle East were likewise designed to serve the above purpose. The British historian G. Kirk claims that the "suggestion that the movement for Arab unity and the Arab League were British creations is absurd".*** This categorical assertion hardly fits in with the facts.

On May 29, 1941, as soon as the anti-British coup in Iraq was put down, Eden declared that a striving for political, economic and cultural unity was observed in the Arab countries and that Britain would support any project aimed at achieving such unity.†) Explaining this statement, the American historian G. Lenczowski writes: "Axis influence was at its peak, and Britain felt an urgent need to make a bold bid for Arab friendship."**)

* L. C. Hurewitz, *Unity and Disunity in the Middle East*, p. 232.

** E. A. Speiser, *United States and Near East*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1947, p. 115.

*** G. Kirk, *The Middle East in the War*, London, 1953, p. 23.

†) *The Times*, May 30, 1941.

***) G. Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, New York, 1957, p. 503.

In 1942, Nuri Said, the pro-British Prime Minister of Iraq, advanced a plan for the creation of an Arab League. The British Government supported this initiative by its puppet, but on February 24, 1943 Eden declared that such a project had to have the support of all the Arab countries.* The Eden statement was prompted by the reluctance of the Egyptian ruling circles and the rulers of Saudi Arabia to unite under the leadership of the Hashimite rulers of Iraq. Subsequently, the initiative to form an Arab League was taken over by the Egyptian statesman Mustafa el-Nahas Pasha.

In line with the Egyptian proposals, seven Arab states signed a protocol at Alexandria on October 7, 1944, under which they pledged to set up an Arab League. In Cairo on March 22, 1945 representatives of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Transjordan signed a pact instituting this League. The pact established fairly loose contact between the members of the League. That suited its participants, who did not want a lasting federation. Likewise, the British Government was not interested in durable Arab unity; its support for the idea of unity was nothing more than a forced concession to the Arabs. At first this concession was a step to parry the efforts of the Axis powers, who were trying to use Arab nationalism for their own purposes, but after 1942 the idea of Arab unity was directed against US attempts to gain a foothold in that region and also against the growing national liberation movement, which could count on assistance and support from the Soviet Union.

The British handling of the Palestine issue must likewise be examined in the light of their attempts to appease the Arabs. During and after the First World War Britain promised to help create a Jewish national home in Palestine. This issue became extremely acute when the nazis began to exterminate Jews en masse. The flow of refugees to Palestine began to swell. This alarmed the Arabs, for it threatened to drive them from the lands they owned in Palestine and to increase the Jewish population of Palestine. In 1939, in its courting of the Arabs the British Government sharply reduced the flow of immigrants to Palestine, despite its promises to the contrary. The Jews were in no position to

* *American Political Science Review*, February 1946, p. 90.

bargain with the British and deny them support in the war against the Axis powers: this was not possible because of the attitude adopted towards the Jews by the nazis.

The Jews, therefore, in spite of their anger, had to tolerate Britain's new policy in the Palestine issue. In 1943, when the threat of an Allied defeat had passed, the Jews started an armed struggle in Palestine with the objective of removing the restrictions on the entry of immigrants. This was accompanied by active propaganda by the Jewish community in the USA against British policy. As early as 1942 the Zionist organisation in the United States pressed for the creation of a Jewish state embracing the entire territory of Palestine, the formation of a Jewish army and the lifting of restrictions on the entry of immigrants to Palestine (the so-called Biltmore Programme).*

Despite the irritation it caused in Britain, the propaganda campaign for the realisation of this programme was pushed forward actively in the USA in 1943. Congress and the White House were inclined to support it. A motion calling for US intervention in the conflict between the Jews and Britain was submitted in Congress on January 27, 1944. It demanded the implementation of the Biltmore Programme. Roosevelt publicly supported this demand. The British Government protested against the American pressure but at the same time drew up various projects for the creation of an association of Levantine states, within whose framework it was hoped to settle the Palestinian issue.

In this question the American Government acted both under pressure from the fairly strong Jewish bourgeoisie in the USA and on the calculation that a future Jewish state created with its support would be an American bastion in a British sphere of influence. However, it by no means intended to side unconditionally with the Jews against the Arabs. Pressure from the oil monopolies made it seek better relations with the Arabs rather than quarrel with them. Oil was the prime cause of the acute Anglo-US conflict over the Middle East in 1943.

The American oil monopolies had obtained concessions in Iraq, the Bahrein Islands and Saudi Arabia before the Second World War, but they had done little to tap them. The

* G. Kirk, *Short History of the Middle East from the Rise of Islam to Modern Times*, London, 1957, p. 204.

Second World War brought to light the enormous economic and strategic significance of oil. The Middle East had 42 per cent of the world's explored oil reserves, and the American monopolies were determined to control them. That was one of the reasons Roosevelt so quickly agreed to the invasion of North Africa, gave Britain tanks and other weapons for their operations in the Middle East and did not vigorously oppose Churchill's Mediterranean strategy. As a result, the conduct of the war in that region ceased to be a purely British affair. American troops appeared in Iran, Egypt and Palestine mainly in connection with the delivery of freight to the USSR and the supply of armaments to Britain. The US Navy and merchant marine played a considerable part in delivering military supplies to the Middle East. The US Air Force built a network of bases linking up North Africa with India, Burma and China. Lend Lease embraced most of the Middle Eastern countries.

In 1943 the Americans demanded payment for all this. In July the US Government set up an oil reserves corporation to handle the purchase of oil-rich land abroad, as it was feared that the oil reserves in the USA were being exhausted. The US press raised a howl. The purpose of this hue and cry was obviously to force Britain to share what it had in the Middle East. High-placed American officials, like the intelligence chief Colonel Donovan, the Republican presidential candidate Wendell Wilkie and Ambassador Averell Harriman regularly toured the Middle East, studying possibilities for pressuring the British in that region. Even President Roosevelt, on his return journey from the Yalta Conference in early 1945, considered it necessary to stop for a few days in the Suez Canal zone for a meeting with Arab rulers.

Active US intrusion into this preserve of British imperialism began in 1941. By the summer of 1943 this pressure was stepped up to such an extent that, as Woodward observes, the Foreign Office became "disquieted at the increasing lack of consideration shown by the Americans for British interests", while Eden informed the War Cabinet of the "uncertainty about American policy in the Middle East".* It was decided to instruct Halifax to ask the Americans what they specifically wanted.

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 395.

In December 1943 the State Department suggested urgent talks with Britain on the Middle East oil reserves. This gave rise to uneasiness in London. Churchill wrote to Roosevelt "that certain British quarters feared that the United States wished to deprive Britain of her Middle East oil interests".^{*} At the talks, held in April-May, agreement was reached on the setting up of an international oil commission. The agreement did not prove to be as terrible as was feared in London, and the British insisted that it be signed without delay. Their efforts brought no result. The American oil companies were dissatisfied with the agreement and prevented it from being signed. The struggle for Middle East oil continued.

This struggle reached its highest point in Saudi Arabia, which the Americans believed had the most promising oil-fields. Besides, the British ties with the Saudi Arabia rulers were weaker than with the governments of other Arab countries.

The British tried to strengthen these ties. In 1940, 1941 and 1942 they granted subsidies to King Ibn Saud. In 1943, when the USA started an all-out offensive to drive British interests out of that country, Roosevelt parried British subsidies by spreading Lend Lease to Saudi Arabia. The Americans used British methods, intending to buy over the ruling circles.^{**} They demanded that instead of being purely British, the missions sent to Saudi Arabia should be Anglo-American. A temporary agreement began to take shape, under which Britain took charge of Saudi Arabia's political and military problems and the United States handled her economic affairs. A clear-cut borderline could not be drawn between these spheres and therefore the Anglo-American struggle went on.

The British and American representatives on the spot intrigued against each other to undermine the position of the other party. The State Department protested to the Foreign Office against what it said were the persevering attempts of the British Minister in Saudi Arabia to damage American positions in that country. The Foreign Office countered this with analogous accusations levelled at the American Envoy.

* G. Kirk, *The Middle East in the War*, London, 1953, p. 360.

** L. C. Hurewitz, *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

This exchange ended with the transfer of the two envoys to other posts. The USA was the stronger adversary and the struggle for Saudi Arabia went in its favour.*

Far Eastern Strategy and Policy

In the Pacific theatre the situation was stabilised in 1943. Japan, which had expanded as far as she could, began consolidating her strategic positions and building up strength. Similarly, the Allies dug in in their new positions. On the whole, however, 1943 witnessed a turn of the tide in the war in the Far East in favour of the Western Allies. In February American troops compelled the Japanese to abandon Guadalcanal in the Solomon group and then began pressing them on New Guinea. Naturally, these small-scale operations were not of decisive significance, but they showed that the tide was turning. It was still very far to Tokyo, and it was hardly possible to island-hop to Japan. The decisive battles would obviously be fought in the Asian continent, but there the situation was not favourable to the Allies. Japan had cut China off completely from the sea and was preparing operations that she hoped would finally give her control over the entire country. Communication with China was maintained by the Allies exclusively by air from India via the Himalayas. Effective assistance in the way of weapons could not, of course, be given along that difficult and dangerous route. Moreover, Chiang Kai-shek did not want to fight the Japanese. He was preparing for battle against the Chinese Communist armies. The Americans and, in some measure, the British feared that Kuomintang China might surrender to Japan. She had to be given assistance without delay.

This was the subject of the Roosevelt-Churchill-Chiang Kai-shek conference in Cairo on November 22-26, 1943. Divergences between the British and the Americans came to the fore on the question of procedure, even before the conference got under way. Churchill and his military advisers were greatly displeased that Roosevelt had invited Chiang Kai-shek to the conference before the British and Americans could reach agreement on basic questions. A hallmark of British diplomacy is that it has always tried to engineer a

* Ibid., p. 129.

collision between its partners, seeking to reach agreement with them separately in order later, by joint effort, to impose the results of this agreement on the third partner. This method of adopting separate decisions beforehand was widely practised by the British Government vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. In the given case it wanted to use the same method against China, but Roosevelt got in the way.

The decisions adopted at the Cairo Conference concerned military-strategic and political problems. The Americans suggested an offensive operation from India via Burma in the direction of China. A major offensive involving Chinese, British and American troops was planned in North Burma with the object of clearing the Japanese out of Burma and restoring overland communication with China. The Chinese insisted on a landing in the Andaman Islands in support of the operation to prevent the Japanese from transferring reinforcements to North Burma. They suggested that the landing should be effected by the British Navy. Roosevelt supported the Chinese in this issue.*

This did not suit Churchill, chiefly for political motives. He did not wish to see the British colony of Burma recovered by the Americans, much less by the Chinese. In 1940 the national liberation movement in Burma had extracted from the British Government the promise of independence and Dominion status for Burma. The fact that the Japanese had booted the British out of Burma by no means enhanced British prestige in that country. Churchill was aware that if Burma were liberated from the Japanese not by the British but by the Americans and the Chinese it would be extremely difficult to restore British colonial rule there.** These were the political motives behind his strategy. He considered that Japan had to be defeated by naval forces, which would cut the Japanese lines of communication and impose a blockade which would force Japan to surrender.

Since Japan was firmly entrenched on the continent, this strategy was unrealistic. This was appreciated by the Americans, who considered that the Japanese armies in China, Indo-China, Malaya, Burma and the Philippines could function as independent units even if they were cut off from

* Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, p. 628.

** William L. Neumann, *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

Japan proper.* Therefore, a land army was needed that could smash the Japanese forces in the Asian continent. Such an army had to be provided by China. Incidentally, this explains Roosevelt's attention to China at this period. However, he and his military advisers were already beginning to see the military weakness of Kuomintang China and to pin their ultimate hopes on Soviet assistance against Japan. In the end Roosevelt's point of view predominated. Chiang Kai-shek was promised a land operation in North Burma and a landing operation south of it.** He took these promises away with him to Chungking.

Churchill clearly had no intention of fulfilling this agreement as any other which did not fit in with his plans. Developments soon came to his aid. From Cairo he and Roosevelt went to the Tehran Conference, where they found that the Soviet Union was in future prepared to help its Allies against Japan. This, as Churchill lost no time in pointing out, "changed the entire strategic picture" and, he said, there was no longer any need for the operation agreed upon in Cairo. It was Roosevelt's turn to yield. The American President feared that if Chiang Kai-shek learned of the shelving of the Cairo agreement he might be tempted to come to terms with the Japanese. At the same time he was aware that the British would not provide forces for a landing south of Burma. He did not wish to provoke an open conflict with Churchill over this question, with the result that the strategic plan adopted at Cairo had a life-span of only ten days.

Discussion of Far Eastern strategy at the Cairo Conference brought to light serious differences between the Allies in that part of the world. Sherwood is quite right in noting that in Southeast Asia "the British and Americans were fighting two different wars for different purposes, and the Kuomintang Government of China was fighting a third war for purposes largely its own".***

The Cairo Conference is known mainly for its Declaration, which stated that it was the purpose of Britain, the USA and China "that Japan shall be stripped of all the islands in the Pacific which she has seized or occupied since the

* Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, pp. 771-72.

** *Ibid.*, p. 773.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 778.

beginning of the First World War in 1914, and that all the territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa and the Pescadores, shall be restored to the Republic of China".*

Thus, where it concerned the USSR, the USA and Britain insisted that territorial issues should be postponed to the peace conference, but at Cairo they adopted an important decision on territorial issues in the Far East. This, it was claimed, was necessary in order to deprive Chiang Kai-shek of the possibility of signing a separate peace with Japan, because under no circumstances would the Japanese have agreed on even approximately similar peace terms with China. The promise to restore Taiwan and other territories to China was made to stimulate her desire to contribute towards victory in the Far East. The Cairo Declaration was unquestionably linked with Roosevelt's wish to raise Chiang Kai-shek China to the status of a Great Power. At the close of 1943, when the Soviet Union's role in the war and the post-war world was becoming more or less clearly defined, the USA needed a relatively strong China both as a weapon in the Far East generally and as an ally of the USA and Britain against the USSR. The American official mind, Feis says, "was that the Chinese people . . . would, in recognition of the chance being conferred upon them, prove to be reliable and friendly partners of the West".**

The initiative for the adoption of the Cairo Declaration belonged to Roosevelt. Churchill was critical of it. He did not like anything that helped to elevate China to the status of a Great Power. He had reason to fear that the USA would use China also against British interests in the Far East. Moreover, even before China attained Great Power status, Chiang Kai-shek made known his expansionist intentions, some of which concerned the British Empire. "The Foreign Office," Woodward writes, "were also disturbed at the large claims which General Chiang Kai-shek was putting forward for Chinese influence and territorial dominion after the war."*** At a talk with Roosevelt in Washington in March 1943, Eden told him that the British Government was assailed

* *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943*, Washington, 1961, p. 448.

** Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, p. 253.

*** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 425.

with doubts about what role China would play in the post-war world and, in any case, he, Eden, did not like the idea of giving China too much freedom in the Pacific. In a record of this talk Harry Hopkins noted: "... from what Eden said it made me think the British are going to be pretty sticky about their former possessions in the Far East."* They had good reason for this.

The Chinese persevered in their criticism of British action in India. Chiang Kai-shek's wife, Soong Mei-ling, who was very active in affairs of state, was particularly critical of the British during her visit to the USA in 1943. Halifax was instructed to lodge a protest with the Chinese Ambassador in the USA against Madame Chiang Kai-shek's statements. In March 1943 Chiang Kai-shek published a book, *Destiny of China*, which contained a fairly large dose of criticism of Britain. This too evoked a negative reaction on the part of the British Foreign Office. The publication in July 1943 by the Chinese Information Ministry of a map in which the whole of North Burma, i.e., a British colony, was shown as Chinese territory, likewise did not pass unnoticed in London.

Diplomatic relations between Britain and China gradually diminished, and from the close of 1943 onwards the talks with China on behalf of the Allies were conducted mostly by the United States.

The Americans claimed the role of arbiter also in Britain's relations with other countries with possessions in Southeast Asia. In December 1944 when the US State Department suspected that the British, French and Dutch were planning to make a deal on something concerning their possessions in the Far East, it informed the British Foreign Office that the President expected consultations with the USA on any problem relating to Southeast Asia.

Problems of the Post-War Settlement

From British historiography we learn that in Britain the Atlantic Charter and the United Nations Declaration are used as the starting point for an examination of the prob-

* *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, Vol. III, p. 36.*

lems connected with the post-war peace settlement. This is an obviously incorrect approach.

Both these documents were mainly propagandistic, and the only reason they are given such prominence is, evidently, to persuade people that in the war Britain and the USA pursued lofty aims which conformed to the interests of the peoples. Actually, however, the British Government seriously got down to studying post-war problems only after the Battle of Stalingrad had shown who would win the war. The Foreign Office, Woodward tells us, began to think of and plan for the post-war settlement "as soon as they were released from conducting what might be called the diplomacy of survival".* The approximate alignment between the leading powers of the anti-fascist coalition began to shape out at the time.

Developments at the firing-lines brought the British leaders more and more round to what for them was the gloomy conclusion that when the war ended both the USA and the Soviet Union would be considerably stronger than Britain. General Kennedy says that Jan Smuts, one of the senior statesmen of the British Empire and Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, told the British leaders at the close of 1943: "In my opinion, there will be two colossi after the war. In Europe, Russia. . . . The other colossus will be North America."** Under these conditions the materialisation of Britain's plans concerning the post-war organisation of the world depended in many ways on the attitude the USSR and the USA adopted to these plans. The British Government did not even count on its plans receiving complete support in Moscow and Washington. This could never have happened because the three powers were pursuing different objectives in the war. Their alliance emerged and developed as a result of their common desire to defeat the common enemy. But as regards plans for the post-war arrangement of the world, they were divided by pronounced contradictions. Woodward is quite right when he writes: "There was a common political purpose—the defeat of the enemy in war—but 'victory' was by no means a simple term; it had one meaning for the United States, another for Great Britain, and . . . a third meaning for Russia."***

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. XLVII.

** John Kennedy, *Op. cit.*, p. 318.

*** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. XXXIV.

The Soviet Union pursued the just objective of liberation, while Britain and the USA had imperialist aims, in addition to the objective of defeating the Axis powers. For Britain this meant a clash of interests not only with the Soviet Union but also with the USA, which was steering a line towards world hegemony, towards depriving Britain of her colonial possessions, markets and sources of raw materials. For the British Government this presaged a difficult struggle over post-war problems, and as the end of the war drew nearer this struggle became more and more difficult because the balance of power was rapidly changing to Britain's disadvantage.

In relation to the problems of the post-war settlement the British Government displayed much less realism and common sense than the US Government. The reason for this was that at the time the US Government was headed by Roosevelt, a bourgeois politician who approached many problems quite realistically. Churchill, on the other hand, never again rose to the level of statesmanship which in 1941 brought him round to an alliance with the USSR. His consuming animosity and hatred for socialism and the Soviet Union, for everything progressive prevented him from correctly understanding the situation and acting in conformity with it and with Britain's actual possibilities. In 1943-45, although the situation was completely unlike anything known in Europe and the world as a whole, the British Government acted in the spirit of its old, traditional policies.

It got down to working out its post-war policy at the close of 1942. Eden drew up and submitted a series of documents on this question to the War Cabinet. Then followed exploratory talks with the Americans to ascertain their views on the post-war arrangement. Most important from this standpoint was Eden's trip to Washington in March 1943, when he discussed this problem with Roosevelt twice and had meetings with many other American statesmen. But even after these talks the British could not exactly tell what the American position was. Eden was not sure whether what Roosevelt, Hull and Welles told him represented considered US policy or whether they were simply thinking aloud.

On March 15, 1943 Eden told Roosevelt that "Russia was our most difficult problem", adding, "England would prob-

ably be too weak to face Russia alone diplomatically".* Indeed, the Soviet Union was moving towards the end of the war as a powerful state, which for the British Government was a great and unpleasant shock. Unlike Roosevelt, who, as may be assumed from certain data, planned to promote relations with the USSR on a basis of coexistence,** Churchill, as his own memorandum of October 1942 to the War Cabinet bears witness, decided to fight "Russian barbarism" with all the resources at his disposal.

In 1943 Soviet strength reached a level where the British as well as the US Government no longer found it possible to raise the question, as in 1941-42, of depriving the USSR of part of its territory after the war and reducing it to its 1939 frontiers, which were established in the period of the Soviet Union's temporary weakness after 1917, when the imperialist powers wrested some of its Western territories away by force. However, in return for their recognition of the Soviet Union's legitimate frontiers they planned to demand considerable concessions.***

Aware that she would be much too weak to face the Soviet Union alone, Britain decided to align Europe against it. The first stage of this alignment was to be the setting up of a series of federations and blocs, and the second—the formation of a British-dominated European Council to head these federations. In a memorandum to Eden on October 21, 1942 Churchill wrote that he hoped to see "a Council consisting of perhaps ten units... with several confederations—Scandinavian, Danubian, Balkan, etc.", and a "United States of Europe".*) Woodward tells us that the "Foreign Office had been considering... the possibility of two confederations—one for Central, and the other for Southeast Europe, covering the states lying between Germany and Italy on the one side, and Russia and Turkey on the other".**) That all this was spearheaded against the USSR is obvious not only from the Churchill memorandum of October 1942. In a document handed to Turkish leaders at Adana early in 1943 Churchill wrote: "... We should arrange the best possible

* *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943*, Vol. III, p. 13.

** J. Agar, *The Price of Power*, Chicago, 1957, p. 54.

*** *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943*, Vol. III, p. 14.

*) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 562.

**) Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 437.

combination against her" [meaning the Soviet Union.—*U.T.*].*

The Soviet Government saw through these intrigues. At the Moscow Foreign Ministers Conference in October 1943 the Soviet representative spoke categorically against attempts to set up anti-Soviet blocs, emphasising that this policy would not only harm small countries but would damage general European stability.** The United States was likewise against the idea of a European Council under British aegis, but for a different reason: the way Churchill saw the European Council, it would, to some extent, be directed against the United States as well.*** These factors worked against Britain and during the war she was unable to put into effect her plan of forming an anti-Soviet bloc.

The question of controlling Soviet relations with the European countries whose territories would be liberated by the Soviet Army was causing intense anxiety in London. The British Government was aware that the Soviet military presence in these countries would hamper the reactionary forces there and foster the growth of revolutionary sentiments, and that true to proletarian internationalism, the Soviet Union would give the peoples the necessary assistance in their struggle for social emancipation.

To avert this and tie the Soviet Union's hands, the British Government suggested setting up a United Nations Commission for Europe. Here the objective, as Woodward points out, was to create the "machinery for the immediate purpose of meeting the confusion—and the risks of chaos and anarchy—certain to occur at the end of the war", and "to secure a common policy, and, in particular, to prevent unilateral action by the Russians".*) By chaos and anarchy the British Government clearly meant the revolutionary movement. In addition to preventing the USSR from "unilaterally" helping this movement, it planned to draw the Soviet Union into action designed to halt and crush the movement. The Soviet Government saw what the British were aiming at, and at the Foreign Ministers Conference in Moscow in October 1943 secured the adoption of a decision to set up, instead of the proposed international counter-revolutionary

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 636.

** *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943*, Vol. I, p. 639.

*** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. XLVIII.

*) *Ibid.*, p. LII.

machinery, a European Advisory Commission which was given the task of drawing up recommendations on the terms of surrender for Germany and her satellites and on the mechanism of putting these terms into effect.*

Parallel with its attempts to ensure the possibility for diplomatic intervention in the affairs of Eastern Europe in the interests of the counter-revolution, the British Government prepared to take steps against the revolutionary movement on territory that might be occupied by British troops. General Kennedy says that as early as September 1943 British military leaders were estimating the number of troops they would need to meet "the numerous requests from the Foreign Office for keeping order, supervising elections, preventing civil war, and so on, in a great many foreign states".**

The British Government was not quite clear about Germany's future after the war. On the one hand, it feared Germany and felt she should be punished for everything she had inflicted on Britain. For that reason the British, like the Americans, wanted Germany's dismemberment. In his record of a talk between Eden and Roosevelt on March 15, 1943, Harry Hopkins notes that "both the President and Eden agreed that, under any circumstances, Germany must be divided into several states".*** Different variants of this dismemberment were put forward at the Foreign Ministers Conference in Moscow and at the Tehran Conference of Heads of States. Since the USSR was emerging from the war stronger than ever before, and the British Government was planning to unite Europe against it, Germany would obviously be needed for the British scheme. The point of departure in Churchill's memorandum of October 1942 was that Germany would be a component of the post-war united, anti-Soviet Europe. At the close of 1942 the British Foreign Office prepared a memorandum, which said that "if the Russians refused co-operation [i.e., if the USSR refused to accept British dictation.—U. T.], we should eventually have to accept the collaboration of Germany".*) Britain's military leaders were likewise obsessed with the idea of using Germany against the USSR. General Kennedy says that in Sep-

* W. Strang, *Home and Abroad*, London, 1956, pp. 201-02.

** John Kennedy, *Op cit.*, p. 304.

*** *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1943, Vol. III, p. 16.

*) Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 435.

tember 1943 "another matter which we began to turn over in our minds was the strength of the forces which we should retain in peace-time. To us there seemed to be only one Great Power who could be regarded as the possible enemy: Russia. From this arose the question of what side Germany might take in a future war."* This line of thinking deprived the British Government of the possibility of firmly deciding its position in regard to a post-war Germany.

While Britain and the USA had little divergences over the German problem, the situation was different on the question of colonial and dependent territories. America's rulers were determined to use their war-won advantages over Britain to blow up the British Empire. Churchill, the militant imperialist that he was, was driven to a frenzy by American pressure in this sphere. At a banquet given by the Lord-Mayor of London in November 1942 he declared defiantly: "We mean to hold our own."** But high-flown verbiage was of little help.

In the second half of 1942 the US State Department set up a committee under Sumner Welles, Assistant Secretary of State, to work out a preliminary plan for an international trusteeship system.*** London was aware of American activities in this sphere. Besides, the general feeling in the colonies, particularly in India, made the British Government occupy itself with the colonial problem. In February 1943 it proposed that it and the US Government publish a joint statement on colonial policy, which would declare that the level of development was appreciably different in the various dependent territories and, therefore, the administering state must, in each given case, promote social, economic and political institutions in the colonies until such a time as the colonial peoples would be in a position to go over to self-administration. Not even approximate dates were named for such self-administration. Moreover, the British proposed declaring that responsibility for the security and administration of the colonies must continue to rest with the colonial powers concerned, and suggested setting up regional commissions to ensure international co-operation in raising the standard of living in the colonies.*¹) Thus, instead of granting

* John Kennedy, *Op. cit.*, p. 304.

** William L. Neumann, *Op. cit.*, p. 46.

*** Ruth B. Russell, *Op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.

*¹) *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

independence to the enslaved peoples, Britain only promised to show concern for their development.

The publication of such a joint statement would have meant that the USA supported British policy in the colonial question and officially renounced the Atlantic Charter. At the same time, however, the London politicians were not inclined to make any concessions in this issue to the American monopolies, and this, of course, made their proposal unacceptable to the US Government.

The question of colonies and semi-dependent territories was brought up at the Foreign Ministers Conference held in Moscow in October-November 1943. This was the first time this issue was formally examined with the participation of the Soviet Union. Prior to this it was dealt with by the USA and Britain as their own exclusive province.

