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British Attitudes towards the Soviet Union, 1951-1956

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Abstract

The thesis is concerned with the British perception of Soviet foreign policy between 1951 and 1956. In particular it examines the understanding that British diplomats, politicians and civil servants had of the process of change which the death of Stalin stimulated in the Kremlin's relations with the outside world. The core of the study centres around 1955, as this was the pivotal point for the British. With the ascendancy of Khrushchev there was perceived not only a new emphasis in Moscow on the necessity of avoiding global war between East and West, but also a new interest in economic competition.

By 1956 Whitehall had concluded that there were a number of factors informing the Soviet re-evaluation of foreign policy. Among which were: the stabilisation of the Western alliance culminating with West German rearmament in 1955; the cost of defence expenditure both in armaments and in supporting the satellite regimes and China; the development of American and Soviet thermonuclear potentials. The latter was thought by the British to be the most profound in its implications on the Soviet approach to the future of international relations. The Soviet leadership certainly appeared eager to be friendly and particularly to communicate an awareness of the grotesque futility of a war employing the latest weaponry. To this end they agreed to the Geneva Summit of 1955. Anthony Eden and Harold Macmillan were convinced by this meeting that, in Macmillan's words, "there ain't gonna be no war". For a few brief, golden months, it seemed in London as if the Cold War might even be negotiated into history.

However, by the end of 1955 it was apparent to the British that Geneva did not mean the Kremlin had given up aspirations to global supremacy, rather that the means to this end were now to be different. Khrushchev, according to the Foreign Office analysis, placed a new emphasis on the role of economic power in the process of undermining Western forms of politics and society, both directly in the potential of Soviet style economies to out-perform capitalist and in the use of economic muscle as a conduit of political influence through economic aid and trade. The latter policy appeared to play a crucial role in the Soviet attempt to take advantage of the birth of post-colonial states in Asia and Africa.

The thesis does not go on to discuss in any detail the implications of the above for British foreign policy, but it does make a broader point about the bearing which British perceptions of Soviet policy had upon their attitude to Egypt before and during the Suez Crisis. The threat of global war might have receded, but the Soviet Union was now seen to be posing a new challenge to British influence in areas of the world which were still of vital economic importance, Egypt being chief among them. Britain's influence in the Third World was not only challenged by the rise of indigenous nationalisms, but these nationalisms could now turn to the Soviet Union for succour and support. From this perspective Britain's position was more precarious than it had ever been before.

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Preface

There is something of a hiatus in the historiography of Britain and the Cold War. Most research has up until recently concentrated on the issue of greatest controversy, the part played by Britain in the initial development of East-West rivalry. This is understandable, not least because the releasing of official documents imposes its own delay, it does, however, leave the reader wondering quite what was to happen next? Indeed some discussions of the decline in Britain's world role in the years after 1945 treat the Cold War almost as a side show which impinged very little upon the main course of events. Britain may have had a more substantial role to play immediately after 1945 than many have given her credit for, but very quickly her lack of super power standing left her as not much more than an interested observer. Such a state of affairs might not be so very bad if the Cold War were a static thing which once set up an running, remained true to the original pattern. This was, of course, not to be the case.

In fact the Cold War underwent very considerable changes in the course of the 1950's, and it is the British understanding of these changes with which this thesis is concerned. In particular it will examine the way in which British diplomats, politicians and civil servants perceived the process of re-evaluation in foreign policy which the death of Stalin stimulated within the Kremlin. The discussion will concentrate around the year 1955 because - as far as the British were concerned - this was the pivotal point. Khrushchev's ascendancy marking a new departure for the Soviet Government in its relations with the outside world. So great was the innovation that the British were forced to think of the threat which the Soviet Union posed to Britain's vital international interests in a fundamentally different way.

Stalin's death came at an interesting point in the technological rivalry between East and West. With the development of thermonuclear potentials in the Soviet Union and America a new stage in the military balance was reached which had the most disturbing implications for either side's war-making potential. The Soviets fumbled towards an understanding of these implications between 1953 and 1955 and by 1955 they were persuaded to change their foreign policy, at least partly, to take account of the unacceptable level of destruction which these new weapons promised in a future war.

There were to be substantial manifestations of this during 1955; the Geneva Conference, the Czech-Egyptian arms deal and the visit by Bulganin and Khrushchev to India and the Far East. In essence the Soviets wanted to ensure that the use of their new capacities would not prove necessary. To this end a warmer relationship was needed with the West, and thus the Geneva process was begun. However, this did not mean that the Soviets had given up their aspirations to global supremacy, rather the end was to be achieved by different means. Herein lay the impetus behind the Soviet Union's new found interest in sponsoring the armament of Egypt and in attempting to extend her influence into the "underdeveloped world" by providing economic aid and

trade agreements with countries such as Burma. By 1956 it was apparent to Britain that she was dealing with a Soviet foreign policy which posed a lessened danger of war, but an increased threat to the maintenance of her position in a number of important parts of the world.

This is, essentially, as far as the thesis will run. It is not part of the present limited exercise to investigate in detail the impact which the above perception had upon British policy. Yet there are important issues which this discussion does throw some light upon. The Soviet role in the Suez Crisis itself has not benefited from close examination and certainly she did not play any very dramatic role until the very end of the affair. Nonetheless, it is only possible to fully understand the international context in which the British Government was operating if the role of the Soviet Union is also understood. For example, the panic which surrounded Eden and his confederates during the crisis has been the cause of considerable bafflement to historians. Why did an apparently able and experienced politician take leave of his senses and sanction sordid skulduggery which moreover was inept in conception and inadequate in execution? This panic is, perhaps, more explicable when we understand the increasing frustration which was felt in London; from September, 1956 the Soviets had seemed almost to take over the position of influence in Egypt which Britain had herself once enjoyed. Much of the surprise at Nasser's announcement of the nationalisation of the canal was because Whitehall was so exercised by the likelihood of the Soviets stepping in to finance the Aswan Dam. The sense that Britain was facing a supreme challenge was not merely a rhetorical conceit used by Eden to justify folly, it also expressed something of his sincere understanding of the problem.

This illustrates a broader issue. British defence and foreign policies were not simply the construct of domestic forces, they were also a response to her perception of what was going on in the wider world. The following is offered as an attempt to examine part of that perception at a crucial point in the decline of British fortunes in world affairs.

I ought also to make a few words of acknowledgement to the many people, mentioned and unmentioned below, who have helped in a wide variety of ways to make the writing of this thesis possible: my Supervisor for his patience and wisdom; the staffs of Glasgow University Library, the Public Record office and the British Library; Mike Black and Morna Black for assistance in the battle to overcome my technophobia. There were also those who helped with accommodation in London, Gordon and Carolyn Clark, Hugh Hunter and Nichola Swann being the chief who suffered my visitation with forbearance. Many, many thanks must go to my parents, brothers, sister and sister-in-law for their support and encouragement. And at the last apologies to those who over the past year have had to live in the same flat as I through the lingering half-life of my thesis, Clara Donnelly and Judy Wakeling.

Chapter 1

Soviet Foreign Policy And Its British Interpreters, 1950-1956

As this thesis is concerned with the perception which the British Government had of developments within the Soviet^{Union} it seems sensible to start by examining, from the perspective of our own time, what was actually going on in Russia between 1952 and 1957, particularly in respect of foreign policy. This is not least the case because the chronology of events in the Soviet Union largely provides the agenda for what is to come. Needless to say there is insufficient space to do the subject justice, but it does not seem necessary for the present limited purpose to be exhaustive. Also, this preliminary analysis, with the assistance of hindsight and a large amount of secondary work by historians and political scientists, will set down something of a bench mark against which the British view at the time may be judged and, perhaps, vice-versa.

Once this has been attempted there will be a discussion of the means by which the British Government formulated its opinion of Soviet developments. Some of the characters who played central roles in this process, at the level of the British Embassy in Moscow, the Foreign Office in London and the politicians, will be introduced. The inter-relationship between these different groups in the apparatus of foreign policy will also be examined. It is important to gain some understanding of the means by which the Foreign Office developed its opinions and disseminated them throughout Whitehall.

The personal roles of the Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister in the formulation of Britain's foreign policy in the 1950's must equally be addressed, at least to some extent for there is probably a whole thesis awaiting to be written on this issue. The imperatives of personal prejudice and ambition are crucially important in understanding reactions at the highest executive level which did not always fall neatly in line with the opinions being canvassed by permanent officials. In this Churchill was more guilty than Eden, but even Eden's complicated personality and diplomatic peccadillos led him, at times, to attitudes subtly at variance to those of his civil servants.

SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY, 1952-1956

The move from British history to Soviet is in many ways a disorientating one. The former provides an embarrassment of government publications, records, private papers and public sources which, although inevitably flawed, provide an invaluable basis for our understanding of the past. In the case of the Soviet Union even basic matters of fact can still be issues of some controversy.¹ Despite the appearance of recent titbits, mainly memoir accounts, and the possibility that more may still be put into the public domain,

¹ See R. Conquest, *Power and Policy in the U.S.S.R.*, pp. 50-75, on the issue of evidence and the study of Soviet politics. Also, Uri Ra'anan, "The U.S.S.R. : What is Ascertainable and how can such Knowledge be Obtained" in Uri Ra'anan and Charles Perry eds, *The U.S.S.R. Today and Tomorrow, Problems and Changes*, pp. 1-16.

very little material concerning the operation of Government itself is yet available.² The main sources for study of the Soviet Union remain the speeches and pronouncements of the executive and the newspapers which acted as a major conduit of such opinions to the Soviet public. These have already been exhaustively raked over by a large body of commentators.³ Over the past decades there has been very little added to the information on which to base analysis.⁴

Indeed the greatest change to happen in Soviet history over recent years has more to do with the perspective from which we view it, rather than in the sources themselves. Now that the Soviet satellite system has collapsed in Eastern Europe and Communism within Russia is no more, it is possible to look upon Soviet history as a discrete subject with its own, separate, alpha and omega. The Cold War itself becomes a truly historical phenomenon, the development of which can be traced from beginning through maturity to its end. It is now possible to see more clearly, although by no means for the first time, the significant turning points in its existence; one of these was the new approach to foreign and domestic policy embarked upon by Khrushchev in 1955. Khrushchev's initiatives were to set the parameters of Cold War rivalry for the rest of the Soviet period.⁵

However, it was dimly apparent even under the stifling rigidity of Stalin's last years that all was not entirely satisfactory with the Soviet Union's external relations.⁶ Indeed even during the Khrushchev period Western commentators such as Marshal Shulman were going so far as to suggest that the changes towards a more flexible foreign policy which came to a climax under Khrushchev had already begun before Stalin's death in 1953.⁷ Shulman dated the turning point thus,

2 These include Andrei Gromyko, *Memories*, Feliks Chuyev, *Sto sorok besed c Molotovym* (*One Hundred and Forty Conversations with Molotov*), an enticing title if ever there were one, the testimony of Malenkov's son Andrei and various addenda to the material on Khrushchev. This latter category encompasses N. S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers, the Glasnost Tapes*, and other additions to the already extent memoir account. Khrushchev's speech writer from 1960-64 has written his version of the Khrushchev years, Fedor Burlatsky, *Khrushchev and the First Russian Spring*. There has also been the publication by *Izvestiia* of the July, 1953, Central Committee stenographic record, "Delo Beria", *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* (January-February), 1991. This was the meeting at which the arrest of Beria was settled.

3 See F. J. Floron, Jr., E. P. Hoffman and R. F. Laird (eds.), *Soviet Foreign Policy, Classic and Contemporary Issues*, pp. 1-2 for an illustration of the relatively stable nature of the study of Soviet foreign policy.

4 See James Richter, "Re-examining Soviet Policy Towards Germany During the Beria Interregnum", for a discussion of the latest primary evidence which has become available

5 For an overview of the period up to Gorbachev see Erik P. Hoffman, "Soviet Foreign Policy Aims and Accomplishments from Lenin to Brezhnev", in *Classic Issues in Soviet Foreign Policy*, pp 49-71.

6 See William McCagg, Jr., *Stalin Embattled, 1943-1948*, for an in depth analysis of Stalin's foreign policy.

7 Marshal Shulman, *Stalin's Foreign Policy Reappraised*. Shulman, whose book was first published in 1963, sums up his argument on page one as follows,

The prevailing interpretation of recent Soviet foreign policy emphasizes Stalin's death as the great watershed event, from which is charted the shift toward a more flexible policy, broadly known by the term "peaceful coexistence." Although this emphasis properly draws attention to the new departures of the more recent period and to the dynamic character of Soviet policy, it

From the end of the Berlin blockade in 1949 to the Nineteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in October, 1952, there were unmistakable signs of a marked evolution in the Soviet strategic outlook toward Western Europe, of a groping toward a more effective adaptation to the new political and technological facts of life.⁸

Chief of these new "facts of life" was, of course, the implications of atomic warfare.⁹

Shulman goes on to argue that Stalin's foreign policy expressed this new thinking in a softening of relations with the West. Restraint was shown where hitherto the Soviets had indulged in provocation and more subtle encouragement was now given to centrifugal forces in the "capitalist" world, in particular neutralism and anti-colonialism.¹⁰ This is seen by Shulman as Khrushchevism before Khrushchev. Stalin's refurbishment of policy was furthered by an increasing commitment on the part of the Soviet Government to the "international" peace movement, which had been kicked off during 1949 in Paris by a World Peace Conference hosted by the French Communist party.¹¹ This trend is awarded by Shulman the familiar tag of "rightist", as opposed to more orthodox and belligerent "leftism".

However, earlier and more recent opinions stress the continuity in Stalin's late years rather than the change.¹² Indeed some suggest that Stalin was becoming more inflexible in his approach to the outside world than the reverse. John Van Oudernaren, in a recent and very substantial study of Soviet foreign policy since 1953, argues that in Stalin's increasing emphasis upon foreign Communist Parties as a means to conduct foreign policy, rather than dialogue with Western countries in the United Nations or Foreign Minister's meetings, the Soviet policy was in fact becoming more radical.¹³ The key contrast with his successors lay in Stalin's desire at all cost to maintain direct political control from Moscow over the international Communist movement,

gives insufficient attention to significant changes in outlook and behaviour which began to be manifested before the death of Stalin.

8 *ibid.* p. 1.

9 *ibid.* pp. 111-114.

10 *ibid.* p. 259.

11 *ibid.* pp. 92-99. For an alternative view see J. L. Nogee and R. H. Donaldson, *Soviet Policy since World War II*, pp. 97-99.

12 See *Soviet policy Since World War II*, p. 100. Nogee and Donaldson come to the following conclusion,

[T]actical changes during Stalin's later life were not sufficient to bring about a major reorientation of the Soviet approach to the world. What was needed was a more thoroughgoing reassessment of the international situation, which in turn necessitated a disavowal of some of Stalin's own fundamental theses on foreign policy. In a very real sense, the ageing dictator had outlived his usefulness to his country, and only with his death... would a more venturesome strategy to attempt to break the stalemate of the Cold War emerge.

Also see Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence, The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-67*, p. 501.

13 John Van Oudenaren, *Detente in Europe, The Soviet Union and the West since 1953*, pp. 17-20.

[T]he innovative element in the Malenkov and Khrushchev policies was not that the USSR sought to mobilise Communists and fellow travellers in support of Soviet policy objectives, but that they reached out to organizations and institutions that they did not control and that were often overtly hostile to the USSR in a long-term effort to promote the "relaxation of tensions."¹⁴

The more Stalin's policy eschewed direct contact with those he had no control over, in particular the West, the more conservative and inflexible it became. Shulman, in essence, had grabbed hold of the wrong end of the stick. This is the reading which I find most convincing, not least because it fits best with the British Government's view of Soviet foreign policy at the time.

This is not to say that there were no nuances of future change, especially in the area of "doctrine". Indeed the British were to pick up the rumbles of ideological adjustment in 1951 and 1952, as will be discussed below. However, in terms of the development of policy the new thinking was yet to be put into practice.¹⁵

Certainly, the jockeying for the succession which was to preoccupy the leadership after Stalin's death in 1953 and 1954, is discernible in retrospect during the very early fifties.¹⁶ Indeed Robert Conquest interpreted the Doctors' Plot, which was publicly announced in January, 1953, as the prelude to a selective purge by Stalin upon those who were attempting to establish personal power bases from which to launch their claims to the succession.¹⁷ The plot's origins and history are far from clear, but the accusations implicated a number of important and largely Jewish physicians in an attempt to kill leading Communists.¹⁸ Fortuitously for all concerned, Stalin's health took a very sudden turn for the worse and before such sinister cunning on his part as may have intentioned the affair became clear, he went to his eternal reward. In the aftermath of Stalin's death the Doctor's Plot was swiftly discredited by the new Government. On April 4th, 1953 the tables were turned and they who had been accusers became accused.¹⁹ In line with this

¹⁴ *ibid.* p. 20.

¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 17.

¹⁶ See *Power and Policy*, pp. 79-191; British and other Western observers of the time were more impressed by the grip which Stalin maintained on power up to the very end. This is an issue which will be dealt with in chapter 2.

¹⁷ *ibid.* pp. 185-191. Conquest argues that Lavrenty Beria, the chief of the secret police, was the main victim which Stalin had in his sights in 1952 and early 1953.

¹⁸ There is an account by Khrushchev of the Doctors' Plot, which lays the emphasis very much upon Stalin's insane paranoia. N. S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, pp. 282-287. This was the line which Khrushchev took on the matter in his Secret Speech to the 20th party Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in February, 1956. Conquest points out that Stalin probably had more rational political ends in sight than Khrushchev was prepared to admit. A key objective in Khrushchev's revelations was to foist all the blame for the errors of the past upon Stalin, thus leaving the Communist system of government itself and Stalin's acolytes blameless. On this point see *Power and Policy* pp. 171-172. There is a recent English translation of the memoir of a Doctor who fell under suspicion, Yakov Rapoport, *The Doctor's Plot, Stalin's Last Crime*. It gives a valuable and moving account of the late Stalinist state's impact upon its citizens. Also by Louis Rapoport is *Stalin's War against the Jews. The Doctor's Plot and the Soviet Solution*.

¹⁹ The fate of Dr Lydia Timashuk, whose letter had sparked off the original investigation, is a fitting testimony to Soviet tergiversation. On April 4th, 1953, *Pravda* announced that she was to be

sudden change in the political atmosphere, Molotov was re-appointed as Foreign Minister. He had lost the post in 1949 to the prosecutor of the great show trials of the thirties, Andrei Vyshinskii. Molotov had increasingly fallen victim to Stalin's suspicions and anti-semitism, the latter through Madam Molotov who was sent to a concentration camp on account of being Jewish.

From the 5th March 1953 to before the 4th April Stalin's heirs engaged in what might be termed the first round of the succession battle. It was clear from the start that the emphasis in the new regime was upon "collective leadership".²⁰ To this end Malenkov, thought by many to have been Stalin's favourite, was forced by the 14th March to choose between his positions of Prime Minister and Secretary of the Party's Central Committee. Malenkov did not choose wisely, perhaps beguiled by Stalin's preference for State as against Party titles in the latter years of his reign.²¹ As a consequence of this Khrushchev, who was left as the senior secretary and in effect promoted, gained the pole position within the Party Secretariat from which he was to launch his ultimately successful bid for power. However, in the interim the key issue was that no one figure should inherit sufficient political power to be able to turn himself into a "new Stalin."

Indeed it was largely because of his challenge to this new principle of "collective leadership" that Lavrenty Beria was arrested in the June of 1953. He was to be tried and executed later in the year. Beria, whose position as overseer of the M.V.D. arm of the security service had been confirmed in the aftermath of Stalin's death, seems to have been the first to put forward a clear bid for untrammelled power and for his pains won the distinction of being the last top-level leader to ~~lose~~ his life as a direct result of conflict within the Soviet elite.²² By the end of 1953 "collective leadership" seemed, at least to foreign observers of Soviet politics, to have become firmly entrenched and to have weathered its first real challenge.

This turmoil at the top was accompanied by a softening of the domestic rigours of Stalin's last years and was also to have important implications for Soviet foreign policy. Despite considerable debate between 1945 and 1953 over the importance of consumer industries, the Soviet economy was still very substantially biased towards heavy industry. This resulted, inevitably, in considerable privation for the Soviet domestic consumer.²³ The new leadership, at least in its perception of the popular mood in spring 1953, seems to have feared that the loss of Stalin's authority might fatally undermine the regime's

stripped of the Order of Lenin which she had been awarded by a grateful Stalin on January the 20th. See *Power and Policy*, pp. 206-207.

20 For an in depth analysis of domestic politics at this point see *Power and Policy*, pp. 195-227.

21 Stalin's authority after 1945 was not based upon any position within Government or Party, but upon the very peculiar personal power which he had developed over the years of his grotesquely ruthless dictatorship, see for example, R. Conquest, *The Great Terror*, pp. 445-463.

22 See *Khrushchev Remembers*, pp. 321-341.

23 Although there had been some dalliance with expansion in the supply of consumer goods in 1945 and 1946, as the international situation turned more chilly the demands of security and reconstruction favoured a renewed emphasis on heavy industry. For more detail see Timothy Dunmore, *Soviet Politics, 1945-1953*, pp. 42-73, and also by Dunmore, *The Stalinist Command Economy, The Soviet State Apparatus and Economic Policy 1945-53*, pp. 95-115.

standing within the Soviet Union. Consequently, a relaxation of economic tempo was embarked upon which was to give the consumer a higher priority in the planning of industrial consumption. This willingness on the part of the "collective leadership" to pander to its people, as we shall see, was the subject of considerable comment by British observers at the time. In the words of a more modern commentator, George Breslauer,

Perhaps because of fear, perhaps for other reasons, a rather broad consensus emerged within the national leadership on the need to break with the past, and to offer a new deal to the urban and rural consumer. Malenkov, Khrushchev, even Kaganovich endorsed such a program, while Molotov grudgingly accepted it as something of a regrettable necessity.²⁴

This policy was to be maintained through 1953 and into 1954, when it too began to become a pawn in the continuing competition between Malenkov and Khrushchev for authority.

Furthermore, the Soviet Leadership's need for calmness at home informed a new flexibility in the Soviet approach to external relations. This tendency was bolstered by an awareness of the counter productive nature of the extremes of Stalin's diplomacy. Malenkov's utterances in the matter were to have a particularly profound effect upon Churchill.²⁵ However, the problem which preoccupied Soviet foreign policy in 1953 seems to have remained very much that which it had been in 1952, the danger of West German re-armament. On this there was considerable debate within leadership as to the best course of action.²⁶

It appears that Beria, at one extreme, was even prepared to see a united capitalist Germany as the price for its neutralisation. Ulbricht and the nascent regime in East Germany were, in this view, little more than diplomatic cannon fodder.²⁷ Malenkov, apparently, tended towards this end of the spectrum, although he was not quite as radical in attitude as Beria.

This preparedness to deal with the West was also informed by a sanguine view of the changing nuclear balance.²⁸ As the Soviet Union developed her own thermonuclear bomb, on top of the atomic weapons already manufactured, Malenkov's and Beria's

24 George W. Breslauer, *Khrushchev and Brezhnev as Leaders: Building Authority in Soviet Politics*, p. 25.

25 A matter which will be afforded considerable attention below.

26 On this see Richter, "Re-examining Soviet Policy Towards Germany". He makes very interesting use of the latest material to come out from the Soviet Union to examine the debate over German policy which went on within the leadership during 1953. My treatment of the issue is essentially his.

27 See Richter and Victor Baras, "Beria's Fall and Ulbricht's Survival," *Soviet Studies* 27:3 (July 1975), pp. 381-95. Also there is a very recent biography of Beria which deals with his role in the succession struggle and foreign policy, Amy Knight, *Beria, Stalin's First Lieutenant*, pp. 176-200.

28 Malenkov was to develop this theme in 1954 with his Supreme Soviet election speech of the 12th March. A full English translation is in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 1954, Vol. 7, No. 11, pp. 6-8. For a very recent and detailed study of Soviet nuclear capacities which uses the latest Soviet information see, Steven J. Zaloga, *Target America, The Soviet Union and the Strategic Arms Race, 1945-1964*.

confidence in the Soviet ability to deter Western aggression increased. So much so that, some would argue, the West may have missed an opportunity to end the Cold War in the months after Stalin's death.²⁹

James Richter suggests that these opinions were also informed by a desire to reduce the importance of ideology in policy. Given that both Beria and Malenkov relied upon State structures for their power bases, such a move could only have increased their control over the reigns of power.³⁰

On the other extreme, Foreign Minister Molotov retained a diehard, Stalinist commitment to the defence of Ulbricht's regime. Furthermore, on ideological grounds he was not one to consider that a "modus vivendi" with the West was desirable, even if attainable.³¹ Khrushchev was associated with this opinion, although not with quite the same devotion. As a man whose power was rooted in the Party he had a clear interest in maintaining the importance of orthodox doctrine in the prosecution of foreign policy.³²

It was this more traditional, Molotov-Khrushchev view which emerged triumphant by the summer of 1953 and the arrest of Beria. Thereafter Molotov's position within the leadership allowed him a crucial role in the development of foreign policy. From the middle of 1953 to the beginning of 1955 that policy revolved around attempts to break up

29 This is a view canvassed by some historians of Western foreign policy, see M. Steven Fish, "After Stalin's Death: The Anglo-American Debate Over a New Cold War," *Diplomatic History* 10:1 (Fall, 1986). It is also a view which James Richter seems to support in his Ph.D. dissertation, "Action and Reaction in Khrushchev's Foreign Policy: How Leadership Politics Affect Soviet Responses to the International Environment". However, Richter himself does not think that the most recent evidence from the Soviet Union supports the thesis. On Soviet policy towards Germany he concludes that the most opportune moment for dialogue was the period before Beria's arrest. Given that in the immediate post-Stalin period Soviet policy was in flux and that not until after Beria's arrest, in the late summer and autumn of 1953, were Western observers prepared to stick their necks out and make longer term estimations of Soviet foreign policy (see below on this), it would have required a very substantial leap in the dark for Western Governments to drop their existent policies and go achasing after a flicker of light from Moscow. There may well have been more to Churchill's intuitive grasping after summit diplomacy in 1953 than many thought at the time, but few Governments are prepared to take grave risks with their nation's security based largely upon subjective feeling. Moreover, in "Re-examing Soviet Policy Towards Germany", Richter concludes,

In sum, the new information suggests that no realistic opportunity to reunify Germany existed in the months after Stalin's death. The Soviets had decided in late May [1953] not to abandon East Germany in return for a demilitarized, united Germany... no Western proposal could have changed their mind in the short time before Beria's arrest in late June.

30 *ibid.* pp. 15-16.

31 *ibid.* p. 17, *Using One Hundred and Forty Conversations with Molotov*, Richter outlines Molotov's position as follows,

His [Molotov's] vision of socialism's unrelenting struggle against the forces of capitalism caused him to reject Beria's suggestion that a capitalist Germany could ever be neutral or "peaceful". Even if the government ostensibly supported neutrality, a capitalist Germany necessarily would support the imperialists in case of war. Furthermore, as Molotov conceived war to be inevitable, the strategic significance of Germany's industrial potential and position in the centre of Europe was far too great to hand the country over to the class enemy.

Richter goes on to point out that Molotov's use of conciliatory rhetoric was entirely cynical. It was designed to prise the Western Alliance apart rather than bring East and West together.

32 *ibid.* pp. 17-19.

the Western Alliance over the issue of German rearmament in particular, what was known by the British Foreign Office as "wedge driving".³³ It had its greatest success during August, 1954 in the failure of the European Defence Community.

By the reopening of the Foreign Ministers' Conference season in January 1954 after a hiatus of some six years, it was clear to the West that the Soviets were not prepared to give way on any fundamentals. Indeed, the new and more subtle Soviet diplomacy was if anything creating more difficulties, particularly for West Germany's rearmament, than Stalin's elephantine blundering. If there had been a "window of opportunity" which all in the West but Churchill had turned their backs upon, it was not open for very long.

1954 saw the intensification of a new round of domestic, Soviet political dog-fighting. Beria having been "legally" disposed of, the competition increasingly centred around the ambitions of Malenkov and Khrushchev.³⁴ This expressed itself in controversy over a number of issues, the most substantial of which were agricultural and economic policy.³⁵

On agriculture Khrushchev saw himself as something of an expert and it was in this area that he devoted much of his energy in 1954.³⁶ In essence the view with which he associated himself was that the Soviet grain problem could best be dealt with by increasing the amount of land under cultivation. This "virgin lands scheme" became a preoccupation for Khrushchev in the years to come. Indeed, the increasing troubles which it ran into by the early 1960's contributed to the groundswell of dissatisfaction which led to Khrushchev's own fall from power in 1964. However, in 1954 it gave him an issue with which to campaign against Malenkov. Malenkov, by contrast, remained happy with the Stalinist approach which emphasised mechanisation and centralised control in the intensification of agriculture upon such land as was already in use. British observers were well aware at the time that this argument was raging, however, as we shall see they did not go on to draw the right conclusions regarding the struggle for power within the Kremlin.

The other domestic issue around which the Malenkov/Khrushchev rivalry crystallised was the balance between heavy and consumer industries in the economy. As late as August 1954 the argument seemed to have been won by those who advocated the

33 See below.

34 For a detailed examination of this period see, *Power and Policy*, pp. 228-262 and "Action and Reaction in Khrushchev's Foreign Policy", pp. 144-166.

35 At least this is the view of most subsequent Western analysts of the power struggle, for example, *Power and Policy*. Richter suggests that such accounts tend to downplay the importance of foreign policy. However, he provides little in the way of concrete evidence to support his claim that foreign policy was the deciding factor in the decline of Malenkov. Having said this there can be little doubt that the Soviet failure to prevent West German rearmament in 1954 came as a substantial blow to both Malenkov's and Molotov's prestige. "Action and Reaction in Khrushchev's Foreign Policy", pp. 162-165.

36 For a thorough treatment of this whole question see Martin McCauley, *Khrushchev and the Development of Soviet Agriculture, the Virgin Land Programme 1953-1964*, pp. 40-75. Also, W. Hahn, *The Politics of Soviet Agriculture*.

sacrifice of heavy industrial to consumer production.³⁷ It was only in November, 1954, that the argument began to hot up once again. Malenkov remained a firm champion of the consumerist approach while Khrushchev seemed to ally himself with those who retained a Stalinist predilection for the primacy of the industrial staples. Despite being aware that the reactivation of this debate was laden with political overtones, once more the Foreign Office in London would fail to conclude that the political infighting was about to reach another climax.

This was indeed the issue which, at least superficially, precipitated Malenkov's fall from Premiership on the 8th February, 1955. In his letter of resignation of the same day, Malenkov confessed his error in the areas of agricultural and economic policy. From this point onwards Khrushchev was clearly *primus inter pares*, his ally Bulganin replaced Malenkov as Chairman of the Council of Ministers. However, Malenkov was not yet definitively beaten as he retained his seat as one of nine members on the Party Presidium. It was not until 1957 and Khrushchev's route of the "Anti-Party Group", that he was able to exclude his immediate rivals from their positions of power at the centre.³⁸ Nevertheless, a decisive phase in Khrushchev's bid for control had been passed, hereafter he was to be concerned with the consolidation and defence of the dominant position which he had established for himself.

Despite these developments, in the area of external relations Khrushchev was yet to stamp his own character upon policy. In order to topple Malenkov from the Premiership, during the consumer industry debate Khrushchev had allied himself with Molotov and those within the leadership who remained loyal to Stalin's approach, although even at this point it was clear that Khrushchev and Molotov did not see eye to eye on all matters.³⁹ Once this end had been achieved Khrushchev had no further use for such attachments, indeed they became a positive hindrance to his attempt to revamp and update Soviet thinking in important areas of policy. Given that Molotov remained the Minister for Foreign Affairs until June, 1956, it is hardly surprising that during early 1955 the debate within the Kremlin shifted its focus from internal to external issues.

Uri Ra'anan argued that this debate is illustrated in the inconsistencies of Molotov's 8th February, 1955, key note speech on foreign affairs to the Supreme Soviet. This was, of course, the same convocation at which Malenkov was forced to resign. On the issue of relations with Yugoslavia Molotov remained firmly Stalinist in blaming Tito for the 1948 split in contrast to the conciliatory attitude which Khrushchev was to take in the following months. However, on the question of the reunification of Austria, Molotov gave evidence of a softening of the Soviet attitude which was shortly to result in the

37 *ibid.* pp. 73-74.

38 See *Power and Policy*, pp. 292-328. Also, Carl Linden, *Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, 1957-1964*, pp. 22-57; Roy and Zhores Medvedev, *Khrushchev, the Years in Power*, pp. 66-80.

39 Uri Ra'anan, *The USSR Arms the Third World: Case Studies in Soviet Foreign Policy*, pp. 88-92. According to Ra'anan Molotov was already being squeezed out of important foreign policy decisions by Khrushchev, most notably in September 1954 when Molotov did not accompany Khrushchev and cronies to what was effectively a summit meeting with the Chinese Government.

withdrawal of Soviet troops from that country.⁴⁰ It is at this point that the opinions of Khrushchev are to be seen. As Molotov was later roundly to condemn Khrushchev for the loss of Soviet control over her Austrian occupation zone under the terms of the Austrian State treaty it seems unlikely that this was a course foreshadowed on 8th February by Molotov's own inspiration.⁴¹ Ra'anana argued that the speech was a compromise cobbled together from two very different understandings of how the Soviet Union was to behave. Molotov continued to stand for the cautious approach which Stalin had maintained in his dealings with non-Communist countries.⁴² Khrushchev, on the other hand, was eager both to take advantage of the opportunities which seemed to glitter in the decolonialised areas of the "under-developed world" and to reduce tensions between East and West. An Austrian settlement seemed in this latter view to give the Soviet blessing to "neutralism" so much in vogue in Asia and went a long way to persuade the West of the value of negotiation. Indeed, the British were left in some little confusion as to exactly where Soviet foreign policy was going at this point, back to Stalin or forward to something altogether new.

A further point at issue was nuclear doctrine. Molotov remained of the Stalinist opinion that unconventional weaponry did not fundamentally alter the way in which the Kremlin should think about and fight a future world war. Khrushchev and his associates, however, displayed a much keener awareness of the need to bring Soviet military thinking into line with recent developments in thermonuclear technology. In particular that it was no longer possible to conceive of any useful purpose for a war which would bring into play such destructive explosives. Malenkov's premature assertion in 1954 that total war would now spell the end of civilisation was about to enjoy its vindication as it was Khrushchev whose star continued to ascend.⁴³

By the end of 1955 Molotov was looking decidedly dog-eared as his position within the leadership was eroded by Khrushchev's swelling power. At the Foreign Minister's Conference at Geneva in October Western officials noted that Molotov seemed subservient to directives from Moscow in a manner which had been unthinkable in 1954.⁴⁴ It was Khrushchev's fresh and venturesome approach to domestic and foreign affairs which triumphed through 1955 and into 1956.

40 *ibid.* pp. 102-122.

41 *ibid.* pp. 104-105.

42 *ibid.* pp. 6-7. Ra'anana argues that the dichotomy between the old and the new approach is acutely demonstrated in the contrast between Molotov's and Khrushchev's attitudes towards Egypt in late 1954 and early 1955. Khrushchev was keen to begin the cooperation between the two states which led in September 1955 to the selling of arms to Egypt via Czechoslovakia. Molotov considered it a deflection from the Soviet Union's crucial interests, European security and relations within the Communist Commonwealth. Also see Karen Dawisha, *Soviet Foreign Policy Towards Egypt*, pp. 4-11, Mohnes Mahmond El Hussini, *Soviet Egyptian Relations, 1945-85*, pp. 25-43 and Galia Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East from WWII to Gorbachev*, pp. 7-13.

43 For a more detailed analysis of the struggle between Khrushchev and Molotov see Richter, "Action and Reaction in Khrushchev's Foreign Policy", pp. 200-303.

44 In October, 1955, Molotov was also forced to publish a humiliating mea culpa concerning his 8th February speech of the same year to the Supreme Soviet. Molotov's error concerned his reticence to accord socialism its full triumph within the USSR, see *Power and Policy*, pp. 263-270.

Khrushchev's "new look" was underpinned by the realisation that it was no longer acceptable to conceive of the Cold War coming to a hot resolution. However, Khrushchev's commitment to the struggle for socialism without the Soviet Union remained fundamental. The Cold War was now to be won by reliance upon economic and social means, in the treasure house of Soviet jargon, the old Leninist term "peaceful co-existence" was dusted off and given a new coinage. No longer did it merely mean a delaying of the cataclysmic show-down between capitalism and socialism until a more propitious hour; at the 20th Party Congress in 1956, Khrushchev would spell out clearly that such a show-down would involve an unacceptable degree of mutuality. Rather, the Soviet Union would demonstrate its economic and social superiority by out-producing and out-living the West. In the new historical circumstances there was no need of war.⁴⁵ The 20th Party Congress was the culmination of a trend of thinking which had become the dominant strand in Soviet foreign policy by 1955.

Even before the 20th Party congress the dimensions of the new policy were visible. As it was necessary to persuade the West that the Soviet Union did not at any point want war, it was also necessary to ensure that the West itself would not consider that war was in its own interests. In order to achieve this Khrushchev flung himself with some aplomb into summit diplomacy. The Geneva Conference in the summer of 1955 was the first and most impressive fruit of this new effort.⁴⁶

The other key area in which Khrushchev presided over profound change in Soviet relations with the outside world was in its policy towards the third world. Stalin had largely ignored one of the defining trends of the post 1945 era, the end of the European Empires overseas. Although sparkles of interest in Asia were already to be discerned before 1955, Khrushchev embarked upon an ambitious and innovative attempt to woo newly independent countries to the Soviet influence by the use of economic power, regardless of the political nature of their regimes.⁴⁷ This meant that he was prepared to spend vast amounts of money courting countries such as Egypt whose Government was inflexibly hostile to native Communist Parties.⁴⁸ The two most spectacular incidents of Khrushchev's new policy in 1955 were the Czech-Egyptian arms deal of September and Bulganin's and Khrushchev's tour of India and the Far East at the end of the year.