At the Conference on October 24 Cordell Hull handed the Soviet Foreign Minister a draft United Nations Declaration on national independence, at the same time informing Eden of this. It was not necessary to send the latter a copy, since he had received one in March. Essentially, the American draft consisted of two parts: the first contained provisions for the actual re-carving of the colonies to give the American monopolies access to the colonial possessions of other powers; the second part consisted of demagogic verbiage designed to camouflage the USA's real aims with externally democratic assertions. The American aims were most clearly set out in the first point, one of whose paragraphs stated that colonial powers had to pursue a policy which would allow the natural resources of colonial territories to be developed, organised and marketed in the interests of the colonial peoples themselves and the world as a whole. In regard to the colonial peoples, the declared policy would require extensive and constant consultation and co-operation between countries directly responsible for the future of the different colonial territories, and other powers having considerable interests in areas where such territories are situated. Provision was made for the creation of the machinery to organise such consultation.* The development of the colonies "in the interests of the whole world" must be interpreted to mean US participation in the exploitation of the colonies under the guise of promoting their development. The point on consultation and

* *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943*, Vol. I, pp. 748-49.

co-operation with other powers meant giving the USA access to the administration of the colonies from behind the screen of an international body. That was the crux of the matter.

On October 26 Eden sent Hull an unofficial memorandum in which he wrote that the draft declaration as presented by the Americans was not acceptable to the British Government.* When the American draft declaration was brought up for discussion at the Foreign Ministers Conference on October 29, Eden said he was not prepared to deal with the question and that his Government did not concur with the views stated in the American document. This attitude prevented a thorough discussion of the issue, and the Soviet representative, therefore, confined himself to stating that the question of the enslaved nations had to be given further study and that the Soviet Government attached great importance to it.**

As we have already noted, when Churchill and Roosevelt considered the post-war world at their Atlantic Conference in 1941, they agreed that after the war the USA and Britain would assume the functions of world policemen and that a world security organisation would be set up under their leadership only after the world had had time to become stabilised. Their intention was to disarm and, consequently, subordinate to their will not only the aggressive powers but also the Soviet Union. But two years later the situation became such that at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers a Declaration was adopted on world security which put paid to these plans. In that Declaration the USSR, the USA, Britain and China said "they recognise the necessity of establishing at the earliest practicable date a general international organisation, based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all peace-loving states and open to membership by all such states, large or small, for the maintenance of international peace and security".*** What a far cry this was from the plans mooted by British and Americans in August 1941! The democratisation of these plans was due to the role which the Soviet Union was playing in the war.

Britain's stand on this issue underwent repeated modifications in the course of two years. Towards the end of 1942

* Ibid., p. 666.

** Ibid., p. 667.

*** *The United Nations Yearbook*, 1946, p. 21.

the dreams which Churchill had cherished in 1941 of undivided Anglo-US domination of the world gave way to a plan for the creation of regional confederations, with Britain holding sway in some of them and using them against both the USSR and the USA. "Perhaps such a system," Feis writes, "had appealed to him [Churchill.—*U. T.*] as better enabling the British Empire and the smaller countries of Europe to hold their own against the massive American and Russian states."* However, opposition from these massive states caused a further evolution of Churchill's views. In 1943 he had to agree to the establishment of a single world security organisation. Roosevelt's views likewise underwent an evolution. He refrained from officially advancing the plan for Anglo-US control of the post-war world and likewise accepted the plan adopted at the Moscow Conference.

A noteworthy point is that at the Moscow Conference it was agreed that the world body should be set up as early as possible, i.e., during the war, while at the Atlantic Conference the intention was to set up such a body not immediately but when some time had passed after the termination of the war. Britain and the USA changed their intention because in some ways they hoped to use the planned organisation against the USSR in order to limit its potentialities in the struggle for a just, democratic peace. Feis writes that the USA and Britain hoped that by forming, while the war was still on, a system for maintaining peace, the Soviet Government could be prevailed upon to accept their demands.**

Having consented to the formation of a world security organisation, the British Government plunged energetically into activity to make sure that the leading group of powers influencing that organisation would be selected in Britain's interests. Roosevelt felt that this group of powers should consist of the USA, Britain, the USSR and China. Churchill could not object to this role for the Soviet Union: the times were different, and the Soviet Union itself was different. But he opposed China's inclusion. The Americans insisted, maintaining that in a conflict with the USSR China would align herself with the USA and Britain.*** Churchill fell in with

* Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, p. 216.

** *Ibid.*, p. 215.

*** *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943*, Vol. III, p. 39.

this, but feared that in a conflict between Britain and the USA China would side with the latter. Churchill subsequently wrote that it was very easy to select these four powers, but as "to China, I cannot regard the Chungking Government as representing a great world power. Certainly there would be a faggot vote on the side of the United States in any attempt to liquidate the British overseas Empire".* To counterbalance this vote, the British Government insisted on France being included in the directing body of the future peace-keeping organisation. It hoped France would back Britain in the same way that China would support the USA. In addition the British suggested including two of their dominions—Canada and Australia.

The debates on this issue were a manifestation of the struggle between Britain and the USA for the leading role in the post-war world. Writing in *International Affairs* in 1955, Woodward pointed out that Roosevelt "had his own views about the future of the world: these views might have seemed at times to others too much like a world predominance of the United States somewhat thinly disguised under a four-Power government operating through the machinery of the United Nations".** While opposing American plans of world hegemony, the British were quite prepared to share this hegemony with them. In talks with the Americans Churchill mooted the idea of a close alliance envisaging even a common citizenship, to say nothing of uniting the armed forces of the two countries.

All this clashed with the desires of the people of Britain, who felt that after the war the Allies should continue acting in a united front in the struggle for world peace and security. On this point McNeill writes: "Feeling, as most people in Britain did, deeply grateful to the Russians for their heroic fight against Hitler, the British public did not see why the war-time alliance should break down after victory, and hoped devoutly that it would not."*** This feeling hampered the manoeuvres of the British Government, frequently compelling it to accept the Soviet Union's progressive suggestions on a post-war settlement.

* Winston S. Churchill. *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 562.

** *International Affairs*, July 1955, Vol. XXXI, No. 3, p. 280.

*** William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 322.

Final Decision on the Second Front

The summer-autumn campaign, which turned the tide of the war, ended at the close of 1943. By that time the Soviet Army had liberated two-thirds of the Soviet territory which the enemy had occupied. The flower of the German Army had been exterminated. These changes in the military situation forced the Germans to go over to a strategy of defence on the Soviet-German Front. "By that time," McNeill says, "the notable achievements of Russian industry in producing armaments, and the growing confidence and skill of the massive Red Army, opened the prospect of total victory over Germany. Even without the help of winter weather, the Russian Army had shown itself able to advance against the Germans; even without a Second Front in France in 1943 Hitler's troops could not stand fast against Russian attack."**

These changes in the Soviet Union's strength and in the course of the war influenced the stand of the Western Allies, chiefly of Britain in the question of a Second Front. As we have already said, at the Quebec Conference Churchill and Roosevelt had agreed that the landing in Western France would be effected on May 1, 1944, but this did not suit Churchill, and the Americans felt this decision was not final either. The cardinal point of this decision, i.e., the date agreed on for the invasion, was not divulged to the Soviet Union evidently out of a desire to preserve freedom of action.

Indeed, even after Quebec the British kept insisting on an invasion of the Balkans instead of a landing in France. At the close of September Churchill ordered an operation with the objective of seizing the Dodecanese Islands in the Aegean Sea, but this expedition ended in failure, which Robert E. Sherwood describes as "shocking and humiliating".** British military leaders were indignant, feeling that they owed this fresh disgrace to Churchill. General John Kennedy says that the "whole business was a gamble" and "a good example of the price we have to pay occasionally for Winston's confidence in his own military judgment".***

At the Moscow Foreign Ministers Conference in October 1943 the Soviet Government bluntly asked the British and

* William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 325.

** Robert E. Sherwood, *Op. cit.*, p. 765.

*** John Kennedy, *Op. cit.*, p. 313.

Americans whether the pledge given by Churchill and Roosevelt in June 1943 to start the invasion of Northern France in the spring of 1944 remained in force. General Ismay spoke on behalf of Britain. As might have been expected he did not give a direct answer, saying: "This invasion is to be launched as soon as practicable after weather conditions in the English Channel become favourable."* Moreover, the invasion had to depend on the results of the bombing of Germany, the availability of landing craft, the number of German divisions in France, Belgium and the Netherlands, and other conditions. But he did not name the date for the landing. The string of reservations that Ismay intertwined with his communication on the landing decision was evidence of the British Government's desire to create as many loopholes as possible for evading fulfilment of that decision.

Chester Wilmot writes that at the Conference the Soviet delegation was "suspicious and sceptical" about the stand of Britain and the USA on the question of a Second Front because Ismay and his American colleague General Deane made "it clear they could give no unconditional assurance".** What assurances could they have given when, as Wilmot testifies, after Quebec Churchill was searching "for new ways of striking at the Germans in the Mediterranean"?*** From Ismay's memoirs we learn that at the Moscow Conference Churchill notified Eden and Ismay that the invasion would be postponed for two months.*) "Major-General Deane," writes Neumann, "recognised that the Russians had good reason to question British-American sincerity on their new invasion promise."***)

The dissensions over this issue were not settled either before or after the Moscow Conference even between the British and Americans. General John Kennedy, the most outspoken of all the British military authors of memoirs about the Second World War, says that in October 1943 there was "still a very distinct cleavage of opinion between us and the

* *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943*, p. 139. Ismay's claim that he named the date for Overlord (*The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay*, London, 1960, p. 315) evokes nothing but amazement for it is a deliberate lie.

** Chester Wilmot, *Op. cit.*, p. 136.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 137.

*) *The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay*, pp. 326-27.

**) William L. Neumann, *Op. cit.*, p. 58.

Americans as to the correct strategy in Europe. CIGS feels very strongly that we should exploit the openings in the Mediterranean and extend the range of our offensive operations to the Aegean and the Balkans.”* An entry in his diary under the date-line October 28, 1943 declares that the “PM has taken a strong line with the Americans on the Mediterranean versus Overlord strategy”.**

Churchill’s Mediterranean-Balkans strategy ruled out the invasion of France. It was a choice of one or the other. This is admitted by the British military leaders themselves. General Kennedy wrote on October 31, 1943 that “if we allot further resources for operations in the Aegean and the Balkans, as we should do to take full advantage of the situation, Overlord must perforce be postponed. The Americans take the view that this is a breach of contract and almost dishonourable.”*** The Americans were right. This was the situation in the question of the Second Front when the Tehran Conference opened at the close of November 1943.

In mid-November General Kennedy made the following entry in his diary: “We have now crystallised our ideas as to the strategy to be advocated in the coming conference. The main points are—to continue the offensive in Italy, to increase the flow of supplies to partisans in the Balkans, to bring about an upheaval by inducing the Balkan powers to break away from Germany, to induce Turkey to enter the war, and to accept a postponement of Overlord. All these proposals have been worked out in a fair amount of detail here, and the stage is now set for the discussions.”*)

The discussions at Tehran opened on November 28, 1943 with Roosevelt’s statement that at Quebec a plan had been drawn up envisaging an invasion across the English Channel on about May 1, 1944. “If we undertake large-scale landing operations in the Mediterranean,” he said, “the expedition across the Channel will have to be postponed for two or three months. That is why we should like to have the advice of our Soviet colleagues on the matter.”**) The reply he got was that the Soviet Government believed “the best result would be yielded by a blow at the enemy in

* John Kennedy, *Op. cit.*, p. 307.

** *Ibid.*, p. 308.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 309.

*) *Ibid.*, pp. 312-13.

**) *International Affairs*, No. 7, 1961, p. 136.

Northern or Northwestern France. Even operations in Southern France would be better than operations in Italy.”*

True to his wonted practice, Churchill spoke generally in favour of the invasion of France, but did not name the date. Then he waxed eloquent on “how best to use our forces in the Mediterranean ... without any detriment to Overlord, so that this operation could be carried out in time or, possibly, with some delay”. He declared: “Our first task is to take Rome.” The next important question, he said, was “to convince Turkey to enter the war. This would make possible the opening of communications through the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus” for the occupation of the islands in the Eastern Mediterranean.** On the next day he repeated his arguments, in an effort to show how all this would help the Soviet Union and contribute to victory over the Germans, and suggested using numerically small forces for an operation in the Balkans.

Roosevelt pointed out that if an expedition was undertaken in the Mediterranean, Overlord would not be carried out in time.*** Stalin said “it would be good to carry out Operation Overlord in May, say the 10th, 15th or 20th”.*) Churchill declined to commit himself, so Stalin said he “should like to know whether the British believe in Operation Overlord or simply speak of it to reassure the Russians”.**) Churchill did not give an intelligible answer to this. Roosevelt spoke against a postponement of the operation. On the following day, in a bilateral talk with Churchill, Stalin warned him that if the invasion failed to take place it would have injurious consequences.

Churchill eventually had to give in. It was decided that Overlord would be launched some time in May and would be supported by an operation in Southern France. In order to give the Germans no possibility of manoeuvring with their reserves or transferring any considerable forces from the Eastern Front to the West, the Soviet Government promised a large-scale offensive on the Eastern Front by May. The final decision to open a Second Front was thus adopted on November 30, 1943.

* Ibid., p. 137.

** Ibid., p. 138.

*** *International Affairs*, No. 8, 1961, p. 113.

*) Ibid.

**) Ibid., p. 114.

Churchill yielded very reluctantly. But he could not ignore the pressure brought to bear by the Soviet and US governments and by the peoples, mainly the British people, the bulk of whom felt that by dodging the Second Front issue the British Government was acting dishonourably towards its Soviet Ally.

Another factor was that by that time it had become evident that the British Government's strategy had flopped. It had staked on an economic blockade of Germany, but this stake failed to justify itself. It had counted on "stirring Europe", i.e., drawing the European peoples into the war against Hitler, but it became frightened of its own idea and, in effect, acted in opposition to the spread of the anti-fascist struggle in enemy-held territory in Europe. Europe was indeed stirred, but not through the efforts of the British Special Operations Executive; this was achieved by the Soviet victories over the German invaders. Britain had calculated on the strategic bombing of Germany, but this had not produced the expected results either. Charles Webster and Nobel Frankland, the authors of an official British four-volume history of the strategic bombing of Germany, speak of "the cardinal failure of British air strategy and operational doctrine".* The British thought that the bombing would break the morale of the German people, disrupt German industry and thereby make Germany surrender by April 1, 1944, but they miscalculated.** By October 1943 the British Government had reliable information that the Germans were preparing to use missiles and unmanned aircraft against Britain. This, among other factors, induced Britain to agree to a Second Front, for such a front held out the possibility of occupying the territory where the missile launching pads were located.

Roosevelt's stand on the Second Front issue was determined by public opinion and also by the desire to preserve capitalism in Europe. The Americans feared Churchill's Balkan strategy would only lead to the Anglo-American forces becoming stuck in the mountains, while the Soviet Army would liberate the whole of Western Europe. What they wanted was a means to enable the Anglo-American

* Charles Webster and Nobel Frankland, "The Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany, 1939-1945", *The English Historical Review*, January 1964, p. 133.

** Ibid.

forces to reach continental Europe ahead of the Soviet Army. That means was a massive invasion of France across the English Channel from Britain. Lastly, the US Government wanted good relations with the USSR in order to secure its assistance in the war against Japan.

The commitments undertaken at Tehran were discharged differently. The British undertook to invade Europe, jointly with the USA, in May 1944. True, not for a considerable length of time, but they nonetheless dragged out this deadline. The Soviet Union, however, punctiliously fulfilled its pledge to start a large-scale offensive in the spring of 1944 in order to facilitate the Allied landing across the English Channel. Feis writes that "when this promise was kept and the Soviet armies did start their great offensives roughly on schedule, and did keep all the German forces in the East engaged, the Western military commanders were not only appreciative but impressed. They—and their number included the Supreme Commander of Overlord, General Eisenhower—were convinced of the reliability" of the Soviet Government's word.*

While the Soviet Government's honourable discharge of its commitments enhanced its prestige, the British Government, for its part, harmed Britain morally and politically by repeatedly breaking its word.

* Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, p. 264.

Chapter Six

CONCLUDING STAGE OF THE WAR

(June 1944-September 1945)

British Economy and Home Policy in 1941-45

The Soviet Union's entry into the war tremendously influenced British economy. Germany's armed forces—land armies, air forces and large naval forces—were tied down on the Eastern Front and this allowed Britain to enlarge her war industry and strengthen her own armed forces. The threat of a German invasion evaporated, and German air raids on British towns and industrial regions ceased.

Britain used these favourable conditions to build up a large army and air force and greatly enlarge her navy. The numerical strength of her fighting forces rose from 480,000 in 1939 to 5,100,000 in 1945.* Together with the troops mustered in the Dominions and colonies Britain had 9,500,000 men under arms. On the whole, the British economy coped with the task of arming and supplying this large army. True, a great measure of assistance came from the Empire and the United States of America.

Industry in Britain proper accounted for seven-tenths of the armaments and equipment of the troops under British command; one-tenth came from the Dominions and the colonies. The remaining one-fifth came from the USA—first for cash, and from 1941 onwards under Lend Lease.**

During the war Britain produced 131,000 aircraft, 264,000

* A. J. Youngson, *The British Economy, 1920-1957*, London, 1960, p. 146.

** *Statistics Relating to the War Efforts of the United Kingdom*, London, 1944.

machine-guns, 160 million artillery shells, 8,300 million cartridges, about 1,000,000 tons of bombs, and large quantities of other armaments and equipment.* To achieve this output many enterprises were switched to war production, some were enlarged and many new ones were built.

There were many difficulties, but Britain was able to tackle them in more favourable conditions than the Soviet Union. First and foremost, she had to resolve intricate technological problems in order to manufacture up-to-date arms and equipment. Although Britain had a large scientific and technical apparatus and skilled workers she was not always able to resolve this problem smoothly and, most important of all, quickly. The shortage of some raw materials caused enormous difficulties in the work of the war industry. When Japan entered the war and seized extensive territories in the Far East she deprived Britain of some major sources of strategic raw materials like rubber, tin and lead.

However, manpower was the main problem. There was no shortage of manpower during the "phoney war": as late as April 1940 there were more than a million unemployed in Britain. When the "phoney war" came to an end, Britain began enlarging her army and war production, and early in 1941 she began to experience a shortage of skilled labour, particularly of instrument makers and equipment adjusters. Urgent steps had to be taken to improve skills and standardise production processes. In the engineering industry the number of persons receiving the wage rate of skilled workers doubled by mid-1942. By that time the problem entered a new stage—the country began to experience a shortage of labour generally. This was the main factor limiting production.** The Government had to introduce a system regulating labour resources. In this sphere the Ministry of Labour was given extraordinary powers.

Government control was established over practically the whole economy. The introduction of a system of "central planning", as it was called, was accompanied by the institution of many new ministries, among them the ministries of food, aircraft, industry, merchant marine and supply. Food and clothes were rationed. These steps were taken to effect the most complete and operational mobilisation of the country's

* *Statistical Digest of the War*, London, 1951, pp. 144-48, 152-55.

** A. J. Youngson, *Op. cit.*, p. 145.

economic resources for the conduct of the war. Moreover, they were used by the monopolies to throttle many rivals.

State control of the economy in the interests of the monopolies was ensured, firstly, by the fact that direct representatives of the monopolies were included in the Government and placed at the head of the corresponding economic ministries, and, secondly, by the fact that practical control in concrete economic fields and in industry was exercised also by monopoly representatives, who acted as representatives of the Government. The monopolies "lent" the Government their best executives for this purpose. As *The Economist* pointed out, these Government controllers had "an unavoidable bias towards seeing things through the particular spectacles of the interest from which they come".*

By taking all the economy-regulating levers into their own hands, the monopolies helped to develop state-monopoly capitalism in Britain during the war. The machinery of state was thereby still further subordinated to the monopolies, which used it more fully and effectively in their own interests. The concentration of production and capital was likewise speeded up. With their own men in key positions in the state apparatus, the monopolies distributed the lion's share of war orders among themselves, deriving huge profits and, at the same time, being able to exempt these profits from taxation.

British industry developed very unevenly during the war. Various branches of the engineering industry registered a considerable growth, but the iron and steel industry did not increase output. Foreign trade diminished as a result of the military situation, despite the Government's all-out effort to boost it. Agriculture received a great deal of attention from the Government. At ordinary times Britain's agriculture fell very much short of satisfying the country's food and agricultural raw materials requirements. But this was not dangerous because both food and agricultural raw materials were purchased cheaply in the Dominions, colonies and some other countries, and brought in British ships. During the war, however, the blockade imposed by the enemy and the shortage of merchant shipping made this dependence on overseas supply extremely hazardous. To alleviate the situation the Government gave agriculture considerable additional man-

* *The Economist*, December 9, 1939, p. 364.

power. Steps were taken to increase mechanisation. Fixed prices were introduced for farm products. These prices likewise stimulated farm production.

The political factor played an important role in boosting war and farm output. Britain was fighting a just, anti-fascist war. She was an Ally of the Soviet Union. This opened up a tremendous and additional source for the growth of production such as was never known before in British history. Striving to help the Soviet people as much as possible and to hasten the end of the war, the British workers worked without stinting their strength and achieved an appreciable increase in labour productivity in spite of the fact that working conditions were much more difficult than before.

The British Government dreaded an exacerbation of class contradictions in war-time conditions. Churchill warned his colleagues in the Government that they should take into account that Britain was "a modern community at war, and not Hottentots or Esquimaux".* This remark mirrored not only the racialism of an imperialist but also the apprehensions of the head of a bourgeois government that in pursuit of profits the bourgeoisie might go too far in their offensive on the British people's standard of living. In order to slow down the rise of food prices the Government introduced a subsidy scheme. Externally, this gave the impression that the Government was concerned about the requirements of the working people, because thanks to the subsidy food prices did not climb rapidly. Actually, however, this was not an expression of concern by the Government: the subsidies came from taxes levied on the working people.

The British people's tax burden during the war was much heavier than in 1914-18. In 1939-45 more than half of the war expenditures were covered at the expense of taxes; during the First World War taxes covered less than one-third of the war expenditures. During World War II direct taxes rose from 516 million to 1,894 million pounds, while indirect taxes increased from 656 million to 1,512 million pounds.**

During the years that Britain was a member of the anti-fascist coalition political trends predominated in the class struggle. In the situation obtaining in Britain in those years,

* W. K. Hancock and M. M. Gowing, *Op. cit.*, p. 491.

** *Annual Abstract of Statistics*, No. 84, 1935-46, London, 1948, p. 231.

her military and political alliance with the Soviet Union could be maintained and used as an effective weapon against the common enemy only through the British people's persevering struggle to get their Government to fulfil its commitments to the USSR. This was the principal aspect of the class struggle in Britain throughout the last four years of the Second World War.

In the course of three years (1941-44) the British people doggedly pressed their Government conscientiously to honour its commitments to the USSR and conduct the war more vigorously. In this aspect the Second Front was of paramount importance. The British people sensed the hollowness of the Government's excuses. Progressives, mainly British Communists, explained to them the class reasons behind the Government's reluctance to open a Second Front. Large demonstrations were held in London and other cities calling for the earliest possible invasion of continental Europe. Delegations were sent to present this demand to Parliament, and MPs were questioned about it. Letters and telegrams demanding a Second Front poured into the office of the Prime Minister.

Although the British people's struggle for an honourable fulfilment by Britain of her Allied obligations to the USSR did not bring about the timely opening of a Second Front it greatly strengthened the anti-fascist coalition. It was one of the factors compelling the British Government to sign a series of agreements with the USSR and USA ensuring joint action against the common enemy and envisaging a democratic post-war settlement.

In Britain the strike movement during the latter period of the Second World War was much weaker than during the corresponding years of the First World War. The workers went on strike only as a last resort, when the behaviour of employers exhausted their patience.

On the eve of the war and after it broke out the British ruling circles did not want Allied relations with the Soviet Union. One of the reasons was that the joint struggle of the peoples of the USSR and Britain would inevitably have won sympathy for the USSR and for socialism in general and led to a swing to the Left. Developments bore this out. Under the impact of the Soviet people's heroic struggle against the nazi invasion and Britain's joint participation with them in the liberation war against the nazis there was a massive swing to the Left in the mood of the British people.

This manifested itself in many ways. First and foremost, by the fact that masses of people who had formerly been politically inert began to react to political problems. Another manifestation was the immense interest that was taken in the Government's plans for post-war social reforms.

The growth of political awareness among the British working class was shown by the increasing prestige enjoyed by the Communist Party of Great Britain, which worked tirelessly to mobilise all of the country's forces for the struggle against the fascist coalition. In 1942 its membership reached 53,000.

Also indicative of the increased activity of the British working class was the growth of the trade union membership. A positive feature was the trend towards the integration of the trade unions. Changes took place in the Labour Party as well. The rank and file displayed greater interest in political problems, and the number of individual party members grew. At its conferences it came out in favour of nationalising transport and key industries. This was evidence of that party's partial return to its militant spirit of 1918, when for the first time it championed nationalisation.

The mass movement for solidarity with the Soviet people was a convincing indication of the growth of Leftist feelings among the British people. The Soviet Union's smashing victories over the nazi bloc blew up the curtain of lies and slander which reactionaries of all hues had assiduously built up after the USSR had come into existence. The British people came to know the Soviet people better and demonstrated their solidarity with them. This was expressed not only in the struggle for the timely opening of a Second Front. Various organisations—women's, youth and so on—sprang up in Britain and the aim they set themselves was to promote friendship and co-operation with the Soviet Union. Campaigns to raise funds to help the Soviet Union were launched throughout Britain.

The British ruling classes were perfectly well aware that the swing to the Left among the working masses was threatening their economic and political plans at home and abroad. To offset this tendency they started a drive to brainwash the people in a reactionary spirit, the chief aim being to expunge the rank-and-file Englishman's sympathy for the Soviet Union and his respect and admiration of socialism. The turning point came at the close of 1942, when Churchill

realised that the Soviet Union was winning the war. That marked the beginning of a steadily mounting campaign of slander and insinuation against the Soviet Union. The ruling circles went to all lengths to inject a feeling of hatred and ill-will for the USSR, to sow doubts about the progressive and democratic nature of its foreign and home policies. The circumstance that Britain was an Ally of the Soviet Union somewhat restrained the ill-wishers and hampered their propaganda efforts.

Right-wing Labour and trade union leaders were most active in the anti-Soviet propaganda campaign. They went so far as to railroad through the Labour Party Executive a decision which marked down as "subversive" the Anglo-Soviet Unity Committee, the National Anglo-Soviet Unity Conference, the Anglo-Soviet Youth Friendship League and other organisations working to promote and strengthen friendship and co-operation between Britain and the USSR. This decision stated that affiliation to such organisations was incompatible with membership of the Labour Party.

Subsequently, in a note to the British Government, the Soviet Government pointed out that so long as the British Government "needed the Soviet Union, without whom it could not defeat Hitler Germany, it somehow restrained . . . its hostility towards the Soviet State. But even before the war terminated, as soon as it became obvious that nazi Germany would be defeated, the Labour leaders, disquieted by the British people's growing friendship for the people of the Soviet Union, began to hasten measures to undermine these friendly feelings."*

Such were the internal political conditions under which Britain pursued her foreign policy at the concluding stage of the war.

Allied Invasion of the European Continent

The long-awaited Anglo-American landing in Northern France at last began on June 6, 1944. Well-prepared, it was a complete success, due mainly to the Allied overwhelming numerical superiority over the enemy. When the Allied troops began to land in France the balance of strength in their favour was: men—2.1:1; tanks—2.2:1; combat planes

* *Pravda*, February 25, 1951.

—nearly 22:1. The main German forces continued to be pinned down on the Eastern Front, where in accordance with the pledge given at Tehran the Soviet Army had launched a powerful offensive.

The Allies owed much of the success of their invasion to the Resistance in France and other West European countries. The French Resistance had more than 100,000 fighters in the field.* They helped the invasion forces to land and then went on to liberate a large part of France, including Paris, Lyon, Marseilles, Toulouse and many other towns. In the night of June 5-6, Resistance fighters carried out 960 wrecking operations on railways in France and Belgium. As Supreme Allied Headquarters noted, the "enemy was facing a battlefield behind his lines".** General Eisenhower, the invasion commander, wrote to Major-General Sir Colin Gubbins, the Operational Commander of SOE: "While no final assessment of the operational value of Resistance action has yet been completed, I consider that the disruption of enemy rail communications, the harassing of German road moves and the continual and increasing strain placed on German war economy and internal security services throughout Occupied Europe by the organised forces of Resistance, played a very considerable part in our complete and final victory."***

The Atlantic Wall, whose might had been made much of by the Germans and spoken highly of by Churchill, proved to be largely the product of German propaganda.

Churchill's opposition somewhat delayed the landing in France. He succeeded in delaying for a longer time the Allied landing in Southern France, which had been agreed upon at Tehran. It was effected only in mid-August 1944. Churchill had set his mind on moving his troops from Italy to the East, to the Balkans, in order "to reach Vienna before the Russians".*) In this connection Eisenhower wrote: "As usual the Prime Minister pursued the argument up to the very moment of execution."***)

By mid-December 1944 the slowly advancing Anglo-

* F. W. Deakin, *Op. cit.*, p. 109.

** *Ibid.*

*** *Ibid.*

*) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 90.

**) Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, New York, 1948, p. 284.

American forces reached the German frontiers, where they stopped as soon as resistance more or less stiffened.

Meanwhile the Soviet Army was conducting a massive offensive along a line running all the way from the Gulf of Finland to the Carpathian Mountains. In the period from January to May 1944 it liberated the whole of the Ukraine and the Crimea, and entered Rumania. The offensive mounted by it in June in Byelorussia took it into Eastern Prussia and up to the Vistula River. Another offensive in the south knocked Rumania out of the war in August. Finland withdrew from the war in September, and at the same time Soviet troops entered Bulgaria. In January 1945 the Soviet Army forced Hungary, Germany's last ally, to abandon the fascist camp. Together with the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia and Bulgarian troops, the Soviet Army smashed the German forces in Yugoslavia. In addition to liberating Yugoslavia, this enabled the patriotic forces of Albania and Greece to complete the liberation of their countries. In fulfilment of its mission of liberation, the Soviet Army drove the fascist invaders out of Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

Last Stage of the Economic War

The turning point achieved by the Soviet Army at Stalingrad marked the beginning of the last stage of the economic war. In 1942, prior to Stalingrad, when the British Government was not clear about the prospects of the war, a prominent place in its defence strategy was accorded to the naval blockade, air operations and subversion in enemy-held territory. This "indirect strategy" was the most active component of Britain's general strategy. In this, Medlicott writes, may be detected "a tendency to exaggerate the immediate effectiveness of bombing and blockade".*

After Stalingrad, the economic wars which had played almost the decisive role in British strategy, gave way in importance to Allied action by direct military means while itself assuming a more offensive character. This is seen from the plans drawn up in 1943, which no longer spoke of any possibility of Japan joining forces with the European Axis powers. All they envisaged was steps to maintain the disruption of communications between the Axis powers. Allowance

* W. N. Medlicott, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 383.

was made for the possibility of destroying Japan's economy, which depended heavily on supply lines. In Europe the plans called for offensive measures to dislocate German and Italian economy, for instance, by air raids on enemy industrial and transport centres, attacks on enemy coastal shipping, the use of diplomatic channels to prevent the enemy from receiving supplies from neighbouring neutrals, and the encouragement of the Resistance movement in occupied territories.*

The war turned in favour of the Allies slowly, and time was needed before this could influence the policy of neutral countries neighbouring on Germany. In 1943 the neutrals were still hesitant about seriously offending Germany, fearing reprisals from her. There was another reason for this "hesitation". By maintaining economic relations with Germany and supplying her with strategic raw materials and manufactured goods, the neutrals compelled the Allies to offer them an increasingly higher price for halting these supplies to the Germans and selling them to the Allies. For this purpose Turkey used her chromium supplies to Germany, Sweden her iron ore and ball-bearings, and Portugal and Spain their tungsten. Moreover, the neutrals had no desire to menace the fat dividends their firms were getting by supplying strategic materials to the Axis powers, which were sliding to their doom. It was a complex matter to re-orient their economic ties on the Allies and, besides, this would take time and would be accompanied by inevitable losses. Thus, the complete rupture between the neutrals and the enemy depended directly on the military situation.

Soviet victories, which compelled the Allies finally to undertake the invasion of Western Europe, made the European neutrals more tractable. There was now no doubt about an Allied victory. In mid-1944, all these factors taken together enabled Britain to blockade Germany completely. She made this official by a number of agreements with the neutrals. In April 1944 Turkey was induced to halt her chromium supplies to Germany, and in June 1944 she had to agree to halve her exports to Germany as compared with 1943. On August 2 she had to sever all relations, both economic and diplomatic, with the Axis powers.**

* Ibid., pp. 382-83.

** Ibid., p. 611.

Sweden considerably reduced her supplies to Germany as early as 1943. However, nothing Britain did could induce her to cut down her supplies of ball- and roller-bearings to Germany, where the shortage of these items was extremely acute. In order to make Sweden stop these supplies the British offered 200 of their Spitfires as an additional incentive. A satisfactory agreement on this question was obtained from Sweden only in June 1944. She had to cut down on her other exports to Germany drastically during the second half of 1944. Swedish-German trade ceased early in 1945.*

With regard to trade with the enemy, Switzerland made her first substantial concessions to the Allies in December 1943. In May 1944 she had to go farther in the same direction. In October 1944 the Allies made her completely stop her supplies of armaments, equipment, ball-bearings and other items of military importance to Germany. In January 1945 when Allied troops reached the frontiers of Switzerland, her Government agreed to satisfy all Allied demands with regard to the blockade of Germany.**

In May and June 1944 Spain and Portugal acceded to the Allied demands to stop supplying tungsten to Germany. The appearance of Allied troops on the Franco-Spanish frontier in August 1944 put an end to trade between these countries and Germany. The ring round Germany was thus finally closed. However, this happened only shortly before the war in Europe ended.

In Britain opinion is divided about the contribution that the economic war made towards victory in the Second World War. Scepticism is particularly rife on this score among military leaders.*** Everybody, however, concurs with the view that the broadly conceived economic war was in reality nothing more than an economic blockade and did not justify the hopes which the British leaders had placed in it in 1939-42. Victory was eventually won by other, more effective means. As regards the economic blockade it played a positive, even if modest, role in denying Germany and Italy access to foreign sources of strategic raw materials.

* W. N. Medlicott, Op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 417, 611.

** Ibid., p. 611.

*** Sir A. Harris, *Bomber Offensive*, London, 1947, p. 220.

British Policy in Occupied Territories

The concluding period of the war in Europe witnessed the growth of a revolutionary situation, and in this period one of the cardinal objectives of the foreign policy of British imperialism was to combat the maturing socialist revolution. The internal conditions for a socialist revolution became ripe in European countries as a result of economic and political development over a long span of time. The war sharply aggravated the class contradictions and accelerated the development of the revolutionary process. The defeat of fascism and the complete discrediting of the most reactionary circles of the bourgeoisie who collaborated with the German and Italian fascists in occupied countries greatly weakened the European bourgeoisie. At the same time, the huge scale of the Resistance movement in which a very active part was played by Communists and the swing to the Left among the peoples under the impact of the decisive victories of the Socialist Soviet State released revolutionary forces in Europe. In Western Europe, where British and American troops landed, these revolutionary possibilities were not turned to account because British and US imperialism went to the assistance of West European capitalism and by direct military and political intervention did not let the peoples establish a socio-economic system which would conform with their freely expressed will. The relevant points of the Atlantic Charter, solemnly proclaiming this right of the peoples, were thus flagrantly trampled.

France was the object of special concern by the British Government. A mighty Resistance movement had formed in that country, and General de Gaulle, head of the French Committee of National Liberation, proved to be uncompromising in spheres where Britain tried to take over some French colonial interests.

Churchill and Roosevelt did not inform de Gaulle of their decision to invade France, pleading security considerations. Neither was there, at the time the invasion was launched, agreement between the Allied command and the French Committee regarding the civil administration in France after her liberation. De Gaulle was summoned by Churchill from Algeria to London only three days before the landing, and on June 4 he was told of the impending operation and asked to address the people of France by radio. De Gaulle was

greatly annoyed by this treatment, but he complied with Churchill's request.

Immediately after the landing was effected it was found that the French Committee of National Liberation, which had by that time been renamed the Provisional Government of France, enjoyed the support of the bulk of the French people. Of great importance here was the support it got from the French Communist Party. On June 9 Resistance fighters were officially included in the French Army of the Provisional Government, and on June 25 General Pierre Koenig was put in command of these forces with direct subordination to General Eisenhower.

There was no other body representing an embryo of authority in France, and the Allies (the Americans were very reluctant to take this step) had to deal with the government headed by de Gaulle. Three additional factors made them take this step: first, the attempts to establish a purely occupation regime after the model of the regime in Italy were bitterly opposed by the French people (as a matter of fact, these attempts gave the de Gaulle Government greater support among the French people); second, time was pressing, for a stable authority had to be set while the initiative of the people had not gone farther to the Left than the de Gaulle programme and had not led to the emergence of more democratic organs of power; "hence, the establishment of a strong provisional authority was necessary," Woodward writes, "in order to prevent the inevitable outburst of popular feeling from developing into a civil war after the liberation of the country"*; third, there was energetic Soviet support for the Provisional French Government. On August 25, the day when Frenchmen liberated Paris themselves, Britain and the USA signed an agreement with the Provisional French Government placing the administration of liberated French territory into its hands.

After the de Gaulle Government was established in Paris, the British had to draw the relevant conclusions. They made an attempt to bind France to their chariot by signing a treaty of alliance with her. The balance of power between Britain and France at the close of 1944 was such that a treaty of alliance would have reduced France to a subordinate position. De Gaulle was perfectly well aware of this and de-

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 260.

cided to strengthen his hand by signing a treaty of alliance with the Soviet Union as a preliminary step. He arrived in Moscow for that purpose on December 2, 1944.

Rapprochement between France and the USSR clearly did not enter into the plans of the British Government. However, it was unable to disrupt the impending Franco-Soviet alliance, and on December 5 Churchill informed the Soviet Government "that it might be best of all if we were to conclude a tripartite treaty between the three of us which would embody our existing Anglo-Soviet Treaty with any improvements".* He was hardly serious about such an extension of Anglo-Soviet Allied relations. His suggestion was designed to prevent direct Franco-Soviet Allied relations and dissolve them in a tripartite treaty with Britain's participation. On December 7 the Soviet Government stated its acceptance of Churchill's suggestion, thereby demonstrating its desire to found its relations with France and Britain on firm, long-term alliance and co-operation.** De Gaulle, however, rejected Churchill's suggestion, and a 20-year Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Assistance was signed by the USSR and France on December 10.

After signing this treaty the French informed the British that they were prepared to negotiate a similar treaty with Britain. The British Government scrupulously scrutinised this proposal. The Foreign Office and the British military leaders came to the conclusion "that we might discuss with the French the possibility of establishing some kind of machinery for regional defence in Western Europe". They felt that an Anglo-French treaty might be the "first step" in forming a "Western group", and that this group would be of advantage to Britain "(i) strategically because it would give us a defence in depth, (ii) politically because in association with the Western European countries and the Dominions we could hold our own more easily with the United States and the USSR and (iii) economically because our own position would be greatly strengthened by close economic and commercial ties with Western Europe".*** These plans tied in with Britain's post-war European policy as formulated by Churchill in October 1942. They were quite plainly

* *Correspondence...*, Vol. I, p. 281.

** *Ibid.*, p. 286.

*** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op.cit.*, pp. 271-72.

spearheaded against the Soviet Union. This approach to a treaty with France exposes Churchill's insincerity when in December 1944, for tactical reasons, he had offered a tripartite alliance between the USSR, Britain and France.

Anglo-French contradictions, especially their struggle for Syria and the Lebanon, became particularly acute in the spring of 1945 and blocked the way to a treaty of alliance between Britain and France.

In Italy the British backed reactionary circles and the completely discredited monarchy. In face of the mounting national liberation, anti-fascist struggle in Nazi-occupied Northern Italy, which in April 1945 grew into a nation-wide uprising, this backing became increasingly more energetic. The British Government resented the return to Italy of Count Carlo Sforza, who had been living in exile in the USA and had come out against the Italian monarchy. When Sforza quite justifiably called King Victor Emmanuel a stupid and criminal monarch, Churchill made a public speech on February 22, 1944 in defence of the Italian king. A crisis was provoked in November 1944 when the British Ambassador in Italy tried to prevent Sforza from obtaining a post in the Government. The Americans took up the cudgels for Sforza, whom they regarded as a reliable person. Eventually, but not for long, Churchill managed to secure Sforza's exclusion from the new Government formed by Bonomi. Moreover, Churchill destroyed the unity of the group of Italian political parties in the Committee of National Liberation, which pressured for the abolition of the monarchy. Through the efforts of the British Government, the monarchy, bulwark of reaction in Italy, hung on throughout the war, but the Italian people finally rid themselves of it in 1946.

The British obstructed social and economic reforms in Italy and took steps to disarm Italian Resistance fighters, who had assisted Allied troops which had made no headway for many months and until the spring of 1945 had been unable to crush the resistance of a relatively small German force.

The British Government regarded the disarming of Resistance fighters in Italy and other countries as a means of preserving the bourgeois system in Europe.

Churchill cynically deceived public opinion in order to disarm the Resistance in Belgium and instal a Government

that had been in exile in London. A rumour was spread that the Belgian Resistance was plotting an uprising against the returning Government. On November 28, under this pretext, the British commandant of Brussels placed his troops at the disposal of the Belgian Government.*

This coincided with British attempts to prevent Sforza from being nominated Italian Foreign Minister. These attempts sparked a wave of indignation in Britain, where public opinion justifiably evaluated them as aimed at undermining the forces of democracy. On December 1 Eden declared in Parliament that the action taken by the commandant of Brussels had the sole purpose of maintaining law and order and protecting the Belgian Government.** This argument convinced nobody. Moreover, it was an official admission of two points: first, that British troops were needed to preserve in Belgium a system such as Britain wanted to see in that country, and, second, that these same troops were needed to put in power the Government that had been in exile in Britain. Hence the logical conclusion that in both cases the Belgian people wanted something quite different and that British troops had to be used to force them to accept what they had rejected but what London felt was of advantage to itself.

All this debunked the British Government, which sought to pose as a champion of democracy. Matters deteriorated so far that the Labour Party found it necessary officially to raise the question of the Government's policy in territory occupied in Europe by British and American troops. Seymour Cocks moved an amendment to the Address from the Throne "regretting that the King's speech contained no assurance that British forces would not be used to disarm the friends of democracy in Greece and other parts of Europe and suppress the popular Resistance movements there".*** It was thereby stressed that in occupied territories Britain was using her Armed Forces to suppress democracy and the progressive aspirations of the people and instal and maintain reactionary regimes. Cocks declared in his speech that in Britain there was a feeling that "as victory was approaching British policy seemed inclined to support many of the worn-

* *Annual Register*... London, 1945, pp. 103, 242.

** *Ibid.*, p. 103.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 104.

out regimes in Europe as against the popular forces which had emerged".*

Cocks's amendment was seconded by the Commonwealth leader Sir Richard Acland, and Churchill had to defend himself. Without batting an eyelid he told a deliberate lie, saying that in Belgium "a *putsch* had been organised at the end of November to throw out the properly constituted Government of M. Pierlot".** The truth soon came to light. A *News Chronicle* correspondent in Belgium wrote in that paper that "after making careful inquiries he had been unable to find any trace of the intended *putsch* which Mr. Churchill had alleged as the ground of British interference in Belgium".*** Had the Belgian people no right to replace the government that had arrived from London with a government consisting of leaders who had remained behind in Belgium during the war and fought for liberation? Was not this right recorded in the Atlantic Charter, proclaimed by Churchill on behalf of Britain and by Roosevelt on behalf of the USA? The British actions in Belgium distinctly showed that on the lips of Churchill the Charter's words about freedom were only a propaganda subterfuge. The Charter was discarded the moment British imperialist interests were affected first in the colonies and then in Europe.

Britain's Struggle Against Revolution in Southeastern Europe

The British drive to throttle the aspirations of the European peoples for social liberation went farthest in Greece. After the mutiny by the Greek troops in Egypt was crushed in the spring of 1944 and agreement was reached in May 1944 in the Levant between the various Greek political organisations, the British Government launched active measures to prevent any upsurge of democracy in Greece. Democratic organs of state power, created by the Greek people themselves, had emerged in Greece by the spring of 1944. The National Liberation Front (EAM) and the People's National Army of Liberation (ELAS) were unquestionably the dominant political and military forces enjoying the

* *Annual Register*... London, 1945, pp. 104-05.

** Ibid.

*** Ibid., p. 108.

support of the overwhelming majority of the people. In this situation Britain ceased material and other aid to these organisations, the only ones which had really fought the German invaders, and considerably increased aid to various reactionary elements despite the fact that they had collaborated with the enemy. Moreover, the British Government took energetic steps to present the Greek Government in exile as a democratic organ of power, and to make sure that King George II did not divulge his reactionary intentions. At the same time, military units were formed on which the Government could rely when it returned to the country. However, in London it was appreciated that these steps were inadequate to compel the Greek people to accept the king and the Government in exile. At the close of October 1944 ELAS had more than 120,000 men, armed mostly with weapons seized from the Italians and Germans. The British Government, therefore, decided on armed intervention in Greece in order to impose on the Greek people a regime they did not want.

Implementation of Churchill's Balkan strategy held out the prospect of resolving this problem without much trouble. As early as August 1943 Churchill had written to Eden that if "substantial British forces take part in the liberation of Greece the King should go back with the Anglo-Greek Army".* However, when the chances that Churchill would succeed in cancelling the invasion of France and organising an Allied landing in the Balkans diminished, the British Government decided on a landing in Greece after the Germans would withdraw. The purpose of this operation was to restore a reactionary regime in that country against the clearly expressed will of the Greek people. Foreseeing this possibility, the Chief of the British Imperial Staff wrote in September 1943 that "if Greece is liberated as a result of an Axis withdrawal, we shall be forced to provide sufficient troops to further the present policy of His Majesty's Government. This would involve us in a military commitment of at least two divisions, since a weaker force might land us in an embarrassing position vis-à-vis the Resistance groups, who were . . . carrying considerable sway in the country when it had been liberated."**

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 479.

** J. Ehrman, *Grand Strategy*, Vol. V, *August 1943-September 1944*, London, 1956, pp. 86-87.

This plan was put into effect in the autumn of 1944 when Greece was liberated. British paratroopers were landed in Athens on October 13, and five days later the British flew in the Greek Government in exile headed by George Papandreou. EAM and ELAS were masters of the situation in Greece. The collaborationist, reactionary element, so dear to Churchill's heart, was a negligible force. To bolster this force, some 60,000 British troops had been transferred to Greece by the close of December. The British looked for a direct confrontation with ELAS in order to suppress resistance by force. On November 16, in pursuance of this policy, General Scobie was instructed to order ELAS units to quit Athens and in the event they did not do so to disarm them. Churchill ordered Scobie to act without hesitation "as if you were in a conquered city where a local rebellion is in progress".*

Scobie acted on his instructions. British troops and the British-controlled Greek police opened fire on a peaceful 500,000-strong demonstration in Athens on December 3, 1944. This marked the beginning of the British imperialist war against the Greek people, a war that dragged out for several years. The British had to take Athens by assault. Sparing the districts populated by the Greek bourgeoisie, the British troops, Fleming writes, "gradually conquered, block by block", vast districts in which the poor lived. "Hundreds of buildings were destroyed, usually containing homes of the poorer people of Athens, at least eighty per cent of whom were on the side of EAM. The property damage approached \$250,000,000. Casualties ranged between two and five thousand."**

In February 1945, at Varkiz, a town near Athens, after 50 days of fighting, the leaders of ELAS and EAM signed with the Greek Government an agreement to end the state of emergency, hold a plebiscite on the question of the state system, disarm the armed forces in the country and form a new army. However, the Greek people were deceived. While ELAS disarmed, the Greek Government formed monarchist gangs consisting mostly of criminals who had collaborated with the enemy during the occupation. A reign of terror broke out spearheaded against patriots who had fought the

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 252.

** D. F. Fleming, *Op. cit.*, p. 181.

nazis in alliance with Britain only a few months earlier. At a press conference in Athens on October 18, 1944, British Brigadier Barker-Benfield told the assembled reporters: "We should never have been able to set foot on Greece had it not been for the magnificent efforts of the Resistance movements of EAM and ELAS." He told the truth inopportunely, and within 48 hours he was ordered out of Greece together with other British officers who had served with the Greek partisans.* The partisans, patriots of their country, had done much to enable British troops to enter Greece, and now they were hunted only because they desired to arrange their lives by themselves.

The war which the British Government started against the Greek people at the close of 1944 was denounced by progressive world public opinion. In Britain this war was supported by the Conservative Party and its representatives in Parliament, who formed the majority in the House of Commons, the Right-wing Labour leaders, above all those in Churchill's Cabinet, and many Conservative newspapers. Churchill was lauded by the fascist dictators Franco and Salazar and by the reactionary press in the United States. The Portuguese dictator's official press congratulated Churchill on his actions in Greece, assessing this as an indisputable victory for Churchill, the guardian of bourgeois, reactionary law and order, over Churchill, the Ally of the Soviet Union.**

On the other hand, the intervention was condemned not only by the Communist Party of Great Britain but also by the overwhelming majority of the Labour and Liberal parties, by the Commonwealth Party, by the trade union movement and even by bourgeois newspapers like *The Times*.***

In Yugoslavia things shaped out differently than in Greece. The British Government overpoweringly desired to prevent democratic changes in that country, too, and restore the reactionary regime. For this purpose it planned to use the Yugoslav Government in exile and King Peter, whom it had in its pocket. But the situation did not allow the British to employ force as in Greece. Soviet troops had reached the Yugoslav frontier in September 1944, enabling the USSR to

* Ibid., p. 183.

** *Labour Monthly*, January 1945, p. 28.

*** Ibid.

stretch its hand out to help the peoples of Yugoslavia. Consequently, the significance of British aid to Yugoslavia waned sharply, and the leaders of the Yugoslav people were able to adopt a firm line in their dealing with the British Government. The democratic forces of Yugoslavia had grown to such an extent that Britain had neither the resources nor the possibility of successfully fighting them. By the summer of 1944 the People's Liberation Army had nearly 350,000 men.* Moreover the opposition put up by the Greek people to the British intervention tied the hands of the British Government and deprived it of the possibility of taking similar measures in Yugoslavia.

Whether it liked it or not, the British Government had to confine itself to political and diplomatic pressure. Churchill took this upon himself. At a meeting with Tito in Italy on August 13-14, 1944 he tried to obtain the former's agreement to a merger between the Government in exile and the National Committee of Liberation of Yugoslavia and to King Peter's return to Yugoslavia. The British felt this would at least somehow strengthen the position of the reactionary elements in that country and weaken the revolutionary nature of the Yugoslav people's struggle for liberation.**

Soviet support enabled the Yugoslav leaders to repulse this pressure. On September 21, 1944 Tito arrived in Moscow where agreement was reached on the supply of Soviet armaments for a number of Yugoslav divisions, on joint Soviet-Yugoslav operations to complete the liberation of Yugoslavia and on the withdrawal of Soviet troops upon the completion of those operations. This powerfully stimulated the Yugoslav people in their struggle for freedom, and therefore, when after all a Provisional People's Government headed by Tito and with the participation in it of Subasić and other members of the former Government in exile was formed on March 7, 1945, it could no longer be used by the British and Americans to achieve their aims in Yugoslavia. Although the new Government's composition and programme clearly did not suit them, Britain and the USA had no alternative but to recognise it. In Belgrade the British Embassy was reopened on March 14, 1945.*** The Soviet Government had

* *Istoriya Yugoslavii* (A History of Yugoslavia), Vol. II, Moscow, 1963, p. 236.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, pp. 79-84.

*** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 349.

appointed its Ambassador to new Yugoslavia four days earlier.

In pursuance of British policy towards Yugoslavia at the concluding stage of the war Churchill spread a deliberate invention about what he called the division of Yugoslavia into spheres of influence.

Referring to his talk with Stalin on October 9, 1944 in Moscow, he wrote: "The moment was apt for business, so I said, 'Let us settle about our affairs in the Balkans. Your armies are in Rumania and Bulgaria. We have interests, missions, and agents there. Don't let us get at cross-purposes in small ways. So far as Britain and Russia are concerned, how would it do for you to have ninety per cent predominance in Rumania, for us to have ninety per cent of the say in Greece, and go fifty-fifty about Yugoslavia?' While this was being translated I wrote out on a half-sheet of paper:

Rumania	
Russia	90%
The others	10%
Greece	
Great Britain (in accord with USA)	90%
Russia	10%
Yugoslavia	50-50%
Hungary	50-50%
Bulgaria	
Russia	75%
The others	25%

"I pushed this across to Stalin, who had by then heard the translation. There was a slight pause. Then he took his blue pencil and made a large tick upon it, and passed it back to us."*

That, Churchill asserts, is how "agreement" was reached on the division of Yugoslavia into "spheres of influence". But even people unskilled in diplomatic techniques will understand that international agreements are not concluded in that way. In Churchill's own words, quoted above, there is nothing to indicate that Stalin said or wrote anything in reply to the note passed to him. Consequently, he neither gave his agreement to Churchill's proposal nor said anything to indicate his attitude to it.

The fact that in narrating this episode Churchill served

* Winston S. Churchill, Op. cit., Vol. VI, p. 198.

out what he desired for reality is shown in documents in the Soviet Foreign Ministry's archives. The record of this talk between Stalin and Churchill says: "Churchill announced that he had prepared a rather dirty and clumsy document that showed the distribution of Soviet and British influence in Rumania, Greece, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The table was drawn up by him to show what the British think on this question."*

The Soviet record (no co-ordinated records of the 1944 Moscow talks were made) thus shows that Churchill had indeed advanced the idea of carving up some countries, including Yugoslavia, into spheres of influence. Generally speaking, in view of his and the rest of the British Government's obsession with ideas of this kind, this is not surprising. The Soviet Government understood what the British thought on this score and took note of it. Nothing more. It did not even feel it was necessary to express its attitude to this British proposal. Neither the Churchill table nor any agreement on this issue are mentioned in the Soviet record of the talks. Had such agreement been reached it would unquestionably have been indicated in the record.** Churchill's assertion that Stalin had agreed to divide Yugoslavia into spheres of influence is thus a piece of fantasy.