Alvin Rubinstein argues that Khrushchev presided over the globalisation of Soviet foreign policy. The Soviet Union was attempting to draw into its sphere of influence states which were not contiguous with its borders and which were by no means Communist. Indeed, in an ironical way, the Soviet Government was behaving in a manner reminiscent of Britain during her imperial zenith.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ For a discussion of the importance of Khrushchev's role as innovator see *Soviet Foreign Policy since World War II*, pp. 114-126.

⁴⁶ See *Détente in Europe*, pp. 31-50, and *Khrushchev Remembers*, pp. 392-400.

⁴⁷ Elizabeth K. Valkenier, *The Soviet Union and the Third World, an Economic Bind*, pp. 1-11.

⁴⁸ On the complex and turbulent relationship between Nasser and Khrushchev see Mohamed Heikal, *Sphinx and Commissar, the Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Arab World*, pp. 11-147.

⁴⁹ Alvin K. Rubinstein, *Moscow's Third World Strategy*, pp. 3-38.

The crises of Suez and Poland and Hungary in the second half of 1956 would play a defining role in this process. They did not fundamentally change Soviet foreign policy, or indeed the way in which the British Government had come to view it. However, they did draw very clearly the limitations which Moscow placed upon the process of detente and "peaceful coexistence". Some of the wilder hopes given birth by the "Geneva Spirit" of 1955's summit diplomacy were proved unfounded and it was made apparent, if it were not already, that Khrushchev's innovations were about changing the parameters within which the rivalry between East and West was to be expressed, rather than bringing that rivalry to an end.

* * *

From the perspective of our own time Khrushchev's innovations look somewhat foredoomed. The 1950's and early 60's were the last years in which the economic threat of competition from the Soviet Union was to be taken very seriously in the West. With the advent of the information revolution of the late 60's the Soviet economy looked ever more dowdy. From the stagnation of the Brezhnev years and the economic and social breakdown under Gorbachev there was to be no resurgence of Soviet power. By Khrushchev's criteria, as set out at the Twentieth Party Congress, there can be no doubt as to who lost the Cold War. Although Khrushchev was right in emphasising the importance of domestic social and economic strength in peaceful competition with the West he was wrong to have faith in the Soviet Union's capacities.

Molotov's attitude towards Khrushchev's foreign adventurism seems, historically to have been right. It was not in Egypt, India or Cuba that the Soviet Union was delivered a mortal blow, or indeed fatal wounding was inflicted on the West. Rather it was at home and in Europe within the immediate satellites that the regime began to come apart at the seams. In emphasising the importance of devoting resources and attention to strengthening that which was clearly under Soviet control, Molotov's approach might have better equipped the Soviet Union to keep up economically and socially with the West. Instead, billions of roubles were spent on regimes, such as Nasser's, which stubbornly maintained their independence or at the very best provided the Soviets with only a limited return on their capital. However, the fall of the Soviet Union is a study quite beyond the bounds of this present work.

THE BRITISH PERCEIVERS

Attention now turns to the machinery with which the British Government formulated its opinion of Soviet policy.⁵⁰ There were two sections within the Foreign Office which were particularly concerned with the gathering and interpretation of information about

⁵⁰ There is a very useful Appendix, giving a brief resume of the F.O. hierarchy and short biographies of personnel, in Victor Rothwell, *Britain and the Cold War, 1941-1947*, pp. 457-464.

developments in the Soviet Union; the Northern Department and the Research Department, Soviet Section. The Northern Department's purview also included Scandinavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia. However, the rest of the Communist East Europe and Yugoslavia was the concern of the Southern Department. This geographical division was a hangover from earlier times when it made more political sense. Given the importance which changes in the relationship between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union were to play in Moscow's foreign policy throughout the fifties, such organisational eccentricities cannot have helped the Foreign Office in its task.

The Northern Department was much the senior in the partnership, although it was in the Research Department that the greatest expertise on Soviet affairs was to be found. In the preparation of briefs and submissions for politicians such as the Foreign Secretary, it was the Research Department which provided much of the detailed analysis and the Northern Department which had the final say in the process of drafting the finished product.

The third direct influence on the British view came, unsurprisingly, from the Embassy in Moscow. This was one of the top ranking British Embassies, however due to the limitations imposed upon its size and operations by the nature of the Soviet regime it attained nothing like the prestige or importance of its sister in Washington. It was indeed regarded by those fortunate to enjoy its florid architecture as, in the words of Sir William Hayter's memoir, "a difficult Embassy".⁵¹ Although access, both to the Soviet people and Government, was to improve very substantially over the period of Hayter's Ambassadorship, the Embassy's view on Soviet affairs was informed by little more than that which was available to the Foreign Office in London by other means. Much of the reportage back to Whitehall was concerned with resumes of press coverage, learned articles and books, public pronouncements by the leadership and so forth.

This point should not, however, lead us to devalue the role which the Embassy played. The Foreign Office "view" was constructed by a process of dialogue between these three parts of a wider institution and although the Embassy may have had no more information on which to base its analysis it did not have any less. Furthermore, staff as well as ideas were transferred from one area to another and it was in the Embassy opposite the Kremlin that many had their first direct experience of the Soviet Union.⁵²

51 Sir William Hayter, *A Double Life*, pp. 98-154. Hayter described the frustrations of his position in 1953 on arriving in Moscow in the following passage from p. 98,

It is customary for an ambassador newly arrived at his post to send a despatch to the Foreign Office recording his first impressions. I conformed to this custom, but with some reluctance. Of what value, I asked, were the reactions of a gold-fish in a bowl, peering through opaque and refracting glass at an utterly alien world, all contact with which was denied him?

See also Sir Curtis Keeble, *Britain and the Soviet Union, 1917-89*, pp. 238-266.

52 Sir William Hayter, for example, returned from his Ambassadorial post to London in January 1957 to become a Deputy Under-Secretary with responsibility for both the Southern and Northern Departments. This was the second highest rank which a permanent official could achieve within the Foreign Office. See *A Double Life*, p. 155.

What impact the Secret Service may have had upon the development of Britain's attitude towards the Soviet Union is difficult to say as no records are available on which to base an analysis. However, as this thesis is interested with the end result in terms of the Government's broad understanding of Soviet policy rather than the means by which it was reached this is perhaps not so important.⁵³

The staff who populated Foreign Office departments were essentially split into two groups, the "generalists" and the "specialists". The former were the more exalted category who dominated the high profile ambassadorial appointments, and upper reaches of the Home Departments. As such it was these people who had the most frequent and direct contact with Government Ministers. They tended to come from rather exalted social backgrounds and were shuffled around diplomatic posts and responsibilities at regular intervals. As they were supposed to be informed as to the overall direction of British foreign policy, so the theory went, it was necessary that they should not limit themselves to anyone particular part of it.⁵⁴

The "specialists", who from the Research Department's provided in depth analysis bringing to bare a much greater degree of linguistic, economic and political understanding, remained, on the whole, at a relatively lowly "clerical" level.⁵⁵ They included people who were to go on to develop notable careers without the Foreign Service, Violet Conolly and Robert Conquest being perhaps the most prominent examples in the Soviet sphere.

This dichotomy can be over emphasised, an absence of specialist Soviet knowledge was not a prerequisite of Northern Department appointments. Indeed Thomas Brimelow, who became the Head of the Northern Department in 1957 was exceedingly knowledgeable. He acted as an interpreter during the Bulganin and Khrushchev visit to Britain in 1956. Most of those operating within the Northern Department had spent some time at the Moscow Embassy.⁵⁶ However, officials above the departmental level in the

53 There are a number of works, particularly on the late 40's and early 50's, dealing with the issue of intelligence. For example see the volume of articles edited by Richard J. Aldrich, *British Intelligence, Strategy and the Cold War, 1945-51*. In his introduction to the volume Aldrich emphasises the need for more research. See also Carl-Christoph Schweitzer, (ed.), *The Changing Western Analysis of the Soviet Threat*.

54 *A Double Life*, pp. 51-52, Hayter discusses this dichotomy in terms of his experience in China in the thirties. A mordant critique of the impact which this philosophy had upon British diplomacy since 1945 is developed by Geoffrey McDermott, a one-time F. O. official, in *The Eden Legacy and the Decline of British Diplomacy*. In essence he asserted that the gentlemanly amateurism which the traditional approach fostered ill-suited Britain to deal with an increasingly complex and dynamic international situation.

55 See Anthony Adamthwaite's criticism of the Foreign Office's disdain for, and lack of, expertise, particularly in the increasingly crucial area of economics, "The Foreign Office and Policy Making", pp. 18-19, in John W. Young, (ed.), *The Foreign Policy of Churchill's Peacetime Administration 1951-1955*.

56 For example the career of J. A. Dobbs as recorded in the Foreign Office List. He was stationed in the Moscow Embassy Secretariat from 1949-1950, the Northern Department from 1951 to the end of 1954 when he returned to the Embassy, where he stayed until February 1957. In December, 1954, he qualified for an allowance in Russian. This meant that he had attained sufficient aptitude in the language to be awarded a bonus. In February 1957, however, he was seconded to the Commonwealth Relations Office and sent to New Delhi.

main did not share the detailed knowledge of those over whom they had responsibility and those within departments enjoyed career paths which worked consciously against specialisation. After working for four years as Head of the Northern Department, H. A. F. Hohler went on in 1957 to become the Minister at the British Embassy in Rome.

This tradition was in contrast to that of the United States. American diplomats up to the highest rank were trained with specialism very clearly in mind. The careers of the two most prominent State Department experts on the Soviet Union of the fifties, George Kennan and Charles Bohlen, provide an instructive comparison with those of their British counterparts.⁵⁷ Bohlen was the U.S. Ambassador to Moscow from 1953 to 1957 and spent most of his career as a diplomat in Moscow or as an expert in the State Department on Soviet affairs, in which capacity he attended the great war-time conferences at Yalta and Potsdam. He did spend two and a half years in Manila from 1957 to 1959, but his transfer there had more to do with personality and political problems and it caused him considerable frustration that his Soviet expertise should be so wasted.⁵⁸ Hayter's reaction to his own equally unexpected promotion to be Ambassador in Moscow, as recorded in his memoirs, reflects the difference between British and American approaches to overseas representation.⁵⁹ Bohlen's last big diplomatic post was as Ambassador to France from 1962.

Putting the question of staff development to one side, some thought must be given to the hard data on which the British Government based its analysis of Soviet developments. It will become very clear in the course of this dissertation that the Foreign Office was dependent on the public pronouncements of the regime as the most substantial indicators of Soviet policy. Newspapers, public speeches, learned journals, plan results, budget announcements and so forth formed the meat of the Embassy's reportage and the basis of the Research Department's work. All of which contributed the building blocks with which the Northern Department put together its assessment of what was going on in the Soviet Union. When Robert Conquest published his book, *Power and Policy in the U.S.S.R.*, in 1961, he was using the same kind of sources as he had whilst working for the Foreign Office up to 1956. The only new advantage which he had as a historian was that of perspective.

57 See George F. Kennan, *Memoirs*, and Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929-1969*. From the opening of formal diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union by Roosevelt in the thirties the Americans had gone to considerable effort to build a cadre of Soviet experts to man their new Embassy and assist the State Department in the formulation of policy towards the Soviet Union. Some historians have gone so far as to argue that this tradition had a profound impact upon the way in which the Americans viewed the Soviets after 1945 and played an important role in the development of the Cold War, particularly Daniel Yergin in *Shattered Peace: the Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State*.

58 *Witness to History*, pp. 441-458 and in particular pp. 450-451. The Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles seems not to have been overly fond of Bohlen. Neither was the right-wing of the Republican Party which harboured suspicions of Bohlen's sympathies with Soviet ideology. He was tainted, in their eyes, by the supposed dishonourable appeasement of Stalin at Yalta.

59 *A Double Life*, pp. 95-97.

This dependence on "official" sources for information is an important point. Debates about Soviet policy were carried out in a shadowy world of supposition. Much depended on the Foreign Office's reading of very limited and prejudiced evidence. For example, the British were to accept the Kremlin's lip-service to "Collective Government" and entirely misinterpret the rumblings of competition between Malenkov and Khrushchev for power during 1954 and early 1955, so that Malenkov's fall in February, 1955, took them quite by surprise.

Even after the liberalisation of Soviet dealings with foreign diplomats once Stalin was dead, there was little to be learned by direct and private contact between Embassies and the Soviet Government, or for that matter the Russian people.⁶⁰ Much of these new contacts consisted of unrevealing, if entertaining, diplomatic receptions which Stalin's successors enjoyed with alcoholic aplomb. Contact with the Soviet on the street was no more enlightening.⁶¹ Western Observers were little advantaged by the improvement in atmospherics which the death of Stalin had allowed.⁶² But then this was a long-standing problem which was not to have improved very much despite Khrushchev's new style of government.⁶³

The process by which the Foreign Office refined its raw data down into a digestible assessment of Soviet policy is reasonably easy to follow in the Records available. A central purpose of the Foreign Office paraphernalia was to reduce Soviet affairs to intelligible summaries for Ministers as the basis for the development of policy. This was achieved by the production by the Embassy of quarterly summaries of events in the Soviet

60 *ibid.* p. 105, Sir William Hayter puts it as follows,

Like my colleagues, I had high hopes, when the Soviet leaders started their new policy of accessibility, that this would mean the beginning of normal diplomatic activity in Moscow. We would, we thought, engage in frank confidential discussion with our new friends, in which the serious issues between the Soviet Union and the rest of the world would be sorted out in genuine dialogues. But it did not turn out like that. Each of the Soviet leaders carried his own private Iron Curtain around with him. Responses were predictable; conversations were like *Pravda* leading articles on one side and *The Times* leading articles on the other; well-grooved long-playing records went round and round.

61 The post-Stalin thaw allowed two distinct sub-genres of embassy reportage to flourish. The trawling of casual conversations with Soviet Joe citizen and the diplomatic junket. Of the former FO 371 111671 NS 1015/2, Moscow Embassy Despatch, Chancery to Northern Department, 4th January, 1954, is a good example. On the latter, the Minister at the British Embassy, Paul Grey's account of the Indonesian Embassy's drunken celebration of their independence day at FO 371 111823 NS 1965/1, Moscow Embassy Despatch, Grey to H. A. F. Hohler, 18th August, 1954, provides an entertaining picture of the convivial side to peaceful coexistence in all its essential vacuity.

62 FO 371 111671 NS 1015/2, Despatch from Washington Embassy, J. H. A. Watson to Northern Department, 3rd February, 1954. Watson was commenting on the opinions of American Soviet watchers.

As George Kennan likes to say, there are no experts of the Soviet Union, only varying degrees of ignorance... In the circumstances every fact and every probable deduction is precious; and I have great sympathy with Violet's [Conolly] desire to know just how the various experts arrive at the conclusions they do.

63 Conquest discussed the matter at greater length in *Power and Policy*, pp. 50-75, published first in 1961.

Union and ad hoc despatches on matters which were considered of importance. Day to day diplomatic activities and reporting was generally dealt with by telegram. The Northern and Research Departments drafted memos and reports on matters of immediate moment and on long-term trends indicative of Soviet foreign and domestic policy. There was a process of dialogue at work between the home departments and the Embassy by which opinions were tested, refined and approved. In this process the Northern Department assumed an executive role, having the final say in submissions to politicians and Permanent Under-Secretaries. However, such submissions were representative of a broad spectrum of contribution.

There was also the need to keep other departments within Whitehall and foreign postings conversant with the most recent developments in the Soviet Union and assessments of Soviet policy. To which end Moscow despatches of importance were circulated, in particular Quarterly Reports, as summaries. These were bolstered by the production of Intelligence Reports on questions of importance.⁶⁴ The Northern and Research Departments in tandem with the Moscow Embassy played a crucial role in developing understanding of Soviet affairs throughout Government.⁶⁵

Thus it is reasonably easy to trace changes in the perception of the Soviet Union on the part of the Foreign Office. More problematic is the relationship between this barrage of opinion and the politicians whose responsibility it was to make decisions. The Foreign Secretary's position is perhaps clearest, in so far as he was the direct recipient of much of what the Northern Department produced and his submissions to Cabinet in turn reflected the opinions of his permanent officials. As regards the Prime Minister the Prime Minister's Private Office Papers are an important indication of what was physically placed before him, although they are by no means a reliable guide as to what he had time or inclination to read. Furthermore, the briefing papers which formed the prelude to international conferences were prepared by the Foreign Office Department^s concerned. Their advice might have been dismissed, as was often the case with Churchill, but it was impossible to avoid.

The case of Churchill's positive attitude to Summit diplomacy is interesting in another sense. Churchill's personal conviction in favour of a meeting with the Soviets in 1953 and 1954 was pitted against a Government which was united in support of the contrary Foreign Office view. Despite Churchill's wriggling it was, fundamentally, the majority which carried the day. In order to gain an accurate understanding of what the British Government's attitude to the Soviet Union was it is necessary to examine the thinking of that Government at a very much wider level than merely its political chief.⁶⁶

64 For example, FO 371 111706 NS 1073/37, Draft Intel. [intelligence report] on Peaceful coexistence.

65 Another good example of the process of cross-fertilisation by which Intels were created is at, FO 371 111672 NS 1015/59, Minute by R.A.Longmire of Soviet Section F.O.R.D., January 14th, 1955.

66 James Richter falls into the error of confusing the opinion of the British Government with that of Churchill. In "Re-examining Soviet Policy Towards Germany", p. 10 he contrasts the lukewarm

However, banal as the observation may be, the thought processes of an individual do not admit of precise or easy analysis. Only Harold Macmillan seems to have been in the habit of committing his ruminations to paper, in memorandum for the benefit of himself and others within Government. Indeed as Anthony Adamthwaite has commented this problem is made much worse by important gaps in the records which make it difficult to follow with any precision the decision making process.⁶⁷ The most damaging trend post 1945, from a historian's perspective, was the increasing dependence upon the telephone and informal meetings to do business. Most of these conversations have gone unrecorded. With the ever increasing pressure of work and the complexity of problems to be dealt with, the paper centred operation of the pre 1939 Foreign Office became compromised.

Nonetheless, there is a very substantial body of material available to the historian on which the following analysis is based. Furthermore, the task is perhaps made easier as I am more concerned with the general context within which policy decisions concerning the Soviet Union were made, rather than the decisions per se.

response of the Eisenhower Administration to the Malenkov Government in 1953 with "Britain's" reaction,

Britain responded more boldly: on April 20 and more explicitly on May 11 Prime Minister Winston Churchill suggested the leaders of the four victorious powers hold a summit meeting.

⁶⁷ "The Foreign Office and Policy-making", pp. 2-3.

Chapter 2

Churchill, Malenkov and the Search for a Summit

"Whoring after the Russians"

"One is in danger of thinking of Molotov as a sort of benevolent middle-man - Auntie - he smiles so nicely and talks so gently to us."

Evelyn Shuckburgh.

Churchill's re-election in the October of 1951 had been despite the best efforts of the Labour Party to portray him as a warmonger; efforts which culminated somewhat hysterically in the excitement of election day with the *Daily Mirror's* infamous banner headline, "Whose Finger On the Trigger"?¹ However, over the subsequent four years Churchill was to prove himself such a passionate crusader for the cause of world peace that it seemed to many of his colleagues he was willing to sacrifice even his country's basic security interests towards that end. After the death of Stalin in March, 1953, his search for a confabulation between East and West grew to an almost childish obsession. Indeed Churchill's attempts to realise his last great vision came close to wrecking his own Government in 1954 before they petered out into the long twilight of his retirement in 1955.² By that point it was clear that the *Daily Mirror's* persiflage was very wide of the mark.

The explanation for this disappointing dichotomy between hopes and achievements must be sought, largely, in terms of what was in fact the substantially unchanged nature of Soviet foreign policy up to 1955. Churchill was alone in his perception of a "window of opportunity" in the immediate aftermath of Stalin's death. Although others, including the Americans under Eisenhower, were prepared to make peaceful noises, they were born essentially of publicity considerations rather than any upwelling of confidence in the efficacy of dialogue. Indeed the Foreign Office quickly came to the conclusion through 1953 that in terms of their international stance, in essence and in tactical detail, there was little to choose between Stalin and Malenkov. Some of the excessive Soviet cussedness of the past had been discarded, but then it had been largely counter productive anyway. Churchill's restless striving for talks with the Soviets was, at least within the limited circles of government, a rather private obsession.³ However, this melancholic footnote to Churchill's career is not in itself the main subject of the following exposition.⁴

1 See John Young, *The Foreign Policy of Churchill's Peacetime Administration*, pp. 55-57.

2 *ibid.* pp. 55-80.

3 FO 371 106527 NS 1021/108G, contains a minute written by Sir Alvery Gascoigne recording a meeting between himself and Churchill on the 19th August, 1953. The record was kept without the knowledge of No. 10. It gives an interesting vignette of the differences and limitations thereof between Churchill and the Foreign Office. It was over Churchill's touching faith in the meeting of minds that he and Gascoigne disagreed, rather than in the fundamentals of Soviet policy. This, in essence, was the division between Churchill and the rest of his Government up until 1955.

4 For a substantial treatment of this subject per se see *Never Despair*, pp. 653-1128. Gilbert's account of Churchill's last years in office is dominated by this theme. Indeed, Churchill's rational

The crucial basis of Britain's Cold War policy throughout Churchill's administration was, much as it had been on Attlee's departure from office, the development of the strength and cohesion of the Western Alliance. However, the means which were applied to this end under Churchill differed. The British Government after 1951 was to place an increased emphasis upon the rearmament of West Germany rather than the extravagant expansion of Britain's armed forces which Labour had envisaged in 1951.⁵ Until the developments of 1955 the British Government did not, in the main, consider that Soviet foreign policy had materially changed, at least not so that any substantial realignment of British policy were required in response.⁶ The military rehabilitation of Germany continued to be a vital objective which even Churchill was not prepared to surrender in the hope of Soviet concessions. In this context his restless wooing of the Soviets was a positive hindrance to the execution of policy and perhaps even vaguely dishonest. The French in particular proved all too willing to delay the evil hour of German rearmament for the sake of Summitry.

Yet despite this rather gloomy outlook the two years between the death of Stalin and the fall of Malenkov were not without their share of diplomatic interest and in comparison with the immediate post-1945 period, some success. In 1954, first at Berlin and even more so at Geneva, Eden as Foreign Secretary proved able to act the role of intermediary between the Soviets and the Americans with considerable skill and achievement. Furthermore the Foreign Office began clearly to discern a number of trends of substantial long-term significance, a discernment which allowed the British Ambassador in 1956 to view the innovations of the 20th Party Congress with a certain *déjà vu*. Even in the last days of Stalin's life it was apparent that the focus of Soviet policy was beginning to move away from the stalemate of Europe to virgin territory in what was then referred to as the Under-Developed World.

However, it was not apparent during Malenkov's Premiership what these early indications were to become. In many ways they were embedded within a resolutely traditional Soviet foreign policy which, for example, was more concerned to subvert existing "bourgeois nationalist" regimes in Asia and Africa than it was to court them. Malenkov's foreign policy caused not a fraction of the surprise and consternation which Khrushchev's bold initiatives through 1955 inspired in Whitehall.

Nor were the Foreign Office prognostications of the Soviet scene necessarily always accurate. The consensus opinion through 1954 was that such controversies as

for hanging on to power, apart from self-centered sentiment and a growing disillusionment with Eden, seems to have been the fulfilment of a fate-decreed role as Peacemaker General for the world.

5 C. J. Bartlett dwells on the irony of a Conservative Government reducing a Labour defence budget. *The Long Retreat, a Short History of British Defence Policy, 1945-1970*, p. 78. Also on German rearmament and the European Defence Community see *Full Circle* pp. 29-52, pp. 146-174, and *The Foreign Policy of Churchill's Peacetime Administration*, pp. 81-102.

6 See the discussion of the British Government's view of Soviet foreign policy at the start of 1955 below in chapter 3.

there existed within the leadership were merely policy debates between colleagues who accepted the constraints of collective leadership upon their individual ambitions. The most embarrassing error of judgement came over the interpretation of the relationship between Khrushchev and Malenkov through 1954 and into 1955. The fall of the latter in the February of 1955 caught all the foreign Legations in Moscow quite by surprise. As in Stalin's day the British still observed the Soviet Union as through a glass darkly.

THE END OF THE STALIN ERA

By the 19th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party the British Government had come to the firm conclusion that Soviet policy towards the outside world had settled into a stable orthodoxy. In contrast to fears about the outbreak of war at the turn of the decade, by 1952 it seemed to the British highly unlikely that the Soviets were about to launch an attack upon the west. Rather they had settled into a long period of political hostility, through which, according to Stalin, the West would be defeated without recourse to World War III. It was apparent to the British that such a rivalry might yet lead the Soviets inadvertently into war, but military experts, Foreign Office officials and politicians all considered it very unlikely that Moscow actually wanted such a conflict.⁷ This was a view with which the Americans were fundamentally in agreement by the beginning of 1952.⁸ Yet these relatively sanguine assumptions about Soviet policy did not give much of a fillip to Churchill's personal search for a Summit. Throughout the first years of Churchill's second administration it proved impossible to bring even the Foreign Ministers to the Conference table.⁹ In the context of a military stalemate, bitter political rivalry and continuing diplomatic frustration, the outlook for Conference diplomacy continued to look bleak.

As early as 1951 it became apparent to the Foreign office that the political struggle was becoming more important than the military in Soviet foreign policy. Through 1951 a series of "Partisans for Peace" conferences were held in Moscow, attended by the representatives of the international "Peace Movement"; at least so

7 PREM 11 369, this file contains an extensive documentation of the British rationale for scaling down the military timetable, agreed in consultation with NATO, during 1951, designed to meet a Soviet threat no longer considered imminent by 1952. See also Defence Committee reports and memos for 1952 at CAB 131/14, by 1952 the Chiefs of Staff did not consider war at all likely in the period up to 1955. It soon became clear that Stalin's death did not necessitate any change in this opinion. Churchill, however, did not want their views passed on to the Americans for fear they might lead them to reduce their defence expenditure. He does not seem to have considered, in his self-assurance, that the Americans were capable of drawing their own conclusions, which were in fact not so very different from the British, see footnote 8. D. (53) 13th Meeting, 14th October, 1952 and D (53) 45.

8 *FRUS* 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, pp. 954-961; National Intelligence Estimate 48, 8th January, 1952.

9 Churchill had himself proposed talks with the Soviets in late 1951, to little avail, see *Churchill's Indian Summer*, pp. 396-397. Such attempts as were made by Eden to get meetings between Foreign Minister's started were concentrated around the unfinished business of German unification. There was inevitably concern that Soviet moves on the issue were designed more with West German rearmament in mind than a relaxation in international tension. See, for example, Cabinet conclusions for 12th March and 16th April, 1952, CAB 128/24

called by the Soviets.¹⁰ It became ever more clear, both from Soviet diplomatic innovations such as the peace conferences and in the ideological tone of Soviet articles and commentaries, that the fear of a "preventative" war launched by Stalin was indeed a chimera. The Soviet emphasis was increasingly seen to be on political methods as the means to achieve their external ambitions. It appeared that they had now accepted a long period of "coexistence" with the West.

However, British observers were very careful to define the limitations of this period of grace. On the 15th December 1951 the Moscow Embassy's Secretariat sent back to London an analysis of one of a recent spate of articles which they felt representative of the general trend in Soviet thinking on foreign policy. The article by G. Deborin had been published in the Soviet journal "Questions of Economics" and was concerned with a definition of peaceful coexistence. The then British Ambassador, Sir Alvery Gascoigne, in summing up the views to which his staff had arrived, made the following comment,

The conclusions suggested by this memorandum are of some importance. They imply that, when the Soviet authorities speak of peaceful co-existence, they mean not co-existence without conflict, but only co-existence without major war. Nor do the Soviet authorities regard this peaceful co-existence as a state of indefinite duration, but only as a temporary (though possibly prolonged) postponement of the complete victory of Soviet Socialism over capitalism.¹¹

This Embassy despatch sparked off considerable discussion in the Northern Department of the Foreign Office and the Soviet Section of the Foreign Office Research Department. The debate centred around the ideological implications of this

10 FO 371 100815 NS 1013/35, From Sir Alvery Gascoigne, Moscow, to F.O., 17th July, 1952. Gascoigne, the Ambassador, in the Quarterly Report for April to June 1952 condemned the Peace Campaign in no uncertain terms,

The aim may be summed up in once sentence, to convince the free world (and dissidents in the Communist world) that they cannot be saved by reliance on the United States,... the Kremlin is intent on two things; to undermine the resolution in Germany, France, and Great Britain to proceed with the integration of West Germany into the Atlantic Alliance, and to rob the United States of the fruit of any victories which they may secure.

11 FO 371 94848 NS 1015/5, From Sir Alvery Gascoigne, Moscow to the F. O., 15th December 1951. Gascoigne continued to spell out the implications of Soviet thought on external affairs in 1951, although he also counselled caution in predicting likely Soviet action from theory, as follows,

The Soviet authorities regard it as an opportunity to change the balance of power in their favour, partly by building the power of the U.S.S.R., partly by winning over the countries defeated in the second world war, together with the colonial and "semi-dependent" countries, to the Soviet camp and partly by allowing time to weaken the capitalist camp by the development of its internal contradictions. The alternative to peaceful co-existence thus conceived is a third world war. This like peaceful co-existence [in the Soviet view], would lead to the final overthrow of capitalism and "imperialism", but only at enormous cost in lives. This the Soviet Government would prefer to avoid.

The difference between Stalin's coexistence and Khrushchev's to be is quite clear. No third camps and neutrals and no definitive renunciation of the Leninist theory of "frightful collisions" was yet even hinted at.

change, from overtly belligerent to political tactics. In particular the validity of the Leninist dogma, which insisted that the triumph of socialism over the capitalism of this world could only be achieved through violence, seemed to be called into question. Would the Soviets chaff to discard it, ignore it, modify, or adhered to it with all the rigour of the past? Members of F. O. R. D. canvassed the view that, in the words of Violet Conolly, "the "frightful collisions" theory may, as a result of the interplay of "creative Marxism", have gone by the board".¹² Despite this the Northern Department decided that it was far to rash to conclude on the given evidence that Lenin's collisions had been entirely abandoned rather than merely postponed. Mr Lunghi of the Northern Department asserted that, "[w]e have not even had indirect evidence that "creative Marxism" has rendered Lenin's theory obsolete".¹³

H. A. F. Hohler, the Head of the Northern Department was in full agreement with his immediate colleague. "Frightful collisions" had most likely not yet been written out of capitalism's *Gotterdammerung*.¹⁴ This was the view officially supported by the Foreign Office. However all the contributors to the discussion were quite sanguine that the Soviets were not about to pre-empt their own eschatology by immediately indulging in war. Stalin seemed far too cautious and confident in the inevitability of Socialism's superior place in the onward rush of History to countenance the destruction which such a war would inevitably entail.

The Foreign Office was not the only department in Whitehall which gave greater emphasis by 1951 to the political rather than the military threat posed by the Soviets. In November 1951 the Joint Chiefs of Staff prepared a Report for a meeting of NATO which was to be held in Rome on the 24th of that month. After summarising the basic objective of the Soviet Government and the means disposed to achieve it the report went on to assert that,

12 FO 371 94848 NS 1014/15, Minute by I. V. Conolly, F. O. R. D., of the February, 1952. Robert Conquest, also of F. O. R. D., shared the view that Soviet ideology might well have been allowed quietly to take account of new realities. The supporters within the F. O. for accepting some flexibility in the Soviet approach to ideology put their case no more strongly than this. If, pace Marshal D. Shulman, Soviet ideological and policy changes in the mid to late 50's can be traced as far back as the end of Stalin's regime, the controversial brilliance and novelty such developments had inspired in the new leadership by 1956 can not. See *Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II*, pp. 79-80 and *Détente in Europe*, pp.17-20.

13 FO 371 94848 NS 1015/30, Minute by Mr Lunghi, Northern Department, of 22nd February, 1952. Lunghi went on to offer his own supposition,

My own guess, and of course it can only be a guess, based on open Soviet sources, is that the majority of opinion among Soviet leaders led by Stalin, hopes to avoid the "frightful collisions" for as long as possible until the capitalist world is weakened by the "falling away" of the majority of the countries of the non-socialist world from the capitalist-imperialist camp, and their incorporation into the "democratic anti-imperialist" camp, but at the same time their "realism" leads them to believe that eventually the "frightful collisions" will be unavoidable... There may, of course, be others among the Politburo who believe that the time for the "frightful collisions" is now at hand.

14 *ibid.* H. A. F. Hohler, the Head of the Northern Department, had already adopted this line as the Department's in his letter to the Embassy in Moscow of the 18th February, 1952 on the subject.

[W]hile the Soviet leaders have in some cases, e.g. Korea and Indo-China, utilised the Armed Forces of the Soviet Satellites to commit armed aggression by proxy, they are skilful tacticians and their actions have so far shown their aversion to jeopardising Russian national security by the direct use of the Soviet Armed Forces to further their objectives.¹⁵

The Chiefs of Staff did not altogether rule out the possibility that the Soviets might yet launch a war to nip Western rearmament in the bud. However, the report made clear that the main threat which Soviet military superiority posed to the West was in terms of the political leverage it afforded to them. By the summer of 1952 such was the Government's mood of confidence in the Soviets' abstinence from military force, that Anthony Eden went so far as to warn the Cabinet against the danger of public complacency as a consequence.¹⁶

As the 19th Party Congress approached in the autumn of 1952, the British Government was provided with further support for this view of Stalin's foreign policy. The Embassy continued to deliver reports which asserted that the Soviets were prepared for an extended period of political rivalry. Moreover they seemed confident of their ability to defeat the West by non-military means. In the Moscow Embassy's Quarterly Report for July to September 1952 the Minister Paul Grey made comment on the interest which the coming Congress had created in Moscow.¹⁷ Yet, he thought that,

This unsatisfied curiosity did not, however, remove the impression that the Soviet Union is now set on a rigid course, which involves no concession to the West and no relaxation of internal effort. To judge by all the signs, Stalin regards the external world as still going his way and the Soviet Union as well

15 PREM 11 369, this report was put before the NATO Council meeting in Rome of the 24th November, 1951 along with an American consort submitted by a committee which Averill Harriman chaired

16 CAB 129/54 C(52) 257, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 23rd July, 1952. Eden, in terms that were after Stalin's death to be applied by him to Churchill's Soviet diplomacy, confessed his reservations,

I am a little disturbed by recent indications that public expressions of satisfaction about the increased strength of the West and the reduced chances of Soviet aggression, however justifiable in themselves, may create the impression that we are out of the wood and can afford to relax our efforts. Her Majesty's Ambassador in Brussels has recently reported that authoritative statements of this kind are already lessening the will to keep up the defence effort in Belgium. And in other countries, opposition to the defence effort, particularly in France and Germany, is already so strong that it is vital not to give it any further encouragement.

17 FO 371 100815, NS 1013/49, From Paul Grey, Moscow to the F.O., 10th October, 1952. These Quarterly Reports, it should be noted, were the main means by which Whitehall and the Foreign Office, including overseas posts, were kept informed of developments in Soviet politics, economics and foreign policy. There were, indeed, a number of complaints made on the reports for 1952 by staff in London due to their increasing length and turgidity. This made them unsuitable as they were supposed to be easily assimilated summaries of the collective Embassy and Northern Department view. Some of these criticisms were indeed made on the above report itself at the same PRO reference. Sir William Hayter's tenure in Moscow was to see the institution renovated to the Northern Department's satisfaction.

able to stand up to any strains in which the antagonism between the two camps may involve it.

The Embassy considered that the forthcoming Congress was not to be a stage for innovation but a consolidation of the existing direction of the regime. Furthermore, Khrushchev's publication in the summer of 1952 of his thesis detailing forthcoming innovations in Party structure and in particular the change in nomenclature by the dropping of Bolshevik from Party's title were taken as indication of "the change in character of the rulers of the Soviet Union from revolutionaries to technocrats".¹⁸ This was considered a further evidence that the Soviets were unlikely to be tempted by military adventurism in foreign policy.

The one aspect of the Congress which had sparked some speculation about the possibility of change within the regime was the appointment of Malenkov as linkman between Party and Congress. This seemed suggestive of his grooming for the role of heir apparent, or as H. A. F. Hohler had it, "deputy Fuhrer".¹⁹ However, on the future of Stalin's command of policy, Grey made the following comment,

His [Stalin's] distinctive characteristic is that he has perfected the machine which now drives the Soviet Union along the course laid down by Lenin. It may be that with the perfecting of the machine a younger generation can be given more powers of management, but the direction and the driving will surely remain his.

However, Stalin was not prepared even to make a semblance of concession in favour of his lieutenants. During the Congress in the October of 1952 it became apparent that Stalin's control had been tightened rather than relinquished to a putative successor.²⁰ Furthermore, in terms of domestic and foreign policy, the Congress

18 FO 371 100823 NS 10110/2, Minute by H. A. F. Hohler, 28th August, 1952. Hohler was clearly not convinced that, as Khrushchev had it, Bolshevik and Communist "now expressed the same meaning".

19 *ibid.* Hohler went on to suggest that,

It is equally possible that the decision was motivated by the desire to spare Stalin the ordeal of a four hour speech which might have lead him to appear aged and ailing on such an important occasion.

Hohler also made the following comforting general observation about the details of the next Five Year Plan which had been announced in tandem with the convocation of the Congress. He thought that the priorities outlined

[s]uggest that the Soviet Union is continuing a policy of developing its economic and military potential rather than concentrating on immediate military striking power.