Churchill's invention was not the result of a poor memory. It was made deliberately, to cast doubts on the Soviet Union's attitude to the liberation struggle of the Yugoslav people. For that reason Churchill's fabrication is best of all refuted by widely known facts about the Soviet Union's consistent and steadfast support for that struggle. The testimony of many leaders of that struggle could be quoted. We shall confine ourselves to the testimony of one of them, Edvard Kardelj, who said in 1945: "Our sacrifices, our efforts and our faith were crowned with victory because the mighty Soviet Union and its Red Army were on our side."***

Hand in glove with the USA, Britain made desperate attempts to restore the post-World War I reactionary, anti-Soviet regime in Poland. These efforts were doomed to

* *International Affairs*, No. 8, 1958, p. 57. The value of this article is that it is founded on unpublished documents from the Soviet Foreign Ministry's archives.

** Ibid.

*** *Izvestia*, June 17, 1945.

failure from the very beginning, because during the concluding stage of the Second World War the situation in the world and in Eastern Europe differed radically from that which obtained when the reactionary anti-Soviet Polish Government came to power. Churchill pinned his hopes on the Polish Government in exile and its armed agents operating in Poland. The intrigues of the British and of the London-based Poles worried not only the Soviet Union but also the patriotic forces in Poland, which realised that Poland could not be rejuvenated on the old foundations. After the Government in exile had shown its reluctance to co-operate with the Soviet Union with a view to rejuvenating Poland and brought matters to the point where relations were ruptured with it, the Polish patriots took steps to create a really progressive Government which would be authorised to act on behalf of the people and direct their destinies until liberation. This Government, the Krajowa Rada Narodowa, was formed in the night of January 1, 1944 in Warsaw. The formation of this Government meant that the democratic, anti-fascist forces, which were fighting for the national and social liberation of the Polish people, had undertaken the responsibility for the destinies of Poland.

The Polish Government in exile, which had instructed its agents in Poland physically to destroy democratic, patriotic leaders, now intensified this struggle. At the same time, the Armia Krajowa (also called the Home Army), which took its orders from that government, instructed its units to stop fighting the invaders and prepare to seize power after Poland was liberated by the Soviet Army.

Britain and the USA pressed the Soviet Union to restore and maintain relations with the London-based Poles. But, obviously, this was impossible because the Government in exile doggedly refused to recognise the Curzon Line as the frontier between the USSR and Poland, hoping that the war would weaken the USSR or, if that did not happen, that after the defeat of Germany, Britain and the USA would start a war against the USSR and restore the reactionary regime in Poland. These plans sound wild today, but in 1944-45 they underlay the political line pursued by the London-based Poles. *Penstwo Polski*, an underground newspaper circulated in Poland by the Polish Government in exile, declared in the spring of 1944: "An essential condition for our victory and our very existence is at least the weakening, if not the

defeat, of Russia.”* In 1944 Churchill told Mikolajczyk: “I talked to your General Anders the other day, and he seems to entertain the hope that after the defeat of the Germans the Allies will then beat Russia.”** In order to attain its ends the emigré Government did its best to spoil relations between the Allies.

Moved by its desire to strengthen Allied unity, the Soviet Government consented to compromises in the Polish issue. In June 1944, despite the outrageous actions of the Government in exile and its agents in Poland, the Soviet Government declared it was prepared to hold talks with that Government if it recognised the Curzon Line and was reorganised in such a manner as would exclude the predominance in it of pro-fascist, anti-Soviet elements. These compromise proposals fell on deaf ears.

On August 1 the Armija Krajowa led an uprising against the Germans in Warsaw. This was a huge provocation on the part of the Government in exile. The Warsaw uprising came as a complete surprise to the Soviet Command. The Polish Government in exile did not notify the Soviet Government in advance that the uprising would take place with the result that Soviet troops were unable to go to the assistance of the insurgents. The uprising was ruthlessly crushed by the Germans. It is said that 250,000 Poles perished.** Such was the cost of the crime perpetrated by the emigré Government, which acted with the backing of the British Government, without whose knowledge such an act could not have been undertaken.*)

The calculation of the organisers of the uprising was that Soviet troops would come to the assistance of Armija Krajowa and thus help to instal the emigré Government in Warsaw against the wishes of the Polish people. For that reason no advance notice of the uprising was given to the Soviet Government.

However, the provocateurs badly miscalculated. The uprising was started at a time when the Soviet troops had exhausted their strength in a massive offensive that drove the Germans back 400 kilometres, and were, therefore, in no

* *Comment*, August 29, 1964, p. 547.

** D. F. Fleming, *Op. cit.*, p. 237.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 233.

*) Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 300.

position to breach the powerful fortifications around Warsaw or try to force the Vistula. Such an operation required painstaking preparations.

On August 16, 1944, Stalin wrote to Churchill: "Now, after probing more deeply into the Warsaw affair, I have come to the conclusion that the Warsaw action is a reckless and fearful gamble, taking a heavy toll of the population. This would not have been the case had Soviet Headquarters been informed beforehand about the Warsaw action and had the Poles maintained contact with them."*

In a message to Stalin on August 20, 1944, Churchill and Roosevelt tried to pressure him into ordering Soviet troops to storm Warsaw, threatening that if such action was not taken they would use public opinion against the USSR.**

The following reply was sent to them on August 22: "Sooner or later the truth about the handful of power-seeking criminals who launched the Warsaw adventure will out. Those elements, playing on the credulity of the inhabitants of Warsaw, exposed practically unarmed people to German guns, armour and aircraft. The result is a situation in which every day is used, not by the Poles for freeing Warsaw, but by the Hitlerites, who are cruelly exterminating the civilian population.

"From the military point of view the situation, which keeps German attention riveted to Warsaw, is highly unfavourable both to the Red Army and to the Poles. Nevertheless, the Soviet troops, who of late have had to face renewed German counter-attacks, are doing all they can to repulse the Hitlerite sallies and go over to a new large-scale offensive near Warsaw. I can assure you that the Red Army will stint no effort to crush the Germans at Warsaw and liberate it for the Poles. That will be the best, really effective help to the anti-nazi Poles."***

In order to cover up their crime, those who organised the slaughter at Warsaw assert that the Soviet Army was in a position to help the uprising but that due to what they allege to be political considerations the Soviet Government did not render that assistance.

Many Western historians admit the untenability of this

* *Correspondence*... Vol. I, p. 254.

** *Ibid.*

*** *Ibid.*, p. 255.

allegation. One of them writes: "At the end of a drive of almost unparalleled length, when their offensive force was spent, the Russians ran into the extremely formidable belt of defenses before Warsaw. They were driven back, had to stop to rest, regroup, build railways, bring up supplies and begin again. . . . That the Red Army did not deliberately wait outside of Warsaw for the Home Army to be destroyed in the city is fully established by the military history of the time."^{*}

In October 1964, *The Observer*, a British bourgeois weekly, carried an article about the Warsaw uprising which drew world-wide attention. It contained the significant and true observation that "militarily, the rising had been directed against the Germans, politically against the Soviet Union". The author of the article reviewed the "popular version", according to which the Soviet Army had deliberately withheld assistance to the insurgents, and unequivocally rejected it. "In fact," he wrote, "the German armour won a limited but bloody victory to the Northeast of Warsaw, annihilating the Soviet tank forces advancing towards the capital. The Red Army fell back and prepared to regroup its forces. Thus, the rising took place at a moment when the massive German reinforcements were free to deal with it. In mid-September the Russians moved forward again to the Vistula, but by now the Germans had expelled the insurgents from the waterfront at Warsaw and held the river crossing in full force. A Polish brigade with the Red Army tried to cross and was cut to pieces."^{**} "Thus perished one more lie," *Comment*, another British weekly, wrote in response to the article in *The Observer*.^{***}

Alexander Werth, a British correspondent accredited to Moscow during the war, likewise helped to explode this lie. He visited the Soviet troops at the approaches of Warsaw in the autumn of 1944, and in a book published 20 years later and based on a comparison of Soviet, German and Polish sources as well as on personal observations he drew the conclusion that the accusations levelled at the USSR in connection with the Warsaw uprising had no grounds. He writes that "in August and September 1944 the available

^{*} D. F. Fleming, Op. cit., pp. 234-35.

^{**} *The Observer*, August 9, 1964, p. 8.

^{***} *Comment*, August 29, 1964, p. 560.

Red Army forces in Poland were genuinely not able to capture Warsaw".*

Churchill and Eden went to Moscow in October 1944 to try to save at least part of the reactionary Polish forces. Mikolajczyk and some emigré ministers likewise went to the Soviet capital. By that time the Polish Committee of National Liberation, the temporary executive organ of revolutionary power set up by the Krajowa Rada Narodowa on July 21, was already functioning on liberated Polish territory. Mikolajczyk's appearance in Moscow after the Warsaw provocation was testimony of the Soviet Government's patience and its desire to co-operate with the British and US governments, in spite of the fact that on the Polish issue their stand was clearly unjust with regard both to the USSR and the Polish people. Once more the Government in exile refused to waive its claim to Western Byelorussia and Western Ukraine.

In early January 1945 the Polish Committee of National Liberation was reorganised into the Provisional Government of Poland, and the Soviet Government recognised it as such. At the Crimea Conference the Soviet Union once more met its Allies half-way by agreeing to the reorganisation of the Provisional Polish Government "on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion in it of democratic leaders in Poland herself and of Poles living in exile".** The British Government, however, refused to respond realistically to this Soviet concession. It unreasonably insisted on a reorganisation which would, in effect, replace the Provisional Government with a somewhat improved variant of the emigré Government. This was unacceptable both to the Polish people and to the USSR. "It was impossible at that late date," Fleming points out, "to create a Poland oriented diplomatically to the East, but politically and ideologically to the West."*** Nothing came of the British attempts to turn Poland, liberated by the Soviet Army, into an anti-Soviet outpost of imperialism and a link in a new variant of an anti-Soviet cordon sanitaire. The might of the USSR and the will of the Polish people frustrated these plans.

The same factors operated when Britain and the USA tried to halt the socialist revolution in East European

* Alexander Werth, *Russia at War, 1941-1945*, London, 1964, p. 882.

** *Uneshnaya politika Sovetskogo Soyuza...*, Vol. III, p. 106.

*** D. F. Fleming, *Op. cit.*, p. 238.

countries that had been Germany's allies. In 1943 the ruling classes of Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria realised that the nazis were losing the war and began actively to look for a way out of the war. Naturally, they looked for a way that would allow them to retain their positions. The best solution, they felt, was to sign a separate armistice or peace with Britain and the USA. This time their interests coincided with those of Britain and the USA, who were determined to preserve reactionary regimes in Eastern Europe.

As regards the peoples of these countries, the defeat of the fascist powers confronted them with the question of choosing the road of post-war development. For them the preservation of the old reactionary regimes meant the preservation, in one way or another, of the fascist regimes that led Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria into an alliance with nazi Germany and to a military disaster. Naturally, the old, bankrupt policies were obnoxious to the peoples, who wanted their countries to develop along democratic lines. Fascism's military defeat and the complete discrediting of the capitalist circles associated with the fascists facilitated the solution of this problem. Moreover, the peoples of these countries could count on support from the Soviet Union.

In 1943, prior to the Tehran Conference, the British had been certain of the success of their political and strategic designs in the Balkans, and reacted favourably to the peace overtures which the ruling circles of Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria were making through fairly numerous channels.

The British sought to come to terms with those circles on their withdrawal from the war as soon as British and American troops landed in the Balkans and reached the frontiers of their countries. This suited both the British and the governments of the enemy countries concerned, for it gave the British the possibility of occupying these countries before the Soviet Army could reach them, and as for the discredited regimes they had the possibility of remaining in power with the support of the occupation forces.

In accordance with these designs Britain, the USA and Hungary signed a preliminary secret agreement on September 9, 1943. This agreement was preceded by negotiations between a representative of the Hungarian Government and the British Minister in Turkey in August of the same year. At these negotiations the Hungarians said their Government was prepared to lay down arms as soon as Anglo-US

forces reached the Hungarian frontier. Under the deal made at these negotiations, on September 9, 1943 on a ship in the Sea of Marmora the British Minister in Turkey Sir Hugh Knatchbull-Hugessen gave the Hungarian representative the terms of the preliminary agreement. Under this agreement the Hungarian Government reaffirmed its communication of August 17 regarding its surrender, while the Allies promised not to divulge the agreement until their troops were on the Hungarian frontier; regular liaison was established between the Western Allies and the Hungarian Government.* The nature of this agreement testifies to the British intention of helping the fascists to remain in power after Hungary's surrender.

The Rumanian Government likewise negotiated with Britain and the USA with the purpose of concluding a separate deal. Alexandre Cretzianu, the Rumanian envoy in Turkey, conducted these negotiations with British Embassy staff in Ankara in the autumn of 1943. In his memoirs Cretzianu says he was instructed to inform the British "that the present Government [the fascist Government headed by Antonescu.—*U.T.*] considers itself to be in office solely to ensure order, and that it would immediately yield the reins to a Government approved by the British and Americans".** At the same time, the Rumanian Government contacted the US Ambassador in Madrid. But these negotiations proved to be abortive.

The situation changed considerably after the Tehran Conference, when Churchill's Balkan strategy was officially scrapped. This deprived the British Government of the certainty that its troops would reach the frontiers of the Balkan and East European countries, and therefore there was no longer any need to sign preliminary agreements with the German satellites after the model of the agreement signed with the Hungarian fascist regime. However, as the final defeat of the fascist bloc loomed larger, the ruling circles of these countries grew more and more frantic in their desire to surrender to Anglo-American forces. In January 1944 the Antonescu Government used neutral channels to send a

* *Uengriya i utoraya mirovaya voina. Sekretniye diplomaticheskiye dokumenty iz istorii kanuna i perioda voyny* (Hungary and the Second World War. Secret Diplomatic Documents of the Eve and Period of the War), Moscow, 1962, pp. 298-99.

** Alexandre Cretzianu, *The Lost Opportunity*, London, 1957, p. 94.

message to Washington, stating that "Rumania is not waging war against Britain and the United States. When British and American troops arrive on the Danube, they will not be opposed by Rumanian troops. The Rumanian troops at that moment will be on the Dniester, fighting back the Russians."* This stand had the backing of the leaders of the "opposition" bourgeois-landowner parties in Rumania.

Britain and the USA had no right to negotiate an armistice or peace with Germany or her satellites without the knowledge and participation of the USSR. This was stipulated in the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of 1942 and in the United Nations Declaration of January 1, 1942. Besides, in 1944 the military situation was such that a separate armistice signed by Britain and the USA could change nothing in Eastern Europe inasmuch as their troops could not get to that area. Therefore, when the Rumanian Government sent Count Barbu Stirbey at the head of a delegation to Cairo in the spring of 1944, he had to talk to representatives of the USSR, Britain and the USA. The Rumanian Government turned down the terms that were offered to it because it still hoped that the German occupation troops would be replaced by Anglo-American forces. In August 1944 the Soviet Army's offensive carried it to the Rumanian frontier, compelling Rumania to sue for peace. The armistice was signed in Moscow on September 12, 1944; the text was drawn up jointly by the governments of the USSR, Britain and the USA.

Soon afterwards Germany's northern ally, Finland, withdrew from the war. Soviet and British representatives, acting on behalf of the United Nations, conducted talks with the Finnish Government delegation in Moscow on September 14-19. These talks ended with the signing of an armistice on September 19.

Bulgaria withdrew from the war under somewhat different conditions. In the summer of 1944 the Bulgarian Government sent its representative, Mushanov, to Cairo to negotiate Bulgaria's withdrawal from the war and that country's occupation by Anglo-US forces.** A British mission secretly went to Bulgaria in early September, and in the talks it came to light that the British wanted Bulgaria to be

* Alexandre Cretzianu, *Op. cit.*, p. 130.

** *Istoriya Bolgarii* (A History of Bulgaria), Vol. II, Moscow, 1955, p. 356.

occupied by Turkish troops, who would subsequently be replaced by Anglo-American units.

On September 5 the Soviet Union declared war on Bulgaria, and the liberation of Bulgarian territory from the German invaders was started. On the night of September 8-9, a popular uprising led by the Communist Party broke out in Bulgaria. The Fatherland Front Government that was formed by the victorious insurgents declared war on Germany, and on October 28 Bulgarian representatives signed an armistice with the USSR, Britain and the USA in Moscow.

Hungary was the last of Germany's European allies to withdraw from the war. The Hungarian Government had maintained uninterrupted contact with British and American representatives, and it is significant that on the basis of information received as a result of this contact the Chief of the General Staff reported to the Council of Ministers of Hungary as early as August 25, 1944 that "foreign circles feel that Hungarian troops must hold the front against the Russians and offer no opposition to the British".* At that meeting the permanent Deputy Foreign Minister said that "the Anglo-Saxons do not want Hungary to be occupied by the Russians. They want the Hungarians to keep the Russians back until they themselves are able to occupy Hungary."^{**} However, the war followed a course that was not quite to the liking of the Anglo-Saxon powers, and on October 11, 1944 a delegation from the Horthy Government signed a preliminary armistice agreement in Moscow. True, soon afterwards the Germans installed a new Government in Hungary and the armistice remained unrealised. In December 1944 the democratic forces in Hungary formed a Provisional National Government on liberated Hungarian territory, and representatives of that Government signed the armistice terms in Moscow on January 20, 1945.

In Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary, at the time they withdrew from the war, the class struggle grew into an armed uprising of the people, into a general democratic revolution. This gave rise to deadly alarm in London and Washington. In view of the Soviet military presence in these countries Britain and the USA were unable to occupy them and throttle the people's progressive aspirations by military force.

* *Vengriya i vtoraya mirovaya voina*. . . , p. 330.

** Ibid.

They hoped to achieve this through political and diplomatic pressure. Since the armistice was signed on their behalf as well, the British and United States governments had their representatives on the Allied control commissions in Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria and persistently sought to interfere in the internal affairs of these countries, trying to pressure their governments and secure support from the USSR, which was the occupying power. Their efforts were aimed at restricting the activities of the revolutionary forces of the Rumanian, Bulgarian and Hungarian peoples and preserving, as far as possible, the position of the reactionary elements, i.e., hindering the establishment of popular governments and preserving the capitalist regime. Naturally, the Soviet Union could not endorse these efforts. Its sympathies were wholly and completely with the working masses and it gave them every assistance. This caused serious complications in its relations with its Allies.

The question of Allied policy in liberated Europe was brought up at the Crimea Conference in February 1945. At that conference it was agreed that the peoples liberated from nazi occupation and the peoples of the former Axis satellite states in Europe would be helped "to solve by democratic means their pressing political and economic problems". The implication was that these peoples would be helped "to destroy the last vestiges of nazism and fascism and to create democratic institutions of their own choice" and "form interim governmental authorities broadly representative of all democratic elements in the population and pledged to the earliest possible establishment through free elections of governments responsive to the will of the people".* This decision conformed to the interests and requirements of the peoples concerned.

Soon it was found that both the British and the Americans were giving an interpretation to the Declaration on Liberated Europe that differed completely from what the peoples thought it meant. Democracy, in the Anglo-American interpretation, implied the restoration in Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria of the power of the bourgeoisie and parties that had collaborated with nazi Germany, fought on her side against the USSR and established fascist regimes in their countries.

* *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, Washington, 1955, p. 972.

The peoples, naturally, rejected these claims and extended the revolutionary democratic reorganisation of their countries. Neither could the Soviet Union endorse this policy because, firstly, it clashed with the interests of the peoples of the countries concerned; secondly, in the event it was successful and anti-Soviet regimes were re-established the security of the USSR would again be threatened; and, thirdly, it would be a violation of the Allied decisions passed at the Crimea Conference. Fleming notes that in Eastern and South-eastern Europe Britain and the USA "sought to preserve the power of the top social strata which had long ruled these countries".*

The Soviet Union understood the Yalta decisions differently. It interpreted the word "democracy" in its direct meaning, i.e., rule by and for the people, and, naturally, in its policy towards Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria it was guided by the interests of the peoples of those countries. As *The Times* wrote, "Democracy to them [i.e., to Soviet people.—*U. T.*] is democracy of the Left".**

The British Government adopted a disapprobatory attitude to the Yalta decisions on liberated Europe, having signed them reluctantly. It would have been more to its liking if these decisions contained a direct demand for the preservation of capitalism in the countries concerned. British politicians and historians accuse Roosevelt of having been much too tractable at Yalta. Clement Attlee subsequently wrote: "That was Roosevelt's line at Yalta. It was two to one against us. We had to agree to many things we oughtn't to have agreed to."*** "I don't think," he said, "Roosevelt really understood European politics. I don't think any American did." Asked what could have been done to make developments in Eastern Europe follow the course desired by the British Government, he replied: "I think if Alexander had been allowed to go in Italy, he would have joined hands with the Yugoslavs and moved across into Czechoslovakia and perhaps right over Germany before the Russians got there."*) This was Churchill's old song in the rendition of his Labourite replacement. Attlee grieved over the fact that

* D. F. Fleming, Op. cit., p. 210.

** *The Times*, April 12, 1945, p. 5.

*** F. Williams, Op. cit., p. 52.

*) Ibid., p. 51.

British troops had not had the possibility of strangling the freedom aspirations of the East European peoples.

Attlee and people like him have really no grounds for heaping everything on Roosevelt. The US President backed the Yalta decisions not out of love of democracy but because he thought in realistic terms and, as distinct from Churchill, did not suffer from an inclination for adventurist gambles. He realised that Britain and the USA had not the strength to secure the aims which Churchill pursued in Eastern Europe. This was later reiterated by the *New York Herald Tribune*, which wrote: "Neither our military, our economic nor our ideological power reached far enough to determine the fate of the Balkan states."*

It is not to be ruled out that already then Roosevelt was aware of the extent to which, in the course of the war, the balance of power between the bourgeois world and the Soviet Union had changed in the latter's favour. Having realised this he probably pondered the expediency of accepting, in the relations with the USSR, the Soviet principle of peaceful coexistence of countries with different social systems. Roosevelt, it goes without saying, had the interests of the capitalist system at heart. The following considerations offered by the American Professor J. P. Morray weigh heavily in favour of this theory: "The spirit of Yalta, which he [Roosevelt.—U. T.] vainly fostered, was an expression of his determination to keep the competition peaceful lest mankind suffer the agony of a new war on the very morrow of finishing the old one."**

Questions of Strategy at Yalta

The end of 1944 witnessed a painful Anglo-American setback on the Western Front. The Germans used the halt of the Allied offensive at Germany's frontiers to launch a counter-offensive in the Ardennes, Belgium. The German objectives were to cut off and annihilate the Anglo-American forces in Belgium and the Netherlands, prevent them from resuming their offensive in 1945 and, thereby, get the possibility of transferring a considerable part of their troops

* *New York Herald Tribune*, March 5, 1947, p. 30.

** J. P. Morray, *From Yalta to Disarmament, Cold War Debate*, New York, 1961, p. 37.

to the Eastern Front. The Germans breached the Allied Front and advanced 90 kilometres. The ensuing grave situation caused a fresh outburst of the long-standing conflict between the British and the Americans over who should have the command of the land forces in Western Europe. The British wanted all the land armies to be subordinated to Field-Marshal Bernard Montgomery, but the Americans were flatly opposed to this. The German offensive was checked but the threat that the Second Front would be wiped out remained acute.

This compelled Churchill, on January 6, 1945, to write to Stalin and ask for the assistance of "a major Russian offensive on the Vistula Front, or elsewhere, during January".* The reply he got was that "in view of the Allies' position on the Western Front" it had been decided "to complete preparations at a rapid rate and, regardless of weather, to launch large-scale offensive operations along the entire Central Front not later than the second half of January".** On January 12, eight days before the deadline, Soviet troops struck a massive blow. The Germans at once discontinued their offensive operations in the West and began transferring troops to the East. During the first three weeks of the offensive the Soviet Army advanced 500 kilometres, reaching the Oder and a point 70 kilometres away from Berlin.

This magnificent example demonstrating the Soviet Union's desire to fulfil its Allied duty to the letter and really co-operate with Britain and the USA still further enhanced its prestige in the anti-fascist coalition. It showed Britain and the USA that the Soviet Union was a dependable Ally. During the bitter December and January days of the fighting in the Ardennes they realised once more how much they needed their alliance with the USSR. With only one-third of their forces the Germans created a terrible threat to the Anglo-American front. It was perfectly clear what would have happened if the Soviet Union had not been pinning down the other two-thirds of the German forces on the Eastern Front.

In 1951, when Averell Harriman had to explain the stand that was taken by the US delegation at the Crimea Conference, he said: "These tremendous and courageous operations

* *Correspondence...*, Vol. I, p. 294.

** *Ibid.*, pp. 294-95.

by the Soviet Army and the fact that Stalin honoured such a vital military commitment influenced the attitude of British and American representatives in subsequent negotiations with the Soviet Union—and built up favourable opinion for the Soviet Union among the people of the United States and the other Western Allies.”* This influenced all the decisions of the Crimea Conference, primarily, the decisions on Allied strategy.

A vast number of documents and books testify to the fact that Britain and the United States never conceived of ending the war in the Far East without Soviet military assistance. However, it would be wrong to assume that in early 1945 it was the only theatre where they needed Soviet assistance. The German break-through in the Ardennes convincingly showed how vital Soviet assistance was to Britain and the USA during the last months of the war in Europe. That explains why at Yalta Field-Marshal Alan Brooke of Britain and General Marshall of the USA raised the question of co-ordinating Allied operations with those of the Soviet Army. They declared that the Allies were planning an offensive north and south of the Ruhr, in the course of which the Anglo-American troops would have to force the Rhine. They expected powerful resistance from the Germans and requested the Soviet Command to build up pressure on the Eastern Front to prevent the Germans from transferring any forces to the West. The Soviet Union, for its part, considered that an Allied offensive in the West was necessary in order to facilitate the operations of the Soviet Army. True, the Allies declared they could not guarantee that the Germans would not transfer reinforcements from Italy to the Eastern Front.** In the end agreement was reached. The Americans proposed establishing liaison between the US, British and Soviet military leadership. This proposal did not please Churchill very much because he feared it might cost him much of his influence over the decisions taken by Eisenhower and his staff. Nonetheless he had to yield because the Soviet and American representatives favoured the proposal.

Moreover, at the Crimea Conference it was agreed that the Soviet Union would enter the war against Japan two or

* *Congressional Record. Proceedings and Debates of the 82nd Congress, First Session*, Vol. 97, No. 158.

** Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, p. 500.

three months after Germany surrendered and the war in Europe ended. This agreement was preceded by long negotiations between Britain and the USA, on the one hand, and the Soviet Union on the other. In one way or another this question was raised at almost all the top-level Allied conferences. As long as victory over Germany was still a matter of the distant future, the Soviet Union, naturally, could not comply with the desire of the Allies in this question. But at Tehran the Soviet Government assured Churchill and Roosevelt that their desires would be met. To a large extent this assurance unquestionably expedited the satisfactory settlement of the question of the Second Front. In October 1944 when Churchill was in Moscow he again raised the question of Soviet involvement in the war against Japan.

However, a verbal agreement did not suit Roosevelt, who, according to Neumann, "was determined at Yalta to secure a written pledge."*

That pledge was given. The document containing it stated the political terms on which it was to be discharged. The Soviet, British and American leaders agreed on the status quo of the Mongolian People's Republic, the restoration of Russia's rights that had been violated by Japan's perfidious attack in 1904, and the transfer of the Kuril Islands to the USSR. This agreement provided for the return to the Soviet Union of the southern part of Sakhalin Island, for priority of Soviet interests in the internationalised port of Dairen, the restoration of the lease of Port Arthur as a Soviet naval base, and joint Sino-Soviet management of the Chinese Eastern and South Manchurian railways.**

This agreement only restored historic justice, returning to the Soviet Union what had been forcibly wrested from a weak Russia by Japan early in the 20th century. Neumann writes: "Franklin Roosevelt was restoring to Russia what his predecessor Theodore Roosevelt had helped to secure for Japan at Portsmouth in 1905."*** Roosevelt arrived in the Crimea after having carefully considered this issue. On the basis of State Department archival documents relating to the Crimea Conference, Herbert Feis says that when this issue was reviewed Roosevelt "went on to state what he

* William L. Neumann, *Op. cit.*, p. 92.