20 FO 371 100823 NS 10110/7, Report from Embassy, Moscow to F.O., 17th October, 1952. On Stalin's role at the Congress and position within the Party they made the following comment,

The Congress has left Stalin in the position he occupied before it began. It has not conferred on G. M. Malenkov any added lustre beyond the fact that he was chosen to speak on behalf of the Central Committee. It is probable that Stalin could not have stood the strain of making so long a speech as that which Malenkov delivered... There was no vestige of independence or originality in Malenkov's speech. It was a faithful reflection of Stalin's expressed views. Nor was there any indication that Malenkov was being groomed for the succession. The

demonstrated that Soviet policy was to carry on as before. The Embassy summed up its impressions thus,

The XIXth Party Congress has produced no surprises as regards Soviet internal or foreign policy. For some time to come it seems, there is to be no significant change.

Indeed so apparently redundant did the Congress' proceedings seem that the Embassy considered the only reason Stalin had called it was the necessity of obtaining its rubber stamp on important changes in the Party Statutes and the methods and membership of the Central Committee.²¹ These were developments which the Foreign Office thought could only further entrench his personal authority.

The Embassy summed up the implications which the Congress had specifically for Soviet foreign policy in a despatch of the 27th October.²² The Congress, despite its prolixity, had been a sterile affair,

The policies laid down in the previous Congresses and adhered to with astonishing fidelity through reverses and successes will remain the same. So will the aim, which is, ultimately, world communism and, as a first stage to it, communism in the U.S.S.R. ... Stalin has set his face against reconciliation, and has reaffirmed the old thesis of his party that imperialism must be destroyed.

Stalin gave the impression of a man supremely confident in the rightness of his cause and in the particular policies by which it was to be furthered. Although the Soviet Union was now thought much less likely to indulge in aggressive adventurism, the Embassy concluded that in essence Soviet policy in 1952 was no different from that of 1948.²³ The Cold War had settled into a stable but bitter rivalry. Given this bleak outlook it is little wonder that Churchill's attempts to play the role of peacemaker achieved nothing during the first two years of his administration.

uncertainty in this respect which existed before the Congress has, therefore, not been dispelled. On the contrary Stalin's status as sole prophet of the Party had been enhanced by the publication on the eve of the Congress of his lengthy "Commentaries" and there is still no one else who seems able to fill this role.

²¹ *ibid.*

²² FO 371 100831 NS 1026/32, From Grey, Moscow to F.O., 23rd October, 1952. The despatch was seen by both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. Sir William Strang went so far as to suggest that a letter of thanks ought to be sent to the Embassy for its clarity. Grey went on to make the following observations about Soviet policy,

[T]he holding of the Congress this year is a sign that a long process of stock-taking and calculation has reached a culminating point; and that the conclusion has now crystallised that there is no immediate emergency and that the cold war has not only paid dividends but that the Soviet union can stand it better and longer than can the Western Powers. ... we must accept an indefinite period of economic, political and psychological pressure. **I**t will be applied no less ruthlessly... Stalin seems fundamentally to be relying on a long process of attrition to gain his ends.

²³ *ibid.*

MALENKOV TAKES OVER

The first real encouragement which Churchill received came on the 5th March, 1953.²⁴ In the Prime Minister's eyes the death of Stalin was a cloud laden with silver opportunity.²⁵ Malenkov's insistence that there were no international problems which could not be settled by negotiation provided further encouragement for Churchill. Despite the fact that this sanguine attitude was shared neither by the Americans nor the Foreign Office, he continued through 1953 vigorous in his search for a "parley".

It was very quickly apparent to the British Government that there was to be no one successor to Stalin. By April it was clear that authority lay in a Committee of five, of whom Malenkov, Molotov and Beria were believed to be the most important.²⁶ Malenkov was considered to be the most influential, but by no means a replacement for the dead man.²⁷ The appointment of Khrushchev to the position of Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU on the 14th March, when it became public knowledge after a Government announcement on the 21st, was not considered to have weakened Malenkov's position.²⁸ There was no perception in early 1953 that the latter two were to become the main contenders for power, nor that Khrushchev would use his new position at the head of the Party Secretariat in Stalin's manner of old. Indeed, as we shall see, all the way up to Malenkov's fall in 1955 neither the British nor the Americans drew the right conclusions on this point from the available evidence

Although the softer tone adopted by this new Soviet Government towards the West was not merely sneered at by the Embassy in Moscow, the Foreign Office remained profoundly doubtful that it presaged any fundamental change.²⁹ Their reaction to

24 PREM 11/540, Sir Alvery Gascoigne attended Stalin's funeral on the 9th March, 1953. In a report to London of the 16th March he expressed some doubt as to whether the 5th had actually been the date of Stalin's death, not least because it would have given little time for the embalmers to do their work. He relayed the following appreciation of the ceremonial,

To say that I was impressed by the funeral ceremony would be an under-statement. The lying in state in the Hall of Columns, while it was a somewhat sinister and barbaric display with no religious atmosphere about it, brought back with full force the history of communism and of those who have invented this particularly vicious but powerful form of ideology. Stalin will, I presume, rank in history as a cruel, cold-blooded and ruthless tyrant. And yet there is no gainsaying the fact that he was a great man... As I looked for the last time on his face, I envinced the bitterest feeling of regret that he should have chosen because of the canker of Marxism and of his overweening desire for power, the path which has led him and his country away from the comity of civilised nations.

25 See, "Churchill, the Russians and the Western Alliance: the three-power conference at Bermuda, December 1953" in *The English Historical Review*, Vol. CI, 1986: p. 894. Young makes clear that the Bermuda Conference was as much a French and American attempt to dampen Churchill's enthusiasm as it was a preparation for a four power conference.

26 PREM 11/540, Telegram No. 282, from Gascoigne, Moscow to London, 22nd April, 1953.

27 PREM 11/540, Despatch from Gascoigne to London, "Analysis of the Changes in the Government of the U.S.S.R. Following the Death of Marshal Stalin", 16th March, 1953.

28 PREM 11/540, Quarterly Report, Gascoigne, Moscow to London, 13th April, 1953.

29 PREM 11/429, In a telegram of the 25th April, 1953 from Moscow, Gascoigne reported on the Soviet reaction to Eisenhower's "chance for peace" speech of the 16th April (see *Eisenhower, The*

Churchill's renewed enthusiasm for talks was far from positive. Evelyn Shuckburgh recorded this unease in his diary,

The PM suggested that there should be a Molotov-Eden meeting. A.E. is attracted... Past troubles are forgotten in a new atmosphere of optimism. I am very disturbed about this. The Russians have not made any concession which is more than a trifle [Shuckburgh was referring to the negotiations towards a settlement for Korea], but they look as if they are going to adopt a much cleverer policy for dividing and weakening the West than Stalin ever did. If so we should be cautious and not rush in.³⁰

Indeed Shuckburgh records that Eden was initially as eager as Churchill over talks with Molotov, to the dismay of the Foreign Office.³¹ This alarm was shared by the other members of the Government who expressed similar concerns in a meeting of the Atlantic Committee of the Cabinet.³² Gascoigne and the Moscow Embassy were also of this opinion. Malenkov's beneficence, they suggested, probably had as much to do with the internal weakness of the new regime as anything else.³³ The West, Gascoigne

President, pp. 94-96). The Soviet reaction, he pointed out, was conspicuously lacking of Stalinist vitriol. In terms of substance, however, the new Soviet leadership had very little new to offer. This last point was underlined in a covering minute of the same day by Sir William Strang for the Prime Minister (PREM 11/540). Changes in domestic policy, particularly the release of those condemned by Stalin in the "Doctor's Plot", also caused considerable surprise. In the Moscow Embassy Quarterly Report for January-March 1953, dated 13th April, Paul Grey made the following addenda

The apparent departure from attitudes which while Stalin was alive, seemed immutable, is astonishing enough. But even more remarkable is that the process of change should have been initiated before he was cold in his grave...

30 *Descent to Suez*, p. 83; Diary entry for the 24th to 30th March, 1953. Shuckburgh went on,

But the idea of a meeting with Molotov becomes exciting. Winston said, "if it is Mol, you go. But if it is Mal, it's me." More punning of this kind appears in minutes from the PM about Ike and Egypt. Something about "unwise counsels moving in by the Byraode" [Byraode was to become the U. S. Ambassador to Cairo]. I was instructed to obtain the [Foreign] Office view on a possible Eden-Molotov meeting. I do so through Strang who organises a meeting with Bob Dixon, Paul Mason and Harry Hohler. All are against the idea...

31 *ibid.* pp. 84-86. In his diary entry for April 1st Shuckburgh was sufficiently exasperated with Churchill's idea to describe it as "whoring after the Russians". Eden was able to summon significantly more enthusiasm for the project despite his worsening illness. See also *Anthony Eden*, pp. 361-362.

32 CAB 134/766, Atlantic (Official) Committee of the Cabinet, "Conclusion of Foreign Office Paper on recent Developments in the USSR", 17th April, 1953. See also *Never Despair*, p. 817.

33 PREM 11/540, Despatch from Gascoigne, Moscow to London, 9th April, 1953. Also Telegram No. 282, Gascoigne, Moscow to London, 22nd April, 1953. In his Despatch Gascoigne considered the most important moves towards a more relaxed international stance by the Soviets to be the offer of their "good offices" with the North Koreans over sticking points in the negotiations at Panmunjom, acceptance of Dag Hammarskjöld as UN Secretary General and certain conciliatory gestures in Germany. He concluded in terms which gave some cheer to Churchill's attitude,

So little is known of the character and views of Malenkov and Beria that it would be wise to keep an open mind in interpreting Soviet motives since Stalin's death. It is much too soon to draw any firm conclusions. But the Soviet internal situation, coupled with the problems of the new leaders in consolidating their power in a totalitarian state, could themselves explain the new and apparently more cautious trends in Soviet foreign policy. There is no evidence of any active challenge to the present rulers, but they have obviously found it expedient... to make the

concluded in a summary of Soviet policy on the 9th April 1953, would need to handle the problem carefully if it were not to get its fingers burnt.

However, despite the reservations of permanent officials, Churchill was able to use his control of the Foreign Office to mischievous effect during Eden's incapacity after a botched gall-stone operation on the 12th April, 1953.³⁴ On the 11th May Churchill made his famous appeal in a House of Commons speech for a meeting with the Soviets, much to the consternation of a recuperating Eden and an unconsulted Marquis of Salisbury who at this point was Lord President of the Council.³⁵ Churchill's speech ended with the following stirring coda,

If there is not at the summit of the nations the will to win the greatest prize and the greatest honour ever offered to mankind, doom-laden responsibility will fall upon those who now possess the power to decide. At the worst participants in the meeting would have established more intimate contacts. At the best we might have a generation of peace.³⁶

However, illness was to fells Churchill himself before he was able to take his initiative any further.³⁷ On the 23rd June, 1953, during a dinner for the Italian Prime Minister, he suffered a stroke which was to put him out of active politics until October. It was the Marquis of Salisbury, ironically given his distaste for the speech of 11th May, who was left carrying the high hopes which Churchill's rhetoric had stirred in the British public as he now took over control of the Foreign Office from Churchill.

carrot more evident than the stick in their handling of the Soviet population and also to adopt more fluid and even more conciliatory tactics in foreign policy. Such tactics might well prove more dangerous to western cohesion and to the building up and maintenance of the military and economic strength of the West than the bludgeoning xenophobia displayed by Stalin since 1946. but this change of tactics offers an opportunity to the Western Powers, who should meet Soviet conciliatory moves half way with a view to reaching agreement on specific outstanding questions.

34 PREM 11/421, despite also the advice of Eisenhower who, in a telegram of 5th May, 1953, voiced reservations very similar to those of the Foreign Office. He expressed particular concern over the impact that such a meeting would have on the other Western Allies. There were no indications, in Eisenhower's view, that there had been any substantial change in Soviet policy. Some words in the final sentence, underlined by the Prime Minister himself, give the key to Churchill's Soviet diplomacy: "Naturally the final decision is yours". His search for a Summit between 1951 and 1955 was very much a private odyssey.

35 See *Anthony Eden*, pp. 362-6 and *Never Despair*, pp. 827-833. Salisbury made one of his many threats to resign by way of futile retaliation. John Colville recollected in *The Fringes of Power*, p. 667, that,

He [Churchill] made his speech wholly contrary to Foreign Office advice since it was felt that a friendly approach to Russia would discourage the European powers working on the theme of Western union... I thought it a statesmanlike initiative and knew it to be one which was entirely Churchill's own.

36 *Never Despair*, pp. 831-32

37 See "Churchill, the Russians and the Western Alliance", pp. 893-896

Salisbury's estimation of Soviet policy, which he put before the Cabinet before his departure to Washington, very much followed the lines of the Moscow Embassy's opinion. He commented,

In the external field there have been many steps to reduce international tension, although without affecting basic Soviet long-term policies. These steps can be explained by, (i) a desire on the part of the new rulers to acquire popularity and to establish their internal position free from external worries; (ii) fear of America (the atom bomb, industrial potential, and possible impatience); and (iii) a desire to weaken and divide the Western World.³⁸

The most significant goodwill gesture had been Soviet support for an armistice in Korea, but even here Salisbury did not consider that anything of any substance had been conceded to the West.³⁹ Salisbury was also concerned with instability in the East European Satellites, evidenced particularly in East Germany during June.⁴⁰ He was anxious that they should not be put to any rash use by John Foster Dulles.⁴¹ Despite these considerable reservations Salisbury was very much aware that the "initiative" of Churchill's 11th May speech had to be maintained; at least that is in so far as the public demanded it. The Prime Minister had, essentially, hemmed the Government in.

Even as Salisbury was preparing to go to America there occurred a further substantial political convulsion in the Soviet Union.⁴² On July 10th, 1953 the Soviet

38 PREM 11/373, CM(53)187, 3rd July, 1953; Memorandum by the Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

39 PREM 11/540, Telegram No. 510, from Gascoigne, Moscow to London, 11th July, 1953. In preparation for Salisbury's Washington visit Gascoigne reported on Soviet policy. He emphasised, once again, that much of the "softer" approach to internal and external matters was born of the new regimes attempt to entrench its position. Internal liberalisation was largely to be explained by its anodyne effect on the Soviet population. Malenkov's international concessions were described by Gascoigne as "cheap gifts". The situation in Eastern Europe was, though, considerably more unstable, largely because of the strains of forced Stalinisation and Industrialisation, the pace of which had been considerably increased to meet Western rearmament. This was particularly so in the case of East Germany. Here, if anywhere, was the success of Western policy which Dulles had been vaunting in America.

40 On the East German disturbances see Arnulf Baring, *Uprising in East Germany: June 17th, 1953*

41 *ibid.* Salisbury outlined Anglo-American differences in respect of the satellites in the following way, although some Foreign Office officials took another view (FO 371 106527 NS 1021/97), making a prescient warning.

The main difference between ourselves and the American Administration is that the American, no doubt partly influenced by their different domestic situation, have hitherto wanted to let events behind the Iron Curtain develop further before embarking on any high-level talks. There also seems now to be a new and more dangerous American tendency, which has its roots in the Republican election campaign and was illustrated by a recent statement by Mr. Dulles, to interpret the situation behind the Iron Curtain as already very shaky and therefore to advocate new although unspecified measures to encourage or even promote the early liberation of the satellite countries. It is my intention to resist American pressure of this kind. A policy of pin-prick is calculated to exasperate the Russians and is most unlikely to help the unhappy peoples of the occupied countries. The last thing we want to do is to bait the Russian and satellite Governments into taking violent measures against them.

42 On the Allied Foreign Minister's meeting in Washington see "Churchill, the Russians and the Western Alliance" and also *FRUS* 1952-54, Vol. V, pp. 1607-1696.

Government announced the arrest of Beria.⁴³ In the immediate aftermath of the event neither the British nor American observers in Moscow were, very sensibly, prepared to stick their heads and predict the long term consequences of the event⁴⁴, although Churchill was eager to put it into as rosy a light as possible.⁴⁵ In terms of its significance to Soviet internal affairs, even after Beria's execution in December, the matter remained largely opaque.⁴⁶ However in the area of external policy, the dust seemed to settle altogether more obligingly.⁴⁷

On the 8th August, 1953 Malenkov gave a substantial speech to the Supreme Soviet which included detailed coverage of internal and external affairs.⁴⁸ Malenkov's most startling revelation concerned the development of a Soviet Hydrogen Bomb. By the end of August Paul Grey was bold enough to send a prognosis of Soviet policy back to Whitehall.⁴⁹ This analysis went substantially beyond defining Soviet motivations in terms of the new regime's entrenchment.⁵⁰ In it he grappled with what appeared to be a contradiction in Soviet policy. Soviet rhetoric continued to promote negotiation whilst they effectively rebuffed any concrete proposals for talks which the West put forward. Having allowed for an amount of confusion on the part of the Kremlin after events in Eastern Europe and the fall of Beria, Grey concluded,

Malenkov's speech of August 8 indicated that the Kremlin has a perfectly clear, consistent and sensible general strategy. Like Stalin, the new Government wish to keep out of major wars and to devote their energies to increasing the strength of the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc, including East Germany. They seem to have realised that this policy was threatened by the extreme degree of international tension which Stalin's policies provoked in the last years of his life, by the existence of a "focus of war" in Korea and by the danger of a revival of German armed might in Europe. The new Government have taken three decisions: first to reduce

43 Both the American Embassy and the British were well aware that Beria's fate had been sealed at least 12 days before. Bohlen thought that the 27th June was the most likely date. see *FRUS* 1952-54, Vol. VIII, p. 1207 and PREM 11/540, Gascoigne Telegram No. 510.

44 *FRUS* 1952-54, Vol. VIII, p. 1207 and PREM 11/540, Telegram No. 507, from Gascoigne, Moscow to London, 11th July, 1953. Both Ambassadors considered it possible that a Stalin style purge would follow Beria's dismissal. There was further speculation among the diplomatic corps in Moscow that Beria had been the main agent of liberalisation. This view was not positively supported in either the British or American Embassies.

45 *Never Despair*, pp. 862-863

46 FO 371/106519 NS 1011/59

47 PREM 11/540, Minute by Evelyn Shuckburgh for John Colville, 14th August, 1953. Shuckburgh thought a note on the rise of Khrushchev should be brought to the Prime Minister's attention as this phenomenon was "one of the more important recent developments inside Russia". Although the Embassy Quarterly Report for July to September, 1953 (PREM 11/540) emphasised that the Party Secretariat remained firmly under the control of the Presidium.

48 *FRUS* 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, p. 1210, In a telegram of 8th August, 1953 to Washington Bohlen described it as "certainly the most important and realistic statement of current Soviet policy since Stalin's death." Apart from anything else Malenkov hinted at the Soviet development of a Hydrogen bomb.

49 PREM 11/540, Despatch from Grey, Moscow to London, 24th August, 1953.

50 *FRUS* 1952-54 Vol. VIII. In his telegram of 10th August Bohlen thought Malenkov's speech a confirmation that changes in policy since March stemmed from "sources deeper than simple manoeuvre or even function of palace intrigue."

tension; second, to liquidate the focus of war in Korea; and third, if at all possible, to prevent the revival of German militarism.⁵¹

The Soviet Government had already achieved a reduction in tension and an end to the fighting in Korea. Their main interests were now to find a political settlement of the Korean war, control atomic weapons and stop the rearmament of Germany. Such vacillations as they suffered were over tactics rather than strategy. Although there was some difference of opinion in the Northern department over the detail of Grey's report, there was no dissension from the main lines of his analysis.⁵² Furthermore to Sir William Strang it came as the most melodic of music, in appropriately warring disharmony with Churchill's romantic attitude towards summit talks.⁵³

To translate the essence of Grey's view into the language of modern politics, the new leaders in the Kremlin thought that Stalin had erred not in the fundamentals of policy, but in his use of rather dowdy "packaging".⁵⁴ This judgement has, I think, stood the test of time. For the Soviets, so the British Embassy concluded, negotiations were advantageous only within very strictly defined limits.⁵⁵ And that advantage was for them to be had at the expense of both Western cohesion and the success of the E.D.C.⁵⁶

By the arrival in Moscow of the new British Ambassador, Sir William Hayter, Grey's impression of Soviet policy had been further underlined. On the 24th November, Hayter sent the Embassy's view of Soviet policy to London by way of contribution to the preparations for the three power meeting (Britain, France and the United States) at Bermuda in December 1953.

51 PREM 11/540, Grey's despatch of 24th August was received with considerable approval in Whitehall, so much so that Sir William Strang brought it to the Prime Minister's attention. Minute of 3rd September, 1953 by Mr. T. Grady for Mr. A. A. D. Montague Browne.

52 FO 371 106527 NS 1021/99, Minutes by H. A. F. Hohler of 27/8/53, P. Mason of 27/8/53 and F. Roberts of 28/7/53.

53 See footnote 50, also footnote 4.

54 PREM 11/540, Grey further developed this view in a despatch from Moscow to London, of the 5th October, 1953. In it he discussed the ideological dimension of Soviet foreign policy in more detail and came to the conclusion that,

At present, in fact, the evidence suggests that, where Malenkovism departs from Stalinism, it is in the direction, not of innovation, but of a reaffirmation of traditional principles neglected or believed to be neglected or wrongly applied by Stalin in his last years.

55 This is contrary to the faith placed in Churchill's reading of Soviet policy by M. Steven Fish in his article "After Stalin's Death: The Anglo-American debate over a New Cold War" in *Diplomatic History*, 1986 (10:1). His belief that Malenkov fought alone in the Kremlin for détente seems similarly ill founded. British and American observers were of the firm opinion that the Soviet Government acted collectively throughout 1953 to 1955. Indeed, in 1953 the most likely candidate for the title of lonely liberal was, ironically, Beria. (PREM 11/540, Telegram No. 580, Gascoigne, Moscow to London, 10th August, 1953). If Dr Fish's analysis is right, then the fundamental flaw in British diplomacy lay in its perception of Soviet policy rather than in its execution. See John Young in "Churchill the Russians and the Western Alliance" for a judicious comment on the "missed opportunity" debate.

56 On Britain and the E. D. C. see Saki Dockrill, *Britain's Policy for West German Rearmament 1950-1955*

The first important point which seems to me to be established is that there has been no real change in this country's foreign policy as a result of Stalin's death... It is now clear that the new Soviet Government still adhere to the twin policies of consolidating their own extended empire and of undermining the rest of the world. They talk of co-existence, but they visualise it as the co-existence of the snake and the rabbit.⁵⁷

Hayter went on to emphasise that "the only real change is a change of method." Stalin's abrasiveness had become counterproductive and consequently "other and more subtle methods of weakening the Western World are henceforward to be adopted." H.A.F. Hohler noted that Hayter's views, which were hardly startling, were in very close accord with those of the Northern Department and it was in this vein that the Foreign Office advised the British delegation at Bermuda about Soviet foreign policy.⁵⁸ This was advice which Churchill did not appear eager to benefit from whilst flying to Bermuda, preferring as he did to read C. S. Forester rather than Government briefs.⁵⁹ Given that the collective wisdom of the Foreign Office was little more than a cold douche to his expectations this is not surprising.⁶⁰

1953 ended with little in the way of refreshment for Churchill in his search for a summit. Indeed the consensus view of the British Government was that underneath the new cordiality, nothing very much had changed in Soviet policy at all. Such change as there had been was quite possibly even dangerous in the effect it might have on Western unity and public opinion. The Soviet acceptance of talks at the Foreign Minister level on the 26th November, 1953, was interpreted by the Foreign Office in this context.⁶¹ In particular its attempt to place World security on the agenda was considered little more than a ploy to reduce the potential for a Soviet embarrassment over Germany whilst allowing them maximum room for mischief. Churchill's disregarded brief explained Soviet policy thus.

They have evidently decided since the riots of 17th June and Adenauer's victory in the West German elections that they cannot afford to relax their own position in East Germany and at the same time to step up their diplomatic and propaganda offensive against the Western alliance, playing especially on French fears of a rearmed Germany.⁶²

57 FO 371 106527 NS 1021/118, Despatch from Sir William Hayter, Moscow to London, 24th November, 1953.

58 FO 371 106527 NS 1021/118, Minute by H. A. F. Hohler 3/12/53. Shuckburgh consigned similar reservations about Soviet policy to his diary on the 1st December, 1953; *Descent to Suez* p. 111.

59 *Never Despair*, p. 916. The novel was aptly titled *Death to the French*.

60 FO 371 106542 NS 1075/14 and 15. The final revision, after the Soviet note of 26th November, saw the Soviet regime after Beria's fall as stable. The course which it had adopted, despite its consumerist and less extreme manner, was in essence a continuation of Stalin's policy.

61 FO 371 111669 NS 1013/3, the opinion of the American Ambassador was very similar, see *FRUS* 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, pp. 1220-1222

62 FO 371 106542 NS 1075/15.

The Bermuda Conference itself was an inconclusive and disappointing affair. Talks with the Soviets at Berlin for January 1954 were agreed by the Western powers, but that could equally have been done by less glamorous means.⁶³ Bermuda is perhaps more interesting because of the light it throws on inter-allied relations than any revelation of attitudes towards the Soviet Union.⁶⁴

1954 was to prove a more active year in terms of conference diplomacy, although it was to be through Eden's approach rather than Churchill's.⁶⁵ At Berlin and more especially at Geneva Eden's flair for detailed negotiation and conciliation was to be used at its best. However, the impact which this diplomatic contact had upon the British perception of the fundamentals of Soviet foreign policy was very limited.

FOREIGN MINISTERIAL MEETINGS

After considerable discussion between the four powers on apparently unimportant issues such as the location and timing of a Foreign Ministers' Conference, agreement was reached.⁶⁶ It was finally settled that it would take place in Berlin from 25th January to 19th February, 1954. The conference lived up to the limited expectations which the British had of it. Much of their planning for negotiations with the Soviets was concerned with how best to turn them to the advantage of the E.D.C. Little hope was expressed as to the probability of achieving a respectable settlement. Indeed Eden was quite explicit about the aim of British policy in a Cabinet Memorandum of 11th January 1954 on "The Problem of Security in Europe".

The Russians have built up a most effective security system in Europe. Their basic objective now is the withdrawal of the U.S.A. from Europe.⁶⁷ Despite N.A.T.O., the Western Powers have not yet completed an effective security

63 A full record of the conference proceedings can be found at *FRUS* 1952-1954, Vol. IV, pp. 1710-1837.

64 For detail on the Bermuda Conference see "Churchill, the Russians and the Western Alliance". Also, *Never Despair*, pp. 916-942 and *Descent to Suez*, pp. 110-116.

65 PREM 11/668, PM/53/334, Memorandum by Eden for Churchill, 25th November, 1953. In this memo Eden put the case for negotiating from specifics to general issues,

If we were to press prematurely for a Five-Power meeting we should risk increasing our difficulties with the Americans over the Far East and thus playing into the Russian's hands. But if we can agree to work towards such a meeting by stages, beginning with the Korea Conference, there is a real chance of our being able to gradually overcome them.

66 PREM 11/664, considerable energy was expended on debating whether the conference should take place half in the West of the city and half in the East, the Soviet view, or a quarter in each of the different W.W.II allied zones, the Western view. In the end the West conceded. Churchill, in a minute of the 14th January, 1954, quoted Bismarck in support of the "sensible party giving way". This advice, unacknowledged, found its way into Eden's memoirs, *Full Circle*, pp. 61-62. Eden's account manages to give the impression that the Soviets too were forced to compromise on their position which was, in fact, not the case.

67 *ibid.* Eden predicted, "The Russians are likely to pose as the champions of "Europe for the Europeans", including themselves but not the Americans". This was very much the line which Molotov's diplomacy was to take in the wake of the Berlin conference, through to the entry of West Germany into NATO.

system of their own. It must be completed by associating Western Germany in the common effort and so denying the potential resources of a reunited Germany to the Soviet Union and preventing a reunited Germany from playing off the Western Powers against the Russians or vice versa.⁶⁸

In line with this strategy Eden's recommendations for Britain's tactics at Berlin were more concerned with how best to wrong foot the Soviets than coming to an agreement with them,

The main positive Western objectives in Berlin will be to make progress towards a German Peace Treaty and to conclude the Austrian Treaty. An important negative objective will be to ensure that French ratification of the E.D.C. treaty is not further delayed by the Berlin Conference. We must avoid creating the impression that we (and more particularly the Americans) are in such a hurry to get on with the E.D.C. that we are not aiming at serious negotiation on Germany and Austria. We must therefore establish the position that we, unlike the Russians, have a practical plan for German reunification, which would produce a representative all-German Government with which alone a peace treaty can be negotiated.⁶⁹

Inevitably, Eden recommended that the break up of negotiations should be over the Soviet refusal to agree to free elections in Germany rather than on their pet issue, the removal of American military bases from Europe.⁷⁰

Evelyn Shuckburgh, who accompanied Eden as his Private Secretary, expressed his approval of British policy in the lead up to Berlin.⁷¹ He thought the biggest problem that they had to deal with was caused by Churchill's preoccupation with summitry and the false expectations in the public which it seemed to have aroused. Shuckburgh's disdain was, perhaps, a little misplaced as Churchill himself was in complete agreement that the West could not afford to sacrifice the commitment of Western Germany to the E. D. C., or failing that NATO, in the pursuit of a settlement

68 PREM 11/664, C(54)10, 11th January, 1954; Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Eden went on to make allowance for the Soviet need for reassurance as to the defensive character of the E. D. C. However, the fundamental point remained, the West could not afford to come to an agreement over Germany which sacrificed the opportunity of adding German military strength to that of NATO.

69 PREM 11/664, Memorandum by the Foreign Secretary, 11th January, 1954. Eden concluded as follows,

This analysis may seem rather sombre. But I do not wish to leave my colleagues under any misapprehension over the difficulties and dangers of this meeting, desirable as it is as a contribution to the reduction in world tension and to a less abnormal relationship with the Soviet Union.

70 PREM 11/664, Memorandum by the Foreign Secretary. After a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador in London, Malik, on the 23rd December, 1953, Eden noted the Russian's expression of concern for Europe. This Eden interpreted in the context of their attempt to brand American bases as an alien blight on the continent. See *Anthony Eden*, p. 375 for Robert Rhodes James' positive response to Eden's positional diplomacy.

71 *Descent to Suez*, p. 128; for Bohlen's preview of the Conference see *FRUS* 1952-1954, Vol. VIII, pp. 1223-1225.

at Berlin.⁷² In essence Churchill's attitude towards Soviet diplomacy differed with the Foreign Office in terms of tactics rather than strategy. No-one suffered under the illusion that the Soviets were at all likely to respect Western interests. Ultimately there was less difference between Churchill and the Foreign Office than some might imagine. The biggest problem was Churchill's fundamentally romantic approach to foreign policy.

It was, indeed, on the issue of free all-German elections before unification that the Conference stumbled. There was simply no way that the Soviets were prepared to **lose** their control over the eastern half of the country merely to watch the whole become a powerful addition to the west.⁷³ Equally, even Churchill asserted that a neutralised, united Germany would be a substantial blow to western interests and security in Europe. There was in fact no common ground to afford room for Eden's undoubted diplomatic charm to come into operation.⁷⁴ His, and Churchill's, policy devolved into an attempt at damage limitation, in particular the salvaging of Ministerial talks on Korea and the Far East from the wreck.

The Berlin Conference was little more fruitful as a guide to Soviet domestic politics and in particular the relationship between individual leaders within the "new team". On this issue Eden found Molotov to be uncommunicative.

I have tried in my dinner conversations with Molotov to penetrate a little his personal relations with Malenkov... I must confess that I have not got very far. He has never once volunteered a reference to Malenkov himself and when I have done so, though perfectly correct in his comments, he has shown no particular enthusiasm.⁷⁵

Eden suggested this might merely have to do with a lack of personal warmth between the two Soviet Statesmen, though this did not tally with the Moscow Embassy's

72 PREM 11/664, Telegram from Churchill, London, to Eden, Berlin, 27th January, 1954. The main difference between the two men was in their attitude towards the timing of conference diplomacy. Churchill made the following comment in response to Eden's reportage.

I find it hard to believe that any settlement can be reached about Germany. We must stand by the principle of a German contingent either to E. D. C. or amend NATO. This alone gives the West the chance of obtaining the necessary strength by creating a European or internationalised German army but not a national one. I think we are bound in good faith to Adenauer to bring this about and we should in no circumstances agree to Germany being reduced to a neutralised, defenceless hiatus which would only be the preliminary to another Czechoslovakian process. I find it hard to believe that the Soviets will relinquish their grip on Eastern Germany if the above is true.

73 On the details of negotiations and for Eden's reports on Conference meetings and his own conversations with Molotov see PREM 11/664. Also *Full Circle* pp. 87-89.

74 *Descent to Suez*, p. 131.

75 PREM 11/665, Berlin Telegram No. 78, Eden to Churchill, 3rd February, 1954. Eden went on, with blithe disregard for the rough patch in Molotov's relationship with Stalin which was endured in the years immediately before the latter's death.

I do not mean to suggest by this that his relations with Malenkov are other than good, but it may be that they were less close personal friends than we know that Molotov and Stalin were.

reading of the relationship.⁷⁶ An alternative explanation, which Hayter endorsed, was that Molotov considered foreign affairs to be his exclusive province and thus resented Eden's references to Malenkov. Eden's telegram continued,

He clearly has a very free hand and has never even hinted in any of our talks, public or private, at the need for reference home. I suppose he could be regarded now as the elder statesman of the Kremlin.

However, there was no apprehension, on the part of Eden, that there were any serious divisions within the Soviet leadership. At least there were none which might be inferred from the pursed lips of Molotov.

Once it became clear that the British Government's lack of expectation over the Berlin Conference was to prove entirely justified, Churchill's main concern was that his hopes of summit diplomacy should not be dealt a death blow by a complete breakdown in negotiations.⁷⁷ His attitude towards talks on the Far East was dominated by this consideration. He advised Eden in a telegram of 27th January that,

The great thing is to avoid a deadlock with all the disappointment and danger that would flow from it. For this purpose the institution of a Five Power Conference, as defined, could do no harm and might do much good.⁷⁸

At least according to Evelyn Shuckburgh's diary, Eden's diplomacy was heavily laced with personal vanity. A desire to cut a peace bringing dash contributed substantially in his eagerness to achieve some "success" from a conference which was clearly deadlocked over Germany. Hence his passion for talks about East Asia. Shuckburgh expressed misgivings regarding the effect on Dulles of this potentially impolitic enthusiasm.⁷⁹

76 PREM 11/668, Moscow Telegram No. 883, Hayter to F. O., November 28th, 1953. Hayter had enjoyed the first official call of any non-communist Ambassador on Malenkov. Hayter thought, "relations between Malenkov and Molotov seemed excellent".

77 FO 371 111690 NS 1051/6, Minute by F. Roberts to Ivone Kirkpatrick, Berlin, January 29th, 1954. This is an interesting sideline on the information which was and which was not passed onto Churchill regarding the Soviet attitude to him personally. It would seem that the Foreign Office was not prepared to challenge comfortable delusions which informed Churchill's search for a summit despite their irritation with him.

I think you should know that Molotov's attitude towards the prime Minister when we dined with the Secretary of State on January 27th was in no way cordial. He was of course perfectly polite when the Secretary of State gave him the normal greetings from the Prime Minister, but he immediately went on to say, with some feeling, that Sir Winston Churchill had had some very hard things to say about the Soviet Union after the war, as any reader of Volume VI of his memoirs could see for himself... The Secretary of State had thought of passing this information on to Jock Colville but decided not to do so. We thought however that you should be aware of it and that it should be on the record in the Foreign Office.

78 *ibid.* Churchill went on in this telegram to insist that the search for better relations with the Soviets was not incompatible with a policy of increasing western strength and unity.

79 *Descent to Suez*, p. 133, the problem was essentially the visceral attitude of the Americans, domestically as much as governmentally, to China,

Indeed, Eden seems to have spent more time at Berlin smooth talking with Molotov than with the Secretary of State. However, it would be wrong to make too much of this point. Eden was well aware that on the issue of a conference on the Far East the Americans proved as ready to make concessions as the Soviets, if indeed not more so. On February 12th he reported to Churchill on the issue,

This is becoming a very difficult question. There is no doubt that Molotov has gone some way to meet us... I am sure that Dulles has gone as far as he can in accepting the French Text [setting out the basis for great power talks on the Far East] It fully meets all our requirements and is defensible in all respects. I was much heartened when Dulles eventually accepted it. If Molotov will do the same all will be well. But I fear that he will not. Then I think we should stand with Americans on French text.⁸⁰

Eden clearly conceived his role in regard of a Far East Conference as that of a facilitator. This was not the last time he was, flatteringly enough, to see himself in a bridging role between the Soviets and Americans.⁸¹ Indeed the first substantial meeting of east and west since the break down of the post war Foreign Minister's Conferences ended with a certain chuminess between the British and Soviet delegations. Despite Eden's initial impression of the Soviet party as "an inhuman platoon", by the end of the conference Soviet affability left a considerable impression upon the British.⁸² Shuckburgh recorded,

Tonight the conference is over, and no feathers lost, to my great surprise. Molotov came round through our seats at the head of all his gang, and shook us all by the hand. It must be admitted that after being shut up all day with these people for nearly a month one has a sort of fellow- feeling for them which was absent before, and I suppose that this is all to the good.⁸³

I am worried about A. E.'s attitude towards the Far Eastern business. He is so keen to get a conference, so as to have some "success" to go home with, that he seems to forget how terribly dangerous this topic is for Dulles.

Interestingly, Eden, no doubt with a scapegoat for Suez already in mind, delivers some home truths regarding Dulles' behaviour in his account of the Berlin Conference, *Full Circle*, pp. 62-64. Also see James Cable, *The Geneva Conference of 1954 on Indochina*, pp. 43-44. The level of tension between Eden and Dulles was not as high as Eden might have liked in retrospect, see *Full Circle*.

80 PREM 11/665, Berlin Telegram No. 156, from Eden to Churchill, 12th February, 1954. The key issue was the status of Chinese representation at such a conference. The Soviets were insisting that the Chinese be accorded full great power status; the Americans were not prepared to afford such prestige to the "illegitimate" People's Republic. A compromise formula courtesy of Molotov was eventually agreed on.

81 *Full Circle*, p. 133.

82 *ibid.* p. 65.

83 *Descent to Suez*, p. 133. PREM 11/664. Churchill and Eden expressed this in their own inimitably precious way in telegrams of the 15th and 16th February respectively. On the best atmosphere in which to end the negotiations at Berlin Churchill suggested, "...say au revoir not good-bye." Eden replied, "I think this will be the mood, though perhaps do svidanie will be the expression."

However, despite such bonhomie, Eden reported to the Cabinet on the 22nd of February that the Berlin Conference had changed nothing.⁸⁴ The Soviet attitude towards Europe and Germany had been one of "extreme rigidity". This Eden thought was due to the weakness of their position, they could not afford to make any concessions even over Austria because they feared that one accommodation would lead inexorably to many more. All in all the future did not hold out much hope of improvement, although due to the lack of "bitterness" the discussions had, at least, not been positively harmful. Eden was indeed surprisingly sanguine about the Soviet attitude towards the E.D.C., although he did highlight the strength of the French delegation under Bidault in resisting "Russian blandishments and bullying".⁸⁵ Western unity had been maintained despite Molotov's efforts at "wedge driving". Soviet foreign policy offered the West nothing new despite its apparently greater flexibility.⁸⁶

Molotov's considered comment on the Berlin Conference after his return to Moscow offered little more joy to the British. Sir William Hayter's report on the Soviet press coverage of Molotov's public pronouncement's on Berlin concluded in the following vein.⁸⁷ The Soviet position on German unification had been maintained immutable with flourishes contra German rearmament. Furthermore,

Molotov tacitly admits that aim of "Soviet diplomacy by conference" is not to reach agreement with his western colleagues but gradually to influence Western public opinion. "No Ministers" he says "can reject the idea of the collective security of the peoples of Europe... this idea... will constantly find new paths to the hearts of millions of people."

This facet of Soviet diplomacy was for Hayter the key to understanding the barrage of Notes, largely concerned with European problems, which the Soviet

⁸⁴ CAB 128/27 Part 1, 10th Conclusions, Minute 1, 22nd February, 1954.

⁸⁵ *ibid.* He commented,

He did not think, however, that the Russians had any real fear of the Germans in the immediate future or that they would regard the ratification of the European Defence Community as a serious threat demanding any form of military counter action. It was even possible that M. Molotov had recognised that the E. D. C. was itself an insurance against future German aggression.

⁸⁶ PREM 11/649, F. O. Telegram No. 969 to Washington Embassy, March 16th 1954. On the possibility that Molotov might see fit to raise the issue of Germany at the Geneva Conference Eden was quite adamant,

There is in my view nothing to be gained by reopening the exhaustive Berlin discussions on Germany and Austria unless the Russians are prepared to modify their position. Of this there is no sign whatever. Indeed, the Russians themselves would seem to have no interest in resuming such discussions in the near future, since they could only confirm Western public opinion in the impression left by the Berlin Conference that Soviet policy on Germany and Austria was entirely rigid.

⁸⁷ PREM 11/664, Moscow Telegram No. 209, from Hayter to F. O., 5th March, 1954.

Government issued during the rest of 1954. On the Note of 27th March, 1954.⁸⁸ He commented,

"Molotov presumably has no serious hope that his proposals will be accepted by the Governments to which they are addressed. Recent personal attacks on Dulles, and to a lesser extent yourself are sufficient evidence of this. The Note is clearly addressed to the peoples over the heads of their Governments and is designed to create confusion in the latter's foreign policy. It has also of course an eye on the forthcoming French debate about the E.D.C. It is in fact a propaganda document."⁸⁹

This commentary set the tone for Britain's reaction to Molotov's Note campaign throughout 1954.⁹⁰ It was clearly interpreted by the Moscow Embassy in the terms of a traditional socialist appeal above the heads of Governments to the people of the West. This was also Eden's explanation of the emphasis placed by the Soviets on their European Security proposals made first at the Berlin Conference itself.⁹¹ Molotov had, it seemed, his fire focused upon the convoluted process of ratification which the E.D.C. treaty was undergoing in Western parliaments, particularly and successfully that of France.⁹² Little wonder then that the British, always excepting Churchill's personal diplomacy, increasingly emphasised the need for tokens of Soviet sincerity either over an Austrian treaty or Germany before a Summit conference could be contemplated.

Ironically, it was Molotov's obsession with all European Conferences which let Churchill off the hook in the summer of 1954. Churchill's attempt to single handedly start the summit process while returning from his visit to Washington of late June and early July almost proved the undoing of his Government.⁹³ Eden's complicity in the

88 PREM 11/670, Moscow Telegram No. 274, from Hayter to F. O., 27th March, 1954. Contrary to Molotov's reputation for greyness, Hayter reported that,

He informed me with a cheerful smile that the Note was principally concerned with American participation in his proposed European Security Treaty and Soviet participation in NATO...

Molotov's campaign against German Rearmament was not without its absurdist moments.

89 PREM 11/670, Moscow Telegram No. 280, from Hayter to F. O., 1st April, 1954.

90 For Example, PREM 11/670, Eden's Minute to Churchill PM/54/115 of 30th July, 1954; Hayter's Telegram No. 1030 of October 23rd, 1954; Kirkpatrick's Minute to Churchill PM/IK/54 143 of 20th August, 1954, in which Kirkpatrick reports on the Tripartite Drafting group which had been set up to discuss a reply to one of many Soviet notes. Interestingly, Kirkpatrick refers to Eden's instructions to push for an inclusion in the Western response of reference to the necessity for a "sign of good faith" on the part of the "Russians", either an Austrian State Treaty or agreement to free elections in Germany before unification. Also *FRUS* 1952-1954, Vol. VII; pp. 1232-1235. The American opinion was very much in accord with the British.

91 PREM 11/649, F. O. Telegram No. 969 to Washington Embassy, 16th March, 1954.

[T]he Russians have shown some desire to focus increasing public attention in the West upon the Soviet European Security proposals tabled at Berlin. This however is presumably aimed at Western public opinion rather than Western Governments and designed to encourage French opponents of the E. D. C.

92 For a detailed discussion of the British role in West German rearmament see Saki Dokrill, *Britain's Policy for West German Rearmament 1950-1955*.

93 See *The Foreign Policy of Churchill's Peacetime Administration*, pp. 67-70 and *Never Despair* pp. 1012-1040.

matter had more to do with his hunger to succeed Churchill than any faith in the soundness of the initiative. The Cabinet, almost to a man, were against any unilateral approach to Moscow. Molotov's Note to the Western Powers of 24th July offered Churchill the means to escape the hole into which he had willfully jumped.⁹⁴ In a Telegram of July 26th Churchill informed Molotov that the Soviet proposal for a formal conference to discuss European Security superseded his suggestion of an informal meeting of Heads of Governments.⁹⁵ Churchill, however, did not go on to outline the domestic political considerations which disposed him so favourably to this particular twist of Soviet diplomacy. Molotov was, apparently, too set upon his own path to notice the advantage which might have been made from the stumbling of others.

THE 1954 GENEVA CONFERENCE

East West relations in Europe were little advantaged by the absence of Stalin. Indeed, if anything the stalemate became even more arid during 1954. Malenkov's comments in 1953 upon the efficacy of negotiation were beginning to ring more than a little hollow. This dismal situation was to stand out in even starker contrast against the relative success of negotiations over Indo-china.

The main subject on the agenda of the Geneva negotiations which opened on the 26th April, 1954 was a settlement for Korea.⁹⁶ However, it was the situation in Vietnam which stole the limelight.⁹⁷ Not only was the French position in the war against the Vietnamese Communists becoming critical, but, unlike their position over Korea, the Soviets were willing to ~~exert~~ their influence in order to achieve a settlement.⁹⁸ From the moment the Conference began to consider Indo-China it became apparent to the British delegation that Molotov wanted a success.⁹⁹

Eden's approach at Geneva, both in 1954 and 1955 was much concerned with what might be termed dinner-time diplomacy. On the evening of the 5th of May Eden

94 *Anthony Eden*, p. 381

95 PREM 11/670. Telegram No. 987, from P. M. to Molotov, 26th July, 1954.

96 For a detailed examination of the Geneva Conference, 1954 and the role played by Eden, see James Cable, *The Geneva Conference of 1954 on Indochina*. Cable combines the advantage of access to British Government records with his personal experience as a member of the British delegation. For a more American view see Robert F. Randle, *Geneva, 1954*. Also there is the vast accumulation of American documents within *FRUS* 1952-1954, Vol. XVI.

97 Evelyn Shuckburgh's diary provides an illuminating and critical account of the first stage of the Conference. He accompanied Eden as Private Secretary, leaving on the 14th May to take up another Foreign Office position, *Descent to Suez*, pp. 168-214.

98 According to Khrushchev's memoirs it was the French who were doing most of the compromising. Khrushchev's account is, however, a little unclear. *Khrushchev Remembers*, pp. 481-483.

99 Although from the start Molotov seems to have turned on the charm. Evelyn Shuckburgh even took to referring to him as "Auntie Mol" in the privacy of his diary.

One is in danger of thinking of Molotov as a sort of benevolent middle-man - Auntie - he smiles so nicely and talks so gently to us.

Descent to Suez, pp. 181-182.

had one of his most successful prandial sessions with Molotov and choice members of the Soviet delegation, including Andrei Gromyko. On the following day Eden sent a report back to the Foreign Office,

M. Molotov dined with me last night... We had a friendly and useful talk. M. Molotov was in an unusually relaxed mood, and talked freely on a number of subjects unconnected with the present Conference... On matters concerning the Conference itself he was also most amenable. I do not think that throughout the evening he disagreed with anything that I said in the course of a frank discussion of our problems here, nor did he ever seek to make a merely debating point. His whole attitude was in contrast to our experience of him in Berlin. He seemed genuinely anxious that the Conference should succeed, and also considerably worried over the situation in Indo-China.¹⁰⁰

Eden went on to conclude that although such amity could be interpreted as another symptom of Molotov's attempt to drive "wedges" between the Western Powers, no-one from the British delegation who was present at the dinner thought such a shallow motive adequate explanation for Molotov's enthusiasm. However, this was not the impression that Evelyn Shuckburgh recorded in his diary. Indeed Shuckburgh was concerned that the success of Eden's dinner was largely due to overmuch denigration of the Americans.¹⁰¹ Eden had spent much of his time with the Soviets emphasising their joint role as moderating influences, the British on the Americans/French and the Soviets on the Chinese/Vietnamese.

Even despite the positive outlook for Indo-China negotiations the Conference was not to come to a settlement without considerable time and effort.¹⁰² The Soviet, Chinese and Vietnamese delegations required all the tact and accommodation which Eden had at his command. However, throughout Eden was keenly aware that success was predicated upon the attitude of both the Soviets and the Chinese.¹⁰³ In Eden's correspondence with London throughout the Conference up to its closing session on the 21st July, 1954, the fruitfulness of his cooperation with Molotov plays a fundamental

100 FO 371 112060 DF 1071/446G, Geneva Telegram No. 161, Eden to F. O., 6th May, 1954.

101 Shuckburgh was not actually present, his opinion was based on an impression of Eden's "exalté frame of mind" immediately after the Soviets had left and the reportage of other British officials who had attended the dinner. Not everyone was as convinced as Eden of the benignity of Molotov. By his diary entry of the next day Shuckburgh seems to have been more sanguine in his opinion of Eden's behaviour. *Descent to Suez*, pp. 191-193.

102 FO 371 112064 DF 1071/527D, Geneva Telegram No. 271, Eden to F. O., 13th May, 1954. Despite the assertions that Khrushchev makes in his memoirs, Eden was convinced at the time that serious concessions would be required of the Communist delegations in order to reach an agreement, particularly over Cambodia and Laos. Separate treatment for these two lesser players in the tragedy was considered an important gain by Eden. Cab 129/69, C(54)207, 22nd June, 1954, Memorandum by the Foreign Secretary. Also see *Full Circle*, pp. 127-130.

103 *ibid.* In Eden's memo of the 22nd June, prepared for the visit of Churchill and himself to Washington, he considered that the Soviets and the Chinese wanted a settlement, "but they may have difficulty in restraining the Vietminh who are in a position to demand a high price."

part.¹⁰⁴ This was not least in consequence of Molotov's role as co-chairman of the Conference in tandem with Eden himself. Indeed at times Eden expressed more exasperation with his Western Allies than towards any of the Communist Powers.¹⁰⁵ Yet, the success of proceedings had, eventually, as much to do with the determination of Mendes France to end France's East Asian imbroglio as anything else.¹⁰⁶

On the role of the British delegation in the negotiations James Cable comes to the following wise conclusion,

Although the Geneva Settlement was of more enduring advantage to Britain than the other diplomatic achievements of Eden's annus mirabilis in 1954... it also engendered more lasting delusions of grandeur. In 1954 Britain had indeed outfaced the United States and negotiated on equal terms with China and the Soviet Union the peaceful resolution of a major international dispute on a basis first conceived in London. This was nevertheless as much the result of a fortuitous combination of circumstances as of greater foresight or superior diplomatic skill. It was not founded on any balance of real power.¹⁰⁷

Cable goes on to suggest that this illusion of power may well have had pernicious consequences at Suez. Certainly it was an illusion which Eden's diplomacy in 1955 and early 1956 was happy to play upon, as shall become apparent. Eden tended to lay too much store by the process of negotiation itself, rather than the prior interests of parties in a settlement.

However, the Foreign Office did not think that Soviet flexibility in Geneva offered any hope for Europe. On the 27th June an analysis of the most recent Soviet Note concerning European Security proposals was sent to the British delegation to the "tripartite drafting group" in Washington who were cooking up the Western response. The Foreign Office was forthright in its opinion,

It is natural that the Soviet Government should try to profit from the Geneva Conference to forward their policies in Europe. There is however no evidence in the Soviet Note that these policies have changed or that the Russians are now more tractable on any major European questions such as Germany, Austria or European Security. Indeed the language of the Note is so sharp and combative that the Soviet Government can scarcely entertain any serious hope that the Western Powers will accept it as a reasonable basis for

104 Eden's communications are held in the Foreign Office's South East Asia Department records at FO 371 112047-112087.

105 FO 371 112073 DF 1071/715, Geneva Telegram No. 727, Eden to Churchill, 15th June, 1954.

106 The Geneva Conference, p. 115.

107 Ibid. p. 143. For the United States' irritation over Eden's policy at Geneva see *FRUS* 1952-1954, Vol. XVI, pp. 680-698, 204th Meeting of the National Security Council, 24th June, 1954. Harold Stassen made the following perceptive comment at the very end of the discussion.

Governor Stassen offered the philosophical observation that we must expect to go through a period in the course of which the British will try to assert their failing world leadership.

Sadly, over the issue of Vietnam it was the Americans who were to assert their strengthening world leadership.

negotiation... The conclusion can only be that Soviet policy has not changed... The agreement on Indo-China at Geneva does not afford a parallel for the settlement of European problems and of the disarmament question...¹⁰⁸

The Geneva Conference's success was conceived in very limited terms by British officialdom. All in all both Berlin and Geneva seemed little to have changed the British view of the Soviet Union's relationship with the outside world, even although Eden gained considerable encouragement from Molotov's apparent reasonableness.

TOWARD THE FALL OF MALENKOV

On March 5th, 1954, Sir William Hayter sent London the Moscow Embassy's opinion on the Soviet Union a year after Stalin's death.¹⁰⁹ He laid out the main differences between the new and old dispensations. The principle of "collective or committee" leadership seemed firmly established, particularly after Beria's execution. The extremes of Stalin's self-deification were now eschewed for a more rational, but still respectful, attitude to the dead leader. Moreover, this humility extended to agricultural and economic policy. The vast schemes for the "transformation of nature" which Stalin had developed in his last years had been abandoned.¹¹⁰ In the 1954 Budget considerably more weight was given to the production of consumer goods.¹¹¹ Altogether the demands being made of the Soviet citizen were becoming more forgiving.¹¹² In ideological terms the trend was no different, Stalin's opinions were tempered, but not discarded.¹¹³ Hayter went on.

108 PREM 11/670, F. O. Telegram No. 3687, F. O. to Washington, 27th July, 1954. Sir Roger Makins replied that the Americans agreed with the British analysis, Washington Telegram No. 1612, Makins to F. O., 27th July, 1954.

109 FO 371 111671 NS 1015/18A, Moscow Despatch, Hayter to Eden, 5th March, 1954.

110 On the issue of agriculture see Martin McCauley, *Khrushchev and the Development of Soviet Agriculture*, pp. 40-75.

111 FO 371 111708 NS 1102/9, F. O. Memorandum, "Soviet Economic Policy since Stalin's Death", 14th April, 1954. This memo gave an assessment of both economic and agricultural policy. Also in same file at /22, Moscow Chancery to Northern Department, 29th July, 1955, is an assessment of the Soviet Government's "Plan results" for 1954. Hayter did not think that this new emphasis on consumerism would seriously reduce the potential of either Soviet heavy industry or military might. There is a Moscow Embassy analysis of the 1954 Budget itself at FO 371 111711 NS 1111/2, Moscow Despatch, from Hayter to Eden, 28th April, 1954.

112 However, Hayter did not consider that there had been any loosening up in terms of the right to express dissent or intellectual freedom, despite the Soviet Government's rhetoric. On this issue the Northern and Information Research Departments took considerable exception to Isaac Deutscher's sanguine opinions which were carried in *The Times* of 17th, 18th and 19th November, 1954. Deutscher talked of a "ferment of ideas" being sanctioned by the Malenkov Government. Violet Conolly in particular thought Deutscher's journalism inaccurate and pernicious. The Moscow Embassy was equally unimpressed by the articles. FO 371 111672 NS 1015/55, Minutes by R. H. Mason, 10th January, 1955 and V. Conolly, 19th January, 1955. Deutscher had published a hopeful study of post-Stalin Russia in 1953, entitled enigmatically, *Russia after Stalin*.

113 FO 371 111775 NS 16701/1, Foreign Office Research Department Memorandum, 25th March, 1954. This production commented upon the latest (4th) edition of the Soviet *Short Philosophical Dictionary* which had been published at the end of 1953. F. O. R. D. considered it an important indicator of orthodoxy. Despite substantial revisions they came to the following conclusion,

In ideology the new leaders have made no pronouncements of note. They seem content to adhere to the established doctrine, not rejecting Stalin's additions to the heritage of Lenin but showing no desire to make additions of their own. Their chief preoccupation seems to be the practical administration of the Soviet Union.

These concerns also informed foreign policy. Hayter explained the Kremlin's new found affection for negotiation and pacific pronouncements as follows,

Their aim, it seemed, was to avoid dangerous international complications and to make it possible for the Government to deal at leisure first with domestic questions and subsequently with those questions of foreign relations which they regarded as ripe for solution... In all its fundamental concepts, the foreign policy of the new Soviet Government remained indistinguishable from that of Stalin.

Even after Eden's success at Geneva the Foreign Office did not think that very much had changed. The settlement in Vietnam was as much in the interest of the Soviet Union as the West and, furthermore, afforded considerable leverage in the Soviet attempt to prise the Western alliance apart. It was in this context that H. A. F. Hohler interpreted the comparatively lenient treatment Britain received in the Soviet press during the summer months of 1954.¹¹⁴ The United States, on the other hand, had been unremittingly pilloried. Hohler's opinion was in accord with his Northern Department colleagues,

I am not inclined to regard the "softer" Soviet policy towards this country as anything more than a tactical and probably temporary phenomenon...

Indeed, in the second half of 1954 "wedge driving" became a metaphorical commonplace in British comment on the Kremlin's foreign policy.¹¹⁵ Until, that is, the Soviet temper frayed as the campaign against West German rearmament reached a screaming pitch. Molotov's triumph over the E. D. C. was shortlived and in his desperation to forestall West Germany's entrance into NATO, the fine distinctions between western countries drawn by Soviet diplomacy earlier in 1954 began to

[N]o fundamental change can be detected in the ideological approach of the new dictionary. The general outlook is more moderate and reasonable than in Stalin's day, but certain hostile trends have grown stronger, notably towards patriotic national exclusiveness and towards vigilance.

114 FO 371 111672 NS 1015/40, Minute by H. A. F. Hohler of 22nd July, 1955. Hayter's Quarterly Report, a copy of which remains with Hohler's minuting, was berated for not making sufficiently clear the contrast between British and American treatment in the Soviet press. Hohler also pointed out that the Soviets had made specific, if minor, concessions to butter up the British, one of which was the extension of the Anglo-Soviet fisheries agreement for another year.

115 For example, FO 371 111672 NS 1015/40, Moscow Embassy Quarterly Report, 7th October, 1954, and Northern Department minutes thereon, or Violet Conolly's mordent criticism of a rosy *Pravda* article of 27th July, 1954, on Churchill's attitude to peaceful coexistence at FO 371 111706 NS 1073/12, Minute by V. Conolly, 30th July, 1954.

blur.¹¹⁶ Blustering threats of retaliation against any and all of the nations associating themselves with the creation of a West German army were at this point the meat of the Soviet's international discourse.

A sceptical attitude also informed the Foreign Office's interpretation of the vogue expression, "peaceful coexistence". In the wave of euphoria which his experience at Geneva created, Eden had himself made so bold as to suggest that it might be possible to come to a *modus vivendi* between East and West.¹¹⁷ The limitations of Soviet enthusiasm for such a project were quickly apparent. R. A. Hibbert of the Northern Department summed up the Soviet interpretation of "peaceful coexistence", in a minute of the 6th November, 1954, in four points,

a) The avoidance of major adventures (such as the Korean War) b) The moral and physical disarmament of the West. c) The maintenance of Soviet and Communist pressure on and in Western countries. d) The wooing of Asia. This is not a policy which the West can view with any gratification; but it does mark some progress compared with the more violent Soviet attitude which led to the Korean War. It is essentially "hostile co-existence" and not an acceptable form of international amity.¹¹⁸

In fact Soviet Doctrine and practice was not considered to be fundamentally different from that of Stalin.¹¹⁹

116 FO 371 111672 NS 1015/59, Moscow Embassy Quarterly Report, 21st December, 1954. The report began,

During this quarter Soviet diplomacy was obsessed by one idea - to torpedo the ratification of the London and Paris agreements. This overshadowed all their other preoccupations... France, as the weak link in the Western chain, received the hardest battering, which culminated in the Soviet threat to annul the Franco-Soviet Treaty if the Treaties were ratified. A similar threat was subsequently directed at the United Kingdom.

117 *Hansard* Vol. 529; cols. 428-441. Also Foreign Office Intel on peaceful coexistence at FO 371 111706 NS 1073/35, Covering Minute by Lord Jellicoe, 16th December, 1954. By November Eden was quite clear in his public pronouncements that the Soviet line was, in fact, little different to that held under Stalin, see above Intel.

118 FO 371 111706 NS 1073/22, Minute by R. A. Hibbert, 6th November, 1954. Hibbert wrote by way of commentary on a lengthy Moscow Embassy Despatch on the same theme of 26th October. The Embassy was, if anything even less sanguine in its appreciation of the new Soviet position. Sir William Hayter concluded,

I believe that the Soviet Government propagates the policy of "peaceful coexistence" for no better reason than because it no longer sees any advantage in pursuing an adventurous or dynamic foreign policy, where all its gains might be hazarded, and prefers a more static policy which may in the end secure it the gains it need without exposing it to the attendant risks.

The Americans developed a similar interpretation, *FRUS* 1952-1954, Vol. II, p. 772, Paper by State Department, 15th November, 1954.

119 The Intel referred to at footnote 122 made much of Soviet efforts to "brush up" the theory of peaceful coexistence "to serve the ends of Communist propaganda" without any fundamental reappraisal. The Stalinist line, for example, regarding the two camps was still a very living orthodoxy. This was an analysis shared by in the U. S. State Department, expressed if anything in even starker terms, see *FRUS* 1952-1954 Vol. II, p. 772; Paper by State Department, 15th November, 1954.

There were, though, some areas in which the British Government did consider that a new work was being done by the Malenkov Government, in particular the emphasis which Soviet foreign policy was increasingly giving to Asia. Eden himself was well aware that the focus of the Cold War was beginning to shift away from a stalemated Europe. In a statement of British policy at Geneva, he commented, "...our aim should be to draw a line and create a *modus vivendi* in Asia of the kind already created in Europe".¹²⁰ However, the means by which the Soviet Union was seeking to ~~exert~~ influence into this new battleground were familiar ones, infiltration, subversion and the support of Communist insurrection.¹²¹ There was no hint of the kind of revisionism which Khrushchev was to introduce into Soviet diplomacy during the following year. Molotov was not prepared to recognise non-Communist regimes in the "under-developed world" as brothers in arms, there were still only two camps. The Soviet interest lay in gathering as many nations as possible into their side of the great divide.¹²²

Another profound change of 1955 which was foreshadowed in 1954 was the Soviet response to the development of thermonuclear weapons. Malenkov's 12th March, 1954 speech to the Soviet electors was the most important indication that something was stirring in this respect, even although he was later forced to retract his heterodox speculation that all, not just the capitalists, would be consumed by a war which used the latest weaponry.¹²³

However, in its analysis of this development, the Foreign Office did not come to any clear conclusion. The novelty of Malenkov's admission of Communist vulnerability was commented upon, but it was at best placed in the context of the "soft" foreign policy which the Soviet Government had been following since Stalin's death.¹²⁴ At worst Foreign Office officials overlooked it almost altogether.¹²⁵ Sir

120 PREM 11/649, Geneva Telegram No. 415, Eden to F. O., 22nd May, 1954. Eden was concerned about the political pressure which non-communist regimes in the area would face post Geneva. It was in this context that he viewed the importance of setting up a treaty organisation in South East Asia, PREM 11/650, Geneva Telegram No. 899, Eden to F. O., 12th July, 1954.

121 FO 371 111706 NS 1073/35, Covering Minute by Lord Jellicoe, 16th December, 1954. It advised that,

There are no signs that the Communist leaders have abandoned their ambition of absorbing the non-Communist world piece-meal into the Communist orbit... The proof of the pudding lies in the fact that recently there has been an increase in Communist propaganda directed towards the undeveloped and "colonial" countries; there has been a reversion to the technique of appealing to peoples over the Heads of Governments and no sign of any weakening of Communist support for political subversion, especially in Asia... they would like the West to curtail all forms of political warfare, while they were free to pursue their aims by all means short of war.

122 The Americans agreed, see for example, *FRUS* 1952-1954 Vol. II; Paper by Allen Dulles, 18th November, 1954.

123 See Robert Conquest, *Power and Policy in the U.S.S.R.*, pp. 228-262.

124 FO 371 111671 NS 1015/21, Minute by Lord Jellicoe, 15th March, 1954. H. A. F. Hohler even wondered if Malenkov's reference to the "destruction of world civilisation" was not part of an attempt to resuscitate the Peace Campaign of the very early fifties. He did though recognise that Malenkov's was the " frankest allusion to the horrors of atomic war by a Soviet leader which I have noticed." NS 1015/28, Minute by H. A. F. Hohler, 23rd March, 1954.

William Hayter in a despatch of the 26th October, 1954 on peaceful coexistence, did go so far as to suggest that.

Whereas in Communist doctrine wars of all kinds were regarded as likely to weaken and eventually destroy the capitalist system... the development of the hydrogen bomb may well have made the Soviet leaders of today doubtful of the validity of these arguments; in a thermo-nuclear age, conflict between the two worlds might well lead to the extinction not merely of capitalism but of communism too, and in such a hypothesis there could be no alternative to a policy of "peaceful coexistence".¹²⁶

But, this perceptive comment was buried at the end of a list of other reasons for the Soviet's enthusiasm for peaceful coexistence and it was offered only as a tentative suggestion. The despatch itself, although considered "interesting", was not deemed by the Northern Department of sufficient importance to merit a very wide circulation within Whitehall.¹²⁷ The impact of the ghastly possibilities of thermonuclear war was to have dramatic effects on Soviet foreign policy in 1955. During 1954 these changes were still embryonic and largely passed over by British observers.

The most embarrassing interpretative error committed by the British Government was in its assessment of rivalry within the Kremlin. Even after the "liquidation" of Beria, it was clear that there remained frictions underneath the facade of collective leadership. Indeed in memorandum of the 18th December 1953, F. O. R. D. attempted to explain the contradictory nature of Soviet foreign policy, in particular its hot and cold rhetoric on summit talks, by reference to splits at the top.¹²⁸ However, this line of analysis was less popular with the Northern Department and the Moscow Embassy.¹²⁹

Disharmony became even more apparent in 1954, particularly, as far as British observers were concerned, over Khrushchev's "Virgin Lands Scheme".¹³⁰ Yet,

125 FO 371 111672 NS 1015/41, Minute by V. Conolly, 13th July 1954. This chronology of principle events in the Soviet Union drawn up by F. O. R. D. makes no special mention of Malenkov speech at all, merely listing it with all the other election speeches.

126 FO 371 111706 NS 1073/22, Moscow Embassy Despatch, Hayter to Eden, 26th October, 1954. Hayter went on,

Malenkov recognised this when he said in his speech of March 12, 1954, that another war would mean the end of civilisation, though a month later he reverted to the older formula that it would mean the end of capitalism.

127 FO 371 111706 NS 1073/22, Minute by R. A. Hibbert, 6th November, 1954.

128 FO 371/111675 NS 1018/1, F. O. R. D. Minute, 18th December, 1953. This is a precocious piece which is suggestive of J. Richter's Doctoral thesis, "Action and Reaction in Khrushchev's Foreign Policy". However, unlike Richter, throughout 1954 and early 1955 the Foreign Office did not think that foreign policy played a crucial role in the course of events. The British Government thought that domestic policy debates informed the substance of political divisions. See Richter pp. 103-166.

129 FO 371 111675 NS 1018/1, Moscow Embassy Despatch, Chancery to Northern Department, 3rd February, 1954.

130 FO 371 111734 NS 1281.7, Minute by J. A. Dobbs, 11th March, 1954. See *Khrushchev and the Development of Soviet Agriculture*, pp. 44-75.

although the political implications of policy disagreements were not altogether overlooked the tendency was to interpret such differences within the context of the collective, rather than as an attempt to undermine it.¹³¹

Even at the end of 1954 and the very beginning of 1955, the British failed to draw conclusions which became all too obvious in retrospect. In a despatch of the 22nd December, 1954, Sir William Hayter pointed out that a change in Soviet industrial policy seemed once more in the air. The emphasis upon the production of consumer goods which had played such a prominent role in 1953 and much of 1954 now seemed to be called into question,

I have the honour to draw your attention to certain signs of a possible change in the Soviet internal line. It looks as if the Party may once again be insisting on the supreme importance of developing heavy industry for the sake of strengthening Soviet defences.¹³²

He then went on to comment that the most important indication of this change was in an article in *Pravda* of 21st December, by a V. S. Kruzhkov, a deputy head of the Central Committee Department of Propaganda. Hayter also pointed out that articles in *Izvestiya*, which was of course significantly the State as opposed to Party organ, remained more loyal to Malenkov's consumerist policy. The Embassy was well aware of the possible political implications of such divided counsel.¹³³ However, by the 28th December, Hayter was "inclined" towards the view that the debate was anyway of little importance and certainly no precursor of a significant rupture within the leadership.¹³⁴ Indeed, the Supreme Soviet meeting on the 8th February, 1955, at which Malenkov would be forced to resign from the Premiership, was thought by the Embassy to have been called in order further to debate the relationship between heavy and consumer based industries within the Soviet economy.

The increase in Khrushchev's public prominence through 1954 was noted, but misinterpreted. The Embassy was well aware that this development was at odds with

¹³¹ For example, FO 371 111789 NS 1751/19, Moscow Embassy Despatch, 19th November, 1954. In this despatch Sir William Hayter examined the publication of a Central Committee decree "on mistakes in the carrying out of scientific-atheistic propaganda among the population." It was noteworthy not only because it propounded a more moderate line on religion, but also because it was signed by Khrushchev alone and not by the collective as a whole. Hayter explained this as follows,

I do not suggest that this is necessarily an indication of Khrushchev's personal ambition. It seems to me rather to be a sign of his own interest in and personal responsibility for the public relations side of the present regime.

¹³² FO 371 111710 NS 1104/2, Moscow Despatch, Hayter to Eden, 22nd December, 1954.

¹³³ *ibid.* Hayter commented,

The difference between the approach of *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* to this question has given rise to some speculation here; it is even being suggested that it reflects a divergence of views at the top level.

¹³⁴ FO 371 111710 NS 1104/2. Moscow Embassy Despatch, Hayter to F. O., 28th December, 1954.

Malenkov's supposed eminence as Premier. Hayter, in a communication of 5th January, 1955, cleverly explained the conundrum thus,

In normal countries it might well be supposed that this contrast indicated some kind of competition between the two men. But the U.S.S.R. is not a normal country; competitions for power are not conducted in the open, and if one were going on we should paradoxically hear much less of it than we hear of Khrushchev's movements. Though a competition of this kind cannot be excluded as a future development, I should be much surprised if anything of the kind were going on now.¹³⁵

The Embassy was, small wonder, caught quite unawares when Malenkov delivered his resignation speech to a meeting of the Supreme Soviet on the 8th February, 1955. In a telegram of the same day Hayter expressed his astonishment, "the change in government has been as much of a surprise to all my colleagues as it was to me. None of us could believe our ears when we heard it announced".¹³⁶ Britain's Soviet experts had triumphantly misread the tea leaves.

* * *

The British Government witnessed considerable change in the Soviet Union's approach to internal and external policy between the 5th March, 1953 and the 8th February, 1955. The new regime introduced a refreshing concern for the individual Soviet citizen, both economically and socially. In foreign policy the Kremlin began to proclaim its concern for the "under-developed world" and the importance of economic competition. Moreover, it seemed aware that the bristling hostility of Stalin was no longer an advantage in the prosecution of their diplomacy. Molotov in particular cut a refreshingly reasonable dash at the Berlin and Geneva Conferences of 1954. This made a considerable impression upon Eden.

However, the limitations of these developments were equally apparent. Malenkov, in the British view, was presiding over a period of retrenchment which was intended to purge the excesses, but not the fundamentals, of Stalinism. There was nothing sufficiently radical in Soviet domestic or foreign policy to cause very much by way of surprise. The years 1953 and 1954 had the character of a breathing space for the Soviet Government and people.¹³⁷ There was little that fundamentally challenged the assumptions about Soviet foreign policy on which Britain's view of the Cold War

¹³⁵ FO 371 116631 NS 1015/1, Moscow Embassy Despatch, Hayter to F. O., 5th January, 1955. Also minuting at NS 1015/5.

¹³⁶ FO 371 116631 NS 1015/11; Moscow Telegram No. 30, Hayter to F. O., 8th February, 1955. Further to this Telegram in a letter to Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick of the 9th February, 1955, Hayter likened the interpretation of Soviet politics to the unravelling of an Agatha Christie plot. He was adamant that none of the other Embassies in Moscow had been any better at second guessing Soviet politics.

¹³⁷ Or interregnum as Noguee and Donaldson put it, *Soviet Foreign Policy since World War II*, p. 88.

was based. It was only during 1955 that novelty in Soviet external relations began to take on proportions at once exhilarating and profoundly disturbing to the British.

Chapter 3

The Austrian State Treaty and the Soviet Diplomatic Thaw

Vienna, Warsaw and Belgrade

"[I]n my opinion they [the Soviets] are now more likely to come to an agreement with us than they have been for many years past, no doubt largely owing to the success of our recent policies and perhaps also because they have at last, in spite of their brave words, begun to realise what the hydrogen bomb means to them".

Sir William Hayter.

It is one of the great ironies of Churchill's later career that he should have resigned in April 1955 just before the realisation of his hopes for a meeting of the great powers.¹ Indeed so closely did Eden's conversion to the cause of summitry follow his appointment as Prime Minister that it is tempting to see it as a conviction born of superficialities. Seduced by the glamour of his long coveted Premiership and mindful of the necessity of re-election, Eden, in this view, found it easy to forget his opposition to Churchill's own abortive Conference diplomacy.² However the burden of the following chapter is that to accept this interpretation of events would be to underestimate the complexity of both Eden and the British Government's perceptions of what was happening in the Soviet Union itself.

It is important to understand that in early March 1955 it was the Americans who provided Churchill with the last glimmer of hope that his proposals for great power talks might yet succeed. On the 10th March Sir Roger Makins reported from Washington that Dulles had mooted that Eisenhower should visit Germany in May 1955 for the forthcoming ratification of the Paris Accords and the establishment of the new fully independent state of West Germany.³ Dulles thought that this would be an ideal opportunity to discuss what steps should be taken to approach the Soviets over Summit Talks.⁴ Churchill's desperate expectations were, however, soon disappointed. Indeed Eden had already communicated his reservations over Dulles' suggestion in a

¹ See *Never Despair*, pp. 1117-2

² Eisenhower in particular rather sneeringly canvasses this view in his memoirs, *Mandate for Change*, p. 505.

On April 5, 1955, Anthony Eden replaced Mr. Churchill as Prime Minister. For some reason, whether because of the political exigencies of his new position or the turn of events in the world, Anthony had now reversed his former opposition to a meeting at the Summit. In the campaign for the general election in May he announced that he was now in favour.