** *Vneshnaya politika Sovetskogo Soyuz.*, Vol. III, pp. 111-12.

*** William L. Neumann, *Op. cit.*, p. 93.

considered the Soviet Union could ask with just title".* The American historian goes on to declare that "perhaps by the show of free and ready assent he was trying to make it a little harder for the Russians to press for more".** But no requests for more were forthcoming. Even Churchill had nothing to say against this agreement reached by the heads of the Soviet and US governments and then communicated to him. "I replied," he writes, "that we... were in favour of Russia's losses in the Russo-Japanese war being made good."***

It was by no means generosity which made Roosevelt and Churchill agree to restore the Soviet Union's rights in the Far East. Their motive was that this would enable them to receive maximum Soviet assistance in the war against Japan. At the same time, they felt a written pledge would tie the Soviet Union's hands at the future peace conference on the Far East.

Many Western historians reproach Roosevelt for having consented, at Yalta, to the restoration of the Soviet Union's rights in the Far East. Criticism of this kind is plainly untenable. All it shows is that this category of historians is guided not by considerations of justice and the historical rights of peoples but solely by hatred of the Soviet Union. Besides, they are not consistent in their criticism. They do not criticise Roosevelt for the decision taken at the Cairo Conference with Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek to return to China what Japan had at various periods wrested away from her by force. They thus use two yardsticks, apply two forms of justice. This is not surprising. This approach to the Allied decision to divest Japan of the fruits of her policy of conquest shows the class position of the historians concerned.

Churchill and Roosevelt were guided principally by their desire to secure Soviet assistance in the Pacific theatre. In early 1945 the strategic situation in that theatre was such that to defeat Japan the Americans and the British had to undertake numerous landing operations on the islands around her. This would have cost them much too high a price. Besides, they would then have had to invade Japan proper. Rough

* Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, p. 511.

** *Ibid.*

*** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 341.

estimates of the possible manpower losses struck them with horror. But that was not all. Even after the loss of Japan proper the Japanese would have been in a position to continue the war in Manchuria and other occupied Chinese territory. Consequently, land armies were needed to smash the Japanese forces in the Asian continent and thereby reduce Japan to surrender. By 1945 it was found that assistance of this kind could not be given by Kuomintang China. There was, therefore, only the Soviet Union, and for that reason US military leaders pressed their Government to secure Soviet assistance. They calculated that even with that assistance the war against Japan would last at least eighteen months after Germany was defeated.

Harriman tells us that the "military authorities estimated... that Soviet participation would greatly reduce the heavy American casualties.... The Joint Chiefs of Staff were planning an invasion of the Japanese home islands, and were anxious for the early entry of Russia in the war to defeat the Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchuria."** To back up this statement Harriman refers to a memorandum drawn up by the Joint Chiefs of Staff for Roosevelt on the eve of the Crimea Conference. In that memorandum they offered detailed arguments in favour of securing the earliest possible Soviet entry into the war against Japan. "These military considerations," Harriman says, "had been the subject of careful study by Roosevelt for a long time and they were uppermost in his mind at Yalta."*** In official State Department documents, published in 1949, US Secretary of State Dean Acheson is quoted as having stated that the US Government was mainly concerned with securing the Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan as soon as possible so that the Japanese army in Manchuria could not return to Japan at the critical moment.***

Another reason for the tractability of the British and Americans at Yalta was that even in 1945 they were unable to cope with Germany without assistance. Answering those who criticise the British and US governments for their eagerness to reach agreement with the USSR at Yalta, Churchill writes: "It is easy, after the Germans are beaten, to condemn

* *Congressional Record*..., Vol. 97, No. 158, p. 3.

** *Ibid*.

*** *United States Relations With China*, Washington, 1949, p. 8.

those who did their best to hearten the Russian military effort and to keep in harmonious contact with our great Ally, who had suffered so frightfully. What would have happened if we had quarrelled with Russia while the Germans still had two or three hundred divisions on the fighting front.”^{*}

Although Churchill wrote this in 1953, in 1945 and later he felt displeased with the decisions adopted at Yalta, firstly because they took into account the Soviet Union's just and democratic stand on a number of issues and, secondly, because he had played a secondary role at the Conference, having been compelled to reckon with the stand of the Soviet and American leaders. As the war drew to an end Britain found herself increasingly weaker than the USSR and the USA, and consequently her voice carried less and less weight in the Big Three.^{**} Regarding the Yalta decisions on the Far East, Churchill writes: “I must make it clear that though on behalf of Great Britain I joined in the agreement neither I nor Eden took any part in making it. It was regarded as an American affair, and was certainly of prime interest to their military operations. It was not for us to claim to shape it. Anyhow, we were not consulted, but only asked to approve. This we did.”^{***}

The Problem of Germany

Like all her plans for the post-war settlement, Britain's plans with regard to Germany were determined by the two contradictions in the world: the basic contradiction between socialism and capitalism and the contradiction between imperialist powers. At first the second contradiction was extremely pronounced, but with the approach of victory it was overshadowed by the basic contradiction, and the British, in spite of the lessons taught them by history, got down to drawing up new plans to use Germany against the Soviet Union. Field-Marshal Alan Brooke, Chairman of the British Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee, made the following entry in his diary under the date-line July 27, 1944: “Back to War Office to have an hour with Secretary of State discussing post-war policy in Europe. Should Germany be dis-

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 352.

** R. W. Thompson, *The Price of Victory*, London, 1960, p. 20.

*** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 342.

membered or gradually converted into an ally to meet the Russian threat of twenty years hence? I suggested the latter and feel certain that we must from now onwards regard Germany in a very different light. Germany is no longer the dominating power in Europe—Russia is.... Therefore, foster Germany, gradually build her up and bring her into a Federation of Western Europe. Unfortunately this must all be done under the cloak of a holy alliance between England, Russia and America.”* During the concluding stage of the war and after hostilities ended British policy with regard to Germany was pursued in accordance with this line as formulated by Alan Brooke after discussing this question with Anthony Eden.

The significance of the plans for a United States of Western Europe was defined in crystal-clear terms by Alan Brooke. British politicians and historians have made a tremendous effort to spread the unfounded view that this union was conceived by the British Government as a defensive alliance against Germany. Woodward, for instance, wants the reader to believe the detailed plan for “regional” defence was directed “against a renewal of German aggression”.** Brooke, on the other hand, maintains that this was a plan for an alliance not against Germany but with her against the USSR. The truth given in his diary was confirmed by Britain’s actions after the war.

One surely cannot accept as serious the attempts to represent the West European bloc planned by the British Government as a means to prevent future German aggression. It probably does not occur to those who peddled the idea that at a time when a powerful anti-fascist coalition existed and fought Germany and had set itself the aim of removing the threat of German aggression once and for all, the creation of such a bloc was both strange and suspicious. It was all the more suspicious in the light of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of 1942. The existence of plans of this kind was testimony that Britain had no intention of preserving an effective alliance with the USSR after the war because her membership of an anti-Soviet bloc would ultimately have nullified that alliance. That is exactly what happened in 1955.

* Arthur Bryant, *Op. cit.*, p. 242.

** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 465.

The British ruling circles were agreed on the necessity of using Germany against the USSR after the war, but there were many disagreements regarding the best ways and means of achieving that purpose without jeopardising Britain's security. A hard line towards Germany after the war was urged by Sir Robert G. Vansittart, the well-known British diplomat. In the USA a similar line was demanded by the US Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. In Britain many politicians feared Germany's might after the war and wanted her to be dismembered. Thus, the anti-Soviet designs for using Germany against the USSR clashed with considerations about the need to weaken her as much as possible to rule out any threat from her to British interests in Europe. The same situation obtained in the USA. That explains why at the second Quebec Conference in September 1944 Churchill and Roosevelt adopted the Morgenthau Plan of turning Germany into primarily an agricultural country and carving her up into a number of weak states.* This implied that at the time the British Government felt a dismembered Germany would best serve its purposes. However, as the war was drawing to a close the British became less and less certain that a dismembered Germany would be a sufficiently effective counterbalance to the Soviet Union. Besides, they had to reckon with the Soviet Union's objection to Germany's dismemberment.

The European Advisory Commission began its work in London in January 1944. Its task was to draw up the terms for Germany's surrender, determine the occupation zones of the three Allied powers in Germany and submit proposals for the Allied control mechanism in Germany. On the commission Britain was represented by Lord Strang, the Soviet Union by F. T. Gusev, who replaced I. M. Maisky as the Soviet Ambassador in London in October 1943, and the USA by Ambassador John G. Winant.

In the commission on January 25, 1944 Britain suggested forming a committee which would consider the question of Germany's dismemberment. Winant seconded this suggestion. F. T. Gusev, however, declined to discuss it. The "result was that discussion of Strang's Draft Terms of Reference for the Dismemberment of Germany Committee was

* Cordell Hull, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 1604-10.

postponed and EAC never returned to the matter".* Britain accorded the EAC considerably more attention than either the USSR or the USA. Strang had a large staff and received constant assistance from various ministries, and the Government frequently discussed the stand Strang had to adopt in the commission.** The British counted on ensuring some of their interests in the German issue by pushing relevant decisions through the EAC. Time was working against them and they were eager to get these decisions through at this stage. The Americans, on the other hand, did not give the EAC any particular attention. They were in no hurry to pass decisions. In October 1944 Roosevelt wrote to Hull that he disliked "making detailed plans for a country which we do not yet occupy"***

The terms of Germany's surrender did not evoke much argument. Strang submitted a draft of a document consisting of 70 articles specifically treating of not only the military and political but also the economic aspect of the problem. It suited the British to tie the hands of their Allies beforehand with definite commitments. The Americans wanted freedom of action and submitted a draft consisting of 13 points of a very general nature. The Soviet draft was more detailed and concrete and concerned mainly the military aspect. A compromise decision was adopted.*)

Agreement was reached quickly on the question of control. The EAC recommendations provided for a Control Council consisting of representatives of the USSR, Britain and the USA. The three Allied commanders in the corresponding zones of occupation would form the Control Council. Argument raged mostly around the question of demarcating the occupation zones. After the war some Western leaders, guided by anti-Soviet sentiments, condemned their governments for having agreed to what in their opinion was a much too large Soviet occupation zone and for having left Berlin in that zone. Lord Boothby, a Conservative leader, for instance, maintained that the Western Allies "agreed to a zonal system in Germany, the authors of which . . . should be certified

* *International Affairs*, No. 5, 1955, p. 41. The article from which the quotation has been taken is based on important, hitherto unpublished documents from the archives of the Soviet Foreign Ministry.

** W. Strang, *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 209.

*) *Ibid.*, pp. 209-10.

as insane if they are still alive".* With the exception of Winant, all of them are alive, and Strang and one of his associates, Goronwy Rees, took steps to justify themselves. Strang has done it in his memoirs, while Rees wrote to *The Sunday Times*. According to Rees, the British recommendations to the EAC were drawn up by Attlee's Ministerial Committee, which had been set up by Churchill in 1943, and then by the Post-Hostilities Planning Committee which replaced it. These bodies drew up "the plan for the Three-Power occupation of Germany, including the Three-Power occupation of Berlin".**

Under the British draft, of which this part did not evoke much objection, the Soviet occupation zone was to embrace 40 per cent of Germany, 36 per cent of her population and 33 per cent of her productive resources. Provision was made for a reduction of the Soviet zone after part of German territory passed to Poland.***

The zones question was the subject of the most heated arguments between the British and Americans. The British insisted on getting northwestern Germany as their zone of occupation, which meant that the southern and southwestern parts would remain for the Americans. Roosevelt was categorically opposed to this. Both sides proffered the most diverse arguments, but when Feis notes that the British "wanted to be in a position to control Britain's great competitor, the Ruhr"*) he pinpoints the reason for the doggedness shown by Britain. The argument was taken to the top level, and at the Quebec Conference in September 1944 Roosevelt yielded to Churchill's solicitations.

Replying to the criticism of the decision giving the Soviet Union a zone whose boundaries were only 100 miles east of the Rhine, Strang observes that "it is well to recall the circumstances of the time. The discussions on the occupation of Germany began before D-day, and . . . were concluded in mid-September 1944, when we were still far from establishing ourselves on the Rhine. It could not be foreseen how deeply the Western Allied forces would penetrate into Germany. There was still some doubt whether . . . the Soviet armies would cross the German frontier, and whether they would

* *The Sunday Times*, August 13, 1961.

** Ibid.

*** W. Strang, Op. cit., p. 214.

*) Herbert Feis, Op. cit., p. 362.

not stand fast there, having expelled the enemy from their soil and that of their neighbours, and leave the Western Allies to finish off the war. . . . It seemed to our Government to be of advantage to us that they should be encouraged to work with us to the end.”* Further, Strang notes that with this objective in mind it was felt there had “to be three zones, there must be broad equality among them, taking into account area, population and productive resources.”** If there was anything to criticise the Western Allies for, it was by no means for an excess of attention to Soviet interests. Indeed, even Strang has admitted that the zones were equal, which meant that the Soviet Union, which had made a larger contribution to victory than either Britain or the United States, was given a zone equal to that of each of its Western Allies. If anything it was not a case of excessive concessions to the USSR or of its encouragement by the Western Allies, but of a transgression of simple justice towards it. The reason the USSR did not insist on a zone equal to its contribution to victory was that it wished to give further proof of its desire and readiness to co-operate with its Western Allies in peace as in war.

The same motives underlay Winant’s position as that of Strang. The Americans felt that if the Soviet Union were not given a zone equal to that of the American and British, it might occupy a considerably larger territory at the end of the war. John C. Campbell, formerly of the US State Department, writes that the USA had “but two ways of heading off what happened: 1) avoiding all agreement on zones of occupation, thus taking a chance on where the various Allied forces would be when war ended . . . 2) seeking agreement on a joint occupation with forces of all occupying Powers serving side-by-side throughout Germany. The first alternative would have risked the possibility of having the Russians on the Rhine, which in early 1944 when the Soviet zone was agreed on seemed more likely than that the Americans and British would be on the Oder.” The second alternative, Campbell says, was rejected by the State Department because “though it would have given the West some foothold in East Germany, it would also have put Soviet soldiers on the Rhine and in the Ruhr”.*** To avoid these situations

* W. Strang, *Op. cit.*, pp. 213-14.

** *Ibid.*, p. 214.

*** *Foreign Affairs*, January 1956, p. 315.

the Americans backed the British plan for three zones of occupation.

The recommendations drawn up by the EAC were approved at the Crimea Conference, where, at the same time, it was decided to give France an occupation zone and a seat on the EAC. Territory from the British and American zones was formed into a French zone. Three elements of synchronised Allied policy—demilitarisation, denazification and democratisation of Germany—were formulated in the decision on Germany adopted at the Crimea Conference. This was a major triumph of Soviet foreign policy, a triumph conforming to the interests of all mankind, including the German people.*

The question of dismembering Germany was raised by the Western Allies at Yalta as well. Roosevelt spoke in favour of dividing her into five or seven states.** Churchill declared that the British Government in principle agreed to her dismemberment.*** This question was turned over for consideration to a special commission set up under Eden's chairmanship. On March 9, 1945, on instructions from Eden, Lord Strang forwarded to F. T. Gusev, the Soviet representative on that commission, the Draft Terms of Reference for the Dismemberment of Germany Committee, which stated that the commission had to determine "in what manner Germany should be divided, into what parts, with what boundaries and with what inter-relationship among the parts".*) On March 26, 1945 Gusev sent Eden a letter stating: "The Soviet Government understands the decision of the Crimea Conference on the dismemberment of Germany not as an obligatory plan for the dismemberment of Germany, but as a possible perspective for pressure on Germany with the aim of rendering her harmless in the event of other means proving inadequate."**) On Victory Day, May 9, 1945, an address from the head of the Soviet Government to the people stated in part: "The Soviet Union celebrates victory, but has no intention of either dismembering or destroying Germany."***)

* *Uneshnaya politika Sovetskogo Soyuza...*, Vol. III, pp. 101-03.

** *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conferences at Malta and Yalta*, Washington, 1955, p. 541.

*** Ibid.

*) *International Affairs*, No. 5, 1955, p. 42.

**) Ibid.

***) *Uneshnaya politika Sovetskogo Soyuza...*, Vol. III, p. 45.

Thanks to this Soviet stand, Germany was not dismembered at the time. "By the time of the Potsdam Conference in July 1945," Neumann notes, "both Britain and the United States had shifted views and dismemberment plans were dropped."** Subsequently, after the war, Britain and the USA after all put their plan into effect, dismembering Germany into two parts.

On the question of reparations from Germany Churchill was, at the Crimea Conference, more hostile than Roosevelt with regard to the satisfaction of the Soviet Union's just claims. It was agreed that Germany would be made to pay in kind for the damage she had inflicted on the Allied powers during the war. A Reparations Commission consisting of Soviet, British and American representatives was formed in Moscow to draw up a reparations plan. Roosevelt agreed that the reparations should total 20,000 million dollars and that half of that sum should go to the Soviet Union.** Churchill was opposed to such a fair decision. His motives were that he did not wish Germany, which figured prominently in his anti-Soviet plans, to be weakened by the exaction of reparations and, in addition, he did not desire to help in the restoration of the Soviet Union by satisfying its legitimate claim to reparations. In this connection, the head of the Soviet Government declared at Yalta that if the British felt the USSR should receive no reparations at all it would be better for them to say so frankly.*** The Soviet Union's legitimate reparations claims were never fully satisfied.

Churchill Seeks to Turn the War Against the Soviet Union

The Yalta decisions stated that the USSR, Britain and the USA reaffirmed their "common determination to maintain and strengthen in the peace to come that unity of purpose and of action which has made victory possible and certain. . . . Only with continuing and growing co-operation and understanding among our three countries and among all the peace-loving nations can the highest aspiration of humanity be

* William L. Neumann, Op. cit., p. 80.

** *Uneshnaya politika Sovetskogo Soyuza, 1947* (Soviet Foreign Policy, 1947), Part I, Moscow, 1952, p. 419.

*** Herbert Feis, Op. cit., p. 536.

realised—a secure and lasting peace.”* For the Soviet Union this was a programme of action, but for Churchill it was little more than a piece of eloquent writing. Before the ink of his signature under the Yalta decisions had had time to dry he began to act in opposition to them. In the spring of 1945 his actions might have not only wrecked the anti-nazi coalition but led to more catastrophic consequences for the world.

By that time he had dropped his Balkan strategy for the simple reason that the Balkans had been liberated by the Soviet Army. Instead, he evolved a German strategy which required that Berlin should be taken at all costs by Western Allied troops before the Soviet Army got there. Churchill's aim was to deprive the Soviet Army of the possibility of capturing the nazi capital, to detract from the moral and political significance of its struggle against fascism and obtain a strong argument to support the claim that the British and American forces had played the major role in defeating Germany. Moreover, the capture of Berlin by British and American troops would have placed almost the entire territory of Germany under Western control and left the Soviet Army considerably east of the western boundary of the Soviet occupation zone. The idea was to prevent Soviet troops from reaching central Germany.

Churchill writes that in March 1945 the decisive points of his strategy and policy were:

“*First*, that Soviet Russia had become a mortal danger to the free world.

“*Secondly*, that a new front must be immediately created against her onward sweep.

“*Thirdly*, that this front in Europe should be as far east as possible.

“*Fourthly*, that Berlin was the prime and true objective of the Anglo-American armies.

“*Fifthly*, that the liberation of Czechoslovakia and the entry into Prague of American troops was of high consequence.

“*Sixthly*, that Vienna, and indeed Austria, must be regulated by the Western powers. . . .

* *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conferences at Malta and Yalta*, p. 975.

"*Seventhly*, that Marshal Tito's aggressive pretensions . . . must be curbed.

"*Finally, and above all*, that a settlement must be reached on all major issues between the West and the East in Europe *before the armies of democracy melted.*"* Such was the programme of action charted by Churchill against the Soviet Union. The second and last points of this programme plainly showed the intention of the British leader to use military force against the USSR. The prime and only "fault" of the Soviet Union was that its armies were successfully crushing the nazi armies and, in pursuing them, were advancing farther and farther westward, bringing liberation to the peoples of Europe. Churchill wanted the impossible: that Soviet troops should beat the nazis without entering their territory.

His Berlin strategy had no chance of success not only because it was a flagrant violation of the Yalta decisions, which stated that Berlin and a vast territory west of it would be part of the Soviet zone of occupation. It was thereby presupposed that this territory would be occupied by Soviet troops. Churchill's plan was fraught with extremely dangerous consequences for the anti-fascist coalition, and another reason it was unrealistic was that the situation on the Western and Eastern fronts did not permit the Western Allies to put it into effect. Therefore, at the close of March, Eisenhower decided against Churchill's plan for an offensive against Berlin, calling it "more than unwise; it was stupid".** Instead, he decided on an offensive along the line Kassel-Leipzig. He communicated his decision to the Soviet Supreme Commander-in-Chief. This was the liaison the Allies had agreed upon at Yalta, but Churchill fumed with rage, because the "liberty" taken by Eisenhower had deprived him of the possibility of continuing to pressure Eisenhower's Headquarters in an effort, against common sense, to turn the Western armies towards Berlin.

Consuming hatred of the Soviet Union and of the East European peoples, who were aspiring for freedom and progress, was muddling Churchill's thinking. With reference to the British political and strategic aims in March-April 1945, Fleming writes: "If . . . any one of the Allies had earned the right to take Berlin, it was Russia. She had supplied the

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 400.

** Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Op. cit.*, p. 396.

vast bulk of the blood required to crush Hitlerism. She could not be denied an occupation zone in Germany on any ground, and if she was to have one in East Germany Berlin would be in it.”*

On April 5 Churchill wrote to Roosevelt: "... the more important that we should join hands with the Russian armies as far to the east as possible, and, if circumstances allow, enter Berlin.”** But circumstances did not allow, and Churchill realised this two weeks later, for on April 19 he wrote to Eden, who was in the USA at the time: "It would seem that the Western Allies are not immediately in a position to force their way into Berlin. The Russians have 2,500,000 troops on the section of the front opposite that city. The Americans have only their spearheads, say twenty-five divisions, which are covering an immense front.”***

When it was found that the Berlin strategy could not be put into effect, Churchill tried the largest piece of perfidy undertaken in the course of the war against the Soviet Union. He decided to come to terms with the enemy, with nazi Germany, to save what had remained of nazism, and, shoulder to shoulder with the Germans turn, the guns against the USSR. At the close of April the situation in some measure favoured the realisation of this plan.

Firstly, nazi Germany was crumbling under the blows of the Soviet Army, which was storming Berlin. The Soviet assault was supplemented with an offensive of the Allied armies in the west. Frantic to save something, their necks at least, the nazi leaders intensified their attempts to strike a bargain with Britain and the USA on the terms of surrender to them and on continuing the war against the USSR. Alarmed by developments, reactionary circles in Britain and the USA were prepared to accept such a bargain in order to save the remnants of nazism in Germany and use them against the revolutionary movement in Europe. A consequence of this was, in particular, the dispatch to Switzerland in March 1945 for negotiations with the nazis of representatives of the British Field-Marshal Alexander, the Allied Supreme Commander in Italy—General L. Lemnitzer, Deputy Chief of the Joint Staff of the American 5th Army, and General

* D. F. Fleming, *Op. cit.*, p. 169.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 446.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 449.

T. S. Airey, Chief of Intelligence of the Combined Chiefs of Staff.* Churchill was right when referring to these negotiations he wrote: "I realised at once that the Soviet Government might be suspicious of a separate military surrender in the south, which would enable our armies to advance against reduced opposition as far as Vienna and beyond, or indeed towards the Elbe or Berlin."** And how! The Soviet Government strongly protested against these separate negotiations, declaring that "this situation cannot help preserve and promote trust between our countries".*** In April the Germans pressed harder for a separate armistice in the west. Goering and Himmler vied with each other in an effort to reach understanding with Britain and the USA.

Secondly, Franklin D. Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945, and was succeeded to the US Presidency by the narrow-minded and rabidly anti-Soviet Harry S. Truman. Churchill was aware of these qualities and decided to use them to secure a change of US policy towards the USSR. Without US co-operation Britain could not strike a bargain with the Germans and turn the front against the USSR. On April 24 Churchill wrote to Eden that a settlement with the Soviet Union "can only be founded upon their recognition of Anglo-American strength. My appreciation is that the new President is not to be bullied by the Soviets."*) These two phrases state the concept of relations between Britain and the USSR and joy over Truman's rise to power.

In the nazi camp Roosevelt's death gave rise to hopes for a miracle—that the Western Allies would turn against the USSR and nazi Germany would survive. Under the date-line of April 29, the log of the German Supreme Command contains the following entry: "Colonel-General Jodl says that the war must be continued in order to gain time politically." This implied the hope that a wedge would be driven between the Soviet Union and its Western Allies. "The leadership hopes that as a result of this the Western Allies may, at the eleventh hour, change their attitude towards Germany."**)

The nazis, it must be admitted, had some grounds for such

* *International Affairs*, No. 2, 1959, p. 80.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 387.

*** *Correspondence...*, Vol. II, p. 206.

*) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 429.

**) *Uoyenno-istorichesky zhurnal*, No. 6, 1960, p. 89.

calculations. In any case, this is borne out by Churchill's actions at the time. On November 23, 1954 he wrote: "Even before the war had ended and while the Germans were surrendering by hundreds of thousands and our streets were crowded with cheering people, I telegraphed to Lord Montgomery directing him to be careful in collecting the German arms, to stack them so that they could easily be issued again to the German soldiers whom we should have to work with if the Soviet advance continued."^{*}

It was not blameworthy that arms were collected and stacked, but the fact that Churchill was getting ready to co-operate with German troops against the Soviet Union and planned to issue weapons to German soldiers for use against the USSR was quite another matter. It meant that Britain was quite willing to enter into an alliance with the Germans and work hand in glove with them in turning the guns against the USSR.

But this could not be done without the USA, and as a first step in that direction Churchill decided to come to terms with the Americans on the conclusion of a separate armistice with the Germans in the West in violation of the most important agreements signed with the Soviet Union. Here is the story as told by Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of the US President's Staff: "An exciting sequence of events that built up to the climax of the unconditional surrender of Germany began on April 25. I was at lunch with my brother at the Army-Navy Club when a telephone call from the White House sent me hurrying to the Pentagon Building. There, at 2 p.m., I found the President, General Marshall, Admiral King and Major-General Hull waiting for a telephone call from Prime Minister Churchill. We were gathered in the communications centre, a portion of the enormous Pentagon guarded even more closely, if possible, than the offices of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. There was a connection on a secret line to a small switchboard in Churchill's offices at No. 10 Downing Street in London. Shortly after I arrived, the Prime Minister was on the 'secret' as he called it. I listened in with the President.

"Churchill said he had information from Sweden through the American Minister that Himmler had asked Count Bernadotte to make an offer to America and Britain of the

^{*} *The Times*, November 24, 1954, p. 8.

surrender of all German forces on the Western Front, including those in Holland, Denmark and Norway. Churchill reported that Himmler said he was speaking for the German Government. . . .