Churchill in his retirement commented to Macmillan. "How much more attractive a top level meeting seems when one has reached the top." *Tides of Fortune*, pp. 586-587.

³ PREM 11/893. Telegram No. 539 from Sir Roger Makins, Washington to F. O., 10th March, 1955. Eden's minute on the telegram for the Prime Minister of March 11th 1955. Eden ended with the following rather plaintive suggestion regarding the response which they should make to Dulles, "I would also like to mention that in May there is the possibility of our own domestic affairs reaching a critical phase and that our international activities may well be hampered just then by developments at home."

⁴ *ibid.*, Eden, in his 11th March minute for Churchill, did not think much of Dulles' proposal.

telegram of March 15.⁵ By the end of March the Americans had made clear that they did not have a direct invitation to the Soviet leaders in mind at all; merely Western discussions on a similar level to those of Bermuda in 1953.⁶ There was no indication at this point that a change in Soviet policy might require a reconsideration of the Western stance on talks. As far as either the British or Americans were concerned there had been no substantial change in Soviet policy, Churchill's hopes were fuelled by what briefly appeared to be new thinking in the White House and not the Kremlin.

However, despite the apparently unpromising position in early 1955, the British analysis of Soviet policy was shortly to undergo fundamental change. Between the months of March and June 1955 the first indications of a far reaching re-thinking in the Kremlin of Soviet foreign policy became apparent to British observers. This shift is clear from the sharp contrast in British attitudes between April and June 1955 to the substance of Soviet policy. At the start of 1955 tentative Soviet moves to come to an agreement over the Austrian State Treaty were interpreted almost exclusively as one more diplomatic tactic in a long standing engagement. Equally the British espousal of Conference diplomacy in the March of 1955 was conceived largely, at least by Eden and the Foreign Office, as an endeavour unlikely to succeed, but necessary in respect of Western public opinion. It was a policy which the British recommended to the Americans in March 1955 regardless of the attitude of the Soviet Union. By the Soviet disarmament proposals of the 10th May, and even more so after Bulganin and Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia, it was clear that the Soviets sincerely wanted a reduction in international tension for its own sake. By the July of 1955 Eden himself was sufficiently impressed by this change in Soviet behaviour to express considerable hope for the outcome of the meeting which had by then been arranged at Geneva. In the first half of 1955 the British and Soviet Governments were moving towards a summit meeting both simultaneously and independently.

By June 1955 the causes of Soviet candour had also become substantially clear to British observers. In the opinion of both the British Embassy in Moscow and the Foreign Office this novel situation was largely the result of the Kremlin's growing awareness of the hydrogen bomb's destructive capacity. This was an appreciation which the July Summit in Geneva was to confirm emphatically in the minds of both the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. These are issues which will be dealt with more

⁵ PREM 11/893, Telegram No. 1057, From F. O. to Makins, 15 March 1955. The Telegram contained a polite rebuff to Dulles which Makins was asked to pass on. In his 11th May minute to Churchill Eden had at least emphasised that the Americans should not be discouraged from an attitude which was more favourable to the Soviets by harsh words about the inappropriateness of specific proposals.

⁶ See *Never Despair*, pp. 1102-16. In a further note sent via the U. S. Ambassador in London, PREM 11/893, March 17 1955, Dulles emphasised that it was not envisaged that the Soviets should be invited to take part in talks during Eisenhower's visit to Europe, nor indeed that an invitation to talks at a later date would arise out of Western conversations. The Americans merely wanted to talk things over with their Western allies. On Churchill's final attempt to cling on to power see also *Anthony Eden*, pp. 400-03.

fully in the following two chapters. However, this chapter will make clear that the six months leading up to the Geneva Conference were an important period of flux in Anglo-Soviet relations. For the first time since the early post-war period the British found themselves reacting to what they saw as radically new Soviet policies.⁷ This was the beginning of a process which by the end of 1955 was to leave the British Government pondering its strategy in a novel kind of cold war.

It should be stressed that Eden's proposals for top level meetings with the Soviets preceded the resignation of Churchill. Indeed they grew quite reasonably out of the diplomacy which he had undertaken in Europe from 1952 in order to pave the way for the rearmament of Germany.⁸ Britain's policy towards the Soviet Union and Cold War in early 1955 continued that of the previous three years. The premise of Eden's opposition to Churchill's approach to the Soviets was that such an attempt should only be made when the west was united and fully re-armed. Talks had to come after West German had been allowed to play its crucial role in strengthening western defences and not before; Eden's "conversion" to conference diplomacy was a matter of logic, rather than a leap of faith.⁹ Ironically it was to one of the last cabinets of Churchill's government that Eden outlined the reasons why it now seemed wise to make attempt to start talks with the Soviets. In a Minute of the 26th March, 1955 he began by making reference to previous Foreign Office studies of Soviet policy, carried out in 1952, which had concluded that the West should talk to the Soviets only once a position of equilibrium between east and west had been achieved,

We are this year as close to "terms of equality" with the Soviet leaders as we are likely to be in the foreseeable future. It seems unlikely that with the passage of time our relative position will improve. On the contrary, once "saturation" in thermo-nuclear weapons is reached, our relative military strength declines even though we may improve our position in conventional weapons. *The ratification of the Paris Agreements may represent a high point of Western political cohesion* [my italics].¹⁰

It is important to understand that this meeting was considered desirable by the Foreign Office because of the political advantage which might be accrued thereby

⁷ FO 371 118025 RY 10338/4, Telegram No. 89, from Sir Frank Roberts, Belgrade to F. O., 22nd February, 1955. Roberts gave the Malenkov regime the following epitaph, "what concessions did the Soviet regime in fact offer to the West during Malenkov's period apart from smoother talk about co-existence and minor gestures of no political significance".

⁸ See *Full Circle*, pp. 288-289, where Eden paraphrases his Cabinet submission.

⁹ See John W. Young, "Cold War and Détente with Moscow", in *The Foreign Policy of Churchill's Peacetime Administration*.

¹⁰ CAB 129, Vol. 74, C(55), 20th March, 1955, "Talks with the Soviets", note by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. The substance of this Cabinet Minute was passed on to the Americans via Makins in Washington on the same day; PREM 11/893, Telegram No. 1246, 26th March, 1955. It was evidently regarded by Eden as a statement of intent to the other Western Powers. In a covering note of telegram no. 1247, Eden made clear that the information was also to be sent to the French and the Germans. The latter he thought should now be consulted as an independent entity.

rather than because of any reasonable hope of coming to agreement with the Soviets. Eden continued to explain under the subtitle, "The Dangers of Our Present Position",

Apart from the probability that our relative military strength will not increase, we may have to reckon with a further expansion of Communism in the Far East. Nor can we regard as anything but dangerous the present situation in Europe, particularly in Germany. Although the division of Germany, to which all the powers have now grown accustomed, is not without its advantages to all of us, even to Soviet Russia, the Russians hold as hostage the town of Berlin, where a conflagration may flare up at any moment. Furthermore, they have German unity in their gift at any time, and, if they wished, could offer it to the Germans on tempting terms to-morrow. Unless we make a serious effort to re-unify Germany, which the Germans will regard as serious, they will be restive, and cannot be relied upon to resist Russian blandishments. So long as Germany is divided the attachment of Western Germany to the Western Group will be precarious.

Eden concluded by reminding the Cabinet of the imperative of Western rhetoric,

The Western Powers have all repeatedly declared their desire to talk to Soviet Russia once the Paris Agreements are ratified. It follows from the foregoing arguments that we should at talks seriously intended to bring results even of a limited character rather than talks which would be no more than a propaganda exercise. Nevertheless, serious talks ought to be so in that, if they break down, Soviet Russia may be shown to be at fault.

The crucial point here is that negotiations were important to Eden in respect of both public opinion and, in the case of West Germany, the opinion of politicians. He did not view conference diplomacy with Churchill's perfervid hope of success. Eden was not so much concerned that the West should talk to the Soviets but that she should be seen to be so doing. Whereas it would seem over cynical to suggest that Eden was not prepared to make considerable effort to come to a compromise with the Soviets over Germany; his attitude was that of a pragmatic diplomat. There is nothing of Churchill's confidence in a leap of understanding between protagonists developed through personal contact. Indeed talks in Eden's appreciation of the situation were little more than part of an on-going diplomatic engagement.

The need to keep Western public opinion content and the western powers united in the aftermath of the Paris agreements was further emphasised by Eden in a telegram to Washington of the 28th March 1955. Bulganin had on the same day issued a public statement favourable towards great Power Talks.¹¹ Eden asserted,

¹¹ Reported on for London by the British Embassy in Moscow on the same day. PREM 11/893, Telegram No. 300, from Hayter to F. O.; 28th March, 1955. Hayter also continued to interpret Soviet foreign policy in terms of the usual diplomatic rough and tumble,

Timing of Bulganin's statement on the Great Power talks suggests anxiety to cover up, with a new Soviet initiative, the Soviet diplomatic defeat involved in French ratification of the Paris Agreements.

Now that the entry into force of the Paris Agreements seems assured, we cannot afford to give any appearance of dragging our feet in seeking talks with Russia. Moreover, it may be that the Soviet Government are aiming to inveigle us into talks on Austria with a view to then refusing to talk about Germany. It is urgent to establish an agreed position on these questions.¹²

There are those who explain Eden's Soviet diplomacy in the first part of 1955 almost exclusively in terms of domestic politics.¹³ There are two points in particular raised by the above discussion which this monocausal analysis overlooks. Firstly, Eden was concerned with Western public opinion as a whole, as much as British. Secondly, the policy which Eden was developing was no spur of the moment electioneering convenience. Although Summit diplomacy may have had very important implications for the way the May 1955 election was to be fought, not least providing the Conservatives with their pithy campaign slogan "working for peace", Eden's attitude was clearly informed by the long term sweep of his diplomacy.

However, in the more limited terms of the British perception of Soviet policy, there is no doubt that Eden was in the beginning of 1955 carrying on with the cold war as normal. As far as the British could see there was no indication from the Soviet side that there had been any change at all. Eden's diplomacy, as much as Soviet, was formulated in early 1955 with a keen regard for cold war point scoring. His eagerness to press for a Western proposal for Summit talks with the Soviets were justified to the Cabinet in terms of diplomatic advantage. In his reasoning he did not betray any serious hope that the Soviets might by that point have been sincere in their desire to reduce international tensions. There was no insistence, as with the Americans, on Soviet achievement of certain conditions, or "hurdles" before negotiation could begin. In contrast to the British the Americans were very sceptical as to the value of Summit diplomacy.¹⁴ Yet where the British differed with the Americans was not whether talking itself would lead to any kind of settlement between East and West, but rather over the publicity value of talks themselves.

12 PREM 11/893. Telegram No. 1294. To British Embassy Washington from Foreign Secretary, March 28th 1955.

13 *The Failure of the Eden Government*, p. 10. Lamb even goes so far as to suggest that the Americans colluded in the electoral interests of the Conservative Party by agreeing to Summit Talks in time to take the wind out of Labour accusations that the Conservatives were stalling them. That this issue played a very important part in the election campaign and was a consideration in Conservative foreign policy up to the election there can be no doubt. However it seems a little simplistic, not to say unfairly cynical, to suggest that getting elected was Eden's only reason for supporting talks with the Soviets.

14 See *Mandate for Change*, pp. 505-06 and also *Eisenhower, The President*, pp. 248-49. Eisenhower emphasises that there were two developments at work in the lead up to the Geneva Summit: changing views on the Western side and concrete action on the Soviet over the Austrian State Treaty. It is to the latter that he gives the most importance on p. 506.

Because of the Soviet's action [the Austrian State Treaty], and not wishing to appear senselessly stubborn in my attitude towards a Summit meeting - so hopefully desired by so many - I instructed Dulles to let it be known through diplomatic channels, that if the powers were genuinely interested in such a meeting we were ready to listen to their reasoning.

Eden made clear this divergence in British and American view points in his annotations on a telegram from Sir Gladwyn Jebb, the British Ambassador in Paris, of 8th April.¹⁵ Jebb reported French fears that the Americans had merely used the promise of considering an approach to the Soviets after the rearmament of Germany as a carrot which now the French Assembly had ratified the Paris Agreements would be withdrawn. Jebb commented,

When I was in London recently the Prime Minister impressed upon me the strong desirability from the point of view of public opinion of our organizing preparatory four power talks with the maximum speed ["Yes I did, A.E." scribbled in the margin]. I must say I have not detected any note of urgency, still less enthusiasm, in Mr. Dulles communications on this subject to Mr Dillon [the United States Ambassador in Paris]. Is it not possible, therefore, that on this particular point our position is rather nearer the French than the American ["Yes, A.E."].

This outlook on Anglo-Soviet relations is further illustrated by the British Government's reaction to what in retrospect was the first concrete sign that Soviet foreign policy was undergoing a process of very radical change. In early 1955 the Soviets gave notice that for the first time since the war they were prepared to give serious attention to ending the occupation of Austria by the victorious powers.¹⁶ By March the Soviets had gone so far as to invite the Austrians to Moscow for consultations on a Treaty.

A brief on Soviet policy towards Austria, signed by Sir Geoffrey Harrison of the Southern Department, was prepared for Eden on the 25th March.¹⁷ Harrison made clear that a change in the Soviet attitude had been apparent from Molotov's 8th February speech to the Supreme Soviet. However this new Soviet line was considered to be little more than an attempt to manoeuvre the western powers into an unflattering position by landing them with the blame for failing to agree to an Austrian settlement.¹⁸ Harrison commented,

15 PREM 11/893, Telegram No. 138, Secret, from Sir Gladwyn Jebb, Paris to F. O., 8th April 1955.

16 See Sven Allard, *Russia and the Austrian State Treaty, A Case Study of Soviet Policy in Europe* for a detailed study of Soviet policy over Austria in 1955. Allard was the Swedish Ambassador in Vienna during the negotiations.

17 FO 371 117787 RR 1071/72, Minute by Sir Geoffrey Harrison for The Secretary of State, 25th March 1955.

18 *ibid.*, Harrison gave the following rationale for the Soviet moves which were clearly considered to be little more than political manoeuvring,

It is arguable that the Russians are no more ready now than in the past to conclude a Treaty, that they are merely ~~bringing~~ ^{bringing up} the question of guarantees against an Anschluss as a successor to the Trieste and other issues on which they have so long held up the conclusion of the Treaty [Allied Military Government of Trieste had come to an end on the 26th October, 1954, see *Full Circle*, pp. 175-188. Harrison continued to explain that the Soviets considered a German Treaty prerequisite to an Austrian] Such a Treaty [the German] is, however, being rendered impossible by the Western decision to re-arm Germany, which will itself threaten Austrian independence. They [the Soviets] might thus hope to establish that it is the Western decision to re-arm Germany and not Soviet intransigence that is holding up the Treaty, leaving the onus on

It is tempting to refuse to chase yet another Russian hare. In the past year, we have accepted the disadvantageous disagreed Articles of the Draft Treaty and the Austrians have agreed to military neutralisation, yet we are no nearer a Treaty. Now we are being asked to guarantee the independence and integrity of Austria. Even if we do so, we have no certainty that a new hare won't be started.

Dr. Schwarzenberg, the Austrian Ambassador to London, had called on the 25th March, 1955 to consult with Harrison regarding the British attitude towards the latest Soviet moves and what the Austrian reaction ought to be. After expressing the deep suspicion that the Foreign Office had for Molotov's motives, Harrison went on to say that it was, after all, a matter on which the Austrians would have to decide for themselves. This does not seem to have satisfied Eden, who in his wanton manner scribbled at the end of the minute in red ink the following rather condescending note,

I am sorry that the Austrians were not warned more firmly against Russia's wiles. I hope we shall not wake up some morning soon and find Raab [the Austrian Chancellor] in Moscow. A.E. March 26th.

Quite clearly the British Government, and in particular Eden, did not in March see Soviet moves over Austria as indicative of any fundamental change in Soviet foreign policy. Rather, Soviet blandishments towards the Austrians were explained in the limited context of cold war one-up-manship.

Even those observers who tended to take the Soviet move as a more serious one, went on to explain it in terms of the tactical advantage which the Kremlin hoped to accrue thereby. On the 22nd March the British Ambassador in Vienna Sir Godfrey Wallinger had already reported to London on more or less these lines.¹⁹ He emphasised in particular the Soviet desire to ensure that Western Austria was not drawn, as Western Germany was about to be, into NATO. Yet on one further point Wallinger pointed to a development which was to become ever more emphasised in British reporting on the Soviet Union as 1955 wore on. He suggested that there might be a similarity between the Soviet line over Yugoslavia and that over Austria,

the West to think up "effective" guarantees against the allegedly increased danger of an Anschluss resulting from the re-armament of Germany.

19 FO 371 117787 RR 1071/83. Confidential, From Sir Godfrey Wallinger, Vienna to Sir Geoffrey Harrison, London: March 22nd 1955. Wallinger commented,

My first thought is that I find myself in a measure of agreement with the Austrians in thinking that there has been some shift in the Soviet position, due possibly to the realism of the Soviet leaders in accepting situations of fact and specifically to their acceptance of the inevitability of the ratification of the Paris Treaties. It would therefore seem logical that it should now become a Soviet objective to ensure, if that is at all possible, that Austria itself should never be incorporated in the Western European Union.

It looks from here as if the development of Yugoslav "neutralism" has not been unpleasing to Moscow and that Austrian "neutralism" might at some time become acceptable.

However, Eden's concern that the Austrians should not be taken in by Soviet blandishments was further emphasised to the Austrian Chancellor by Wallinger in Vienna on April 5th 1955.²⁰ Although the Austrians accepted British reservations they felt, not surprisingly, that they were best placed to decide where Austria's interest lay. Raab seemed set on taking up Moscow's offer regardless of Eden's concern. As to any further indication of what Soviet motives might be Wallinger was still unsure.²¹ Even supposing that their interest were sincere Wallinger thought, as he had on March 22nd, that their interest most probably lay in establishing an independent and neutral Austria compatible with Soviet security interests.

The British continued to be highly suspicious of Soviet motives even as the Austrian delegation enjoyed conspicuous success during their visit to Moscow between the 11th and the 15th April 1955. It quickly became evident to Sir William Hayter, as the Austrian delegation indicated the progress which the talks were making over detail, that for the first time the Soviets themselves wanted to come to an agreement.²² By the 15th April and the Austrians' departure, all the Western missions in Moscow, according to Hayter, concurred that the Soviets had set their hearts on an unoccupied and neutralised Austria following the Swiss model.²³ However, in a despatch sent to London on the 15th April, Hayter drew the following conclusions about the motives behind these apparently good intentions,

I have no doubt that the main Soviet motive is their desire to prevent the absorption of Austria, or at least of Western Austria, into the western defence system. Subsidiary Soviet motives are probably the elimination of a question in which the Soviet Union is in a bad international posture and which has now ceased to serve any vital Soviet interest, the desire to present Germany with a useful pattern to follow, and conceivably the wish to demonstrate Soviet

20 FO 371 117789 RR 1071/130, Despatch from British Embassy, Vienna to London, 6th April, 1955; Sir G. Wallinger to Sir G. Harrison.

21 *ibid.*, Wallinger thought.

As is always the case with a Russian initiative - and I think we may take it that Molotov's words on Austria in his speech of February 8 was an initiative - the first problem with which one is faced is the attempt to analyse from the very cagey words used what may be the Russian intention. In the present instance, it seems to me that only one point, and that a very subsidiary one, is reasonably clear. The Soviet Government intend, if they possibly can, to divest themselves of the onus for the delay on the Austrian Treaty which was firmly laid on their shoulders at Berlin.

22 FO 371 117789 RR 1071/128, Telegram No. 352, From Hayter, Moscow to F. O., 13th April, 1955. The Soviets were prepared to compromise to an extent over the quantity of oil that Austria was to be obliged to continue supplying them and payment by Austria for assets of the Danube Navigation Company.

23 FO 371 117789 RR 1071/128, Despatch from Hayter, Moscow to F. O., 15th April, 1955.

willingness to settle outstanding questions as a preliminary to wider great power negotiations.²⁴

Eden added his own comment: underlining the phrase, "the Soviet Union is in a bad international posture", he asserted that, "This seems good advice."²⁵

Only at the very end of Hayter's list of "subsidiary" motives is it admitted that the Soviets might "conceivably" be clearing the ground for an attempt to get international negotiations of the ground. Clearly at this point the British were not interpreting Soviet foreign policy in any substantially new light. Once more, as in Eden's policy presentation to the Cabinet of 26th March, 1955, the emphasis was firmly on playing for the advantage. Yet despite these reservations as to the Kremlin's intentions no one on the British side thought that they ought not to ride along with Soviet good will, so far as it went.

However, from this point onwards it became increasingly apparent that something altogether more profound was happening. The Soviet moves over Austria presaged a flood of concrete gestures towards improving the international atmosphere, which by June 1955 left Eden quite hopeful that a Summit meeting stood a chance of leading to serious results.

On the 19th April 1955 the Soviet Government issued a formal note proposing that a Four Power Ministerial Conference should be held to discuss the issue of Austria. In a Foreign Office brief of April 20th, Sir Geoffrey Harrison considered that given the hopes this initiative had kindled at a popular level in Austria the West would have little option but to react positively to the Soviet suggestion.²⁶ This was despite his expressed concern that the Soviets move was intended,

[T]o impede the re-armament of Western Germany... by raising in Western Germany the hope that Germany could be re-united if a settlement on the Austrian lines were accepted.²⁷

Harrison did not think that the West should be diplomatically wrong footed by the Soviets and cast in the role of the obdurate one. He suggested that a Western reply agreed to by Britain, France and America should welcome the Soviet note, but he thought that although the Foreign Ministers should meet to sign a Treaty in the event of success, the "preparatory" work should be done by the Ambassadors of the Four Powers resident in Vienna. Talks might be started for that purpose from around the 2nd May.

This was very much the approach which Macmillan, now Foreign Secretary, put to the Cabinet in a Memorandum of the 26th April 1955. By this time preparatory meetings between the three western powers to discuss the form of a response to the

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ FO 371 117789 RR 1071/128, Prime Minister's Minute, P. De Zeluta, 16th April 1955.

²⁶ FO 371 117791 RR 1071/193, F. O. Minute by Sir G. Harrison, April 20th, 1955.

²⁷ *ibid.*

Soviet proposal had already been agreed.²⁸ Macmillan's emphasis was once more upon the shadow Austrian neutralisation might throw over West German politics.²⁹ However, in terms of fundamental principles the British could have no real objection to the neutralisation of Austria.³⁰ Macmillan commented,

It must obviously be our aim to retain for Austria the maximum possible freedom to determine her own policy in the political and economic fields. provided this purpose can, within reasonable limits, be achieved, I do not see any serious objection to recognising Austrian neutrality.³¹

In a meeting on the 27th April, the Cabinet, in the anodyne words of the minute takers, "approved generally" the proposals which had been put forward.³²

THE AUSTRIAN STATE TREATY

So it was on the 2nd May 1955 that the Ambassadors of the four occupying powers met in Vienna to begin detailed negotiations.³³ It was from this point onwards that the British began to comment on the very marked change in the Soviet attitude in terms which went substantially beyond realpolitik. Before the talks began Sir Geoffrey Harrison, in a minute of the 30th April, saw two articles of the Soviet draft of the

28 CAB 129, Vol. 75, CP(55)12, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 26th April, 1955. On the 15th April, 1955, Harold Caccia had been informed by the United States Minister at the Embassy in London that on all important points American thinking on Austrian "neutralisation" was very much the same as the British. Given the Soviet lead it would be impossible not to go along with negotiations; FO 371 117789 RR 1071/129, Telegram No. 1705, from Caccia, F. O., to Makins Washington, 15th April, 1955.

29 *ibid.*, the memorandum made the following estimation of Soviet motives, essentially a rejinking of Hayter's original,

Soviet motives are no doubt mixed. they may have been embarrassed by the bad international posture in which they found themselves on the Austrian question; they may wish to demonstrate their willingness to settle this outstanding question as a preliminary to wider great power negotiations; they may feel that, by the further condition regarding neutrality which they have imposed on the Austrian Ministers, they will have been successful in preventing the absorption of Austria into the Western defence system. But I have little doubt that their main purpose is to unsettle opinion in Western Germany by holding out the prospect of the reunification of Germany on condition of neutralisation.

30 R. A. Hibbert of the Northern Department in a minute at FO 371 117787 RR 1071/78, of the 8th April 1955 made the point, with which the Southern Department did not altogether agree, that it was the Soviet Union that had most to ~~lose~~ by the neutralisation of Austria. They controlled the industrially most advanced parts of the country and such communications routes which might be valuable to NATO through the western zones could easily be secured in time of war.

31 CAB 129, Vol. 75, CP(55)12, Macmillan continued to point out that an international guarantee of the territorial integrity of Austria was in the interest of Britain as much as the Soviet Union. On the 23rd March Geoffrey Harrison had expressed the opinion that it was "probably" illogical to think of any other solution to the Austrian problem than complete neutralization, FO 371 117787 RR 1071/72; F. O. Minute by Mr G. Harrison, 23rd March, 1955.

32 CAB 128, Vol. 29, CM(55) 7th Conclusions, Minute 3, 27th April, 1955.

33 There is a substantial American record of these discussions at *FRUS* 1955-1957, Vol. V, pp. 66-118.

Treaty in particular which the British should make a serious attempt to excise.³⁴ These were numbers 16 and 35, on "Displaced Persons" and "German Assets in Austria" respectively. They were felt to provide possible avenues for future Soviet interference in the affairs of a united Austria.³⁵ However, Harrison thought that the Soviets would probably use the fund of international goodwill which they had built up thus far over Austria to push through their version of the treaty intact. Wallinger was instructed to make his stand against them even though it might open up the British to Soviet accusations of obduracy.³⁶ Harrison did not hold out any great hope for the Ambassadorial talks coming to a resolution of these issues.

However it was not long before Sir Geoffrey Wallinger was able to inform London that the Soviets were being quite remarkably obliging. In a telegram of the 4th May, 1955 Wallinger reported,

Sudden Soviet concessions on Article 16 took the whole conference by surprise and confounded our prediction that on no major issue would progress be achieved before the meeting of Ministers. It is, of course, a measure of the Soviet eagerness to get the Austrian Treaty out of the way and my Soviet colleague is piling on pressure for speed.³⁷

The Soviets were less eager to move over article 35.³⁸ Even so by the 6th May, 1955 sufficient progress had been made for the Ambassadors seriously to consider a date which might be convenient for all the Foreign Secretaries to sign the Treaty.³⁹

34 FO 371 117793 RR 1071/255, F. O. Minute by Sir G. Harrison, 30th April, 1955. Harrison's minute was approved by Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick. Article 16 would have prohibited the Austrian Government from helping any persons who had fought against the "Allied and Associated powers". Article 35 concerned Soviet economic rights within Austria. Here the problem lay in the fact that the Soviets had already unilaterally agreed with the Austrian Government that a fixed amount of compensation should be paid in their stead, the Soviet draft of the Treaty did not take this change into account, thus creating an anomaly. It perhaps says more about Western suspicion of Soviet motives than Soviet cunning, that such a comparatively minor quibble should have caused so much difficulty.

35 *FRUS* 1955-1957, Vol. V, p. 43, Telegram Delegation at Vienna Ambassadors Conference to Department of State, 3rd May, 1955. The Americans were equally concerned about this issue, summing up their discomfort as follows, "[U]nder present [article] 35 Soviets retained 30 years right intervention... if Soviets felt violation had occurred they might reoccupy oil fields and leave the West no legal basis to object".

36 FO 371 117793 RR 1071/260. The Austrians were prepared to accept the confusion over article 35 in order to secure an agreement. On the 2nd May, 1955 Wallinger reported from Vienna in telegram no. 150 on a joint western "demarché" with the Austrians over the issue.

It was pointed out to these [Austrian] officials that even if the text of Art. 35 was signed in the present form (which God forbid) there was still ratification to come, and that our parliaments would become aware of the fact that the Austrians would have sacrificed not only their friends but their reputation for a Soviet mess of pottage.

37 FO 371 117794 RR 1071/292, Telegram No. 175, Wallinger to F. O., 4th May, 1955 and FO 371 117796 RR 1071/339, Telegram No. 443, from Hayter to F. O., 5th May 1955. In this latter telegram Hayter reported from Moscow that Molotov had said he now thought that the Ambassadors in Vienna to come to an agreement covering all the main points for the Foreign Ministers to sign.

38 FO 371 117795 RR 1071/306, Telegram No. 187, Wallinger to F. O., 5th May, 1955.

39 FO 371 117595 RR 1071/320, Telegram No. 199, Wallinger to F. O., 6th May, 1955. May 16th was bad for Dulles, May 14th was bad for Molotov and Friday 13th May was felt by all to be

The argument over article 35 proved, however, to have one last kick left. On the 9th May it seemed that the Ambassadorial talks might yet be about to founder on the Soviet insistence that their original draft should not be altered. Wallinger thought that the Soviets were eager to leave at least one "back door" for use in the future. The Americans were adamant that they would not sign a Treaty with the offending article intact. Wallinger thought the Soviet Ambassador "shaken" when the Americans had made clear their position.⁴⁰ By the 11th May, however, the Soviets capitulated with remarkable grace rather than risk calling the Americans' bluff.⁴¹ This came as a further pleasant surprise to the Western delegations. By the time the Foreign Ministers arrived for the state signing there was little left for them to discuss but the possible time and place for a future summit meeting of the four powers.⁴² The Americans had come round to accepting the wisdom of an approach to the Soviets on the issue with reluctance and largely at British insistence.

This was for Macmillan his first meeting with Molotov whom he describes in his memoirs. It seemed to Macmillan that the years had not been kind,

He seemed smaller to me than I had supposed and older (we are all older!). He is grey, not black anymore; a very pale pasty face; a large forehead; closely cut grey hair. He wore a very respectable black suit - and looked rather like a head gardener in his Sunday clothes.⁴³

Eden had made a formal expression of the British position on the issue of starting a top level dialogue in a telegram to Eisenhower of the 5th May, 1955 which was passed through the Embassy in Washington.⁴⁴ The British wanted to make a specific proposal for a meeting to the Soviets as soon as possible, although in his message to Eisenhower, Eden was at pains to point out that he regarded the proposed conference as a prelude to further negotiations, rather than an end in itself.⁴⁵ It took more than a

"unpropitious". The date agreeable, Sunday 15th May, was however considered even more unpropitious by the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland who sent a letter to Macmillan on the 6th June, 1955. They complained of Her Majesty's Government's complicity with Sabbath breakers and asserted that the Austrian State Treaty was "struck thereby". FO 371 117804 RR 1071/504.

40 FO 371 117797 RR 1071/347, Telegram No. 215. Wallinger to F. O., 9th May, 1955.

41 FO 371 117800 RR 1071/412, Despatch from Wallinger to F. O., 16th May, 1955 in which Wallinger outlined the last days of the talks.

42 *Tides of Fortune*, pp. 598-602 and *Full Circle*, pp. 290-291.

43 *Tides of Fortune*, p. 599.

44 PREM 11/893, Telegram No. 2139 from F. O. to Washington, from Prime Minister to President, 5th May, 1955. Indication had already been given by British officials to their American counterparts during bilateral talks held a few days previously in London.

45 FO 371 116700 NS 1071/15, Minute by Sir I. Kirkpatrick, 6th May, 1955, and also *Tides of Fortune*, pp. 584-587. This seems initially to have been Macmillan's idea, although it was expressed in the press by the *Economist* of the 6th May 1955. Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick brought the opinion of the *Economist* to Macmillan's attention in a minute of the same day, commenting,

It seems to me that there is a lot of sense in the views expressed. And it confirms your thesis that what we have to cater for is a long round of negotiation rather than a short, sharp meeting followed by either success or irrevocable failure.

little gentle urging on the part of the British immediately before the Foreign Ministers were due to meet in Vienna to persuade the Americans of the desirability of such a summit. Macmillan himself met Dulles in Paris on the 7th May and canvassed his (and the British Government's) conception of a series of conferences designed to deal with specific problems over a long period of time, rather than a one off as at Yalta. The Americans were most anxious not to repeat what they saw as a baleful precedent.⁴⁶ Eisenhower's election in 1952 had involved considerable denunciation of the supposed betrayals which Roosevelt had presided over in secret in the Crimea.⁴⁷ Macmillan was hard put to persuade Dulles of the value of the British proposal. He reported back to London in a telegram of the following day that,

In my private talks with Mr. Dulles yesterday, I used every argument I could think of in favour of the "top level" meeting, *on its merits, apart from any convenience which it might have in satisfying British and French public opinion* [my italics].⁴⁸

Britain's eagerness to talk with the enemy was clearly at least partly informed by electoral considerations.⁴⁹ There is indeed a strong emphasis in the American side to the correspondence on the assistance that summit diplomacy might afford the Conservative Government in its re-election. Yet the Conservative Government was not merely seeking another term of office in the becoming clothes of peacemaker. Macmillan's diplomacy in May 1955 was following a long established pattern.⁵⁰ The British attitude towards the Soviet Union, possibly influenced by her propinquity, had a more pragmatic air than the American. Dulles still seemed more concerned that a willingness to talk with the Soviet devil should not be interpreted as an acceptance of his works in Eastern Europe, than he was willing to start talks in the first place.⁵¹

46 PREM 11/893, Telegram No. 80, from U. K. Permanent Delegation to NATO., Paris to F. O., from Foreign Secretary to Prime Minister, 8th May, 1955. It is worth pointing out that Macmillan thought the most effective argument he employed was that the Chinese Communists were unlikely to make trouble over either the Offshore Islands or Formosa in the lead up to and duration of Great Power talks. Formosa and the People's Republic of China were to play a large part in the substance of negotiations at Geneva in July.

47 *Eisenhower, The President*, pp. 269-274.

48 *ibid.*

49 The language used by both parties gives thinly veiled indication of the way in which British domestic politics impinged upon Anglo-American diplomacy in May 1955. In his Telegram of 5th May Eden added to a list of considerations a less than convincing denial of party political expedient, "I must also tell you that much in our country depends upon it [a conference]; this is not a party question here, but responds to a deep desire of our whole people". Eisenhower perceptively put this issue to the top of the agenda in his reply to Eden of 6th May 1955, "We appreciate the importance to you of this project under existing circumstances, and are naturally disposed to do everything we can to further it". Eden did not attempt to correct this more candid analysis in further correspondence.

50 Consider Eden's submission to the Cabinet of the 26th March, 1955 discussed above.

51 PREM 11/893, Telegram No. 1073, from Makins, Washington to F. O., 6th May, 1955. In a private conversation with Sir Rodger Makins after handing over Eisenhower's response to Eden on the 6th May, Dulles expressed American reservations regarding the proposed summit. After insisting that China should not be brought in and complaining of the lack of co-ordination of Western views on certain key areas, he went on to say,

However, the Americans were reluctantly prepared to make an approach to the Soviets on the condition that the Foreign Ministers should try the waters first.⁵² The conclave of Foreign Ministers on the 15th May in Vienna seemed to both the Americans and the British a most convenient time to get the process underway. This proviso was contained in the formal invitation to talks which was sent jointly to the Soviets by the Governments of Britain, France and the United States on the 10th May, 1955.⁵³

Once the Foreign Ministers meet in Vienna the process of sounding out went smoothly. Macmillan reported back on his conversations of the 15th May with his counterpart as follows.

Although we do not expect the formal reply to the invitation for some days, Mr Molotov made it quite clear that he is very keen on having the White House, and at a top level [Macmillan's way of referring to Eisenhower]. He appeared to approve the general scheme set out in the invitation and said that it conformed with his ideas, viz, that a top level conference should be the beginning of a process of negotiation which must necessarily be prolonged. He agreed that any other suggestion would lead to disillusionment in all our countries.⁵⁴

The only real area of disputation was the place in which talks were to be held.⁵⁵ Molotov's preferred location was Vienna. Both Macmillan and Dulles did not agree as it would have meant meeting in a city still under an occupation regime. The "Allied" forces were not due to withdraw from Austria completely until 1956 and a Swiss city was the option preferred by the west. However, Molotov gave indication that the Soviets might well be willing to bend to western pressure on the issue. The question of the agenda, often the sticking point in previous talks about talks, was sketched out more or less to the satisfaction of all.

The main public function of the visit by so many foreign politicians to Vienna was carried off in some style. The Austrian State Treaty, bound in green Morocco

[T]hat it was possible to take the view that something like an equilibrium had now been achieved in Europe and that there might be some prospect of scaling down the forces arrayed on each side in this area. But there were great difficulties here also since the US. certainly did not want to give any colour of sanction to the Soviet position in the Satellite countries or to the Eastern European "N.A.T.O.-type" organisation which they seemed to be in the process of setting up.

52 PREM 11/893; Telegram No. 190, From Sir G. Jebb to F. O., From Foreign Secretary to Prime Minister, 8th May, 1955. Dulles was still expressing his doubts to Macmillan in Paris on the 8th May. At this point his main concern seems to have been the unpopularity of summit diplomacy with the right wing of the Republican Party.

53 PREM 11/893. Text of Statement contained in Telegram No. 202, from Sir G. Jebb, Paris to F. O., 10th May, 1955.

54 PREM 11/893. Telegram No. 201, Sir G. Wallinger to F. O., from Foreign Secretary for Prime Minister, 15th May, 1955. As so many of Macmillan's negotiations, this one began "after an agreeable dinner". Food plays a large part in Macmillan's diplomatic memorabilia, see *Tides of Fortune*, pp. 582-697.

55 PREM 11/893, Telegram No. 513, from Sir W. Hayter to F. O., 26th May, 1955. A very positive official response to the Western invitation of the 10th May was not issued by the Soviets until the 26th May.

leather by the same firm which had bound the Vienna Treaty of 1815, was signed with due pomp and ceremony in the Belvedere palace on the 15th May, 1955.⁵⁶ Macmillan records in his memoirs that the Viennese crowds and, less predictably, the weather were agreeably festal in aspect.⁵⁷

SNOWDROPS AND CROCUSES

By this point there had been even further indication that the Soviet policy towards summitry was becoming ever more positive. On the 10th May the Soviet Government lodged with the United Nations proposals for disarmament which, as the British considered them, were much more credible than any previous Soviet position on the issue.⁵⁸ Furthermore the manner in which the Soviets conducted the founding of their own "N.A.T.O." in Warsaw from the 11th to 14th May, 1955 was interpreted, rather ironically, by British observers as another indication of the way in which the Soviets were softening towards the West.⁵⁹ It also gave one of the first clear hints to the British that the prospect of thermonuclear war might be the one of the main factors prompting Soviet foreign policy to change.

In a despatch of the 11th May Sir William Hayter reported on the detail of the Soviet Disarmament proposals of the previous day. He drew the following conclusions from what seemed a clear indication of movement on the issue,

Soviet Government at present genuinely desire a measure of disarmament, partly for internal economic reasons and partly because the present state of international armaments seems to them menacing. To achieve this they are prepared for quite far-reaching sacrifices, including the loss of their present superiority in conventional armaments and the acceptance of a degree of foreign control activity [for the purpose of verification] in this country which is utterly alien to their tradition.⁶⁰

Hayter considered that this desire to be pleasant to the West has as much to do with the internal weakness of the regime and the economic stress of rearmament than anything else.⁶¹ It all fitted into a pattern which had begun with the opening of

56 FO 371 117801 RR 1071/433, Wallinger described the circumstance surrounding the signature in a Despatch to the Foreign Office on the 19th May, 1955. The full text of the Treaty is held at FO 371 117799 RR 1071/401.

57 *Tides of Fortune*, p. 598.

58 Hayter expressed his approval in a despatch of 1st June, 1955, FO 371 116652 NS 1021/38, Hayter to Macmillan. The Americans were however less sanguine in their appreciation, *FRUS* 1955-1957, Vol. V, p. 182, Memorandum of a Discussion at the 249th Meeting of the NSC, 19th May, 1955.

59 For a brief study of the Warsaw Pact see M. Mackintosh, "The Warsaw Treaty Organisation: A History" in D. Holloway and J. M. O. Sharp (eds.), *The Warsaw Pact, Alliance in Transition*.

60 FO 371 11652 NS 1023/34, Telegram No. 464, from Sir W. Hayter to F. O., 11th May, 1955. Hayter also thought that the Soviet proposals might have been designed to advance the closure of American bases in Europe.

61 *ibid.*, Hayter continued,

Soviet leaders do not appear to be in the tough or aggressive mood that we expected when Malenkov fell. On the contrary, perhaps because of their undoubted internal weaknesses and

negotiations for the Austrian State Treaty and which had been further developed by the Soviet disarmament proposals. Only at the very end of his despatch did he speculate that,

[I]n my opinion they are now more likely to come to an agreement with us than they have been for many years past, no doubt largely owing to the success of our recent policies and *perhaps also because they have at last, in spite of their brave words, begun to realise what the hydrogen bomb means to them*[my italics].

Hayter may well have been referring to the brave words which Khrushchev had publicly declared as recently as the 20th April, 1955. In a speech delivered in Warsaw on that day, in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Soviet-Polish alliance, Khrushchev had re-affirmed the orthodoxy on nuclear war which had been established against Malenkov in 1954; and placed his emphasis firmly upon the inevitability of Soviet victory in the event of world war.⁶² Although he had also pointed to the necessity of peaceful co-existence, Hayter thought the speech bore Khrushchev's "personal stamp with its truculent, over-simplified approach to foreign affairs".⁶³ In his report (telegram no 464, referred to below) Hayter pointed out, "Soviet atomic superiority is not referred to, but third world war is described as undoubtedly leading to the destruction of capitalist countries".⁶⁴

Hayter's speculation of the 11th May, 1955 on the possibility of a change in this Soviet attitude was to be confirmed in substance by the tenor of the Soviet delegation's speechifying at the Warsaw Conference, held from the 11th to the 14th of the same month. In a telegram of the 12th May commenting on a speech by Bulganin in Warsaw of the previous day, Cecil Parrott, the Minister at the British Embassy in Moscow, developed Hayter's line of reasoning,

[H]is [Bulganin's] lengthy passage on disarmament proposals underlines their importance from the Soviet point of view. Like Zhukov he refers more than once to the calamity of an atomic war without referring to the possibility of

uncertainties, they seem to me now to be anxious for a relaxation of tension and even perhaps for some kind of genuine settlement with the West. It is not that they have given up their ultimate objective; it is clear enough that all of them, Zhukov and the Marshals as well as Khrushchev and Bulganin, still think that Communism will ultimately prevail...But it seems to me that they are beginning to feel that the best way of achieving this is not by threats and menaces but by conciliation and appeasement and by sufficiently reducing, through disarmament, the strains on their own economy to enable them to compete with capitalist standards of living.

62 Malenkov had made his "wobbly" speech on the issue of mutual destruction on March 12th, 1954 only to publicly "qualify" it in a further speech of the 26th April, 1954. Molotov's keynote speech of 8th February, 1955 was seen by the Foreign Office as an emphatic declaration of the old view that under the conditions of world war only capitalism would be destroyed and the Soviet Union would be victorious. See above, *Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II*, pp. 88-95 and FO 371 116650 NS 1021/18.

63 FO 371 116652 NS 1023/28. Telegram No. 387, from Sir W. Hayter, Moscow, to F. O., 21st April, 1955.

64 *ibid.*

Communist victory. This again supports the supposition that the Soviet leaders are really anxious about the effect of the hydrogen bomb (see our telegram No.464).⁶⁵

The importance of thermonuclear weaponry in the Soviet Government's foreign policy calculations was to become increasingly obvious as the Geneva Conference drew closer. Parrot went on to comment that Bulganin's speech had also contained a number of conciliatory touches and was, "[v]ery different from the normal run of Soviet speeches, and the passages in which he spoke of the need for establishing confidence as a first step towards agreement and cited Austria as an example that problems could be solved piece-meal had a western ring about them".

Perversely enough, the British saw the Warsaw Conference as a further indication of the Kremlin's new eagerness for summitry. The formation of a Soviet military pact was largely dismissed by the Foreign Office merely as a recognition of long established fact. E.F. Given of the Northern Department put it thus, "it [the Warsaw Pact] is, of course, a facade erected on an existing edifice, and will no doubt be used as a bargaining counter in four power talks".⁶⁶ The British Ambassador in Warsaw, Sir Andrew Noble, sent his summing up of the Conference's significance to London on the 17th May, 1955.⁶⁷ Once more comment was made of the surprisingly "mild" tone of the proceedings, particularly in contrast to the "violent language" which had so recently been used in condemnation of the Paris Agreements. Bulganin's speech of the 11th May was singled out as a good example of this trend. However, Noble, looking for an ulterior motive, suggested that,

Blustering tactics having failed to intimidate the Western parliaments, the Soviet Government apparently decided to assume a disposition of disarming reasonableness, calculated perhaps to appeal to uncommitted countries and opinion.⁶⁸

However suspicious of Soviet intentions the Foreign Office staff may have remained, there was an impressive list of Soviet goodwill gestures towards the west building up. These were soon to be followed by further startling changes in Soviet foreign policy. At the end of May, 1955 in the aftermath of the signing of the Warsaw Pact, Khrushchev himself was to make an attempt to soft-talk another formerly implacable foe, Tito.⁶⁹ Khrushchev and the accompanying Soviet delegation,

65 FO 371 116118 N 1074/8, Telegram No. 469, from C. Parrot, Moscow to F. O., 12th May, 1955.

66 FO 371 116118 N 1074/9, Minute by E. F. Given of 18th May, 1955.

67 FO 371 116118 N 1074/19, Despatch from Sir A. Noble, Warsaw to F. O., 17th May, 1955.

68 *ibid.*, Noble also made clear that the East German Government's statement, clearing a future united Germany from any obligation undertaken by the existing regime, left "the diplomatic doors... ostentatiously open". The Soviet Union was keeping a careful eye on its freedom of manoeuvre.

69 FO 371 118207 RY 10338/74, Despatch from Sir F. Roberts, Belgrade to F. O., 21st May, 1955. Both the Yugoslavs and the British were concerned from the start that the Soviets might have ulterior motives in wanting to visit. Publicly the Yugoslavs hailed Khrushchev's visit as a great vindication of their policy since 1948, privately they were less assured as Roberts reported in the

conspicuously lacking Molotov, arrived in Yugoslavia on the 26th May, 1955.⁷⁰ This was the same day as the British elections in which Eden was to be victorious.⁷¹ It was also the day on which the Soviets made a positive formal reply to the Western proposal of the 10th May for a Summit meeting.

The British had entertained the hope after Tito's break with Stalin in 1948 that it might be possible to increase western influence in the country to the point at which it leaned decisively towards the west. However, by April 1955 it had become apparent that Tito had not fallen out of one camp merely to fall into another.⁷² The Khrushchev visit was taken by the British Government as confirmation that Tito had gone "Indian". It was also adduced by the Foreign Office as one more example of the new conciliatory look which Soviet policy had been developing since their first moves towards the Austrian State Treaty, although this did not mean that all had necessarily gone smoothly between the Soviets and their hosts.

Indeed, the Yugoslav reaction to Khrushchev's first speech of the 26th May, 1955, delivered at the airport on his arrival in Belgrade, was far from positive. Khrushchev delivered a number of gaffes, including reference to the supposedly unassisted role played by the Red Army in Yugoslavia's liberation from Germany. On the 27th May, 1955 Sir William Hayter delivered the following judgement on Khrushchev's bravura performance, "the whole pleading, apologetic, clumsy tone of this speech is surprising, or would be surprising if we did not know that Khrushchev is like that".⁷³ Hayter also pointed out an interesting straw in a wind which was soon to increase to gale force proportions,

above despatch. Hayter expressed Britain's concern in a letter of the 27th May, 1955 to the F. O. (FO 371 118027 RY 10335/97) as follows,

It is of course obvious enough that this high powered Soviet delegation have not gone to Belgrade with the sole purpose of saying *mea culpa*. They must have something serious and possibly (from our point of view) sinister to propose. I cannot imagine what this will be, though the composition of the Soviet Delegation suggests that it will have an economic element [the delegation included Mikoyan]. One can only hope that the Yugoslavs dispose of a very, very long spoon.

70 Perhaps because of his unfortunate association with Stalin's foreign policy and perhaps also because of his increasing disagreement with Khrushchev over the basic tenor of policy post Stalin.

71 *Full Circle*, pp. 276-287 and *Tides of Fortune*, pp. 602-604.

72 FO 371 118025 RY 10338/25, Telegram No. 26, from Sir F. Roberts, Belgrade to F. O., 8th April, 1955 and Minute by H. B. McKenzie Johnston, 13th April, 1955. McKenzie Johnston commented as follows on the telegram which was an assessment by Roberts of the Yugoslavian attitude towards defence.

There is really nothing in this to modify recent assessments by Belgrade of present Yugoslav policy... If anything it gives further indication of Yugoslavia "going Indian" [in the sense, presumably, of Nehru's neutralism].

73 FO 371 118027 RY 10338-97, Letter from Sir William Hayter to F. O., 27th May, 1955. Hayter made the following report on the substance of the airport speech.

Khrushchev's speech is very peculiar, and also very typically Khrushchev. It is full of his characteristics of blurring out surprising truths and also determined and narrow minded conformity to the Marxist line. From our point of view the most interesting feature is the suggestion that the responsibility for the breach between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia was

It is also noticeable that Khrushchev is anxious to advertise himself as leader of the Party founded by Lenin, exploiting in a rather clumsy way the fidelity of the Yugoslav communists to Lenin. Stalin is not mentioned anywhere in the speech. The emphasis on the cooperation of the two Marxist-Leninist parties is laboriously obvious.

Khrushchev's airport speech was not the only outpouring which caused the Yugoslavs to wince.⁷⁴ But, despite the apparent coolness of the Yugoslavs towards the Soviets throughout their stay, the visit soon recovered, and by the time of the Soviets' departure was credited to them as at least a partial success.⁷⁵ On this point the Americans seem to have taken a marginally more negative view than the British.⁷⁶ Although there was trans-Atlantic agreement that there had been successes for both the Soviets and the Yugoslavs, the fear that in the long term this new cordiality between Moscow and Belgrade would pull Yugoslavia increasingly back towards the Soviet

the supply by Beria, Abakumov and other of false material about the Yugoslav leaders. It is hard to imagine that the Yugoslavs could take this apology seriously... the most wounding accusation of all was that almost the sole part in the liberation of Yugoslavia had been played by the Soviet army...

74 FO 371 118028 RY 10338/125, Roberts reported in his summary despatch of June 11th, 1955 that Khrushchev had, allegedly, further alarmed Tito in his private conversations with him at Brioni by a renewed emphasis on the ability of the communist world to survive a Third World War victorious.

75 FO 371 118027 RY 10338/98, Despatch from Sir F. Roberts, Belgrade to F. O., May 29th, 1955. Roberts reported that,

[T]he atmosphere improved yesterday, so far as the substance of the talks is concerned. But the gulf between hosts and guests grows deeper with each social gathering. This was particularly noticeable at Tito's major reception last night. Many of my Yugoslav contacts, high and medium, commented on this. One told me that after the passage of seven years the Russians and the Yugoslavs no longer even spoke the same language, adding that he now found it impossible to understand how they had ever done so, even during the honey-moon period between 1945 and 1947... I could not avoid the impression myself last night that the Russians found themselves rather more at home in the four power company of ourselves, the Americans and the French than of their former Yugoslav comrades.

Roberts ended his despatch with an expression of western satisfaction as to the outcome of the visit,

So far I think we have every reason to congratulate ourselves on the Soviet visit to Belgrade, although I naturally keep my fingers crossed until it is all over. As the Prime Minister of Croatia put it in a special article on Tito's birthday, "If the Yugoslavs have to choose between the two blocs, they know perfectly well which from their point of view is the lesser evil.

76 FO 371 118028 RY 10338/109, Letter from Mr. Wilkinson, British Embassy Washington to Mr W. H. Young, Southern Department, 7th June 1955. Also at the same reference minutes by Northern Department; R. A. Hibbert of 16th June, 1955 and H. Mackenzie-Johnston of 11th June, 1955. The State Department had reported their view of developments to the British Embassy. Wilkinson described the American view of events as "slightly less optimistic" than the British. If, as seemed likely to the Americans, the Soviets had not been aiming for a complete reconciliation with Yugoslavia, but rather a half-way agreement then, "in these circumstances, a perfectly adequate accommodation seemed to have been reached in Belgrade and Chip Bohlen had commented from Moscow that he thought there had been a victory for both sides". Also *FRUS* 1955-57, Vol. X, p. 13-15, Summary of Discussions of Legislative Leadership Meeting, Washington, 28th June, 1955. At this meeting with Senators Dulles was very eager that US. economic aid to Yugoslavia should not be reduced or refused by the legislature as, "Russia seemed to have eaten humble pie at Belgrade, he [Dulles] said, and we should not take any action that would tend to drive the Yugoslavs back to their Russian connection".

camp was not as strong in Britain as in the United States.⁷⁷ Indeed Sir Frank Roberts' estimation of Yugoslavia's preference, in extremis, for the west remained bullish; the opinion of the Foreign Office as a whole was rather less robust.⁷⁸

However, one of the most important impressions of their visitors which the Yugoslavs were so obliging as to communicate to the British was, once more, the Soviet eagerness to do business with the West. Sir Frank Roberts reported back to London on his conversation with Edvard Kardelj, a member of the Yugoslav Politburo, during a diplomatic reception held for the Soviet visitors on the 28th May, 1955.⁷⁹ Kardelj made comment that the Soviets had proved willing to compromise with the Yugoslav view of inter-communist relations by including a reference to "different roads to socialism" in the final communique. The Foreign Office's first reaction was to play down both the novelty of such a concession and even more the effect which it might have on the rest of Eastern Europe.⁸⁰ Of more direct importance to the West was the following information,

[H]e [Kardelj] now thought positive results would flow from the Belgrade meeting. The Soviet attitude had convinced him that the Russians genuinely

77 FO 371 116652 NS 1021/40, Despatch from Sir W. Hayter, Moscow to F. O., 10th June, 1955. Hayter thought that, "As seen from Moscow the Belgrade talks look remarkably like a defeat for the Soviet Government, and a personal defeat for Khrushchev." However Hayter continued to reason that although Khrushchev may have hoped to persuade the Yugoslavs to give emphatic support to the Soviet Union, he was enough of a realist to expect something rather less. To the Soviets' credit it could be argued that the visit had confirmed "neutralist" tendencies which had already become apparent in Yugoslav foreign policy. Hayter did not think that the Soviet success could be put in any stronger terms. Given the overall trend in Soviet policy, neutralism was probably good enough.

78 FO 371 118028 RY 10338/125, Despatch from Sir F. Roberts, Belgrade to F. O., 11th June, 1955. In his summing up of the Soviet visit in the above despatch, Roberts went so far as to suggest that the Yugoslavs felt "western", particularly in reaction to the rather brutish and "uncouth" performance of Khrushchev and entourage. This Soviet display had gone some way to "dissipate some of Marshal Tito's airy confidence in a complete Soviet change of heart." Amongst other Foreign Office minuters questioning the basis of Roberts' confidence, Miss V. Conolly of the Research Department played down the element of novelty in the proceedings, commenting in a note of the 17th August that,

I should not personally attach over much importance to the Soviet admission that there is more than one road to socialism, nor regard it as a landmark in Soviet thought on revolution and violence. After-all, the Lenin-Stalin doctrine of by-passing capitalism amounts to an admission of the same order though not couched in the same terms.

79 FO 371 118027 RY 10338/81, Telegram No. 391, from Sir F. Roberts, Belgrade to F. O., 29th May, 1955. Kardelj was the Yugoslav Foreign Minister from 1948-53.

80 See footnote no. 70 and FO 371 116652 NS 1021/40, Despatch from Sir W. Hayter, Moscow to F. O., 10th June, 1955. Hayter thought that although neutralism in the non-communist world was becoming increasingly favoured of Moscow, the Soviet leaders would have made it clear that this did not apply to the communist world. Indeed he felt that,

Soviet condonation of Titoism is probably a measure of their confidence in the docility of the satellites and not a prelude to any relaxation of the Kremlin's control over its empire. It is conceivable that the Soviets may be prepared to trade a withdrawal of their troops from one or more of the satellites for e.g. a withdrawal of American forces from Europe. But I see no prospect of the Soviet Government entertaining the idea of free elections in any satellite. On the contrary, any withdrawal of American forces would probably be preceded by a strengthening of Communist control over the State apparatus in the country concerned.

wanted peace and an international détente and that there were real prospects for big-Power negotiations although the road would be long and difficult and Soviet concessions hardly won.

This was the main lesson from Khrushchev's sojourn in Yugoslavia which Macmillan took with him in his briefing material when he left in early June, 1955 to begin detailed negotiations with the other Foreign Ministers of the Great Powers at San Francisco. In a minute of the 10th June the Southern Department made the following summation for the Foreign Secretary of the Yugoslavs' understanding of where the general trend in Soviet policy was going,

The Yugoslavs are confirmed in their view that a very important change is taking place in the Soviet attitude towards international relations and co-operation with other countries. The Russians had been very critical of their own past persuasions and in particular of their original disarmament proposal... Nevertheless, they still seemed to cherish many of their old conceptions and illusions, more especially concerning Yugoslavia.⁸¹

The Yugoslavs thought, at least in so far as they communicated their opinions to the British, that there was a real possibility the Soviets might be willing to compromise in international negotiations.

* * *

It is important to stress that through the first half of 1955 the British were making their own foreign policy, as much as reacting to that of the Soviets. The line followed by the Conservative Government in Germany and Europe since 1952 developed naturally, once it had met with success over West German re-armament, into Eden's attempt to start top-level talks with the Soviets. There was no "U" turn or contradiction in the British Government's thinking. Yet in following this straight line, Eden had to overcome the deep-seated doubts of the Eisenhower Administration. He was partly assisted in this task, it seems, by the Americans' willingness to connive in the re-election of a British Conservative Government. This factor, however, in no way detracts from the logical force of Eden and Macmillan's policy, not least as it was decided without prior reference to the Americans. The British attitude towards the Soviet Union was informed by a pragmatism which the Americans, it seems, did not share. More startlingly the likelihood of Britain achieving the consummation of that policy was very substantially increased by profound change in the Soviet attitude towards the west. The Soviet Union, not Great Britain, was the country which committed something of an "U" turn in early 1955.

⁸¹ FO 371 116652 NS 1021 42, Minute by Southern Department of 10th June, 1955. This minute, which summed up the wisdom of the British Embassy in Belgrade's commentary on the Soviet visit, was expressly asked for by Macmillan.

By the end of May, 1955 the Kremlin had gone a very long way in changing its relations with the external world. The Foreign Office was quite aware of the importance of what seemed to be happening. It was not however completely apparent in Whitehall why the Soviets had become so pleasantly reasonable in their relations with the west. Much of the emphasis in their explanations revolved around the Soviet search for diplomatic advantage. However, the weight of Soviet good-will had, by Khrushchev's visit to Yugoslavia, become so heavy as strongly to suggest that what motivated them was not merely realpolitik. The British Embassy in Moscow began to notice indications that the nature of thermo-nuclear war, already recognised in its full horror by the British, was causing profound concern within the Soviet Government. These indications were still confusing and unclear, but they were soon to crystallise. What could not be ignored was that Soviet foreign policy was undergoing a change much more profound than anything initiated under Malenkov. As Churchill's great hope for a Summit grew closer to its epiphany, this impression was further strengthened in the Foreign Office. The expectations raised by this new Soviet approach to the outside world formed the background to the Geneva summit itself. And so we move on to the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Prelude to the Geneva Summit, 1955

Canute and the Rising Tide of Soviet Amity

"I think we have been right to emphasise the diplomatic and tactical advantages which the Russians see in reducing tension at present... On the other hand, I also agree with Sir William Hayter that this policy stems also from a "truer appreciation of the nature of modern war".

H. A. F. Hohler.

Because of the July 1955 Geneva Summit's apparent lack of fundamental achievement it tends to be discounted as a matter of no importance in a longer view of East West rivalry. This, arguably, stems from a misconception as to where the Geneva Meeting fitted into the development of Soviet policy and consequently the way the West viewed and fought the Cold War. Historiographically the Geneva Summit has been considered worthy of very little attention. In his recent work on the Eden government Mr. Richard Lamb discussed the significance of the Summit in a few short paragraphs inserted at the end of a chapter on "The Far East 1954-56". He summed up its place in history as follows,

The 1955 Geneva four power summit aroused great expectations all over the world because it was the first gathering since the end of the war of the Communists and the free nations. With Stalin dead and new Soviet leaders in charge there were high hopes of a new atmosphere of conciliation. These were not fulfilled, although during the six days of proceedings the Russians ~~exuded~~ a certain amiability which became known as "the Geneva atmosphere".¹

Equally Lord Blake, in his survey of Britain's twentieth century decline, accords a slip of a page to the summit in the beginning of his chapter on the Suez Crisis. His treatment is no less dismissive than Lamb's.² Indeed on the issue of Eden's proposals for the unification of Germany Lamb does Blake the honour of approving quotation.

This view is also very much that of Eden's biographers, the summit meeting was conspicuous by its lack of achievement. They accord it a minimum of space and by implication, as much as by direct comment, a minimum of importance.³ Macmillan's

1 Richard Lamb, *The Failure of the Eden Government*, p. 126. The Summit meeting is dealt with over pp. 125-128.

2 See Robert Blake, *The Decline of Power*, p. 359. Blake dismisses it with the following words, now rather dated.

The conference came to nothing. Re-unification of Germany, one of its objectives, was and remains unattainable... Disarmament, the other objective, was too closely connected with Germany to be separately soluble. The "Eisenhower plan" and the "Eden plan" are part of the debris of history.

3 The following summarises the treatment given to it by Eden's most recent biographers. D. Carlton deals with it on pp. 376-82 of his *Anthony Eden*, in which he concentrates on the interesting issue of

official biographer is no more spacious in his treatment of the Foreign Secretary's side to the first "full-dress" meeting of the great powers since Potsdam.⁴ The consignment of the Geneva conference to the status of irrelevant, if harmless, side-show, may be taken as the orthodox line. Perhaps the best summary of this assessment being Blake's grudging last words on the issue, "However no positive ill will was created - and that was something."⁵

Yet this compares unfavourably to the place accorded to the proceedings in the memoirs of both Eden and Macmillan. Eden effectively devotes two chapters in his memoirs, to the diplomatic build up and the actual meeting itself, although the former is hardly extensive.⁶ Macmillan also devotes a substantial chapter to it, perhaps unsurprisingly given that this was one of the most dramatic events to occur during his short period as Foreign Secretary. However the point is that they both attached considerable importance to the Geneva Summit, much more than might be expected if we were to accept Blake's damnation by faint praise. In his memoirs Eden considered that despite the lack of concrete results, "[T]he Geneva Conference taught some lessons, which were powerfully to affect the course of events in the next few years".⁷ Macmillan's post facto account also places emphasis on the influence that his impression of Geneva had in the future development of policy towards the Soviet Union. He asserted, "my experience at Geneva supported me in the efforts I was subsequently to make as Prime Minister towards a détente with Russia".⁸

There seems therefore to be a dichotomy between the opinions of historians and those British politicians who actually took part at the time. The following two chapters are largely concerned with arguing that Eden and particularly Macmillan were much more perceptive in insight than their late twentieth century chroniclers. The Geneva summit deserves rather more than the fag end pages to which it has tended retrospectively to be consigned.

If as Eden and Macmillan we look at the summit in the context of relations with Russia, rather than in a sweeping narrative of British policy, for two reasons Geneva becomes a significant landmark. It can be seen on the one hand as a culminating point in western and British policy which started with Ernest Bevin's attempt to provide

British prestige vis-a-vis the "super powers". R. Rhodes-James in his *Anthony Eden* on pp. 417-18 gives it still less space, hardly even stopping to verbalise its inconsequence. Ironically for one so critical of the taint that the Suez Crisis has given to much of what has been written about Eden, he spends an intemperate amount of time on it himself. Indeed to this extent his treatment of Eden's prime-ministership up to July 1956 might be likened to the hurried overture of a grand opera.

4 A. Horne, *Macmillan 1894-1956*, p. 361. The Summit and the following autumn's Foreign Minister's conference are squeezed into a mere two pages. He sums up Macmillan's opinion of the meeting as follows, "he... was left with a strong feeling that they really wanted détente with the West not war". Horne however does not give the slightest indication why Macmillan might have thought that this was the case. Nor does he spend any time on the importance such a conclusion might have had in the evolution of subsequent thinking regarding the Soviet Union and defence.

5 *The Decline of Power*, p. 359

6 *Full Circle*, pp. 288-311. *Tides of Fortune 1945-55*, pp. 582-628.

7 *Full Circle*, p. 306.

8 *Tides of Fortune*, p. 625.

Europe with a defence against the Soviet continental threat. At Geneva the effective division of Europe into the Warsaw Pact and NATO was, de facto, accepted. This was signified by a tacit agreement to differ over the reunification of Germany. The second point has as much to do with the way in which negotiations were conducted rather than what they actually achieved. In their eagerness to persuade the West that they no longer harboured any illusions as to the destructive capacity of thermonuclear weapons, the Soviets implemented changes in their foreign policy which were by the end of 1955 to lead to a new phase in the cold war. If measured in terms of concrete agreements then there can be no debating that Geneva was not a success, for there were none. And this despite the hopes raised in the west and the involved preparations of all three western parties. But the burden of the following argument is that such an accounting is misconceived in its premise.

In relation to how the cold war was changing the Summit might be taken as an interesting example of Oscar Wilde's dictum that one should always judge by appearances. What seemed important to Eden and Macmillan was that the Soviets were keen to persuade the west that they did not want war. Their attitude was entirely pacific. That no agreement on concrete matters was achieved was in that sense immaterial. Geneva was taken by the British as the first irrefutable indication that the Soviet Union shared the west's appreciation of the utter destruction which a nuclear exchange would cause. The British concluded from the Soviets' new found love of amiable atmospherics that deterrence was a viable policy of defence.⁹ This is the kernel of the meeting's importance in the metamorphosis of the cold war. However detailed the diplomatic proposals may have been, they are basically subsidiary to the symbolic importance of the Summit Meeting.

However, before fleshing out these conclusions as to the Summit's real place in the development of Britain's understanding of Soviet foreign policy, some account must be taken of the events that lead up to, and those that took place during, the Summit. This is not least because whatever Britain's post-summit conclusions were to be, they prepared for the meeting in the serious hope of arriving at settlements, most crucially over Germany. In this their emphasis differed slightly from the American.

⁹ See Alistair Home, *Macmillan, 1957-1986*, pp. 45-55, for a discussion of Macmillan's approach to deterrence and defence reductions as Prime Minister. From 1955 Macmillan's thinking was based upon the presumption that neither side in the Cold War was prepared to resolve their rivalry by an all-out war which would inevitably use thermo-nuclear weaponry. For a recent examination of British defence policy concentrating on the development and implications of deterrence see Martin S. Navias, *Nuclear Weapons and British Strategic Planning, 1955-58*. Navias concentrates on the Sandys' White Paper of 1957 and its ancestry, although he does not seem to bring into account the changes which the British Government perceived in Soviet foreign policy between 1952 and 1956. In order to make thermonuclear deterrence the corner stone of defence policy it would seem essential to be sure that the enemy was indeed liable to be deterred. It was only in 1955 that the British became convinced that the Soviet leadership believed global nuclear war to be a grotesque futility.

An agreement on German unification remained the single most important issue for the British in "parleying" with the Soviets until the September of 1955.¹⁰ On this issue the British government seems to have been quite sincere in its laboured attempts to come up with some answer to the conundrum. Furthermore it was an issue which they were to put before disarmament as the prerequisite to any solid progress on a wider East West agreement. Indeed despite Macmillan's conception of the summit as a generalised discussion preliminary to further specific talks, rather than a Yaltaesque end in itself, the British were to put together very detailed proposals on German unification. It was only because of American opposition that Britain's specific plans were not actually tabled. During the pre-conference discussions with the Americans it was to become apparent that the American view was not synonymous with that of the British.

Geneva came as the happy confluence of developments in a number of countries. On the American side, for somewhat similar reasons as the British, the situation increasingly seemed to favour the calling of a summit. In Eisenhower's words.,

Some two years [from the death of Stalin] went by with no positive results in developing a promising basis for high-level negotiation in spite of some new and, we thought, reasonable proposals concerning disarmament and atoms-for-peace. Then, in early spring, 1955, there seemed to arise a new wave of interest. The Western European Union was now a fact. More and more in Europe and the United States influential voices joined in the chorus...¹¹

According to Eisenhower's biographer the crucial factor was the startling change in the Soviet attitude to a number of international problems and in particular Austria.¹² On 23rd November, 1954, Eisenhower had stated that he was prepared to enter into summit talks with the Soviets once they had demonstrated their good faith in the shape of an Austrian treaty agreeable to the West.¹³ After this came to pass in the May of 1955 the way to Geneva inevitably opened up.

In all of this the western powers played an essentially reactive part. The greatest dynamic force in international politics in 1955 was the Soviet Union. It was after all they who met the "tests" as set out by the Americans and British. All of which lead to the question, what where the Soviets trying to achieve?

10 See below on the actual substance of the Geneva negotiations. In his 26th March, 1955, Note to the Cabinet (see beginning of Chapter Three), Eden made the following observation on the chances of an agreement on disarmament,

Dis-armament and the Hydrogen Bomb - The prospect of any agreement is so remote that discussion on these lines would be better avoided for the time being. But since these issues are so fundamental to the relaxation of tension, we should hope, by achieving settlements on other and narrower issues to prepare the ground for a subsequent accommodation.

The last sentence is very much a key note in Eden's diplomacy, see *Full Circle* p. 9.

11 *Mandate for Change*, p. 505.

12 *Eisenhower, The President*, pp. 247-249.

13 *ibid.*, p. 246.

THE FOREIGN OFFICE EXPLANATION

After the Soviet disarmament proposals of the 10th May the way to a Summit meeting appeared clear to the British.¹⁴ Once the inevitable diplomatic "footsie" over dates and places was over the Soviets sent their final note of 13th June concurring in the calling of the summit on the 18th July in Geneva.¹⁵ In this note the Soviets made it quite clear what they considered Geneva to be all about,

In the present circumstances the efforts of the governments of all the four participating Powers in the conference must be directed above all to ensure the achievement of the basic task of the meeting - the relaxation of tension in international affairs.

The first round of extensive bilateral discussions between the British and Americans regarding their policy at the summit had already begun on the 2nd June.¹⁶ At this meeting, according to Sir Rodger Makins' report, the British submitted a Foreign Office paper which outlined their attitude towards Geneva. The Western aims were set out on very much the same lines as Eden's note to the Cabinet of 26th March. As the West was considered to be at a high point of strength and unity which might not last, the time was right, according to the paper, for negotiations with the Soviets. Disarmament, rather than German reunification, was given centre stage as the summit's most important task.¹⁷ Although the Foreign Office did stress the importance of making a serious attempt to solve the German problem, lest the West Germans become disillusioned and prey to Soviet blandishments.¹⁸ The Americans, Makins reported, were in agreement with most of the above Foreign Office assessment. However matters were not to rest on this convenient point. In particular, Eden quickly came to the conclusion that the key issue of the conference ought to be

¹⁴ These proposals were regarded with considerably less enthusiasm by the Americans. This Dulles explained as a consequence of differences between the American and the British and French views on disarmament. *FRUS* 1955-57, Vol. V, p. 182; Memo of discussion at 249th Meeting of the National Security Council, 19th May, 1955.

¹⁵ PREM 11/894, Telegram No. 573, 13th June 1955, from Hayter, Moscow to F. O.

¹⁶ PREM 11/894, Telegram, 2nd June 1955, from Makins, Washington to F. O.

¹⁷ PREM 11/894, Telegram, 2nd June 1955, from Makins to F. O.,

The entry into force of the Paris Agreements has created a new situation in that Western strength and cohesion relative to the Soviet Union has reached a point unlikely to be exceeded in the foreseeable future. Indeed, the further development of thermo-nuclear weapons, perhaps resulting in "saturation", could conceivably alter the position in a few years to our disadvantage. Having at the moment a comparatively firm position, we are interested in making firm progress towards a really effective disarmament plan ... In addition we seek the reunification of Germany on acceptable terms ...

In a letter of the 13th June, 1955, Dulles was to make a similar point about the impact of Western solidarity upon Soviet foreign policy to Adenauer. *FRUS* 1955-57, Vol. V, p. 79.

¹⁸ This follows almost exactly along the lines of Eden's analysis of the German situation in his note to the Cabinet of the 26th March. This is though hardly surprising, given that both were essentially the creation of the Foreign Office. See chapter two.

German reunification, there being very little hope that discussions over disarmament might lead to any success.

More interesting for the purpose of this study was the Foreign office's summation of why the Soviets had become converted to summit diplomacy.¹⁹ The paper set out the following "assumptions" on Soviet policy,

We assume that the long term Soviet aims have remained unchanged. The greater flexibility which Soviet policy has recently shown might be ascribed merely to a desire to prevent the execution of the Paris Agreements, which is now the major immediate objective of Soviet policy in Europe. On the other hand, this greater flexibility may have other causes. The Soviet Union is faced with internal and external difficulties. The internal struggle for power may be unresolved; we know that the Soviet economy is over-strained and unbalanced and the Soviet Government may be genuinely concerned at the added burden laid on the economy by the exorbitant cost of modern weapons. The Russians may also find the Chinese hard to handle. In addition while the Soviet leaders may seek a relaxation of international tension mainly with a view to getting the West to drop its guard, it is probable that they are also genuinely alarmed about thermo-nuclear war. But, since the Soviet government still assume that Communism will eventually win the world, they believe that time is on their side and wish, at the moment, to buy time.

Apart from the suspicion of Soviet motives, in particular the old chestnut which had been used against Churchill that the Soviets would merely use summitry as one more weapon in the cold war, the above is an interesting indicator as to the British position on thermo-nuclear deterrence. The view on Soviet attitudes towards global war were very much the same as those expressed in 1952.²⁰ The Foreign Office concluded that as Soviet ideology remained inflexible on the issue of its inexorable march to global triumph, there could be no fundamental change in its policy. The Soviet interest was in delaying the inevitable hour until a more propitious time of western weakness. This was a view which the Moscow Embassy itself and crucially Macmillan were increasingly calling into question.²¹ It was also an orthodoxy which as a result of their experiences at Geneva the British Government was to discard with very far reaching implications for future policy.

The Moscow Embassy had already contributed a report on the 1st June outlining its view of developments in Soviet policy for the coming summit.²² This report should be seen as a harbinger and consequently deserves close attention. After remarking on

¹⁹ It is little wonder that the American and British officials in Washington should have been in concord as American intelligence estimations of Soviet policy were more or less the same as that set out by Makins' paper. See *FRUS* 1955-57, Vol. V, p. 247; Memo from Director of Central Intelligence to the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council, 1st July, 1955.

²⁰ See chapter two above on the Foreign Office's interpretation of late Stalinism attitude to "frightful collisions".

²¹ For Example Hayter's comments on the Tripartite Working Party's conclusions on the issue of the Conference's opening statements, PREM 11/894, Telegram No. 576, June 15th 1955; from Hayter, Moscow to F. O.