"Truman told the Prime Minister that America could agree only to an unconditional surrender on all fronts in agreement with Russia and Britain. Churchill was anxious to end the war. Truman said he was, too, but we must stand by our commitments."*

This thwarted Churchill's plans. There were two reasons for this: the strength of the Soviet Union and the will of the peoples. Churchill blames the failure of his plan on the USA. "The United States," he wrote, "stood on the scene of victory . . . but without a true and coherent design. Britain, though still very powerful, could not act decisively alone. I could at this stage only warn and plead. Thus this climax of apparently measureless success was to me a most unhappy time. (I moved amid cheering crowds) . . . with an aching heart and a mind oppressed by forebodings."** However, the USA was likewise powerless to do anything in the direction desired by Churchill.

Roosevelt had been aware of Churchill's ideas on this score. In Hyde Park in December 1944 he "talked reflectively of British ability to get other countries to combine in some sort of bloc against the Soviet Union and said soberly, 'It's what we've got to expect' ".*** For Churchill America was of particular interest in this light. He would obviously have given her the opportunity to bear the brunt of the war he was planning against the USSR. There is no doubt that this was his line of thinking. He spoke of the prospects of another world war in a telegram to Eden on May 4.*) But the prospects were unfavourable.

As early as May 16, 1944 the US Joint Chiefs of Staff wrote to the Secretary of State that at the close of the war "the outstanding fact to be noted is the recent phenomenal development of the heretofore latent Russian military and economic strength. . . . In a conflict between these two powers [i.e., Britain and the USSR.—*U. T.*] the disparity in the military strengths that they could dispose upon that continent

* William D. Leahy, *Op. cit.*, pp. 354-55.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 400.

*** D. F. Fleming, *Op. cit.*, p. 162.

*) Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 439.

would, under present conditions, be far too great to be overcome by our intervention on the side of Britain. Having due regard to the military factors involved—resources, manpower, geography and particularly our ability to project our strength across the ocean and exert it decisively upon the continent—we might be able to successfully defend Britain, but we could not, under existing conditions, defeat Russia. In other words, we would find ourselves engaged in a war which we could not win.”* This was one of the two principal reasons underlying the US stand and the collapse of Churchill’s plans.

The second was that under no circumstances would the people have supported a “switch” of the war against the USSR, which they rightly and justly regarded as their liberator from fascism. In an article published in 1955, Woodward wrote: “Public opinion indeed outside the areas directly under Russian control would not have understood, and to a large extent would have been outraged, by the threat of force against an Ally which had in fact taken for so long the weight of the German attack on land and whose resistance had made possible the invasion of German-controlled Europe from the west.”** A memorandum on “international communism” was prepared for Truman on the eve of the Berlin Conference. Among other things, it pointed out that as a result of the heroic feats of the Soviet troops . . . “the majority of Europeans regard them as their liberators. Even in the West the Red Army receives the major share of the credit.”***

Thus, neither the balance of power nor moral and political factors favoured the implementation of Churchill’s adventurist designs. The popular nature of the anti-fascist coalition was pronounced at the time. Created by the will of the peoples to fight fascism, it was, by their will, preserved in the spring of 1945 when the joint efforts of the USSR, Britain, the USA and their Allies brought the long-awaited victory over Germany. The act of military surrender, whose terms were dictated by representatives of the Supreme Commander-

* *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conference of Berlin, 1945*, Vol. I, Washington, 1960, p. 265.

** Llewellyn Woodward, “Some Reflections on British Policy”, 1939-45; *International Affairs*, July 1955, Vol. XXXI, No. 3, p. 283.

*** *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conference of Berlin*, Vol. I, p. 278.

in-Chief of the Red Army and the Supreme Commander of the Western Allied forces, was signed by the German High Command in defeated Berlin on May 8, 1945.

Britain and the United Nations Organisation

Almost immediately after the Moscow Foreign Ministers Conference in October 1943, the British Foreign Office initiated preliminary discussions with the US State Department on questions of procedure in connection with the agreement reached at Moscow to set up an international security organisation. At the same time, a special Interdepartmental Committee in London engaged in drawing up recommendations which the British Government would submit at the time the future world body was set up. This activity resulted in five lengthy memoranda dealing with the pattern, functions and aims of the planned organisation. The British plan envisaged retaining in the new organisation many features of the Covenant of the League of Nations, but made it more flexible. Moreover, provision was made for the possibility of regional organisations emerging side by side with the world body and in some way linked up with it.

When the War Cabinet examined the prepared recommendations, the question of regional organisations at once acquired paramount importance. Churchill supported the idea of setting up regional bodies for Europe, America and Asia, as well as, possibly, for Africa. He formulated his views on this issue in a memorandum of May 8, 1944, in which he enlarged on the idea of regional organisations, an idea which in his mind meant preserving the Anglo-American military bloc and promoting co-operation between the two countries after the war. He planned to fit a British-controlled United States of Europe and the Anglo-American military alliance into the future edifice of a world security body. He regarded the Anglo-American bloc as a means of removing American objections to a regional federation in Europe and as a bulwark for a declining Britain in post-war world politics.

Churchill worked on these ideas throughout the latter half of the war. In May 1943, when he was on a visit to the United States, he invited a large group of American leaders (Roosevelt was not present) to the British Embassy and

expounded to them his ideas about setting up an association consisting of Britain, the USA, the USSR and, possibly, China, if the Americans wanted "to prevent further aggression in future by Germany or Japan". Subordinate to this World Council there should be three Regional Councils: one for Europe, one for the American Hemisphere, and one for the Pacific.* To allay American fears that the British might use the European Council against the USA, Churchill said it was imperative that "the United States and the British Commonwealth worked together in fraternal association". This co-operation was to be so close as to lead to some sort of integration of US and British citizenship, the joint use of more military bases for the defence of common interests, the preservation of the Combined Anglo-American Staff and the working out of a common line of foreign policy. The Americans at once saw what Churchill was driving at. US Vice-President Henry A. Wallace said he was anxious "lest other countries should think that Britain and the United States were trying to boss the world". Churchill did not deny it. "I made it perfectly clear," he says, "that they ought not to put off necessary and rightful action by such suggestions."***

Churchill dwelt at length on these ideas in his memorandum of May 8, 1944 to the War Cabinet when it examined the nature of the future international security organisation. In face of opposition from the prime ministers of the Dominions, Churchill had to drop his idea of regional alliances, but the idea of a United States of Europe remained in his plans.***

At Dumbarton Oaks, USA, representatives of the USSR, USA, Britain and China met in conference in the period from August 22 to September 28, 1944 for preliminary talks on the charter of the new organisation. It was recommended that in addition to a General Assembly representing all members, the new organisation should have a Security Council to act as the main body responsible for the maintenance of world peace and security. The Security Council would have 11 members: five permanent members—the USSR, Britain, the USA, France and China—and six non-permanent

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 717.

** *Ibid.*, p. 721.

*** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, pp. 454-56.

members elected for a term of two years by the General Assembly. Provision was made for other bodies—a Military Staff Committee, an Economic and Social Council and an International Court of Justice.

All questions save two were settled with relative ease and speed. These concerned the voting procedure in the Security Council and the list of foundation members of the future organisation. By tradition, the British and Americans had a separate discussion of all the questions that were later brought up at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference. This discussion, says Sir Alexander Cadogan, who represented Britain at Dumbarton Oaks, showed that the Americans had come provisionally to the conclusion "that the permanent members of the Council should have a right of veto on any subject in which their own interests were involved, and that parties to a dispute should therefore be allowed, as in the League, to vote on it".* The idea of a veto in the Security Council, around which bourgeois politicians and the bourgeois press raised a clamour after the war, was thus advanced by the Americans. When the British opposed this idea during the separate Anglo-US talks, the Americans told them "that without a provision of this kind it would be difficult or impossible to get the plan through the Senate".**

At Dumbarton Oaks the Soviet representative spoke in favour of the principle of unanimity among the permanent members in the settlement of issues in the Security Council, but encountered opposition from the British representative. The American representative abandoned his original stand and aligned himself with the British representative.

In the USA there were lengthy arguments over this question. One group of statesmen opposed the veto, another, which included military leaders, Cordell Hull writes, was "willing to go farther than many of the political advisers in agreeing to Russia's position that the veto should be applied without exception".*** This implied that the Americans might return to their former stand.

What should be Britain's stand in this case? It was not easy to oppose both the USSR and the USA in this issue. After pondering the situation the London politicians came

* Ibid., p. 456.

** Ibid.

*** Cordell Hull, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 1470.

to the conclusion that the principle of unanimity was not bad after all, even for the British Government. It is said that Churchill was influenced by the opinion of Field Marshal Jan Smuts, who in September 1944 wrote him a series of letters on the question of the international security organisation. Smuts pointed out that the veto issue was "one which involves the honour and standing of Russia among her Allies", and recommended accepting the Soviet proposal. He offered two arguments in favour of this: firstly, if the Soviet proposal were not accepted the Soviet Union would not join the contemplated organisation and would "become the power centre of another group" and, secondly, "a brake like unanimity may not be so bad a thing" for Britain as well. "Where so much is at stake for the future," Smuts wrote in conclusion, "we simply must agree, and cannot afford to differ."*

Another factor influencing the stand of the British and US governments was that the peoples of Britain and the USA, like those of the rest of the world, wanted a world peace-keeping body in which the USSR, Britain and the USA would act in a spirit of complete concord and co-operation, and they wanted the coalition of Great Powers, which had won victory, to ensure world peace. "The American and British people were still counting on a continuation of co-operation with the Soviet Union after the war," Herbert Feis notes, summing up the results of the Dumbarton Oaks Conference.**

All this told on the Yalta Conference, where the issues outstanding at Dumbarton Oaks were finally settled. In December 1944, before the Yalta Conference opened, Roosevelt submitted new proposals for the voting procedure in the Security Council, meeting the desires of the USSR. "This calls, you will note," he wrote to Stalin, "for the unanimity of the permanent members in all Council decisions relating to a determination of a threat to peace, as well as to action for the removal of such a threat or for the suppression of aggression or other breaches of the peace. As a practical matter, I can see that this is necessary if action of this kind is to be feasible. I am consequently prepared to accept in this respect the view expressed by your Government in its memorandum

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, pp. 183-84.

** Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, p. 437.

presented at the Dumbarton Oaks meetings on an International Security Organisation.”* This put an end to British vacillation, and a decision on this question was adopted in the wording suggested by Roosevelt. In addition, Britain and the USA promised to support the suggestion to invite the Ukraine and Byelorussia as foundation members of the world body.

At Yalta it was decided to convene a United Nations Conference in San Francisco, USA, on April 25, 1945 to draw up the final text of the International Security Organisation's charter.

On the day the San Francisco Conference which instituted the United Nations Organisation opened, April 25, 1945, Soviet and American troops made history by establishing contact on the Elbe River in Germany. While the preparations for the conference were under way the British Government was preoccupied with the balance of votes at San Francisco, because it would be attended by only nine delegations from Europe, while Latin America would be represented by 19 delegations. It sought to use the question of inviting a Polish delegation to San Francisco to compel the Soviet Union to agree to a remodelling of the Polish Government, which would bring reactionary elements into prominence. When this was rejected the British thought of postponing the San Francisco Conference in order to pressure the USSR. Churchill was prepared to go so far as to hold the conference without the USSR,** but these were helpless gestures. The times had changed and questions of this kind could no longer be settled without Soviet participation. Churchill found he could not even suggest postponing the conference, for it would have meant going against the wishes of the US Government.

At San Francisco a sharp discussion flared up round the question of how the unanimity of the permanent members of the Security Council would be implemented in practice. Bound by the Yalta decisions, the British Government could not openly demand a revision of these decisions. Therefore, in collusion with the US Government, it used the bloc of small countries that took shape at the conference to “specify” the use of the veto to the disadvantage of the USSR. This

* *Correspondence...*, Vol. II, pp. 173-74.

** Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, pp. 636-37.

was done under the screen of demagogic declarations about the rights of small countries and so forth. The most active part in these attacks on the principle of unanimity was played by Herbert V. Evatt, the Australian Foreign Minister. The decision that was finally adopted on this question proved to be satisfactory to the USSR.

Britain was particularly anxious about how the United Nations Charter (the name was suggested by the British delegation at Dumbarton Oaks) would embody the idea of international trusteeship, which the US Government had urged throughout the war.

The Tehran Conference, held at the close of 1943, had been unable to deal earnestly with the problem of colonies in the post-war world. Roosevelt mentioned the colonial problem to Stalin, and this opportunity was taken by the Soviet delegation to record its unconditional stand against colonialism. Stalin told Roosevelt that "he did not propose to have the Allies shed blood to restore Indochina, for example, to the old French colonial rule". He welcomed the developments in the Lebanon as "the first step toward the independence of people who had formerly been colonial subjects".* He agreed with the trusteeship idea, emphasising that he had in mind the creation of a system that would help the oppressed peoples gain their independence sooner. Edward R. Stettinius says Roosevelt related the following episode: "When Churchill objected, the President said, 'Now, look here, Winston, you are outvoted three to one.' "** By "three", Roosevelt meant China, which had supported the idea of international trusteeship at the Cairo Conference.

In December 1944 the Americans again raised the trusteeship issue, this time in conversation with Halifax. In this connection Churchill wrote to Eden: "Pray remember my declaration in a speech of November 1942, against liquidating the British Empire. If the Americans want to take Japanese islands which they have conquered, let them do so with our blessing and any form of words that may be agreeable to them. But 'Hands Off the British Empire' is our maxim."***

* *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943*, p. 485.

** Edward R. Stettinius, *Roosevelt and the Russians, The Yalta Conference*, Garden City, New York, 1949, p. 238.

*** Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. 531.

The principles of the future trusteeship system were agreed on at the Yalta Conference, where it was decided that the UN Charter would provide for a territorial trusteeship machinery which would take over the mandated territories of the League of Nations, the territories wrested from the Axis countries at the termination of the war and any other territories that might voluntarily join the trusteeship system. The provision for the voluntary inclusion of territories into the trusteeship system greatly restricted the importance of the planned system as a means facilitating the independence of colonial countries. This provision was recorded on British insistence with US backing.

The Soviet Union was engaged in the final battles against Germany and, desiring to preserve unity in the anti-fascist coalition, was thus unable to achieve more at Yalta. However, several months later the military situation was such as to enable the Soviet Union to do much at San Francisco towards making the trusteeship system conform more fully to the interests of the enslaved nations.

The discussion of the destiny of colonial peoples, conducted at various inter-Allied and international conferences during the war, was marked by an acute struggle between the USSR, which was championing the interests of the enslaved peoples, and the imperialist powers, Britain, the USA and France among them, who, each in its own way, pressed for the preservation of colonialism. Through the efforts mostly of the Soviet Union the problem of colonies was taken out of the exclusive jurisdiction of the colonial powers concerned and turned into an international problem. Thanks to the Soviet Union and in spite of the desires of the colonialists the discussion of this problem proceeded from the angle of liberating the oppressed peoples of dependent and colonial countries from the yoke of imperialism.

At the San Francisco Conference it was forcefully demonstrated that in the anti-fascist coalition the Soviet Union was the only consistent champion of the freedom of the enslaved nations. Woodward notes that the "Russians ... wished to insert in the Charter a statement that the ultimate objective for 'trust territories' and colonies generally was independence. With American and French support the British delegation obtained a more limited statement."^{*}

^{*} Ibid., Op. cit., p. 535.

Speaking of the alignment of forces at the San Francisco Conference, the American historian McNeill points out that "the Soviet Union ... championed the rights of colonial peoples" while "the Americans supported the British and French",* i.e., colonialism.

At San Francisco the sharpest struggle between the Soviet delegation and the delegations of the colonial powers flared up over the question of the aims of the United Nations Organisation with regard to the colonial peoples. This was the principal issue of the discussions of the trusteeship system. Much depended on how this issue would be decided. Firstly, the inclusion in the UN Charter of the principle of independence would inevitably give powerful impetus to the national liberation movement and be a call to the oppressed peoples to activate their efforts with the objective of winning independence as quickly as possible. If this principle were to be rejected and something else incorporated in the UN Charter in its stead it would bring grist to the mill of the colonialists, enabling them to maintain, with references to the authority of this key conference, that the time had not come for granting independence to the colonial peoples. This sort of "settlement" of the issue would have been a serious obstacle to the national liberation movement. Secondly, the incorporation or non-incorporation of the principle of independence in the UN Charter would determine the future attitude of that organisation towards the desire of nations for liberation, and how far the UN could be utilised to facilitate the struggle of the peoples for independence.

The US stand on this issue at San Francisco convincingly demonstrated the colonialist character of US policy. The American draft of the UN Charter's chapter dealing with international trusteeship stated that the purpose of trusteeship was to enable the colonial territories to achieve self-government. The British draft stated that self-government for the peoples concerned was the purpose of trusteeship. The French draft did not even mention self-government, speaking only of "the progressive development of the political institutions" in the trust territories.** The USA, Britain and

* William Hardy McNeill, Op. cit., p. 597.

** S. B. Krylov, *Istoriya sozdaniya Organizatsii Obyedinennykh Natsii, Razrabotka teksta Ustava Organizatsii Obyedinennykh Natsii, (1944-1945)* (History of the Establishment of the UNO. The Working Out of the UN Charter [1944-1945]), Moscow, 1960, pp. 157-58.

France were supported by the Netherlands, the Union of South Africa, Belgium, Australia and some other countries. A colonialist bloc thus emerged as soon as the San Francisco Conference opened. It made every attempt to obtain a declaration to the effect that the time had not come for raising the question of independence for the colonial peoples, that this was a matter of the distant future, and that for the present self-government was as far as the colonial people could go.

The Soviet delegation opposed the colonialists with the demand that the UN Charter contain a provision on independence as the objective of the planned trusteeship system. It suggested that Chapter 1 of the Charter proclaiming the general purposes of the UN should state that the UN would promote friendly relations between nations "on the basis of respect for the principle of the equality and self-determination of peoples".* This principle obviously ran against the grain of the imperialist powers, whose ideology and policy is founded on the inequality of nations. However, the world situation in this period was such that the colonial powers could not tell the world they did not consider all nations to be equal. Ruth B. Russell writes that the Americans clearly did not like the Soviet proposal but they "agreed that it would be difficult to oppose the principle".** The Soviet proposal for inserting in the UN Charter the principle of the equality and self-determination of peoples was accepted.

Correspondingly the Soviet Union submitted amendments to the American draft of the Chapter on trusteeship, suggesting recording in the Charter that the purpose of trusteeship was not only self-government but also self-determination with the active participation of the peoples of the colonial territories in order to achieve complete state independence as soon as possible.*** This proposal was supported by China, Iraq, the Philippines, Egypt and a number of other countries. "The British, French, Netherlands, South African and United States delegates," Russell says, "were against including the controversial word. They elaborated previous arguments, stressing that 'self-government' did not exclude independence."*) This marked the beginning of the second stage of

* Ibid., p. 111.

** Ruth B. Russell, *Op. cit.*, p. 811.

*** S. B. Krylov, *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

*) Ruth B. Russell, *Op. cit.*, p. 816.

the Soviet Union's struggle for the inclusion in the UN Charter of the principle of independence for oppressed nations.

The British, American and other colonialist delegates found their position difficult. They had to oppose an idea which had the sympathy of all freedom-loving nations and which was being championed by the Soviet Union with all the weight of its immense international prestige. The arguments offered by the opponents of independence were both untenable and contradictory. While declaring that "self-government" did not exclude "independence", they were nonetheless opposed to the term "independence" figuring in the Charter. They maintained this would be tantamount to interference in the internal affairs of the colonial powers. However, it was not clear why the provision on self-government was not qualified as interference as well.

The British argument against the inclusion of the principle of independence as the aim of the international trusteeship system was that it would shatter colonial empires, which, they said, were a blessing to mankind. The British African colonies, the British delegate said, "saved us from defeat", adding that the same could be said of the French and Belgian colonial empires which were a "machine for the defence of liberty". "Could we really contemplate as the conscious aim of our deliberations, the destruction of this machine or its separation into its component parts?" The insertion of the principle of independence in the trusteeship chapter, he held, would "be unrealistic and prejudicial to peace and security".*

In order to calm public opinion the American delegation published a statement in which it "explained" its stand: in the American view "'self-government' was intended 'clearly' to include the attainment of independence 'if the people of a trusteeship area so desire and are prepared and able to assume the responsibilities of independence'".** This "explanation" only showed the reluctance of the Americans to recognise the right of the colonial peoples to independence. It convinced nobody, and the US delegation, Ruth Russell says, were worried lest the omission of the independence clause from the Charter would "enable the Soviet Union ...

* Ruth B. Russel, *Op. cit.*, pp. 823-24.

** *Ibid.*, p. 817.

to capitalise on 'Western' opposition".* The US Secretary of the Interior insisted that the USA come out "in favour of the rapid advancement of dependent peoples towards self-rule and independence" for this was essential "to American moral and political leadership".**

Acting together, the Americans, British and French succeeded in deleting from the Soviet draft the words "the speediest achievement of complete state independence". However, through Soviet insistence a compromise wording was accepted and inserted in the UN Charter. It stated that the progressive development of the trust territories "towards self-government or independence" had to be promoted. After agreeing to this wording the Soviet Union secured the addition of the words: "as may be appropriate to ... the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned".*** This was a major achievement which conformed to the aims of the national liberation movement.

The objective of the imperialist powers was to deprive the UN trusteeship body of authority and restrict its functions as far as possible. The Soviet Union steered a totally different course at the San Francisco Conference. In face of British and French opposition, it secured the inclusion of all the permanent members in the UN Trusteeship Council. Thus in the Council were not only colonialist powers but also a country that had no colonies and sympathised with the liberation aspirations of the colonial peoples. This was recognition of the fact that concern for the destinies of enslaved peoples was a matter of the whole of mankind, and not only of colonialist powers. Having secured a seat on the Trusteeship Council, the Soviet Union obtained the possibility of consistently using it to champion the oppressed peoples.

On Soviet initiative it was ruled that "the trusteeship system shall not apply to territories which have become members of the United Nations, relationship among which shall be based on respect for the principle of sovereign equality".*) The USA, Britain and France were thus deprived of the possibility of imposing on India, the Philippines, Syria and the Lebanon the status of trust territories.

* Ibid.

** Ibid., p. 819.

*** *Charter of the United Nations*, San Francisco, 1945, Chapter XII, Article 76, p. 25.

*) Ibid., Article 78.

Through the efforts mainly of the Soviet Union the UN Charter particularly where it concerned dependent territories was turned into a more effective instrument than the League of Nations Covenant. However, the UN Charter was the result of a compromise, hence its measure of weakness.

The San Francisco Conference showed that at the concluding stage of the war, when the Soviet Union's political and other potentialities increased, the Soviet Government came forward more and more energetically and effectively as the champion of the colonial peoples' struggle for freedom. At the same time, the USA formed an ever closer bloc with Britain, France, the Netherlands and Belgium on the platform of colonialism. There were three reasons for this. First, with the war drawing to a close, American ruling circles felt more and more strongly that the USA should take over some territories belonging to Japan and other countries. McNeill points out that the "change in the American position on trusteeships between the time of the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers (when Hull first formally broached the idea) and the San Francisco Conference measured the growth of military influence in the determination of American post-war policy, and served, also, as an index of how the changed military position of the country reacted upon traditional views of imperialism. From 1944 onward American official opinion was far less critical of the British Empire than had been the case in the first years of the war. The possible advantages of being able to use British bases, scattered so conveniently over the world, had dawned on American military leaders; and their own ambitions in the Pacific made it illogical for them to voice criticism of analogous British arrangements in other parts of the world."^{*} Secondly, the powerful post-war upsurge of the national liberation movement which ultimately brought about the downfall of the colonial system influenced the American stand. This upsurge directly threatened colonial interests not only in their traditional British form, but also in their American variants. Thirdly, the powerful wave of socialist revolutions which soon brought a number of European and Asian countries to the road of socialist development was regarded by America's rulers as a menace to the capitalist

* William Hardy McNeill, *Op. cit.*, p. 597.

world, and in face of that menace they sought to form a bloc with their imperialist rivals against the Soviet Union and the revolutionary movement. Cordell Hull considered "it inexpedient to insist too vigorously on anti-colonialism because of the need for the colonial powers' continued support for American policies in Europe".* The death of the realist Roosevelt and the installation in the White House of people who thought differently expedited the change of the American stand on the colonial question.

On what was for Churchill another sore question, that of regional arrangements, it was recorded in the UN Charter that nothing in it "precludes the existence of regional arrangements or agencies for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action, provided that such arrangements or agencies and their activities are consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations".**

The setting up of the United Nations Organisation and the adoption of its Charter at San Francisco were positive phenomena in world politics, and an indubitable achievement of the anti-fascist coalition. Soviet foreign policy did much to smooth the way for this achievement. At San Francisco the USSR repeatedly demonstrated its desire to co-operate with Britain, the USA and other countries and made reasonable concessions to them to attain that aim. *The New York Times* reported: "The Conference record shows, the delegates note, ten concessions by Russia."*** In this connection Fleming points out that this "was the record of a Government willing to make real and important concessions . . . in order to get agreement for a great undertaking in co-operation".*)

The British Government regarded the results of the San Francisco Conference as satisfactory. On June 26 its delegation signed the UN Charter together with the other delegations. However, it obviously did not intend to use the new organisation for the purpose it had been established. Churchill felt that in spite of the existence of that organisa-

* F. R. Dulles and G. E. Ridinger, "The Anti-Colonial Policies of Franklin D. Roosevelt", *Political Science Quarterly*, March 1955, p. 18.

** *Charter of the United Nations*, Chapter VIII, Art. 52.

*** D. F. Fleming, *Op. cit.*, p. 286.

*) *Ibid.*, p. 287.

tion there had to be in the post-war world an Anglo-American bloc which would secure world domination to Britain and the USA. In conversation with Truman three weeks after the San Francisco Conference (during the Potsdam Conference), Churchill elaborated on his old idea of joint Anglo-US utilisation of military bases, the preservation of the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee and on agreement between Britain and the USA in all regions of the world. "Britain," Churchill said, "was a smaller Power than the United States, but she had much to give." When Truman observed that all this would have to be harmonised with the policy of the United Nations, Churchill replied that "there was nothing in it if they [military bases.—*Ed.*] were made common to everybody. A man might propose marriage to a young lady, but it was not much use if he were told that she would always be a sister to him." According to Churchill, Truman seemed to be in full accord with this but noted that it had to be "presented in a suitable fashion" so it would "not appear to take crudely the form of a military alliance *à deux*".* This policy did not hold out for the United Nations the prospect of much success in the promotion of international co-operation in the maintenance of world peace and security. It could not but affect the Berlin Conference as well.