²² PREM 11/1015, Despatch, June 1st 1955; Hayter, Moscow to Macmillan.

the change which the "Khrushchev-Bulganin era" had brought to Soviet foreign policy - matching Malenkov's peaceful words, but quite surpassing him in putting them into action - Hayter emphasised the novelty of what was happening,

[T]he Russians have now met all these "tests", almost it seems of set purpose to demonstrate their willingness to negotiate (though of course action they have taken in each case can be justified on the grounds of Soviet interests). Austria is settled... Disarmament proposals have been made which, whatever we may think of them, are at least a major advance on previous Soviet positions and look plausible... they have accepted without any skulking and even with surprising meekness (very unlike their argumentative recalcitrance in the period preceding last years Berlin Conference) the general outline of our proposals for a Four-Power meeting. There is another remarkable change in their general attitude. Even during the Malenkov period the Soviet Government never admitted that neutrals could exist... All this has changed. Not only are existing neutrals recognised as such, but new ones are anxiously created.

Despite what Hayter referred to as Soviet "doublethink, or even treble-think" in maintaining that their policy had not in fact changed, it was indisputable that there had been a fundamental shift. Not that this meant that the Soviets had relinquished their designs for World Socialism, but that,

The truth is perhaps that there has been a change in the methods of reaching that objective, a change brought about by a more realistic appreciation of the world situation. The Communist leaders, viewing the world as it is and not as it was distorted by Stalin's senile megalomania, must realise that methods of menace and violence will not now succeed. Not only has the West managed to consolidate and strengthen itself, but the level and still more the character of modern armaments are such that forcible action has no future, the Soviet Government never probably contemplated initiating forcible action. But they could regard it with a certain equanimity which has now gone. In these circumstances they must obviously re-think their whole political strategy. We can only guess where this re-thinking will have lead them, since unlike the leaders of free countries they are not obliged to announce and justify their policies to the public.

Hayter continued despite the last sentence above to lay out his prognosis of Soviet policy. He ended by emphasising that though Soviet tactics might have changed the fundamental purpose was the same. A conclusion which was summed up in the following vaguely condescending way,

They are intelligent enough to want international peace and to realise that a price must be paid for it. But fundamentally they remain convinced communists and believers in the necessity for world communism.

Following on from this in a telegram of the 13th June, 1955, Hayter reported on a conversation which the American Ambassador, Charles Bohlen had had with Marshal Zhukov and, in particular, on an article that Zhukov had contributed to *Pravda* on the 8th May.²³ Both of these dealt with the issue of thermonuclear war. In his article, the Embassy reported. Zhukov had made the following startling assertion,

It is surprising how the leading experts, and especially those of Britain, can adopt such an irresponsible attitude to the problem of atomic and hydrogen warfare. We military men realise more clearly than anyone else the utterly devastating nature of such a war. One need but imagine what would happen.
[Foreign Office underlining]

Hayter also pointed out that some of Zhukov's *Pravda* comment had actually been suppressed, he thought that it was probable Zhukov had gone on to make even more explicit the true horror of thermonuclear war. Zhukov's conversation with Bohlen supported what he had said in his article. H. A. F. Hohler, wrote an acute minute of 16th June in which he posed questions leading on from the Embassy's report of Zhukov's written and spoken opinions.²⁴ After discussing the political leadership's possible position on the matter, Hohler came to the following conclusions,

I am, therefore, inclined to feel that, although the Party leaders may not know quite as much about fall-out as Zhukov, they have a pretty shrewd idea of what nuclear war would involve. But they may not wish to say so publicly since:- (i) they fear the effect of the truth on Soviet morale, especially given the fatalistic streak in the Russian character; (ii) The theory that another war would mean the end of civilisation makes nonsense of the dialectic. It is difficult for them publicly to subscribe to a doctrine which would undermine the foundations of Marxist-Leninism.

Hohler ended his minute tentatively,

All this is of course very speculative. I think we have been right to emphasise the diplomatic and tactical advantages which the Russians see in reducing tension at present. These are, briefly, that it will cause the West to drop its guard and may contribute to the non-execution of the Paris-Agreements and the eventual withdrawal of United States forces from Europe. On the other hand, I also agree with Sir William Hayter that this policy stems also from a "truer appreciation of the nature of modern war".²⁵

23 FO 371 116742 NS 1242/15G, Telegram No 569, 13th June 1955; from Hayter Moscow to CANUTE. The G. suffix denotes a green guard file used for matters top secret.

24 FO 371 116742 NS 1242/15G, Minute of 16th June 1955 by H. A. F. Hohler.

25 *ibid.*, Hohler's reasoning went as follows.

Among the questions which Marshal Zhukov's statement poses are:- (a) *Is there a division of opinion between him and the Party leaders about the implications of nuclear war.* On the face of it there would appear to be. Malenkov said a year ago that a new world war would mean the end of civilisation. Zhukov's remarks suggest that he may think the same. But this view has become unfashionable, even heretical of late and Molotov and the others have been striking the note that another war would rather mean the downfall of capitalism. However:- (i)

It was becoming apparent to the Northern Department, as well as the Moscow Embassy, that a process of reappraisal was underway in Soviet foreign policy. Their reaction to the destructive capacity which science had recently unleashed was influencing a fundamental change in their attitude towards the cold war. It was no longer sufficient to explain Soviet policy merely by reference to the increasing strength of Western organisation or weaknesses in Soviet economy and society. Hohler in his minute pin-pointed the contradictions which Khrushchev was finally to grapple with head on, regardless of "Russian fatalism", at the 20th party Congress in the February of 1956. In June 1955 the conclusions which Hayter and Hohler expressed were still couched in cautious terms, which is in itself indicative of the radical nature of the change which they were commenting upon. The Soviets were themselves quite blunt about their hopes for the summit. The British conviction that the Soviets had at last accepted the awful equation that war equalled mutual devastation was to be further reinforced by the proceedings at Geneva.

THE BRITISH PREPARE FOR THE SUMMIT

In true cabinet tradition a committee had been set up consisting of the principal members of the government to deal with planning and preparation for Geneva. It held its first meeting on the 13th June, 1955, in the Prime Minister's room in the House of Commons and was called rather appropriately CANUTE. Whether this was intentional irony is not clear, the name did though prove singularly prescient. However there is very little information available on its actual proceedings.²⁶ The reverse is true of the planning papers which it spawned. Preparations for Geneva had begun in earnest.

Eden was himself quite clear what was of crucial importance to the summit's work. He made his opinions known to Macmillan melodramatically in comments on the jointly agreed recommendations for the content of Eden's, Eisenhower's and Faure's opening addresses to the conference. The recommendations were relayed from

Khrushchev, Bulganin and Molotov have all been identified with the current, more flexible, Soviet policies; (ii) The Yugoslavs got the impression at Belgrade, presumably from Khrushchev, Bulganin or Mikoyan, that the Russians might be prepared to compromise on disarmament (para. 6 of Belgrade Telegram No. 421); (iii) Mr. Malik, who is a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, suggested in a recent conversation with the Permanent Under Secretary that he too subscribed to the bourgeois theory that war might spell the doom of civilisation.

²⁶ In the PREM 11 files on the Geneva Summit meeting, most of the minutes of the proceedings of CANUTE have been destroyed, saving the last one. This was usual policy for copies of cabinet papers filed in non-cabinet files and it is a little strange that one should have escaped the attentions of the weeders. However in the Cabinet papers, where the originals should be lodged, I have not been able to locate the minutes either. It seems therefore reasonable to presume that they have not yet been opened to public inspection. There is in the PREM 11 files an apparently almost complete record of the telegrams, reports, notes and memorandum sent to and created by and for CANUTE. Also there are the telegrams and memos written individually by Eden and Macmillan. These contribute to two very sizeable files indeed. From this information the above picture of British policy has been reconstructed.

the Tripartite Working Group, which had been set up in Washington early in June, by Embassy telegram of the 11th of that month.²⁷ The Americans wanted to speak on the satellites and international communism; the French wanted to speak on Germany and European security. Eden was then left with disarmament and the H-bomb. At this point it becomes apparent that Eden and his Foreign Secretary did not necessarily see eye to eye. In a minute of June 14th on these proposals Macmillan expressed the opinion that as there was little constructive to be said on any of the issues the French and Americans had taken, "It seems to me that you will have the best of it". The Foreign Secretary was apparently quite happy with the way in which western preparations for the Summit were shaping up.²⁸ However, on Macmillan's minute Eden responded in his inimitable red ink scribbles that Germany and European security, rather than disarmament, were in fact the heart of the matter. These were the issues on which the conference should be concentrating and upon which he should not be excluded from expressing an opinion. True to his fabled ballerina temperament he continued,

This is just nonsense we are not staging a play I must be free to say what I like. I have already said this once. Apparently one has to say everything 2 or 3 times about this conference. A. E. June 15 [Eden's punctuation].²⁹

Sir William Hayter also had reservations about the attitude the Tripartite planners in Washington seemed to be taking towards the Russians. In a telegram of 15th June he expressed the hope that the opening statements would not, given the recent indications of change in Soviet policy, lead merely to rehashing past recriminations as he feared the Washington telegram of 11th June seemed to auger.³⁰ He did not think

27 PREM 11/894, Telegram No. 1370, 11th June 1955, from Makins, Washington, to F. O. The British were to deal with the following,

(a) the build up of Russian and (sic) military forces in the cold war; (b) the collective defence arrangements of the West; (c) the burden of armaments and the danger of the H-bomb; (d) general disarmament; (e) opportunities for the development of world resources.

There is an American record of these discussions at *FRUS* 1955-57, Vol. V, pp. 119-360.

28 PREM 11/894, June 14th 1955, Minute to Prime Minister from Foreign Secretary. This is also an interesting indication of where Macmillan's thinking was to lead. In this minute he quite clearly saw the issue of armaments, and particularly nuclear weapons, as the most important the summit would have to deal with. He treats Germany in rather a dismissive way. Eden's actual address (see below) was to start after all with a striking depiction of the thermo-nuclear "stand off" in which both east and west found themselves. Makins' telegram of June 11th, No. 1370, had ended on the forlorn hope that, "I should be grateful if you would let me know as soon as possible if this is likely to be agreeable to the Prime Minister".

29 In a more measured style Eden worked these words into his memoirs thus, *Full Circle*, p. 291,

The more detailed preparations were made at the official level in Washington. I thought that these were committing us to too detailed a programme, dividing up the topics which each Head of Government should raise. I did not think we should be staging a play, but ought to allow each other plenty of room for manoeuvre to make use of such indications as there were of changes in Soviet foreign policy.

30 PREM 11/894, Telegram No. 576, June 15th 1955: from Hayter, Moscow to F. O.

that the west should "talk to Bulganin as if he were Stalin".³¹ The view taken by the some in the Foreign Office seemed to be closer to that of Eden than Macmillan.

From this point onwards, in line with Eden's opinion, British planning for the conference was largely taken up with the question of German unity and in particular the "Eden Plan", rather than disarmament. It was felt that this issue might provide the common ground necessary for the development of a broader settlement.³² Indeed in a Foreign Office brief submitted by the Foreign Secretary to the CANUTE committee on the 29th June disarmament was dismissively treated thus,

While it has been agreed that disarmament should be one of the subjects to be discussed at the 4-Power Talks, we do not consider that it should be discussed in any detail, as it is a highly technical problem and not suitable for detailed consideration at this level.³³

Although the brief went on to make clear that the West should be prepared to deal with any Soviet suggestions which might arise, there was to be no Eden Plan for disarmament.³⁴ It would seem that Macmillan was quickly brought round to Eden's approach.

From as early as Eden's first mooted of a summit meeting to the Cabinet in March the issue of German unity had been at the forefront of his thinking. The realisation that a serious attempt would have to be made to get a solution agreeable to east and west, at least to keep German public opinion quiet, was reinforced by Soviet attempts to ingratiate themselves with Adenauer.³⁵ On June 7th the Soviet Government sent a note to Bonn proposing the opening up of formal diplomatic relations with West Germany.³⁶ Macmillan arrived for his quadripartite talks in New

31 This was a phrase which was to enter Eden's memoirs unacknowledged, *Full Circle*, p. 291,

32 See *Full Circle*, pp. 292-294 and *Tides of Fortune*, p. 605.

33 PREM 11/894, F. O. Brief, June 29th, 1955. During the first meeting of CANUTE Macmillan had been asked to provide the brief for the benefit of the committee. This information is imparted by a covering note on the brief by A. E. Burroughs of the Foreign Office.

34 *ibid.*, On the issue of abolition of nuclear weapons the brief summed up the international status quo as follows,

The U.S.S.R. has also accepted an Anglo-French proposal that [nuclear weapons] should be totally prohibited after 75% of the reductions in conventional forces have been completed, and that the conversion of all nuclear stocks to peaceful uses should begin at this point. This proposal was a compromise between the previous Western view that the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons should come after 100% of the conventional reduction had accrued and the Soviet view that it should come at the 50% point. Once again the United States and the Canadians have not yet accepted it for themselves.

Macmillan's thinking was to take a new and rather more controversial line on the issue of the abolition of nuclear weapons after the Summit was over.

35 The Soviets had begun their extension of feelers towards Bonn as far back as 1954, according to Dallin, see *Soviet Foreign Policy After Stalin*, pp. 261-63.

36 For the full text of this note see H. Hanak, *Soviet Foreign Policy since the Death of Stalin*, pp. 57-60.

York on 16th June with a brief including the following telegrams from the British Embassies in Bonn and Moscow on this new Kremlin gambit.³⁷

Hayter was quite clear as to what the Soviets hoped to do, although he did not think that it implied that they were about to abandon East Germany; unless they could find some settlement more to their advantage. He expressed surprise that the Soviet move, inevitable though it was, should have come so quickly, only a few months previously Adenauer had always been referred to as a "revanchist". It was another example of "crude and hasty Khrushchev diplomacy" which, in his opinion, would be best treated coolly.

The conclusions seem to be that: (a) The Russians are in a hurry. They fear that unless they intervene rapidly the German situation will crystallise in a sense unfavourable to them. (b) But they think that the German longing for reunion is so strong that they can get the West Germans onto a slippery slope, ending in a form of reunion that will suit Soviet aims. As seen from here, Adenauer's position seems quite a strong one, and it hardly seems as if he need fall in with the Soviet desire for speed.

Sir F. Hoyer Miller, the Ambassador to West Germany, was even more sanguine as to the positive side of the Soviet move. He considered that the opening of diplomatic links might even have the salutary effect of opening German eyes fully to the fact that it was Soviet intransigence which stood in the way of reunification. Adenauer had made it clear that, given the pressure of public opinion, there was no doubt that he would have to agree to the Soviet suggestion. Although he was quite prepared to take both time and full consultations with his allies over the issue. Adenauer was in fact to travel to America and raise the issue with the western powers in New York before the Geneva summit.

Hoyer Miller ended with a point which Hayter had also touched upon regarding the substance of what the Soviet note had said or at least implied,

Incidentally, one good thing about the Russian note from our point of view is the way in which it tacitly suggests the possibility of there being two Germanys having to co-exist together for an indefinite period. This may be the best solution if no progress can be made with the Russians over reunification at the coming conferences, but in view of the German dislike of the idea it is all to the good that it should have been the Russians, and not ourselves, who should have taken the initiative in thus ventilating the matter.³⁸

37 PREM 11/894. Moscow Telegram No. 555, June 8th; from Hayter to F. O. and Bonn Telegram No. 350, June 10th; from Hoyer Miller to F. O.

38 Hayter's Telegram No. 555 of June 8th made the following comment,

[I] think it is too early to conclude that the Soviet Government are ready to throw over the DDR. It looks as if they have two alternative policies in mind, between which they will choose according to Adenauer's reaction. They will try to establish simultaneous relations with both German Governments. At the same time they will work for the entry of the DDR en

This was perceptive.³⁹ Geneva was to be a watershed in the cold war in more than just one way. In the context of western policy from the late forties onwards, and in particular British policy, it was something of a culmination. With the armament of West Germany and its embedding in the structure of NATO the defence of Western Europe seemed secured.⁴⁰ In the aftermath of the July meeting, if not indeed before, it was apparent that Europe had achieved something near to equilibrium, in the absence of a formal settlement.⁴¹

However, contrary to Eden's protestations about the need to maintain freedom of manoeuvre, the British proposals on Germany as they developed in late June and early July were complicated and involved considerable detail.⁴² Eden was adamant that the West should have something to offer of greater substance than merely a rehash of the 1954 Eden Plan that had been proposed at the Berlin meeting of Foreign Ministers of that year.⁴³ This had been concerned merely with constitutional provisions for free elections, there was at that point no attempt to cater for the wider security needs of east and west.⁴⁴ The situation in which diplomacy was to operate appeared to the British to be decidedly different from that of January 1954, when the Soviets had refused flatly to give anything on Austria or Germany. The confrontation then fitted into the pattern that had become familiar under Ernest Bevin. Now with Austria settled and the Soviets exhibiting much greater flexibility, Eden was not prepared to stay pat on the old battle lines.

It would be invidious, not to say a little tedious, to go through the development of what was to become the second Eden Plan step by step. Particularly as it was to prove fruitless. However a brief outline and more importantly explanation of the rationale

bloc into an ostensibly united Germany, and only if this fails will they fall back on the solution of indefinite prolongation of relations with both Germanys.

39 See *Full Circle*, p. 292. This view had been expressed by Bohlen to the State Department in his assessment of the significance of the Austrian Treaty, *Witness to History*, pp. 375-376.

I also pointed out that if the Soviet Union went ahead with the Warsaw Pact and armed Germany as part of the organisation, this would be a clear indication that the Soviet Union, for the foreseeable future, was accepting the division of Germany as a definite fact and was not contemplating a radical revision in its German policy.

40 See above on Eden's foreign policy from 1951-55, and particularly Young, "German Rearmament and the European Defence Community"; on Bevin's foreign policy up to 1951 see A. Bullock, *Ernest Bevin*.

41 Macmillan made the following comment on the discussions in America, *Riding the Storm*, p. 606,

Behind this apparent concentration upon the problems of Western Europe lay more urgent and in many ways alarming dangers in the Middle and Far East. As the weeks proceeded, it became more and more apparent that these anxieties were more real than those in Western Europe, where at least a form of political and military stability had been reached.

42 This was the cause of complaint from Dulles early in July, see below.

43 On this issue Eden's red scribbles on a telegram from Dixon in San Francisco of 23rd June, reporting Molotov's remarks to Pinay on Germany, were to be expanded to eminently more legible print in *Full Circle* p. 293. PREM 11/894, Telegram No. 58, 23rd June, 1955; from Sir Pierson Dixon, San Francisco to F. O.

44 On the Berlin conference and the first "Eden Plan" see *Full Circle*, pp. 53-76 and also *Descent to Suez*, pp. 127-132.

that lay behind it is necessary to understand the British position when they actually arrived at Geneva and what they hoped that it might achieve. Basically the plan centred around proposals for the disengagement of the two sides in Europe and the creation of what would effectively be a demilitarised zone. This did not mean that British troops would be withdrawn from Germany, but it was hoped that force limitations might subsequently be laid down in particularly sensitive areas of the continent, with verification provisions for East and West. In effect both sides would be forced to concede territory to a neutralised *glacis* in the heart of Europe. Thus the Soviet Union and NATO would be provided with some concrete guarantee of security. The final phase of the second Eden Plan consisted of a European security system which was to be elaborated involving Soviet and NATO forces, again the key words being "joint control".⁴⁵

The Germans had also chipped in their piece with a suggestion for a plan earlier in June, which although similar to the British in that it involved demilitarised strips, did not contain elaborate provisions for an overarching European Security system. This was however quickly dismissed.⁴⁶ It was the Eden plan which was to form the basis of discussions over the Western position in the lead up to the Summit. Yet there was more hanging on Eden's proposals than just the unity of Germany. As far as Eden and the CANUTE committee were concerned it was the essential first step towards a complete settlement of the cold war and this more than anything else explains why the British were prepared to devote so much time to it.

Indeed at this point the CANUTE committee seems to have been bullish in their hopes that the Soviets might be willing to do some kind of a wider deal, or at least this was the line which they took with their allies. The Americans and in particular Dulles were less enthusiastic. Dulles was worried that by making too specific proposals, such as the Eden Plan, the west might deliver itself a hostage of Soviet machination. His view is treated in greater detail below. However the British Government's attempts to persuade him of the ripeness of the moment for their plan give a valuable insight into exactly what they were trying to achieve by it.

CANUTE telegraphed Washington on 8th July, 1955, in an attempt to calm the State Department's edginess regarding the Plan.⁴⁷ The view of the Turkish

⁴⁵ Eden gives in his memoirs a quite lucid summary of the plan and his intentions, *Full Circle*, pp. 292-294. There is a substantial body of planning papers, Chiefs of Staff reports, memos and some very attractive maps outlining proposed "strips" contained at the beginning of the PREM 11/895 file. Much of the planners time was taken up with debating the advantage Western Powers might gain by various different geographical definitions of the neutralised zone.

⁴⁶ As ever Eden's memoirs tend to pass a silky gloss over events, see *Full Circle*, p. 293. The CANUTE committee gave a less charitable treatment in the following telegram to Washington, "I note that the Americans now agree with us that the Adenauer plan is not a starter. This is all to the good and we can now expunge the Adenauer plan as such from our minds".

⁴⁷ PREM 11/895, Telegram No. 3183, 8th July, 1955, CANUTE to Washington Embassy. The telegram, presumably the hand of Macmillan, said that the remarks had been made by the Turkish Ambassador to Macmillan while both were in Strasbourg.

ambassador in Paris was quoted with approval. The Ambassador, with forty-one years in the Turkish foreign service had said,

[T]he Russians might now really wish to reach an accommodation, at least for a period of years, with the West. If the Russians had only been intent on a propaganda exercise, he would have had no concern. But that did not look to him to be the case. There was only one remedy in his opinion. The West should not pitch their demands too low... They should ask for something it would really hurt the Soviets to concede.

CANUTE went on to express the following, which was described as "also the Prime Minister's strong personal view",

Our favourable posture justifies us in displaying boldness and imagination at Geneva; and I see no reason to be paralysed by fears and indecision. Please try to fortify Mr. Dulles and the State Department, and persuade them that there is every ground for self-confidence.

It was on the Eden Plan that the British government wished to test the Soviets as to how far they were prepared to go in ending the cold war. Indeed the whole purpose of it was to seize the initiative in offering what Eisenhower was to describe - in relation to his open skies proposal - as a window of opportunity. Behind the rather florid and evanescent optimism of these telegrams clearly lies the thought of Eden. Although there may have been a degree of playing up for the sake of American doubters, the CANUTE committee's telegrams to Washington give an emphatically hopeful view of what might be achieved. In his desire to open up the East West dialogue into a grand settlement of differences Eden resembles nothing in all the diplomatic world so much as Churchill. Here, more than in his original acceptance in March, 1955, that a summit was now desirable, he might truly be said to have changed his attitude with his ministerial office. However, for this purpose the Eden Plan had to be plausible as well as bold.

In a further telegram from CANUTE to the Washington Embassy on 8th July the committee emphasised the consideration that the Eden Plan gave to "reasonable" Soviet security interests.⁴⁸ They defended the plan in the following terms against its negative American reception.

(a) For the first time we are negotiating from a position of some strength; and the Russians have an interest in seeking an agreement. Consequently we need not concern ourselves unduly ... whether any particular proposals will be acceptable to the Russians in the first round. (b) I agree, however, that we should take account of Western public opinion. we must seize and keep the initiative by putting forward proposals which are not unfair and which give the Russians reasonable security against any threat arising from a free, unified Germany. (c) Our proposal for a demilitarised strip does not purport of itself to afford the Russians security. It is part of a package deal designed to do so

⁴⁸ PREM 11,895, Telegram No. 3182, July 8th, 1955, from CANUTE to Washington Embassy.

(viz. demilitarized strip plus Security pact plus agreement on ceiling of forces in the sensitive areas).

The Eden Plan was specifically conceived as a proposal which would at once give the Soviets "reasonable security" and provide a crucial test of their future intentions. If the bait were bitten the way would be opened to a general settlement which would go much further than merely German unity. Here Eden, and for that matter the British Government, thought he was matching the boldness of his diplomatic initiative with the size of both the opportunity and the prize which were at stake. If he had been right Eden would have proved post 1945 peacemaker par excellence. However the Eden plan erroneously presupposed that the Soviets were prepared to be "reasonable" over Germany and that they considered the cold war to serve no further useful purpose. It is indicative of just how novel Soviet policy had so far been that it seemed plausible to the British Government that change might yet reach to the very heart of East/West rivalry. The Soviets had already come a very long way from the sterility of late Stalinism and even Malenkovism. However, after Geneva it was quickly to become apparent that though Bulganin and Khrushchev were prepared to come to a tacit agreement over the division of Germany, they yet saw an active future for the Cold War.

Nonetheless Eden cannot be accused of a lack of good will. In conception his proposals were every bit as imaginative as Eisenhower's at Geneva. They both seem to have been fired by a perception that there was a real possibility the cold war might have been grinding to a close. The following words from Eden's memoirs might, almost, have referred to Eisenhower's plan.

The Russians were suspicious of control. This was part of their national character and not just to be ascribed to communism. I felt that if a system of international control could be established, even on a limited scale, the dragon might be found to be not so very dangerous after all.⁴⁹

The essential difference with American policy was in their understanding of where the key to ending the cold war lay. For the British it was in building confidence by the implementation of a plan for Germany that was beneficial and agreeable to both sides. Eisenhower's bold suggestion for aerial inspection identified disarmament verification as the central issue. Both, as it wearily transpired, were wrong.

ANGLO-AMERICAN DIFFERENCES

The process of bilateral consultations in Washington throws an interesting light upon differences in the American and British approaches to the Soviet Union. The British

⁴⁹ *Full Circle*, p. 293. Eden's account of the Geneva preparations in his memoirs, although it tends to gloss a little too assiduously, is not basically inaccurate. Given that he chose to write so shortly after the events he was describing a making smooth of the rough places was no doubt inevitable.

exhibited a more accommodating attitude, although even so they were still awaiting considerable concessions from the Soviets. However, the United States was anxious that in the process of negotiation matters of principle concerning the "freedom of Eastern Europe" might be conceded. Dulles was, basically, not prepared to stop short of a complete Soviet withdrawal from its satellites. Indeed, in early May when enthusiasm for a Summit was picking up in Britain and France, Dulles had expressed considerable reservations about the reliability of America's allies in the continuing battle against Communism.⁵⁰

Initially the State Department were in agreement with the basic outline for the conference that had been put forward by the British.⁵¹ Indeed in the discussions at Embassy level little divergence of opinion seems to have been registered between the two sides. Where perhaps there was divergence of opinion was over how inter-related these issues were; whether or not it might be possible to progress on disarmament without any advance over Germany. This was really the only indication, as far as I have found, that the Americans might have been prepared to try some bold individual initiative as they were less inclined to think in terms of an all inclusive package. Ironically, given their distaste for negotiation with the Soviet Union, the most striking proposal of the conference was Eisenhower's Open Skies plan of the 21st July. However, there was no consultation with the British on the issue in the lead up to the Summit. This it seems was most likely because the State Department had nothing to do with the idea and in the case of Dulles was positively lukewarm in attitude towards it.⁵² The group of ex-officio "experts" who made the suggestion to Eisenhower were under the aegis of one of his historically shady ideas men, Nelson A. Rockefeller.⁵³

50 *FRUS* 1955-1957, Vol. V, p. 174, Telegram from the Secretary of State to Department of State, 9th May, 1955. Dulles complained of the lack of substance behind European hopes although he did speak with approval of Macmillan's suggestion that the Summit should be seen as the start of a process of detailed negotiation, rather than an end in itself. In a conversation of 15th June, 1955, with Adenauer in Washington. Dulles went so far as to express his worries over the British and French attitude towards Geneva, *FRUS* 1955-1957, Vol. V, p. 229.

51 PREM 11/894, Telegram, 14th June 1955; Makins, Washington to CANUTE.

American thinking was close to our own. They saw the meeting as developing in three stages: A. Frank opening statement by each Head of Government on the international situation... There should not be undue recrimination, but also there should be no pulling of punches. B. Western exploration of Soviet motives and the chances of making an improvement in the situation.... C. Identification of problems at issue and discussion of methods for pursuing them.

52 See W. W. Rostow, *Open Skies, Eisenhower's Proposal of July 21, 1955* for an insight into American unofficial planning for the summit.

53 Rockefeller was a member of the Operations Co-ordinating Board, which was chaired by H. Hoover Jr., and he was also himself the chairman of "a special sub-committee designed 'to exploit Sino-Soviet vulnerabilities'". Rostow, *Open Skies*, p. 26. His appointment as presidential aide lasted from 1954-57. His end was sealed by the enmity of Dulles, amongst others, *Open Skies*, p. 67. Rockefeller had in preparation for Geneva appointed a number of experts, from academia as much as government, to examine the "psychological" dimension of the cold war. According to W. W. Rostow who chaired the group, known rather colourfully as the "Quantico Panel", there was indeed a degree of rivalry between Rockefeller and the Secretary of State. Rostow claims it was the panel which worked out the possibility of disarmament verification through aerial supervision. He gives substantial documentary detail in his short book on the subject. Furthermore he records its principle

It was with, and indeed at, the State Department that the British, not unreasonably, conducted all their co-ordination meetings in early June, both bilaterally and in tripartite consultation with the French. And it was with Dulles that Macmillan met at the United Nations in America in mid to late June. It is therefore not surprising that nothing was said by the State Department to the British about what was to become Eisenhower's publicity coup, as the State Department was not involved.⁵⁴ From Rostow's account the President's conversation to Open Skies happened only at the eleventh hour.⁵⁵

Dulles had agreed with Macmillan's opinion that the summit should be about setting an agenda for future meetings, rather than an attempt to lay down any detailed proposals. Yet the reasons underlying their shared desire to avoid another Yalta were rather different. Dulles great fear was that if the west put forward clear plans for a settlement of any of the issues to be discussed the Soviets might then be able to use western commitments to their advantage.⁵⁶ He was also worried that any concrete settlement for Germany might be taken by the Soviets to imply that the west had finally accepted the Soviet position in Eastern Europe.⁵⁷ Bohlen expressed the following opinion,

I attended the Geneva Conference of 1955 simply because I was ambassador to the Soviet Union. I was not on intimate terms with any members of the administration, and in view of my association with Yalta, Dulles certainly did not want me in the foreground at Geneva. McCarthyism had finally abated,

members were influential at Geneva in eventually persuading the President to use their ideas in his Open Skies proposal. Given the concern of the "Panel" with psychological cold war it is tempting to dismiss Open Skies as little more than a cheap propaganda gimmick. There is a memo in the State Department records outlining the ideas floated by the "Panel" which includes freedom of aerial inspection, however it does not feature in any of Dulles' productions concerning policy at Geneva. See *FRUS* 1955-57, Vol. V, p. 216, Letter from Chairman of the Quantico Vulnerabilities Panel (Rostow) to the President's Special Assistant (Rockefeller), 10th June, 1955 and , for example, p. 239, Memo from Secretary of State to President, 18th June, 1955.

54 Eisenhower's account in *Mandate for change* pp. 503-531, puts Dulles in centre stage on the issue of pre-conference planning.

55 See also *Eisenhower the President*, p. 264.

56 *FRUS* 1955-1957, Vol. V., p.188, Memo of discussion at 249th Meeting of NSC, 19th May, 1955. From the start Dulles had grave reservations about the consequences of a Summit meeting,

Secretary Dulles brought the discussion to a close with the statement that one of the greatest dangers the United States would face at the forthcoming Conference was the danger that the Soviets would present projects and ideas designed to create the impression that the United States and the free world were willing to accept the current situation in the Soviet satellites. Under the circumstances it would be highly advantageous for the United States to take certain initiatives to prevent any such view gaining currency.

Rostow's account of the American preparations, which uses some interesting documentary detail, gives the impression that Dulles spent most of his time trying to deflect the President from making any detailed proposals of his own. *Open Skies*, pp. 34-56.

57 Eisenhower made this point to Eden in a letter. *FRUS* 1955-1957, Vol. V, p. 206. Letter from Eisenhower to Eden, 31st May, 1955.

but its effects lingered on. President Eisenhower even felt it necessary to assure the country publicly that he would make no secret deals.⁵⁸

Macmillan's hope was that through a gradual process of negotiation firm progress might be made towards an end to the cold war. According to Macmillan, the mistake made at Yalta had nothing to do with appeasement, but rather with trying to do much at the one time. Indeed during the meeting of the four foreign ministers at the United Nations in New York and San Francisco, Macmillan's soft talking was to contrast with Dulles' more direct approach.

According to Eisenhower's account it was Molotov who put up the barriers in the preliminary discussions before Geneva in June.⁵⁹ Macmillan also indicates that the going with Molotov was not entirely smooth, although remarkably agreeable given his reputation.⁶⁰ However, Dulles himself was hardly blameless in the matter. The difference between the Macmillan and Dulles approaches is clearly illustrated in the reports which were made to London of their one to one dealings with Molotov.

Macmillan talked to his Soviet counterpart on the 22nd June in San Francisco.⁶¹ Of this conversation Macmillan made the following comment to London,

I asked what subjects he thought should be brought up. He replied that there were broad possibilities but that "topics which were undesirable from the point of view of one side or the other should be avoided." This may mean the satellites. Each side should however raise the problems which worried it most. I said that the task of the Heads of Government would be to divide up these problems and perhaps to leave it to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs to try to make some progress in settling them. He agreed to this proposition.

Dulles, on the other hand went straight in with his cold war obsessions flying as he had promised he would to the National Security Council on the 19th May.⁶² Over luncheon with Molotov on the 23rd June he,

[S]aid that he might also like to raise the question of the East European satellites. He understood that the Soviet Government might not accept this as a topic for future international discussion, but it was, nevertheless, a subject which contributed to international tension. It also raised the question about proper execution of wartime agreements. Mr. Molotov replied that the Soviet position on this matter had been made sufficiently clear and he had no further

58 *Witness to History*, p. 381.

59 *Mandate for Change*, p. 508 Dulles comes across very clearly as Eisenhower's right hand man, an opinion also forwarded by Rostow.

60 *Riding the Storm*, pp. 605-611. He gives the following rather affectionate account of his impression of Molotov's character after the pre-Geneva talks were over.

In spite of his reputation for a hard, negative, brutal attitude, when one saw him alone there appeared an unexpected attractiveness and even softness. I felt that the Russians wanted a détente, that they were really frightened by the American bases in Europe, and that they would like to reduce the expenditure and effort on armaments.

61 PREM 11.894, Telegram No. 32, June 22nd, 1955, from Macmillan in San Francisco to F. O.

62 See footnote 55.

comment. Mr. Dulles said that he also wanted to raise international Communism. Mr. Molotov replied that this was not possible without getting into internal affairs. Mr. Dulles said that what he meant were questions like international propaganda which had nothing to do with internal affairs. Mr. Molotov said he ~~knew~~ nothing about this subject.⁶³

The contrast with Macmillan's circumlocution is instructive, Dulles had evidently been imbibing rather less deeply of the Geneva spirit. Molotov's restraint in dealing with Dulles' attack is in its self an indication of how much store the Soviet leadership were setting by the summit and it is Dulles who comes across quite clearly in the British record as the most reluctant participator in the pre-Geneva talks. This disparity with British enthusiasm was to come out even more strongly when the Eden Plan was laid before the Americans in detail in a note of the 4th July.

Dulles's initial reaction had seemed to Makins to be that he considered the British Plan gave far too much away in solid proposals, though he did not disagree with the basis of what was being suggested. Makins went on to report in his telegram of 6th July that,

There is a genuine fear here of getting committed or trapped at Geneva into courses of action on points of substance, the implications of which have not been fully thought out. I understand that this feeling was strongly reflected by the President at a meeting at the White House this afternoon.⁶⁴

By 8th July Dulles was offering his own "tentative redraft" of the British note,

It is not desirable that any cut and dried proposals should be tabled at Geneva. That should be left to the conference of Foreign Ministers. But the Western Heads of States should inform the Russians that they understand the Russian desire for security.

Dulles was hiding behind the Macmillan formulation that the summit should stick to vague agenda construction but for rather different reasons than Macmillan. It was in their attempts to persuade the State Department of the rightness of the British view that the telegrams of the 8th July quoted above were sent to Washington from the CANUTE committee. A degree of irritation was expressed to Makins by CANUTE, presumably in line with Eden's own view, scribbled on the Washington telegram of the

63 Molotov in riposte raised the issue of a six power conference on the Far East. Dulles wondered if the sixth power were the Nationalist Chinese. Molotov replied he meant India. This strictly confidential record of the proceedings was relayed to British officials through the State Department. PREM 11/894, Telegram No. 59, 23rd June, 1955, From San Francisco to F. O.

64 PREM 11/895, Telegram No. 1563, 6th July, 1955, from Washington Embassy to F. O. Makins commented acerbically on the American political system.

I am sure you realise too that another factor which is operating here is the extreme difficulty which an American Administration has in arriving at an agreed position on any important question. [to which scribbled by A. E., "we cannot really help that"]

6th.⁶⁵ By the 8th July CANUTE were still expressing their puzzlement as to what exactly Dulles' reservations about the British plan were. The British began to fear that State Department doubts and hedging would lose the west the initiative to the Soviets.

Dulles made clear to Makins in further conversations on the 9th July what he particularly objected to. Although dubious about proposals for demilitarised strips, at least until the American military had had time to examine them in detail, Dulles wanted the British to know that he was not against using the British proposals, provided, that was, they were to go into no specific detail at the summit meeting. On the issue of European Security however, there was no way that the United States would be prepared to join in with the other western allies in providing a security structure which guaranteed the Soviet position as it then stood.