Britain and the Potsdam Conference

After Britain failed to strike an eleventh-hour bargain with the dying nazi regime in Germany and, in co-operation with it and the USA, attack the USSR, she had recourse to another plan designed to deprive the USSR of influence over the settlement of European problems and to suppress the revolutions in Eastern Europe. Under this plan the United States troops that had occupied a sizable part of the Soviet zone of occupation in Germany were not to be withdrawn until the Soviet Union had accepted all the Anglo-US demands regarding its policy in Europe. It was proposed to hold an urgent summit meeting and use the threat of force to compel the Soviet Union to accept British and US terms. On May 4, 1945 Churchill wrote to Eden that the "pro-

* Winston S. Churchill, *Op. cit.*, Vol. VI, pp. 547-48.

posed withdrawal of the United States Army to the occupational lines which were arranged with the Russians and Americans ... would mean the tide of Russian domination sweeping forward 120 miles on a front of 300 or 400 miles. This would be an event which, if it occurred, would be one of the most melancholy in history." To prevent this he proposed that the British and Americans "*ought not to retreat their present positions to the occupational line until we are satisfied about Poland, and also about the temporary character of the Russian occupation of Germany, and the conditions to be established in the Russianised or Russian-controlled countries in the Danube valley, particularly Austria and Czechoslovakia, and the Balkans*".*

The intention was thus to compel the USSR to allow counter-revolution to be exported to the East European countries, permit the suppression of the people's democratic revolution in progress in these countries, return these countries to the capitalist system and turn them into Anglo-American-controlled anti-Soviet spearheads. At Potsdam, Fleming writes, the British and Americans presented a "programme for insuring that Rumania and Bulgaria should be organised on the Western model, and remain in the Western orbit".** The above extracts from Churchill's letter are testimony that this programme concerned not just these two countries but the whole of Eastern Europe. Inasmuch as there were Soviet troops in the East European countries, and the Soviet Union thereby bore the main responsibility for the situation in them, the Churchill programme envisaged enforced Soviet participation in his counter-revolutionary designs.

Churchill was not in the least disturbed by the fact that this plan was a flagrant violation of the Yalta decisions and of other agreements with the USSR. He said it would be catastrophic if Britain firmly abided by all her agreements.*** Late in May 1945 when Truman's personal representative suggested to Churchill that with the USSR "there had been an express agreement as to these zones", Churchill replied "that conditions had greatly changed".*)

* Ibid., pp. 438-39. Italicised by the author.—Ed.

** D. F. Fleming, Op. cit., p. 290.

*** Ibid., p. 483.

*) *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conference of Berlin, 1945, Vol. I, p. 67.*

This convincingly shows the British Government's attitude to the commitments it had made during the war.

Churchill told the Americans that "we ought to seek a meeting with Stalin face to face and make sure that an agreement was reached about the whole front".* In a message to Truman on May 12 he wrote of an "iron curtain" and suggested coming "to an understanding with Russia, or see where we are with her, before we weaken our armies mortally or retire to the zones of occupation".** He was extremely worried when the Americans began transferring their troops to the Far East and British public opinion began to clamour for the demobilisation of the British Army. That spurred him on to speed an urgent summit meeting in order to intimidate the Soviet Union with Anglo-American might.

This gamble was fraught with the danger of a war between the Anglo-Saxon powers and the USSR. Churchill was aware of this and took the risk deliberately. The British Chiefs of Staff were instructed to study the possibility of a war against the Soviet Union. We learn of this from the diary of Field Marshal Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, whose entry under the date-line May 24, 1945 states: "This evening I went carefully through the planners' report on the possibility of taking on Russia should trouble arise in our future discussions with her. We were instructed to carry out this investigation."***

The Americans realised that the British were steering towards war with the USSR. Two days after Brooke studied the planners' conclusions, Joseph Davies, Truman's personal representative, had a conversation with Churchill and reported to the President that it was the British Premier's purpose "to employ the presence of American forces and their position in advance of their lines as trading material to induce concessions from the Soviets. His policy was based upon the 'tough approach'. He was willing to run the great risk which such a gamble entails."*) Davies had no doubts that this gamble was fraught with the threat of war.

* Winston S. Churchill, Op. cit., Vol. VI, p. 445.

** Ibid., p. 499.

*** Arthur Bryant, Op. cit., p. 469.

*) *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conference of Berlin*, Vol. I, p. 78.

Churchill's "attitude", he wrote, "placed not only the future, but possibly the immediate peace in real danger".*

The Americans realised that if war broke out they would have to bear the brunt of the fighting because Britain had neither the potentialities nor the inclination to shoulder half the war costs. They therefore had to decide urgently their attitude to Churchill's plans. When he urged the Americans to take a "tough approach" to the USSR he took into account the change that was taking place in the USA towards a more hostile policy to the Soviet Union. In a radio broadcast on May 22, 1945 US Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles declared: "In five short weeks since the death of President Roosevelt the policy which he had so painstakingly carried on has been changed. Our Government now appears to the Russians as the spearhead of an apparent bloc of the Western nations opposed to the Soviet Union."** Truman did not venture on the road suggested by Churchill for several reasons. The principal reason was that Britain and the United States were not strong enough militarily for a victorious war against the USSR. This has been stated plainly in the above-quoted conclusion of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff of May 16, 1944. It was to be found, among other documents, in the reference file of the United States delegation at the Crimea Conference. Later it was recorded in the dossier prepared for the Berlin Conference, which meant that American military opinion had not changed in the spring of 1945.***

The British military leaders held the same opinion. After studying the report on the possibility of starting hostilities against the Soviet Union, Field Marshal Alan Brooke wrote in his diary on May 24, 1945: "The idea is, of course, fantastic and the chances of success quite impossible. There is no doubt that from now onwards Russia is all-powerful in Europe."*)

Another important factor was that the hands of the Americans were tied by the war against Japan, which the British regarded as generally an "American affair". The

* Ibid., p. 72.

** *Congressional Record*, Vol. 91, Part II, p. A 2507, k. 47.

*** *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conference of Berlin*, Vol. I, pp. 264-66.

*) Arthur Bryant, *Op. cit.*, p. 470.

USA could not risk another war in Europe while the war in the Pacific was raging, and desiring Soviet assistance in the Far East the Americans were reluctant to let relations with the USSR get out of hand. Moreover, in the spring of 1945 the Americans knew that the creation of an atom bomb would soon be completed and, therefore, as Feis writes, felt that "if a contest of will against the Russians involving possible transit into war should prove inevitable, it would be better to have it come after we and the world knew of this new master weapon".* Besides, in Washington it was realised that Churchill was provoking a clash with the USSR not only to deprive it of influence in European affairs but to strengthen British domination in Europe, which clearly was not to the liking of the US Government. Joseph Davies writes that Churchill was hoping to use American manpower and resources to support the British policy of "leading Europe".** The American ruling circles naturally were not inclined to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for their imperialist rivals. On May 14 the US Government courteously rejected Churchill's suggestion and proposed a three-Power summit conference to settle outstanding issues stemming from Germany's surrender.

In order to prepare for such a conference Truman sent as his personal representatives Harry Hopkins to Moscow and Joseph Davies (former US Ambassador in the USSR) to London. Churchill tried to persuade Davies (and thereby influence Truman) that a "tough approach" was the only correct one towards the USSR. In his report of this conversation Davies writes that Churchill "was bitterly hostile to the Soviets". He insisted on the need to use force against the USSR so strongly that, as Davies says, "I told him frankly that I had been shocked beyond words to find so violent and bitter an attitude, and to find . . . so violent a change in his attitude towards the Soviets. . . . It staggered me with the fear that there could be no peace. I had heard of such attitudes in Britain, but I had discounted these reports. Recently, a banker in San Francisco had come to tell me that a British officer, part of the British delegation at the Conference [in San Francisco.—*U. T.*], had declared

* Herbert Feis, *Op. cit.*, p. 637.

** *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conference of Berlin*, Vol. I, p. 73.

publicly at a luncheon club and with feeling that the British and American armies should not stop, but go right through and clean up the Red Army and destroy the Soviet menace now when we were at it."* From Davies' report it may be inferred that he came to the conclusion that Churchill was thinking along the same lines as that British officer. Davies further reports that "as I had listened to him inveigh so violently against the threat of Soviet domination and the spread of communism in Europe . . . I had wondered whether he, the Prime Minister, was now willing to declare to the world that he and Britain had made a mistake in not supporting Hitler, for as I understood him, he was now expressing the doctrine which Hitler and Goebbels had been proclaiming and reiterating for the past four years in an effort to break up Allied unity and 'divide and conquer'. Exactly the same conditions which he described and the same deductions were drawn from them as he now appeared to assert."**

Churchill intended to try to influence Truman directly and for this purpose invited him to stop over in London on his way to the Berlin Conference. Truman, however, courteously declined this invitation and through Davies informed Churchill that prior to the Conference he was planning to meet the head of the Soviet Government. This threw the British Prime Minister into a fit of violent fury. He told Davies that he "was both surprised and hurt that he should be 'excluded' from the first meeting with Stalin after victory. . . . He could never, never consent. . . . Such a meeting would be tantamount to a 'deal'. . . . He reiterated that he could not possibly attend a meeting which was a continuation of a conference between the President and Marshal Stalin." Davies had to promise that no preliminary Soviet-American conference would be held.***

Churchill's "noble indignation" is shared by British official historiography. Woodward, for instance, writes that Churchill "was certain to reject" the idea of a preliminary Soviet-American meeting. And with clear displeasure says that Truman went to Berlin "after refusing to visit Great

* Ibid., p. 70.

** Ibid., p. 73.

*** Ibid., pp. 68-77.

Britain".* This showed the British Government's insulting pretensions and superiority complex in foreign policy, and its dogged striving to infringe upon the interests and prestige of the Soviet Union. It is fair to ask why the British Government was indignant when it heard the US President wanted to meet the head of the Soviet Government? After all there had been many such bi-lateral meetings between the British and the Americans during the war, and they had even drawn up the Atlantic Charter, proclaimed as the programme for the future peace, without Soviet participation. Another fair question is why after displaying indignation over the contemplated meeting between Truman and Stalin, Churchill demanded to meet Truman himself? In other words, the British felt that a separate meeting between Truman and Stalin was impermissible, and that a Churchill-Truman meeting should take place. Does this not convincingly show that vis-à-vis the Soviet Union the British Government tried to use methods incompatible with Allied relations?

Such were the sentiments of the British Government on the eve of the Potsdam Conference, which was held from July 17 to August 2, 1945. To a considerable extent these sentiments underlay the actions of the British delegation, which was led first by Churchill, and then, after the defeat of the Conservative Party at the Parliamentary elections, by Clement Attlee.

The Conference reached agreement to set up a Foreign Ministers Council as a standing body to prepare the coming peace conference, draft the terms of the peace treaties with Italy, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland, work out the terms of the peace settlement for Germany and scrutinise some other questions. The Council consisted of representatives of the USSR, Britain, the USA, France and China. With the setting up of this Council the European Advisory Commission was disbanded.

The principal success of the Conference was its decisions on the German question. Germany would be regarded as an integral political and economic unit despite her division into zones of occupation. The political principles adopted by the Conference envisaged that in the zones of occupation power would be in the hands of the commanders of the occupying

* Llewellyn Woodward, *Op. cit.*, p. XXXIX.

forces who would jointly make up the Control Council designed to settle questions relating to the whole of Germany. The economic principles provided for the establishment of Allied control over the German economy, the dismantling of war industries and the abolition of monopolies. Germany, it was agreed, would be completely disarmed and demilitarised, all nazi organisations would be abolished and Germany's development would be directed along democratic lines. The decisions on these questions were passed quite quickly, for they were prepared beforehand by the European Advisory Commission, and the British and US governments found it difficult to go back on the stand they had occupied in the EAC.

No final decision on the exaction of reparations from Germany had been passed earlier, and Churchill with Truman's support did everything in his power to limit reparations to the Soviet Union so that the latter would not grow stronger at the expense of these reparations and, correspondingly, Germany, which acquired increasing importance in the anti-Soviet plans of Britain and the USA, would not grow weaker. The compromise decision that was adopted did not fully satisfy the Soviet Union's legitimate claims.

The British and US delegations agreed to the transfer to the Soviet Union of Königsberg and the adjacent region and promised to back this decision at the pending peace conference.

There were heated arguments over the question of Poland's western frontiers. Poland's democratic development caused dissatisfaction in London where it was felt that it would be impossible to subordinate the policies of a democratic Poland to British influence. The British delegation, therefore, insisted on demarcating Poland's western frontier along a line which would not embrace territory rightfully belonging to the Poles, territory which had been wrested away from them by the Germans. "The Potsdam Conference of the three Heads of Government," writes the American historian J. P. Morray on this score, "had heard President Beirut of Poland argue for fixing the western frontier of Poland along the Oder and the Western Neisse rivers. . . . Churchill opposed Beirut's claim. . . . It might be thought a paradox that Churchill, who had urged Britain to go to war against Germany on behalf of Poland and who had declared himself at Yalta as being in favour of 'sub-

stantial accessions' of German territory to Poland, was now arguing as a protector of the Germans against Polish claims."^{*} The Soviet delegation, however, secured a just decision of this question. Poland received Danzig, East Prussia (with the exception of the Königsberg region) and territory east of a line running from the Baltic somewhat west of Swinemunde, and thence along the Oder to the basin of the Western Neisse and along the Western Neisse to the Czechoslovak frontier.

The British delegation militated against the democratic governments of the East European countries. Their aim was to secure Soviet agreement to changes in the composition of these governments and the creation in the East European countries of conditions in which reactionary, anti-popular elements would have a free hand. Churchill, and Attlee after him, clearly wanted to have the possibility of planting "democracy" in Eastern Europe with the methods they had applied in Greece, and this was exactly what the Soviet delegation pointed out to them. The British and US delegations declared that Britain and the USA would not recognise the governments of Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria if they were not reorganised to suit the Western Allies.

At the same time, Churchill showed touching concern for Spanish fascism. The Soviet delegation proposed denouncing the fascist regime in Spain and rupturing diplomatic relations with it. Churchill categorically opposed this proposal, stating it would be "interference in domestic affairs."^{**} The head of the Soviet Government pointed out that this was not a purely Spanish affair, that the Franco regime had been forced on the Spanish people from without by Hitler and Mussolini, and that the Spanish fascists had fought against democracy in the Second World War. To this Churchill noted that Franco had sent his "Blue Division" to the USSR but had not fought Britain, that Britain had good trade relations with Spain, and that he was not going to sever diplomatic relations with her. Truman backed him up, and the Conference confined itself to a denunciation of the Franco regime and to a statement that the USSR,

^{*} J. P. Morray, *Op. cit.*, p. 60.

^{**} *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conference of Berlin*, Vol. II, p. 123.

Britain and the USA would not support the request of the present Spanish Government for membership of the United Nations.*

At the Conference Soviet foreign policy scored an indisputable success in that it secured the decisions on Germany that concurred with the interests of the peoples and the cause of peace. These decisions were carried out in the Soviet occupation zone, and had they been put into effect in the other zones of occupation as well, the cause of progress and world security would have been further strengthened. The Potsdam Conference owed its success to the Soviet Union's consistent efforts to secure a democratic post-war peace settlement in Europe. Contributing factors were the Soviet Union's enhanced prestige and role in world politics, the keen desire of the peoples for co-operation in the post-war settlement between the USSR, Britain and the USA and the Western Powers' eagerness to draw the Soviet Union into the war against Japan.

The fact that the Western Powers no longer required Soviet assistance in Europe because the war against Germany had ended had a detrimental effect on the results of the Potsdam Conference and led to the activation of anti-Soviet intrigues by influential reactionary circles in Britain and the USA who wanted to cut short the war-time unity of the anti-fascist coalition. In Britain this was expressed by the increased aggressiveness of the policies pursued by Churchill, spokesman of ultra-imperialist circles. In the USA, Roosevelt and his associates, who had soberly assessed world developments, had been replaced by Truman and a group of politicians inclined to use force to prevent the growth of democracy and socialism. The activities of these forces mounted gradually. After Germany was defeated the European peoples focussed more and more of their attention on questions of internal policy. In Britain the entire propaganda machine switched to these questions in order to divert the people's attention from the aggressive plans and actions of the ruling circles in foreign policy and give the latter more elbow room. Lastly, completion of the atom bomb in the USA likewise had an adverse effect on the situation in the Grand Alliance.

* Ibid., pp. 122-27.

The first atom bomb test was made at the Alamogordo Air Base, New Mexico, on July 16, 1945. A detailed report on this explosion was sent to Truman in Potsdam by General Leslie R. Groves.* It was shown to Churchill and he went into raptures over it. He at once began to urge Truman to take a tougher line towards the USSR. He said to Alan Brooke that it was "now no longer necessary for the Russians to come into the Japanese war; the new explosive alone was sufficient to settle the matter. Furthermore, we now had something in our hands which would redress the balance with the Russians. . . . Now we had a new value which redressed our position." He said he could now say to the Soviet Union: "If you insist on doing this or that, well. . . . And then where are the Russians!" The "well" implied that it would be followed by a shower of atom bombs on the USSR. Brooke notes that Churchill "was already seeing himself capable of eliminating all the Russian centres of industry and population".**

The Americans were somewhat calmer in their attitude to the atom bomb. This was seen in their stand when the Potsdam Conference considered Far Eastern problems. Possession of the atom bomb did not shake the US Government's intention to obtain Soviet assistance in the war against Japan. This was Truman's main goal at Potsdam before and after he received General Groves' report. The report arrived in Potsdam on July 21. On the same day it was studied by Truman, Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, Generals Marshall, Eisenhower and Arnold, and Admirals Leahy and King.*** On the next day Stimson showed the report to Churchill. After this, on July 24 the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee laid before Churchill and Truman its strategic plan for the conduct of the war in the Far East, which stated in part: "Encourage Russian entry into the war against Japan. Provide such aid to her war-making capacity as may be necessary and practicable in connection therewith."*) The British and US leaders approved this plan and the appropriate negotiations were started with Soviet represent-

* *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conference of Berlin*, Vol. II, pp. 1361-68.

** Arthur Bryant, *Op. cit.*, pp. 477-78.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 1361.

*) *Congressional Record* . . . , Vol. 97, No. 158, p. 6.

atives. At a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff of the USSR, USA and Britain, General Antonov reported that Soviet troops were being concentrated in the Far East, that the USSR would enter the war against Japan in August and that the Soviet Army would be operating against approximately 50 divisions of Japanese and Manchurian troops.* The Soviet Union thus acceded to the Anglo-American request to enter the war against Japan. Even with Soviet participation in the war, the British and American Chiefs of Staff considered that Japan would be defeated not earlier than November 15, 1946.**

In this period the United States was particularly in need of Soviet assistance, for Britain could not be counted on to take an active part in the storming of Japan proper. At Potsdam the British said they could give only five divisions for the concluding phase of the war against Japan, and that of these only three divisions would be available at the initial stage of the offensive; the other two would join much later.*** Neither could the USA count on Kuomintang China giving effective assistance in the Far East. The Kuomintang's inability to conduct successful military operations against the Japanese was now obvious to all the American leaders, civilian and military alike. Consequently, there was a pressing need for Soviet assistance. In June 1945 the Combined Anglo-American Intelligence Committee wrote in its conclusions that the Soviet Union's entry into the war would finally convince the Japanese that complete defeat was inevitable.†) Truman wrote in his memoirs that at Potsdam it was extremely important to him "to get from Stalin a personal reaffirmation of Russia's entry into the war against Japan, a matter which our military chiefs were most anxious to clinch".**†) He explained why the Chiefs of Staff were anxious for the Soviet Union to enter the war: "Russia's entry into the war would mean the saving of hundreds of thousands of American casualties."***)

* *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conference of Berlin*, Vol. II, p. 345.

** *Ibid.*, p. 115.

*** *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 48-49.

†) *Ibid.*, p. 36.

**†) Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs*, Vol. I, *Year of Decisions*, New York, 1955, p. 411.

***†) *Ibid.*, p. 314.

Churchill and his military advisers went to the Conference determined to secure from the Americans the reorganisation of the US Command in the Far East into an Anglo-American Command. They felt this was necessary for two reasons: first, to give Britain a bigger role in the settlement of Far Eastern problems not only during the war but after it, and, second, it would give them another argument in favour of preserving Anglo-American military co-operation after the war, something which Churchill and his Chiefs of Staff were anxious to achieve. The Americans, however, were not inclined to hamper their own freedom of action, and, besides, Britain's promise to furnish five divisions was not sufficient grounds for taking the desires of Churchill and Alan Brooke into account. On July 18 General Marshall told a joint meeting of the Chiefs of Staff that the American military leadership "could not ... shoulder the burden of debating the 'pros' and 'cons' of operational strategy with the British Chiefs of Staff". The British were promised they would be kept informed of this strategy, but the Americans reserved for themselves the right to adopt final decisions. If this did not suit the British they could withdraw their troops. It was decided that the "control of operational strategy in the Pacific Theatre would remain in the hands of the United States Chiefs of Staff".*

At Potsdam Churchill and Truman together with their advisers considered the terms for Japan's surrender. During the discussion of this question it was found that Churchill was anxious to preserve as much as possible of the existing Japanese machinery of state together with the emperor in order to forestall the country's democratisation. Alan Brooke pressed upon his American colleagues the need for "preserving the dynasty", while Churchill told Truman that the Japanese had to be given the possibility of saving "their military honour".**

The text of the Declaration on Japan was drawn up, communicated to Chiang Kai-shek "as a matter of courtesy" and published on July 26 in the name of the United States, Britain and China. It demanded that Japan surrender unconditionally and stated the terms for a peace settlement

* *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conference of Berlin*, Vol. II, pp. 85-86.

** *Ibid.*, p. 81.

with her: the removal of warmongers, the establishment of a peaceful order, the setting up of a peace-loving government in conformity with the freely expressed will of the Japanese people, the restriction of Japanese sovereignty to Japan proper, the disarmament of Japan, and so on. These were considerably milder terms than those on which Germany surrendered. Nothing was said about the preservation of the emperor and the existing Japanese Government, issues which worried the British. The Allies left themselves a free hand in these matters.

1945 Parliamentary Elections in Britain

A change of government took place in Britain while the Potsdam Conference was in session. In accordance with the Parliamentary elections, whose results were published on July 26, Churchill's Conservative Cabinet was replaced by a Labour Cabinet under Clement Attlee.

The last years of the war had witnessed an acute struggle between progressive forces and reactionary elements in Britain over the ways of the country's post-war development. The nearer V-Day drew the colder the Government became to the reforms it had promised to the people during the difficult period of the war. It had become plain that after the war the Conservatives would try to restore the practices of the 1920s and 1930s and that they would oppose any major change in the life of the country.

In this situation the main task of the British people was to prevent a Conservative Government remaining in office after the war. In order to remove the Conservatives from office and then break their resistance to the programme of post-war reconstruction, the Communist Party of Great Britain suggested that at the coming elections all progressive and radical forces should act together. It was the Communist Party's view that this bloc should include, in addition to Communists, the Labour Party, the Liberals, the Co-operative Party and some other organisations. This, it was felt, would be in line with the war-time experience of co-operation between different political forces. Since they had been able to co-operate to achieve military victory it stood to reason that they could co-operate in the implementation of an agreed programme of social progress.

The Labour Party leadership, however, feared the

reforms suggested by the Communists, feeling they would be a step towards changing the socio-economic system in Britain. A slightly reformed capitalism suited them more and they were prepared to go to extremes to protect it. For that reason the Labour Party rejected the proposal of the Communists to form a united progressive front. The Right-wing Labour leaders, who had willingly co-operated with the Conservatives, the political representatives of the monopolies and of the extreme reactionaries, flatly refused to co-operate with the progressive forces.

On May 24 Churchill announced the resignation of the Coalition Government, formed a new Conservative Cabinet, the so-called Interim Government, disbanded Parliament and named July 5 as the date for new elections to Parliament. The Interim Government consisted entirely of ex-Munichites, thereby demonstrating the intention of the Conservatives to return to the pre-war home and foreign policies.

The Labour Party took into account the swing of the people to the Left and, at the elections, it put forward a programme calling for the preservation of state control of the economy, the nationalisation of a number of industries, the Bank of England and transport, and the implementation of social reforms. Having in mind the British people's attitude to the USSR, the Labour Party stressed its intention to preserve and develop the alliance and co-operation that had taken shape between Britain and the Soviet Union during the war.

While opposing nationalisation, the Conservative Party promised, it is true, to preserve curtailed state control over the economy. On the whole, it did not present a concrete programme, tending to criticise the Labour programme more than divulging its own plans. The anti-Soviet press campaign, which rose to an intense pitch in the spring of 1945, betrayed the Conservative Party's real intentions towards the USSR. This did not escape unnoticed by the British people. Generally, the Conservative Party staked not so much on an election programme as on the personal popularity of its leader, Churchill, posing as the military leader who brought Britain to victory.

Churchill had done much to weaken the position of his Party at the elections. He opened the election campaign with a speech full of invectives against socialism, which he

compared with fascism. Moreover, he attacked the Right-wing Labour leaders, who had been his immediate associates in the Coalition Government. He said that if the Labour Party came to power it would establish in Britain some sort of Gestapo regime.* These absurd statements were resented by the electorate. The Conservative press tried to soften Churchill's blunders but with no success.

Subsequently, in 1965, on the day after Churchill's death, when his role in history was grossly magnified, *The Times* felt it could not pass over in silence his actions during the 1945 elections. "The conduct of Churchill during the campaign of the 1945 election," the newspaper wrote, "will always seem one of the strangest episodes of his career. The swing against the Conservative Party, which had started before the war, was so strong that even his reputation as a national leader could be of no avail. But he could have emerged from the election with that reputation untarnished. Instead he indulged in accusations, imputations and even personal abuse against his war-time colleagues which shocked his hearers—even his friends—and embittered his opponents."**

The Conservatives suffered an overwhelming defeat at the elections, getting 209 seats in Parliament. The Labour Party scored an indisputable victory such as was unexpected even by its leaders. It won 389 seats which gave it an absolute majority in Parliament. Before leaving the Potsdam Conference to get the election results in London Attlee told correspondents he hoped there would be an increase in the number of Labour seats in Parliament but he did not count on getting an absolute majority. Churchill left Potsdam together with Attlee, and upon his departure told Stalin: "I hope to be back."*** He was confident the Conservatives would be returned to office. The Communists—William Gallacher and Phil Piratin—were elected to Parliament, and the Liberals won 11 seats.

The voting on July 5 showed the change that had taken place in the balance of political forces in Britain.

On July 26, the day the results of the elections were

* Lewis Broad, *Winston Churchill. The Years of Achievement*, New York, 1963, pp. 481-82.

** *The Times*, January 25, 1965.

*** Lewis Broad, *Op. cit.*, p. 493.

announced, an infuriated Churchill, insulted by the "ingratitude" of the British people, was forced to resign.

The new Government was formed by Clement Attlee, leader of the Labour Party. Ernest Bevin became the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

All the members of the new Government belonged to the Right wing of the Labour Party leadership. The leading ministers had gone through a school of state administration under Conservative leadership in Churchill's Coalition Government. Co-operation between the Labour and Conservative ministers in 1940-45 had been complete and close. Churchill had not only trained most of the men who obtained the key posts in the Labour Government but participated in the formation of that government. Attlee and other Labour leaders had intended to give the Foreign Office to Hugh Dalton, but Churchill intervened and Bevin became the new Foreign Secretary.

The British bourgeoisie showed no anxiety over the Labour take-over of power, and this was not a very good sign for the British people, who had linked their post-war hopes with a radical change in British home and foreign policies.

The British ruling circles subsequently considered that the Labour take-over of power in 1945 served them well in the sphere of foreign policy. In face of the considerable swing to the Left among the British people and the mounting wave of revolution in Europe and Asia the Labour leaders could pursue an imperialist policy more successfully than the Conservatives. They had firmer ties with the people and they spoke on behalf of the working people, posing as socialists, although their socialism was reformism pure and simple, which had nothing in common with revolutionary socialism. In 1956 Anthony Eden wrote that "it was fortunate" that a Labour Government opposed the Soviet Union after the war.*

This opposition was set on foot as soon as Attlee and Bevin arrived in Potsdam to complete the work of the Conference. It was quickly found that the only change in the British stand was that Bevin adopted a line that was more aggressive than the one Eden had been pursuing. This is excellently illustrated by Fleming: "Churchill did not return to Potsdam, but Ernest Bevin, new Foreign Secretary,

* *The Memoirs of Anthony Eden. Full Circle*, Boston, 1960, p. 496.

sat in his place and British policy toward Russia did not change an iota. Bevin was a Labour Churchill, still more volcanic and irascible, without Churchill's aristocratic graces. Bevin had long been an inner member of the Churchill Coalition Cabinet. His opposition to Russia was even greater than Churchill's.... Neither tact nor diplomacy would restrain British attitudes toward Russia thereafter, as the Conservative-dominated Foreign and Colonial offices stiffened Bevin for conflict with the Soviets."⁴

End of the War in the Far East

The Soviet Union honoured the commitment it had made to its Allies to help hasten the end of the war in the Pacific. In spite of the existence of the Soviet-Japanese neutrality pact, Japan had been preparing to attack the Soviet Union and had maintained the huge Kwantung Army on the Soviet frontier for that purpose. By pinning down considerable Soviet forces, she had rendered substantial assistance to her allies—Germany and Italy. This was a direct violation of the neutrality pact. Therefore, when the Soviet Union denounced that pact on April 5, 1945, it had every grounds for doing so. The denunciation of the pact made a powerful impression on Japan's aggressive ruling circles, and as they watched Germany's formidable war machine which seemed to be invincible crumble under the blows of the Soviet Army they began to realise that the war had been lost. However, they rejected the Anglo-American Potsdam Declaration for they still had sufficiently powerful forces to defend Japan. The Western Allies were still far away from Tokyo.

Soon things began to move faster than either the Allies or the Japanese had expected. On August 6 the Americans dropped an atom bomb on Hiroshima. This was the first time that a nuclear bomb had been used and it was an unprecedented act of barbarism, the responsibility for which devolves on the British Government as well. In Quebec in 1943 Roosevelt and Churchill had agreed that if the atom bomb were developed it would not be used without mutual consent between the USA and Britain. Accordingly, on

* D. F. Fleming, *Op. cit.*, pp. 291-92.

July 4, 1945 the British Government gave its formal consent to the United States for the use of the bomb against Japan. Thus, to use the words of Lewis Broad, the British journalist, "responsibility for what was to be done was shared by the partners in the alliance".* Another atom bomb was dropped on August 9, this time the target being Nagasaki. The psychological effect was considerable, but Japan's armed forces, in effect, suffered no losses at all. The Americans had no more of these bombs, and time was needed to manufacture others.

The decisive moment of the war in the Far East had come.

In *A History of the War in the Pacific*, written by Japanese authors, it is pointed out that the Japanese Government and military bodies "reacted very poorly to this development", i.e., the atomic bombing; "the Government leaders were not interested in the atom bomb—they were interested in only one thing: the outcome of the meeting in Moscow between Ambassador Sato and the Soviet Foreign Minister scheduled for the evening of August 8".** The Soviet Government had subscribed to the Anglo-American Potsdam Declaration and on August 8 Sato was told that on the next day the Soviet Union would consider itself to be in a state of war with Japan.

On August 9, Soviet forces began a swift offensive in Manchuria and in the first 24 hours inflicted a crushing defeat on the Kwantung Army. The Soviet declaration of war "was a stunning blow to the leaders of the Japanese Government. . . . Even in face of the atom bomb state policy, charted by the Imperial Council for the conduct of the war, had undergone no modification. . . . But the Soviet declaration of war blasted all hopes of continuing the war. Only now did the Emperor . . . as well as other leaders of the Government firmly make up their minds to end the war."***

In Tokyo it was realised that this was the end, and the Allies were informed that Japan was prepared to accept the Potsdam Declaration provided the Emperor's prerogatives were preserved. The Americans (it is not clear whether

* Lewis Broad, *Op. cit.*, p. 502.

** *Istoriya voiny na Tikhom Okeane* (A History of the Pacific War), Vol. IV, Moscow, 1958, p. 206.

*** *Ibid.*, p. 209.

they had agreed this with the British) did not give a direct reply to this stipulation but what they said did not rule out the possibility that the Japanese Government and the Emperor would be preserved. On August 14 the Japanese Government informed the Government of the USA that the Emperor had issued a rescript accepting the Potsdam Declaration and ordering the surrender of Japan.

On September 2 representatives of the Japanese Government signed the act of surrender on board the US battleship *Missouri* in the Bay of Tokyo. The signing was witnessed by representatives of nine Allied countries—the USSR, the USA, Britain, China, France, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

That ended the Second World War, the greatest tragedy and the greatest trial in the history of mankind.

CONCLUSION

During the Second World War British foreign policy went through a number of stages, each of which differed markedly both for the purposes pursued by Britain at the given stage and by the conditions under which these purposes were pursued. In all cases the objectives of British policy were determined by the class interests of the British big bourgeoisie, which governed the country—whether in the period of the phoney war or during the years of the Grand Alliance. The extremely complex political and military conditions, which changed with lightning speed, compelled British foreign policy to zigzag and manoeuvre. At decisive moments it conformed to the vital interests of the people and that is precisely why it is possible to speak of its success, if by such success is meant that Britain not only survived but found herself among the victor powers.

The division of British war-time foreign policy into periods is directly linked up with the division into periods of the Second World War as a whole, but at the same time the former has its own features and distinctions. Many variants of the latter division have been produced, and each is a reflection of the class approach to the history of the war and depends on what country is taken as the basis for a scrutiny of the problem and on whether the problem was approached from a socio-political or military-strategic standpoint.

In dividing the Second World War into periods Soviet historians use as their points of departure the major changes

that took place in the military and political situation under the impact of military, political and economic factors.

Basically, British historians use the division into periods given by Churchill in *The Second World War*. According to Churchill, the first period embraces 1919 through 1940, which he regards only as years of an armistice between the two world wars; the second period—1940-41—witnessed Britain fighting singlehanded; the third period—the Grand Alliance—covers the span from December 1941 to the end of 1942; and the fourth period—Triumph and Tragedy—lasted from 1943 to 1945.* This periodisation is used by British bourgeois historiography for the history of foreign policy as well.

In our view, the data assembled in this book enable us to divide the history of British war-time foreign policy into three periods: the period of the phoney war—from the events of early September 1939 to Germany's attack on Denmark and Norway in April 1940; the period when Britain was fighting for survival—from May 1940 to the end of 1942; and the period of planning and preparing the anti-democratic post-war settlement—from the victory at Stalingrad to the end of the war.

The period of the phoney war was characterised by acute contradictions between imperialist Britain and the socialist Soviet Union. At the same time, the antagonisms between the imperialist powers grew so sharp that war broke out between the Anglo-French bloc and Germany. The British imperialists hated the USSR so intensely that most of them had been unable to appreciate the dimensions of the German threat to Britain, a danger which grew with every passing day. Blinded by class hatred they failed, together with France and Poland, to use the possibility of defeating Germany militarily in 1939. Instead, they doggedly sought to stop the war with Germany and start a war against the Soviet Union. "The phoney war," writes R. Palme Dutt, "...combined passivity against Hitler with plans of military adventures against the Soviet Union."**

When in the spring of 1940 Germany turned her war machine not against the East, as it was hoped in London

* Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vols. I-VI, Boston, 1948-53.

** *Labour Monthly*, March 1963, p. 103.

and Paris, but against the West, it became quite plain that British foreign policy had foundered. Frustration was so complete that at once the question arose whether Britain would survive. The changed military-strategic and political situation brought about a change of the role played by various contradictions in British policy at this stage. For some time the threat from Germany and Italy and then from Japan, i.e., antagonism between the imperialist powers, became the factor determining British policy. Their instinct of self-preservation made the British ruling classes temporarily move the contradictions with the Soviet Union into the background. The foreign policy pursued with the objective of survival at any price was founded on the need to fight Germany, Italy and Japan, for the alternative was surrender. But Britain did not have the strength to fight this war alone, and for that reason long before France surrendered the British Government came to the conclusion that there would be a chance of survival only if in addition to the USA the Soviet Union became Britain's Ally. Hence, first (until June 1941) the exploration of the possibilities of drawing the Soviet Union into the war against Germany and then British participation, together with the USSR, the USA and a number of other countries, in the anti-fascist coalition.

Two factors compelled the British ruling circles to enter into a coalition with the Soviet Union. The first was survival, and the second was pressure from the people to whom hatred of the socialist state was alien, by virtue of which they had a better appreciation of the importance of Allied relations between Britain and the USSR. B. Collier, one of the authors of the British official history of the Second World War, writes that the "national interest, soon seconded by powerful evidence of popular sympathy for Russia, demanded therefore ... all practical aid to Germany's new victim",* i.e., the Soviet Union. Another British author, R. W. Thompson, says that the British policy of alliance with the USSR was "a policy of despair based on fear of Soviet collapse, and the consequent isolation and collapse of Britain".**

During the second stage Britain fought not only for

* B. Collier, *The Defence of the United Kingdom*, London, 1957, p. 293.

** R. W. Thompson, *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

imperialist interests but for her existence as a national state. However, even at this stage the British Government did not abandon its imperialist aims. With the improvement of Britain's position these aims and the antagonism between capitalism and socialism grew more and more pronounced. That, as R. Palme Dutt notes, was precisely why in British policy the phoney war was "succeeded by the alternative tactics of the peculiar alliance, when the withholding of the Second Front for three years enabled the entire weight of the Hitlerite forces to be hurled against the Soviet Union, with the confident calculation and prediction of all the Western General Staffs and politicians that the Soviet Union would be destroyed. Their calculations were frustrated."*

The turning point in the Second World War came with the Soviet victory at Stalingrad. It is to Winston Churchill's credit that he realised this at once. Britain had survived. It would seem that this should have been an occasion for rejoicing and jubilation. But the jubilation of the British Government was poisoned, firstly, by the fact that Britain had survived because of her alliance with a socialist state and because of the unparalleled heroism and dedication shown by the latter, and secondly, because the Soviet Union had withstood a terrible onslaught and would emerge from the war as a great world power. This changed the world balance of power. British statesmen became more and more preoccupied with the struggle against socialism. "By 1943," writes R. Palme Dutt, "panic seized the Western rulers at the prospect of the fall of fascism and the victory of communism. The planning of the post-war Western front against the Soviet Union and communism; the preparation of the Anglo-American atom bomb under the Quebec Agreement as the weapon, not against fascism, but for future domination against the Soviet Union; the Churchill secret memorandum against 'Russian Barbarism' in post-war Europe; the organisation of the Second Front, after the nazi armies were already beaten, to prevent victory of the peoples in Europe: all date from this turning point." However, as Dutt concludes, "everywhere the peoples rose in the enthusiasm of alliance with the Soviet people for liberation".** In combina-

* *Labour Monthly*, March 1963, p. 103.

** *Ibid.*

tion with the necessity of somehow bringing the war to an end, this enthusiasm prevented the imperialist circles of Britain (and of the USA) from breaking up the anti-fascist coalition before the war ended.

With the approach of victory the class contradiction between Britain and the Soviet Union came to the fore and the antagonisms between the imperialist powers receded into the background. *The Listener*, a British journal, writes that "the cold war existed from the very outset of the Grand Alliance. As long as the supreme aim was the defeat of the Axis, it lay unrecognised."* But by the spring of 1945, as Churchill admits, the "Soviet menace, to my eyes, had already replaced the nazi foe".** In the light of this admission, it is small wonder that towards the end of the war British policy-makers did so much to spoil the relations of co-operation that had taken shape between the leading members of the anti-fascist coalition.

When people speak of the Grand Alliance as a "strange" and "unnatural" alliance, they have in mind its Western members. For the Soviet Union membership of the military and political alliance with Britain and the USA was neither strange nor unnatural. It was the operation of the policy of peaceful coexistence, which in the specific conditions of the Second World War led to military and political co-operation between the socialist Soviet Union and the imperialist United States and Britain.

The nazi invasion of the Soviet Union put an end to a period of peaceful co-habitation between the Soviet Union and part of the capitalist world, and witnessed a gigantic armed struggle between socialism, represented by the USSR, and capitalism, represented by the Axis bloc. It was not the Soviet Union's fault that peaceful coexistence was cut short with that bloc. What happened was foreseen by Lenin as far back as 1919. He wrote: "... the future will almost certainly bring many further attempts by the Entente at intervention and possibly a rebirth of the previous predatory alliance between international and Russian capitalists, to overthrow Soviet rule in Russia, in short, an alliance pursuing the old aim of extinguishing the centre of

* *The Listener*, Feb. 4, 1954, Vol. LI, No. 1301, p. 229, "The Listener's Book Chronicle".

** Winston S. Churchill, Op. cit., Vol. VI, p. 495.

the world socialist conflagration—the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic.”*

Simultaneously there was a serious aggravation of the contradictions between the imperialist powers, as a result of which war broke out between them even before the Soviet Union became involved in that war. In this situation, while fighting the Axis powers the Soviet Union was able to preserve and considerably expand its relations, founded on the principle of peaceful coexistence, with most of the capitalist world.

In 1918 the possibility of Soviet Russia co-operating with one group of imperialist powers in order to repulse the attack of another was the subject of bitter argument in the Bolshevik Party, but now the entire Party steadfastly adhered to the Leninist principle of peaceful coexistence, which envisaged the possibility, in the interests of socialism, of military and political co-operation between the Soviet Union and bourgeois countries. Lenin wrote that in 1918 we did not seek an alliance with the Entente against Germany, “although we do not in general reject military agreements with one of the imperialist coalitions against the other in those cases in which such an agreement could, without undermining the basis of Soviet power, strengthen its position and paralyse the attacks of any imperialist power”.*** Such a situation obtained in 1941, and the Soviet Union not only joined the anti-fascist coalition side by side with bourgeois countries but was active in creating it and played a very important role in it.

The Soviet Union co-operated politically with the other members of the coalition to ensure victory over the common enemy and prepare the future peace settlement. Economic and trade relations expanded substantially compared with the pre-war period and acquired a character of their own. The Soviet Union received from and supplied its Allies with various items under Lend Lease. During the war it received key materials, equipment and machines, for example, 401,400 lorries. The deliveries of locomotives, fuel, means of communication and various non-ferrous metals and chemicals were of vital importance. However, as a whole, the Lend Lease supplies did not and could not essentially

* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, pp. 208-09.

** Ibid., Vol. 27, p. 361.

influence the course of the war. Allied aid played a very small role in supplying the Red Army with weapons and equipment. During the war the Soviet Union produced 489,900 pieces of artillery, 102,500 tanks and self-propelled guns and 136,800 aircraft, while from the USA and Britain it received 9,600 pieces of artillery, 11,567 tanks and self-propelled guns and 18,753 aircraft, of which 14,013 were transport aircraft.* The Soviet Union co-operated with the other members of the coalition in the sphere of science and technology, but this co-operation took mainly military requirements into account. Cultural relations were also maintained, but their promotion was, naturally, limited by the war-time conditions. Thus the Soviet Union's relations with the other members of the anti-fascist coalition embraced all basic forms of co-operation under the principle of peaceful coexistence.

The salient feature of this stage was that coexistence was extended to military co-operation between the USSR and a number of bourgeois countries. Under this co-operation the USSR received armaments from its Allies; the USSR, USA and Britain co-ordinated (in very general outline) their military plans; the members of the coalition rendered each other direct military assistance through military operations against the common enemy.

The period of the war showed that consistent implementation of the principle of peaceful coexistence wholly and fully conforms to the interests of the Soviet Union and the entire world communist movement. The ties between the Soviet people and the peoples of the Allied countries were considerably strengthened and extended. In the Western states the peoples learned more truth about the life of the Soviet Union with the result that friendliness for the peoples of the Soviet Union was markedly enhanced. The Soviet Union enjoyed more prestige than ever before. Co-operation with other countries ensured a certain amount of assistance to the Soviet Union against nazi Germany and her satellites. This co-operation was of great positive significance to the cause of socialism. Undermining the forces of reaction, it helped to create favourable conditions for the triumph of socialist revolutions in a number of European

* P. N. Pospelov, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

and Asian countries, for strengthening the progressive forces in the capitalist world and for a successful liberation struggle of the peoples of colonial and dependent countries.

An extremely important result of the Soviet Union's struggle for peaceful coexistence in this period was that the ruling circles of the countries of the anti-fascist coalition had to give formal recognition to peaceful coexistence as a norm of the relations between the Soviet Union and capitalist countries. This found expression in documents drawn up by the leading members of the coalition to determine the post-war arrangement of the world. Under the Treaty of May 26, 1942, Britain undertook to co-operate closely with the Soviet Union in order "to preserve peace and resist aggression in the post-war period". In this treaty the two countries proclaimed their fidelity to such principles of peaceful coexistence as territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs, collective security, the honouring of international commitments and economic co-operation on the basis of mutual benefit.* These principles found their embodiment, though much curtailed, also in the documents on Soviet-US relations. The Moscow Four-Power Declaration on General Security of October 30, 1943, the Three-Power Tehran Declaration and the decisions of the Crimea and Berlin conferences were founded on recognition of peaceful coexistence between the Soviet Union and capitalist countries. This stemmed from the Soviet Union's struggle for coexistence and the intense desire of the people of the capitalist countries, for coexistence. This is what made the ruling circles of the US and Britain formally accept coexistence.

However, the promise of post-war co-operation was not destined to come true. Instead of becoming weaker, as the imperialist politicians expected, the forces of socialism gained in strength during the war, and as victory over Germany, Italy and Japan drew nearer, the ruling circles of Britain and the USA became increasingly apprehensive about the fate of capitalism. Churchill was so alarmed by the growth of socialism that in the spring of 1945 he was prepared, together with the USA and the surviving nazis,

* *Uneshnaya politika Sovetskogo Soyuza...*, Vol. I, pp. 235-38.

to turn the guns against the victorious Soviet Union. This design failed, but it showed the difficulties the Soviet Union would encounter in its struggle for peaceful coexistence after the war.

Both the USSR and Britain benefited by their military and political alliance. It helped the Soviet Union to defeat the nazis and saved Britain from defeat and devastation. This is admitted not only by Soviet historians. Churchill who did more than anybody else to belittle the significance of the Soviet Union's victory in the Second World War, repeatedly referred to this question. In a speech in Parliament in October 1944 he declared that "Russia is holding and beating far larger hostile forces than those which face the Allies in the West".* He made many statements in a similar vein during the war; far from all of them were sincere. But in 1950, when through the efforts of Churchill and like-minded people an end had been put to the Grand Alliance and the cold war unleashed by them was already raging, Britain's war-time Prime Minister wrote in his memoirs that he did not in the slightest degree challenge "the conclusion which history will affirm that Russian resistance broke the power of the German armies...".**

Farther, he recalls that

"we all felt that even if the Soviet armies were driven back to the Ural mountains Russia would still exert an immense and, if she preserved in the war, an ultimately decisive force".***

The whole world knows that the Soviet Union staunchly continued the war until victory was won, and was, consequently, the decisive force ensuring the triumphant completion of the war for the peoples, the British people among them.

The ideological struggle between imperialism and socialism has embraced the history of the Second World War as well. This explains why some bourgeois historians pass over in silence and others belittle the Soviet Union's contribution to victory over the Axis powers. However, even in their writings one finds recognition of the decisive role which the Soviet Union played in the war. Noble Frankland, one of

* *The Times*, September 29, 1944.

** Winston S. Churchill, Op. cit., Vol. III, p. 352.

*** Ibid.

the authors of the official British history of the Second World War, writes that "Britain and America, though locked in the closest of alliances, had not the strategic genius nor the military resources to defeat Hitler without the massive support of Communist Russia".*

One finds many analogous admissions in American publications. In early June 1945, in a memorandum on the state of the international communist movement, the US State Department wrote: "Europe is emerging from probably the most devastating war in its history" and "the majority of Europeans" regard the Red Army "as their liberators".** Even an ill-wisher of the USSR like George F. Kennan admits there "was no prospect for victory over Germany, unless it were with the help of Russia".*** Cordell Hull, war-time US Secretary of State, wrote: "We must ever remember that by the Russians' heroic struggle against the Germans they probably saved the Allies from a negotiated peace with Germany. Such a peace would have humiliated the Allies and would have left the world open to another Thirty Years War."*) Many American politicians and historians consider that Soviet assistance was vital to the Allies for victory over Japan as well.

The experience of Anglo-Soviet relations during the war show that the Soviet Union is a reliable Ally. Today one is astounded when one reads that when the Second World War broke out the leaders of the British Government were unable to assess even approximately the Soviet Union's war-industrial potential or its material (to say nothing of moral) possibilities of putting up resistance to an aggressor, and that they believed its military potential was smaller than that of squire-ridden Poland.

The war demonstrated that the material resources of the Soviet Union made it an extremely powerful Ally. The moral spirit displayed by the peoples of the Soviet Union in the struggle against the Axis won universal admiration and will live through the ages as a magnificent example of

* *International Affairs*, July 1959, Vol. 35, No. 3, p. 343.

** *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conference of Berlin*, Vol. I, p. 278.

*** George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy 1900-1950*, Chicago, 1951, p. 77.

*) Cordell Hull, Op. cit., p. 1465.

staunchness in the struggle for freedom. The moral factor played a key role in ensuring victory, for in war, as Frederick Engels aptly noted, the "moral element . . . immediately transforms itself into a material force".*

An immutable principle of Soviet foreign policy is that Allied commitments must be honoured. It manifested itself in full during the war. This is admitted by British and American war-time leaders. On February 1, 1943, Churchill wrote:

"I told them that in my experience the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had never broken an engagement or treaty. . . ."** On February 27, 1945, he said: "I know of no Government which stands to its obligations, even in its own despite, more solidly than the Russian Soviet Government."***

The fact that the Soviet Union rigidly discharged its pledges is noted by American statesmen as well. US Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson writes that "the Russians were magnificent Allies. They fought as they promised."*) Admiral William D. Leahy, who was the war-time Chief-of-Staff to the US President, noted: "Russia had kept every military agreement made before that time."**) This was the cement that held the anti-fascist coalition together.

The politicians and historians who doggedly maintain that Britain wanted neither the First nor the Second World War ignore the facts. Along with other imperialist powers Britain helped to start the First World War. As regards the Second World War, the British ruling circles indeed did not desire it in the shape in which they got it in September 1939. What they wanted was a war of their imperialist rivals against the Soviet Union. They had long hoped for such a war, prepared for it and made many sacrifices in order to get it started. And when their plans misfired they were caught flatfooted.

What hopes had the British ruling circles pinned on the war, and what were their objectives? First and foremost to

* F. Engels, *Selected Military Works*, Russ. ed., Moscow, 1956, p. 226.

** *Correspondence*. . . , Vol. I, p. 90.

*** W. P. and Zelda K. Coates, *Op. cit.*, p. 78.

*) Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, New York, 1947, p. 527.

**) William D. Leahy, *I Was There*, New York, 1950, p. 317.

eliminate or weaken (first with the hands of the German nazis and Japanese militarists, and then by placing the entire burden of the war against the Axis on the USSR) the Soviet Union, which was, at the time, the only socialist state. In this way they planned to strengthen British imperialism's international position. The undermining of the socialist revolution and the abolition of its basis would inevitably have been followed by the weakening and the cessation of the national liberation struggle in the colonial and dependent countries. Moreover, it was calculated that the weakening of Britain's imperialist rivals in the course of the war would insure the safety of her colonial possessions against encroachments by them. In the long run, it was felt, the war would strengthen the world capitalist system and, above all, consolidate Britain's position in that system. For Britain's imperialist rulers the war against Germany and Italy was a war for domination in Europe which was the last but one, if not the last, step towards world supremacy.

It is widely recognised that the London politicians are among the most experienced and astute leaders of the bourgeois world. However, during the war events did not develop as these politicians believed they would. The same may be said of the results of the war.

The calculations with regard to the fate of socialism failed to materialise. Indeed, the Second World War was a grueling test for the Soviet Union. It was a test which unquestionably no non-socialist country would have survived. Lenin wrote: "Like every crisis in the life of individuals or in the history of nations, war oppresses and breaks some, steels and enlightens others."* The Soviet Union emerged from the war much stronger than ever before, with tremendous international prestige and influence. The American Professor John Lukacs writes that "never in the history of mankind was the power and prestige of Russia greater than in 1945".** This brought about a further change in the world power balance in favour of socialism. The defeat of the fascists in Europe and of the Japanese militarists in the Far East, combined with the enormous growth of the Soviet Union's weight in world affairs, created favourable condi-

* V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 22.

** John Lukacs, *A History of the Cold War*, Garden City, New York, 1961, p. 18.

tions for socialist revolutions. A powerful wave of socialist revolutions swept across a number of countries in Europe and Asia, demolishing the capitalist system in them. The peoples of these countries took the road of socialism and together with the USSR formed the mighty socialist system, uniting more than one-third of mankind. British imperialism and its imperialist allies were unable to stem this revolutionary tide.

The hopes of the British ruling circles with regard to the colonial system were likewise blasted. Far from strengthening Britain's colonial positions, the war shook them to their very foundations. The socialist revolutions that broke out in Europe and Asia at the end of the war stimulated the growth of the national liberation movement in the colonies and dependent countries. This movement developed into a national liberation revolution, which put an end to the British colonial empire in its old form. In connection with Churchill's war-time statement that he did "not become the King's First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire", the American historian Morray notes: "Mr. Churchill escaped presiding over the liquidation of the British Empire by ceasing to preside."^{*} This job fell to the Labour Government, which presided when India and many other British colonies achieved their independence. Practically all the British colonial possessions won independent statehood in the course of two decades after the war.

Britain's place and role in the world underwent a radical change after the war. Instead of strengthening the capitalist world, as it was hoped, the war weakened it, particularly Britain. The second stage of the general crisis of capitalism, embracing the economy, domestic and foreign policy and ideology of capitalism, set in during the war and the socialist revolutions in a number of European and Asian countries.

The war accentuated the uneven development of capitalism, on account of which Britain failed to win domination in post-war bourgeois Europe. During the war she became dependent on the USA economically, militarily and politically, and this greatly restricted her potential of pursuing an independent policy in international relations. Lord Strang, who has had years of experience at the Foreign Office,

^{*} Joseph P. Morray, *From Yalta to Disarmament. Cold War Debate*, New York, 1961, p. 3.

draws the conclusion that Britain's might is a thing of the past and that if war were to break out today she cannot save herself "without calling on the United States"* and this seriously limits her "freedom of action in international affairs".** In January 1965 the British newspaper *Guardian* wrote that Britain won "a delusive victory", that she "emerged from the war with more honour, but less power, than she had at the outset"***

Nothing came of the British ruling circles' other calculations linked up with the war. Nor were their plans for joint Anglo-American domination over the post-war world, which Churchill and his American colleagues had so vigorously discussed in the course of the war, destined to be fulfilled. The American historian Neumann rightly notes "that World War II failed to achieve the hopes and aspirations voiced by Roosevelt and Churchill in August of 1941"*) —happily for mankind. The peoples reject the idea of one or two countries dominating the world. They want lasting peace and international co-operation among equal nations.

* W. Strang, *Op. cit.*, p. 329.

** *Ibid.*, p. 378.

*** *Guardian*, January 25, 1965.

*) William L. Neumann, *Op. cit.*, p. 99.

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