For political reasons there was really no question in the foreseeable future of the United States entering into a commitment to come to the defence of the Soviet Union, especially if there was an implication that this might involve action against the peoples of Eastern Europe who wished to liberate themselves

Here was the crucial difference between the American and British views at Geneva. The British were prepared to accept that the Soviets' position in the satellite states had to be accorded some respect, provided that might lead to a settlement of the cold war. The Americans wanted to see very much more in the way of surrender from the Soviets before they would co-operate in an agreement, in essence a complete Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe. A Republican Party which had been elected three years *earlier* on a pledge to roll back Communism could hardly be expected to participate in its entrenchment in Eastern Europe. That would seem too much like a return to Truman's reviled policy of containment.

Over the forthcoming few days before the Summit the American insistence that there should be no giving away of specific details was to prevail. Such matters were to be referred to the Foreign Ministers' Conference the following November, which became something of a "sin-bin" for the summit. This was perhaps a little unfair considering that Eisenhower was to come out with the most explicit detail of the summit over Open Skies.

Macmillan put forward a Foreign Office appreciation of what the conference might yet achieve on the 13th July for a CANUTE meeting of the following day.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ See footnote 72. In a telegram of 8th July CANUTE expressed its frustration with the American tergiversations communicated by the Washington Embassy on the 6th thus,

[I]f the Americans still have misgivings about our wording of the formula they should define them and suggest an amended draft. We have not much time before us. Please put the above to Mr. Dulles and the State Department as soon as possible. We are on the threshold of the conference and are entitled to more than "some preliminary views" promised you by Mr. MacArthur [of the State Department].

⁶⁶ PREM 11/895, Note by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 13th June, 1955.

The process of negotiation which he had originally suggested still seemed to have some promise of success, although the analysis was, perhaps, a little less rosy than it had been at the beginning of the planning process.

It seems likely that the Russians will be torn by two conflicting emotions; a desire that the conference should not fail, and a determination not to give way to the West, in particular by agreeing to a German solution. The Western Powers have a similar interest in preventing anything in the nature of a breakdown or deadlock. Consequently, if we cannot get agreement on a reference to the Foreign Ministers of all the subjects listed above, we should aim at organising a meeting of the Foreign Ministers.

The one meeting of the CANUTE committee for which the minutes are available, the fourth and final one of 13th July, threw a further douche of cold water over the optimism which pervaded CANUTE's telegrams to Washington of the 8th July. Present on this occasion was Sir William Hayter, who at Eden's request gave the following prognostication of the "Russian attitude",

[T]he plan set out in CAN/15/55 [for demilitarized strips] was asking a lot of the Russians. He [Hayter] did not think they would be ready to reach a settlement on Germany at Geneva... They would rather try to tempt the West Germans to accept unification on the Russian terms... There was no real reason why the Russians should make the sacrifices which our plan would require of them.

Yet Eden continued to insist that they should offer his detailed proposals on Germany. However his mind seems to have been as much preoccupied with the necessity of maintaining a good propaganda profile as the prospects of a major break through.⁶⁷ This is somewhat of a contrast to the opinions expressed to the State Department of less than a week before. Perhaps there had been a conscious degree of hyperbole involved for the sake of the half converted. As far as American opposition to laying out concrete proposals he still held out what was to prove the forlorn hope that,

Although it might be Mr. Dulles' idea to avoid discussion of questions of substance, he did not think that the attitude of the President was nearly so negative.

On the 17th July the last western confabulation before the summit proper started took place in Geneva. A compromise, between the American desire to avoid dangerous commitments and the British to make concrete proposals was reached during

67 PREM 11/895, Minutes of CANUTE committee meeting, 14th July, 1955. Eden had commented,

[T]he main issues should be brought out in the discussion between Heads of Government so that, if the Russians were willing to discuss German reunification, they could be put in the position of refusing to accept it. He did not think that deadlock would necessarily be reached by this method.

this meeting. In conversation with Eisenhower Eden agreed with the President that a French plan put forward by Faure, which offered even more exact detail than the British, was dangerous precisely because it was too specific. Compromise seems to have been more capitulation than anything else.

I added that I agreed and that we had to be careful not to propound precise boundaries at this stage or we should be held to anything we offered. I thought the really important issue at this Conference was Germany. I hoped that he and I would press together strongly to try to move the Russians on this. The President cordially agreed.

The President was in fact giving nothing on the line which Dulles had been taking all along. Dulles had been quite willing to accept the ideas that the British put forward, providing they were clothed in the form of loose suggestion and he objected to the detail which the Eden Plan afforded as to how such loose suggestion might be realised. Eden finally had agreed, in effect, that Dulles had been right all along. This seems as clear an indication as any of where the balance of authority lay between the western powers attending the Summit. The scene was finally set for the superficially anticlimactic drama to begin.

Chapter 5

The Geneva Summit, 1955

Thermonuclear Stand-off

"There ain't gonna be no war"

Harold Macmillan

The Summit at Geneva was to convince the British that the Soviet appreciation of nuclear war was now very similar to their own. The conference acted in this respect as a confirmation of Foreign Office and Embassy opinion as has been outlined in Chapter Four. It also became clear that the Soviets were relatively happy to accept the stalemate which had been achieved in Europe between N.A.T.O. and the Warsaw Pact, even at the cost of a divided Germany. In both of these respects the Summit provides a turning point in the development of British perceptions of Soviet foreign policy and, indeed, the Cold War itself. However, it was not yet apparent in the summer of 1955 how the Soviets were shortly to redirect their energies in the prosecution of a cold war now to be fought within more limited parameters.

ANGLO-SOVIET TABLE TALK

Opinions differ as to the suitability of the old United Nations building, Geneva, as the venue for the July Summit. Eisenhower records in his memoirs a relatively favourable impression of the environment within which East and West met. Macmillan however most emphatically did not share this happy memory. Indeed he considered that,

The room in which we met filled me with horror the moment we entered it. the protagonists were sitting in tables drawn up in a rectangle, the space between them was about the size of a small boxing ring... I could think of no arrangement less likely to lead to intimate or useful negotiations.¹

Whether or not the bombastic conference chamber in which the formal sessions of the conference were held had any negative impact or not, both Eden and Macmillan concur that the crucial contacts with the Soviet side were made in more informal surroundings.² Eden records that, "at a conference like this, it is usual for private discussion to be the most worthwhile. We entertained each other informally and made working occasions of

¹ The memoirs of Eisenhower and Macmillan differ in particular over the appropriateness of the rooms decoration. Eisenhower gave the following appreciation of the art which lowered down over the delegates, "The mural is effective. The brutish characters remind the participant in the drama of the grim seriousness of his task". As compares with Macmillan's, "the walls were decorated with vast, somewhat confused frescos depicting the End of the World, or the Battle of the Titans, or the Rape of the Sabines, or a mixture of all three. ... The whole formal part of the conference was bound to degenerate into a series of set orations".

² See *Tides of Fortune*, p. 617, "it was only when the Heads of Government or Foreign Ministers met in a small room outside in a restricted meeting that any serious discussion could take place".

the meals".³ Indeed, the most profound impressions that the British came home with were garnered after a private dinner with Khrushchev and Bulganin. Macmillan's hopes for informal "dinner diplomacy" were to prove very well founded.⁴ It was in an expansive post-prandial atmosphere that Eden and Macmillan found the Soviets at their most candid.⁵ With this in mind a blow by blow account of the conference proceedings seems, in the context of the present study, unnecessary.⁶

However, that is not to say that the formal sessions were devoid of interest. They revolved around set speeches, an entertainment which the four delegations took it in turns to provide. Eden's contribution, despite his petulant qualms expressed in June, was very much in line with the division of the agenda agreed by Tripartite consultations in Washington.⁷ The speech, which he gave on the afternoon of the 18th July, encapsulates what was to seem of importance to the British after the conference was over in respect of how they were to view the new Khrushchevian foreign policy. He began by dwelling, in a manner appropriately reminiscent of Churchill, on the dangers and opportunities that the present state of nuclear technology afforded to the world.

[T]his Conference is unique in history because the conditions in which we meet are unmatched in human experience. We all know what unparalleled resources the scientific and technical discoveries of our age have placed within our reach. We have only to stretch out our hand and the human race can enter an age of prosperity such has never been known. It is equally clear how utterly destructive must be the conditions of any conflict in which the Great Powers are engaged. There was a time when the aggressor in war might hope to win an advantage and to realise political gain for this country by military action... nothing of the kind is possible now. No war can bring the victor spoils; it can only bring him and his

3 *Full Circle*, p. 308

4 PREM 11/894, Tel. No. 495, New York to F. O., from Secretary of State; 17th June, 1955. During the Tripartite discussions before the conference Macmillan expressed the following opinion on the issue of entertainment,

I agreed that we did not want banquets and I thought Mr. Dulles idea of buffets splendid. But I thought that, in addition, there could be useful contacts at informal lunches and dinners, and I knew that the Prime Minister would wish to feel free to invite members of other Delegations to quiet meals. This was generally accepted and we will discuss the subject on these lines with M. Molotov in San Francisco.

Also Macmillan's hopes for the success of informal contacts expressed in PREM 11/893, Tel No. 2553, from F. O. to Washington, from Secretary of State to Mr. Dulles; May 29th 1955. In his memoirs, *Tides of Fortune*, p. 616, Macmillan was candid enough to record his condemnation of Presidential cuisine after lunch with the Americans on the 17th July, "a disgusting meal, of large meat slices, hacked out...and served... with marmalade and jam. The French were appalled".

5 So important were these informal discussions in the eyes of Eden that a record of them was circulated around the Cabinet at his behest by Sir Norman Brook on the 27th July, 1955 before the official record of the formal proceedings. A copy is to be found at the end of the PREM 11/895 file.

6 There is a full record of the British minutes of the conference's proceedings in the P. R. O. at CAB 133/141. It is a bulky 141 page document which it would be invidious and pointless to attempt to summarise in any detail above.

7 See above. Eisenhower was also keen to persuade the Soviets of the ghastliness of thermonuclear-nuclear war, Ambrose, *Eisenhower, The President*, p. 264.

victim utter annihilation. These are stern facts out of which we can perhaps win enduring peace at last.⁸

Eden went on to concentrate on the need to work upwards from the detail to a general settlement. He had no time for Churchill's old emphasis upon a leap of human sympathy between the Heads of State which might lead from a broad understanding of each other to successful negotiation over particular problems. In this case Eden asserted the detailed matter crucial to the development of a *modus vivendi* was Germany.⁹ This is only what might be expected given the painstaking emphasis during British preparations for the meeting on the need to come up with some compromise answer to the problem of unification which provided suitable security guarantees for the Soviet Union.¹⁰ The basic premise upon which British thinking turned is though quite brilliantly clear from the above. The British Government no longer considered that "world war" was a rational extension of foreign policy, it was rather an irrational act of global suicide. The question which Geneva was to answer with a conclusive yes for both Eden and Macmillan was, did the Soviets agree?

On the issue of the specifics in either the formal negotiations or general discussions, Eden did not think his American allies showed sufficient enthusiasm. It was a point over which Eden himself was not prepared to let the planning of the past month go entirely to waste. On the 19th discussion concentrated on the German question. It was soon apparent to Eden that neither the Americans nor the Soviets seems quite to have shared

8 CAB 133/141, Verbatim Record, Second Meeting of the Four Heads of Government in the Council the Palais des Nations, Geneva, at 2.45 p. m., 18th July, 1955. Compare to Churchill's words on the issue of the Defence White Paper for 1954 on 1st March 1954, see Gilbert, *Never Despair*, pp. 1098-1101. The opening and closing statements of the Conference, of which this was one, were by prior agreement to be made public. They were printed for the House of Commons in Command Paper No. 9543, Miscellaneous Series No. 14, July, 1955.

9 Ibid. Eden went on to say with what from the perspective of today was almost a prophetic soundness of insight,

The deterrent against warlike action holds up a warning hand. But the deterrent cannot of itself solve international problems or remove the differences that exist between us. It is in an attempt to make progress with these problems and differences that we are met here today. And at this Conference we have to deal with them mainly in the context of Europe. What is the Chief among them? There can surely be no doubt of the answer. The unity of Germany. As long as Germany is divided, Europe will be divided.

10 CAB 133/141, Record of Tripartite Discussions in Geneva before the Opening of the Conference at President Eisenhower's Villa, 17th July, 1955. At this meeting Eden had expressed the following opinion on the issue of Germany.

[B]y far the most important question to be discussed at the Conference was that of German unification. The Russians would not be anxious to discuss this. But the right tactics for the Western Powers would be to insist on discussing it and to put forward proposals which the Russians would find it difficult to reject. These tactics would be advantageous from the point of view of public opinion in Germany, but they were also likely to produce practical results. The pressure for an Austrian settlement which the Western Powers brought to bear on the Russians at the Berlin Conference had in the end born fruit.

his sense of urgency on the issue.¹¹ In his replies to Eden's offer of assurance for Soviet security, Bulganin made clear that the division between the two sides over the problem was very deep indeed. Despite this, and following Eden's insistence that the matter had to be discussed further, it was only in private conversation that evening that Bulganin and Khrushchev seem finally to have been able to persuade the British that they were not willing to change the status quo. That the Soviets were prepared to discuss the matter seriously in informal surroundings was in marked contrast, Eden reported back to London immediately before the meal, to the experience both the French and the Americans had had in their bilateral dinnertime exchanges with Bulganin and Khrushchev.¹²

Immediately after he had enjoyed his dinner and chit-chat with the Soviet leaders, Eden composed a minute recording his impressions of what had been said. Serious talking had, it seems, begun during the meal, Eden being sat between the two Soviet leaders. At this point Bulganin was exclusively Eden's interlocutor. Macmillan however recorded the clear impression that Khrushchev was the more authoritative of the two.¹³ The two topics under discussion were unsurprisingly Germany and the Hydrogen bomb, on which Bulganin expressed the Russian fear that Germany might again pose a serious threat to Soviet security. Even after Eden referred to the difference thermonuclear war must surely have made to such considerations, Bulganin continued to express his doubts. Bulganin did however go so far as to flatter Eden's ego,

Bulganin said he thought that some of our suggestions were important and more than once in our conversation emphasised the part that we would have to play in trying to find a solution.

11 PREM 11/895, 19th July, 1955, From Prime Minister, Geneva for Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord President, Minister of Defence and Sir Michael Adeane. Eden gave the following account of the discussion in the Palais des Nations of that afternoon,

[on the issue of guarantees to Soviet security] Bulganin had said the Soviets could not accept them because they were derogatory to a Great Power. Bulganin made his replies good-humoredly but indicated firmly that he had nothing more to say on Germany. *The President then staggered us by observing that the subject was exhausted. I said that we must return to it because of its very great importance, but that we should reflect tonight on what had been said by everyone [my italics].*

Matters were not all sweet agreement and light of concord between Eden and Eisenhower.

12 *ibid.* Eden continued to report an exchange between himself and Bulganin just after the formal session had closed,

Bulganin came up to me and admitted the reality of our divergence and how serious was the German question. He said that he thought I understood their position. I said that I did understand that they did not want to see East Germany join West Germany in NATO. On the other hand how could we devise a security arrangement which satisfied him and allowed Germany to take her own decisions... he agreed that this was the heart of the problem, and made various complementary remarks about how I could resolve it. ... *We agreed to continue to examine the topic after dinner tonight. If this proves possible our evening should be more useful than that of the French and the Americans, when the Russians left without any serious talk immediately after the coffee [my italics].*

13 Minute of 19th July from *Tides of Fortune*, p. 619. Macmillan also recorded very similar impressions to those of Eden regarding the Soviet attitude to Germany.

It was not until after dinner had been finished and as the memo puts it "when Khrushchev was present" that Bulganin got down to what Eden considered the real "nitty-gritty".¹⁴ Once their discussion had touched on the issue of the form a European wide security organisation might take Bulganin went on to confess,

[T]hat he wanted to say something to me which he had said to nobody else. It was really not possible for his Government to return to Moscow from this Conference having agreed to the immediate unification of Germany. They were a united Government and reasonably solidly based in the country but this was something that Russia would not accept and if they were to agree to it, neither the army nor the people would understand it and this was no time to weaken the Government. The people would say this was something Stalin would never have agreed to. On this therefore he simply could not meet us.

Bulganin qualified this by admitting that although the Soviets could not agree on German unity immediately they would be prepared to discuss the terms under which the Foreign Secretaries might later turn their collective abilities to the problem. Molotov was also present by this point. Both Bulganin and Khrushchev seemed to agree cautiously with the agenda which Eden went on to suggest.¹⁵ However it was quite apparent that the Soviets had no enthusiasm for a solution, even if it were cacooned in the most favourable security guarantees for the Soviet Union. By the 21st July the West German Government had been made equally aware that the Soviets were not for giving any ground on the issue.¹⁶ Eden, who had talked to Stalin in the lucid desperation of the war's worst moments, made the following summation of the implications of this unwonted surfeit of Soviet candour,

In a long experience of talks with Russians, I think that this was the most important and certainly the frankest conversation I have known. I have not thought it useful to repeat the many compliments to Britain and references to a personal part in relations in years gone by. All this could properly be ascribed to a desire to divide us from the Americans. But I do not think that this would be a complete explanation. It is rather my impression that they regard us as the only possible bridge between themselves and the United States and that they are anxious that this bridge should be built. The French were never mentioned, the

14 There is somewhat of an internal discrepancy in the memo. Dinner is specifically said to have been "between Bulganin and Khrushchev". However the post-prandial discussion is said to have been "...later...when Khrushchev was present".

15 Eden's suggestion consisted of,

(1) an instruction to study the unification of Germany, having regard to the security of all concerned; (2) study of a security pact for Europe, or a part of it; (3) study of the limitation of forces and armaments in Germany and in the countries neighbouring Germany, and (4) study the possibility of creating a demilitarised area.

16 PREM 11/895. Minute by Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, 21st July, 1955. Herr Blankenthorn, the West German Ambassador in London, called on Kirkpatrick on the 20th July asking for guidance as to the correct line the German press should take now it had become clear the Soviets opposed unification. Kirkpatrick counselled a restrained approach for,

(i) the Russians were for the first time being civil in manner. It was therefore important that no Western nation should be the first to relapse into rudeness. (ii) We were now at the most difficult and delicate part of the conference.

United States were always referred to with respect, and as being our friends - from whom we should not be divided.¹⁷

Eden was clearly quite taken with the flattery which the Soviets were, at least according to his record, paying him. This contrasts markedly with the opinions of some of the American delegation and both that of later biographers of Eden and historians. Emphasis has tended to be put on the inglorious comparison Eden must have been forced to make with his crucial importance in the 1954 Geneva summit over the Far East and the relatively humble role assigned to him as junior to the Americans in 1955.¹⁸ There is no hint of injured pride in any of the British records that have to do with the conference. Indeed the problem seems almost to have been on the contrary one of an inflated estimation of Britain's own abilities as go-between, particularly in respect of the Far East. What is important from the above is that this idea was not something that Eden was trying to force upon the Soviets, but something that he perceived in what they had to say.

Eden was impressed by the apparent willingness on the half of the Soviet delegation to be at the very least frank, particularly, the cynical might suggest, as they seemed to be franker to him than anyone else. This was a perception that had a profound effect on the means by which Eden would seek through 1955 and 1956 to conduct his relations with the Soviet Union. Increasing emphasis was to be put, ironically once again in the manner of Churchill, on the efficacy of mind speaking to mind. Even in respect of Soviet intervention in the Middle East, Eden was to alarm the Americans by his eagerness to discuss Middle Eastern affairs with the Soviets.

In this it might be argued that Eden was misinterpreting the Soviet motive. What seems to have mattered to the Russians in July 1955 was to persuade the West that they did not want to start a war. In their sweet reasonableness the Soviets very effectively managed to communicate this idea. Eden's misjudgement lay perhaps with his over sanguine view of the intrinsic power of diplomacy to lead to a settlement. Soviet niceness did after all serve an ulterior motive which put very profound limitations on the scope for

17 PREM 11/895, Memorandum of Meeting between Prime Minister and Soviet Delegation, 19th July, 1955.

18 In particular David Carlton, writing before the official British record was publicly available, gives a rather negative account of the British showing at the conference in *Anthony Eden* pp. 376-380. Eisenhower, according to this view, stole centre stage as Eden was left floundering in the wings. In particular Carlton's impression of the Soviet reception accorded to Eden's proposals for German unification does not accord with the material dealt with above. Indeed Eden's subsequent enthusiasm for meetings with the Soviets hardly tallies with bitter disappointment, nor with the comments of Khrushchev in his memoirs quoted below, *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 399. Even accepting that Eden was not likely to put things in an ill light himself, given the ebullience of his reportage to London the following judgement by Carlton seems a little sour,

Nothing was to come of the Open Skies idea, at least not in Eisenhower's time, but for the duration of the Geneva Summit it held the world stage as something of glittering simplicity that might serve to end the arms race. Eden's plan, by contrast, was too complicated and too limited in scope to have any similar appeal; *and it was received by the Soviets without enthusiasm* [my italics].

diplomacy. Indeed it was to become apparent very shortly after Geneva that the Soviets were not interested at all in having done with East/West rivalry.

THE FAR EAST

Eden's perception that both sides had come to what amounted to an agreement to differ over Germany is further illustrated by his attitude towards the Far East. This had, of course, been an important consideration in the lead up to the conference.¹⁹ Although there was no formal place in the Conference's agenda for discussion of the Far East, Eden considered this an area more fraught with danger in July 1955 than Germany or European security. The Soviet attitude to German negotiations was further evidence that all sides were increasingly coming to an acceptance of the status quo. In his conversation of the 19th July Eden and Bulganin amicably came to the following agreement,

I remarked to Marshal Bulganin that though the situation in Europe was difficult it was not dangerous. He cordially agreed and added that the possibility of war in Europe was so far away it was hardly worth talking about. He agreed however that the Far Eastern situation was much more anxious. He spoke of Formosa and the dangers there. I said that Quemoy and the Matsus worried me much more.²⁰

Eden, therefore, spent a very substantial part of his informal soundings with both the Americans and Soviets on the issues raised by Chiang Kai-shek and the off-shore islands.²¹

Indeed in his concern over the Far East Eden was consciously playing the role of go-between for the White House and Kremlin which, apparently, had been accredited to him by the Soviets on the 19th.²² A part which he had after all made very much his own at Geneva in 1954. This was particularly evident in his separate conversations with the Soviet and American delegations on the 22nd July. Eden while at breakfast with the Americans suggested to Dulles that he might use his meeting with the Soviets that evening after dinner, the farewell function during which Eden was to invite Khrushchev to

¹⁹ See above on the preparations for the conference and particularly Macmillan, *Tides of Fortune* p. 612.

²⁰ PREM 11/895, Note by A. Eden; 19th July, 1955. The conversation continued as follows, with a characteristically flippant, but pointed, aside by Macmillan,

Khrushchev interjected here that the Chinese had been very patient. He did not think that the Russians would have been so patient. I replied that he under-estimated his own statesmanship. The position of Quemoy and the Matsus was very difficult for the Americans and for everybody concerned. The Americans might wish Chiang Kai-Shek to reduce his forces on the island. It did not follow from that that they could compel him to do so.... The Russians appeared to accept this... The Foreign Secretary suggested that the Americans would be very happy if Quemoy and the Matsus were sunk under the sea. This suggestion appeared to receive universal approbation except, possibly, we all admitted from an absent Chou En-Lai.

²¹ PREM 11/895. Eden spoke specifically on the issue to Eisenhower on the 17th July and with both Soviet and American delegations separately on the 22nd. See also *Full Circle*, p. 311.

²² PREM 11/895, Note by A. Eden; 23rd July, 1955.

Britain, to urge patience on the part of their Chinese friends in respect of the off-shore islands. Dulles had agreed that such an approach by Britain would be a good idea.²³ Thus it was that the main topic of conversation between Eden, Bulganin and Khrushchev on the evening of the 22nd was China and Chang Kai-Shek.

Eden's conversation with the Soviets was, at least according to his own record, of some value. After Bulganin and Khrushchev had made clear their confidence in Mao, Chou En-Lai and the future of China, they pointed out that it was natural the Chinese should feel resentful of Chiang's occupation of the off-shore islands and their debarrment from the United Nations. In response Eden made the following mediation:

President Eisenhower was doing his best to keep his public opinion under control on the subject of Quemoy and the Matsus. The Russians should, however, recognise his difficulties. This was a subject on which emotions ran high in the United States... The President was doing his best, in spite of this, to calm things down and to counsel patience. If he were given more time, all might yet be well. Were the Chinese prepared to be equally patient?²⁴

To this Khrushchev replied that "traditionally the Chinese were a patient people. He believed that they would not take any rash action at the present time", which is ironic given Khrushchev's later view of Mao.

It is little wonder that in his report to Cabinet and his ruminations in Full Circle Eden should have laid such emphasis on this flattering role.²⁵ He clearly seems to have conceived Britain's position between the Americans and Soviets as an independent one. As at Geneva in 1954 Eden was acting as honest broker, albeit in slightly less dramatic way. Furthermore his perception of the Soviet attitude towards the British delegation at Geneva tended to confirm this high opinion rather than anything else. Whether or not the Soviet delegation intended to give this impression for quite the reasons Eden conjectured is another matter.

"OPEN SKIES" AND OPEN INVITATIONS

As regards the most startling incident in the conference proceedings, the Eisenhower "Open Skies" proposal, the British had nothing to do at all with its Genesis and even less

23 PREM 11/895, Note by A. Eden: 22nd July, 1955.

24 *ibid.* Eden drew the following contrast between British and American attitudes to China,

Our own interests in China had been mainly commercial: we had traded there for a long time, and over the years had earned a good commercial return from what we had invested. But the Americans during the war and since had poured money into China; and the average American now felt that the Chinese had bitten the hand that fed them. As a result the Americans were specially sensitive about the present situation.

25 CAB 128/29, 16th Cabinet Conclusions. Minute 4: 26th July, 1955. *Full Circle* pp. 310-311, where in places Eden quotes almost verbatim from his record of 22nd July in PREM 11/895. However in his report to Parliament of 26th July, 1955, *Hansard* Vol. 544, Cols. 1212-1217, Eden concentrated on the attempt at Geneva to solve the German problem and the real relaxation of tension which Geneva had achieved.

with the theatre which surrounded Eisenhower's offer on the 21st July during a formal session of the conference.²⁶ Consequently, the issue does not directly reflect upon the British understanding of Soviet policy at Geneva, although indirectly it says a considerable amount about the difference of approach to Soviet relations between the Americans and the British. It also says something about both power's lively concern to score a victory for Western propaganda over Soviet.

Eden was informed at breakfast on the morning of the 20th July by Eisenhower that he was considering making an effort in the area of arms control verification in an attempt to break the stalemate over details which had descended over the conference's formal sessions.²⁷ It seems that the Americans were no more specific than this, despite the fact that the proposal had already been worked out in some precision by the "Quantico Panel", because they did not want to risk compromising the element of surprise by leaks from the British or French delegations. A fact which says much about the American attitude to her allies. On the whole both Eden and Macmillan thought Eisenhower's vague suggestion good as it would put the Soviets on the spot and reduce their ability to make propaganda about their own "ban the bomb" stance. The sticking point for the West was that the Soviets were not at all clear as to how to establish that the bomb had actually been banned. Macmillan in particular came away from his breakfast with the President more impressed by Eisenhower's abilities of diplomatic gamesmanship than the possibility of turning the Summit in a more fruitful direction.

The British reaction to Eisenhower's more specific proposal of the 21st July, as well as for that matter the French, was warm but not ecstatic. Indeed Eden's own response during the formal proceedings on the 21st is interesting.²⁸ As an alternative to Eisenhower's grand gesture Eden suggested that it might be helpful if the two sides began by agreeing to inspections within a limited but increasingly wide radius spreading out from Germany. This was a proposal which he had discussed with Eisenhower, again at breakfast, on the 20th July.²⁹ By this means, Eden suggested, the two side could build up

26 Eden certainly could claim no control over the thunderclap which dramatically accompanied Eisenhower's proposal. See Amborse, *Eisenhower, The President*, p. 265.

27 See *FRUS* 1955-1957, Vol. IX, pp. 398-403 for the American record of this conversation and pp. 421-24. It was in a meeting of the American delegation at 6 p.m. on the 20th July, that Eisenhower decided to table his "Open Skies" proposal and that the British and French delegations should not be informed in any detail. It was noted that at breakfast that day Eden and Macmillan had been favourable to the general suggestion on inspection which Eisenhower had made. Both Dulles and Nelson Rockefeller were present during the evening meeting. See also *Open Skies*, for a discussion of the proposal.

28 CAB 133/141, Formal Session of the Conference 21st July. Also see Eden, *Full Circle*, p. 304 and Macmillan, *Tides of Fortune*, p. 620.

29 In *Full Circle*, p. 304 Eden is perhaps a little disingenuous in his account of events in his Memoirs when he gives the strong impression that this proposal on limited inspection rights was "my idea". This is especially so as much of his Memoir follows very closely on his contemporary record. The Suez Crisis is not the only incident which suffers at Eden's hands for the sake of posterity. His official record of the conversation, PREM 11/895, Note by Anthony Eden of 20th July, 1955, avers the following,

[A]fter canvassing various possibilities we agreed that some immediate agreement to apply supervision to the forces of East and West in a part of Europe would be the best tangible result

their confidence in each other to a point at which some wider settlement of the issue would at last be mutually acceptable.³⁰ In this Eden showed not only his wonted diplomatic rational, but also perhaps a more sincere concern to achieve a settlement than Eisenhower.³¹

Macmillan's reaction is also interesting in respect of the conclusions he was to draw about general Soviet policy in Geneva's immediate aftermath. He records in his memoir that during the Eisenhower and Eden proposals in the Palais des Nations of the 21st,

Thinking of the realities which lay behind all this diplomatic screen, I passed a note to Kirkpatrick: "To abolish the nuclear now would spread terror throughout Europe". For I was beginning to reflect more and more upon the strange fact that peace was being preserved, not endangered by nuclear power.³²

This point was to undergo substantial development in but a few weeks. It seems clear that the British reaction to "Open Skies", a proposal with which they had as little to do as the Soviets, had its critical side. Their approach to diplomacy tended to avoid the grand gesture in favour of limited and consequently, so Eden thought, more practical measures.

The Soviet reaction was even more ambiguous. Bulganin, who was in the Chair when Eisenhower introduced the idea, was initially welcoming. However, this had possibly more to do with being caught off guard as the Americans had hoped the Soviets would be, for Khrushchev made very clear during the buffet at the end of the session that "Open Skies" was simply not acceptable.³³ From this moment onwards Eisenhower addressed his energies to Khrushchev, who had demonstrated considerably greater authority in the handling of Soviet diplomacy than Bulganin.³⁴

With Eisenhower's offer still left formally in the air by the Soviet delegation, the British went to the farewell dinner provided by the Soviets on the evening of 22nd July.³⁵

we could hope for. *The President suggested that there might for instance be such joint inspection to a depth of 100 miles or so on either side of the existing line in Germany....[my italics]*

30 Khrushchev made the following comment in his memoirs, *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 399, on the difference he perceived in the British and American approaches to negotiation. Although not as convivial as was his experience of the French delegation,

[T]he atmosphere of our conversations with Eden was certainly warm. Naturally he was following the same general line as the Americans, but he seemed to be more flexible and receptive to reasonable arguments.

31 This is so particularly in relation to the debate over the balance in Eisenhower's motivation between propaganda and diplomacy. Given that the Soviets would probably not have been able to add by over-flights much more intelligence to that which they already had, "Open Skies" might reasonably be dismissed as a little one-sided. See Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. 157 and pp. 191-193 for an interesting insight into the American rational at Geneva. Eden's rather more prosaic proposal demonstrated his wonted concern with building confidence by starting from small and relatively undramatic agreements. Eisenhower's biographer is considerably more sympathetic to his subject over the issue, *Eisenhower, Soldier and President*, p. 393.

32 *Tides of Fortune*, pp. 620-21. Macmillan went on to comment, "this paradox was to confuse and invalidate much of the subsequent arguments about disarmament."

33 There is a memorandum of this conversation at *FRUS* 1955-57, Vol. IX, pp. 456-67.

34 Ambrose, *Eisenhower, Soldier and President*, pp. 392-93.

35 It was only from Moscow that Bulganin was to make his distaste of the proposal public.

It was during this event that Eden invited Bulganin and Khrushchev to visit Britain the following spring. Indeed according to Eden's memoir there must have been something of a romantic air to the invitation, delivered as it was to Bulganin on the terrace of the Soviet delegation's small villa.³⁶ This however was no last moment flight of whimsy on the part of Eden. He had already been given cabinet approval that if he thought such a thing appropriate he should feel no compunction in asking the Soviets to visit Britain. In their response to a telegram from Eden immediately after the British delegation's arrival in Geneva the Cabinet had expressed through Butler the following opinion,

We came to the conclusion that so much depended on the Geneva discussions that the judgement of yourself and the Foreign Secretary would be better than ours. All we can do is to assure you of the general support of the Cabinet in whatever you decide, since we think that no harm could come from the visit of the Soviet leaders.³⁷

Butler went on to comment that the decision to invite the Soviets depended very much on how Eden gauged the "atmosphere" of the conference. Although the formal proceedings, particularly during the last couple of days, had produced nothing more substantial than rhetoric, Eden had been sufficiently impressed by the Soviets' private candour finally to pop the question.³⁸ As early as the 20th July Eden had given a relatively sanguine interim report to Churchill in which pointed out the following contrast between the formal and informal proceedings of the conference,

So far the Russians show little sign of movement in our discussions. The Foreign Secretaries are to try tomorrow to work out the instructions which might be given to them on the subject of German reunification and European security. However, our private discussions have been more hopeful and it seems clear that both the Russians and the Americans want to get some positive results from the Conference.³⁹

The Soviets' flattery on the night of the 19th, and their cautious reasonableness thereafter, had not been entirely without effect.

In concrete terms the conference did not produce anything more solid than a bland communique of unexceptionable platitudes and the instructions which were to provide a basis for the Foreign Ministers to disagree over in the autumn.⁴⁰ But as Eden had made clear to Churchill on the 20th July this was about as much as they could expect. The

³⁶ *Full Circle*, p. 307; Eisenhower was informed after the event.

³⁷ FO 800/684, Telegram No. 52 from F. O. to UK. Delegation Geneva, from Chancellor of the Exchequer to Prime Minister; 19th July, 1955.

³⁸ Although the Soviets reserved their most serious blast of cold war polemic until the very last day of the conference, after the invitation to Britain had been made, on the 23rd July. See *Full Circle*, p. 306, *Tides of Fortune*, p. 623. Macmillan in particular thought that this final outburst had much to do with Soviet "peevishness".

³⁹ FO 800/684, Telegram No. 50 from UK. Delegation Geneva to F. O., from P. M. for Winston Churchill, 19th July, 1955.

⁴⁰ See Cmmd. 9543 for the text of the Directives for the Foreign Ministers.

Conference's success was in the informal candour the Soviets had displayed, detailed in Eden's memos already discussed above.

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE SUMMIT

Eden and Macmillan reported their impressions of the conference to a meeting of cabinet on the 26th July.⁴¹ Eden, interestingly, concentrated first of all on his private discussions with Eisenhower and the relatively agreeable attitude he had displayed towards British concern regarding the antics of Chiang Kai-Shek. Eden was also convinced, again from his informal contacts, that the Soviets were prepared to use such influence as they had on the Communist Chinese to hold them back from precipitate action. After a long treatment of this Far Eastern theme he went on to comment,

In the Conference itself discussion had turned mainly on the questions of German unification and European security. It had proved impossible to induce the Russians to modify their view that Germany could not be unified until a new system of security had been established in Europe. In this they were influenced by a genuine fear that Germany might re-emerge as a strong military power in Europe. Even if the Russian leaders could be persuaded that this could be prevented, their freedom for manoeuvre would be for some time limited by an instinctive fear of Germany among the Russian people. This evidently went so deep that even a dictatorship had to take account of it. At this Conference, at any rate, the Russians had seemed to be more apprehensive of the resurgence of Germany than of encirclement by the United States. The other outstanding impression left by the Conference was the desire of the Russian leaders to establish more normal relations with the Governments of the West. They seemed genuinely anxious to secure a relaxation of international tension and a friendlier relationship with the Western Powers.

Macmillan expressed his "full agreement" with what the Prime Minister had said, he did however lay emphasis presciently upon the following in contrast to Eden's preoccupation with the Far East,

The Russians had seemed far less anxious than he had expected about the possibility of encirclement by the United States. They were much more concerned about Germany and, in the long run perhaps, in the position which they might find themselves between a resurgent Germany and a strong China. He doubted whether the Foreign Ministers, at their meeting in October, would make much progress towards the unification of Germany. But, if a steady pressure were maintained, a solution might eventually be found through some sort of security pact for Europe. Meanwhile it certainly seemed that the Russian leaders were anxious to follow peaceful policies in Europe. They had presumably concluded that, with the advent of nuclear weapons, European war would not serve their purposes. Moreover, with the end of the Stalin regime, they seemed less disposed to favour aggressive methods and would prefer, if

⁴¹ CAB 128/29, 16th Cabinet Conclusion, 1955, Minute 4, 26th July, 1955.

they could, to devote their resources to the development of their internal economy.⁴²

The predictions of both Moscow and Bonn Embassies as regarded the Soviet attitude over Germany were born out. The Soviets, it was now clear to the British executive were not interested in coming to a settlement, preferring to accept a status quo which gave them the substance of what they wanted, a relatively enfeebled Germany.⁴³

The Foreign Ministers' conference of October 1955 was to mark the final attempt to get some kind of agreement on the issue in line with the directives which had been worked out at the Summit. Even before Macmillan came up against the granite-like intransigence of Molotov the British were extremely doubtful that any settlement would be forthcoming. Although interestingly Macmillan seems not entirely to have given up hope at the Cabinet meeting of the 26th July, the rock on which such residual hope was to flounder was the West's insistence that Germany must be allowed freely to make her own security arrangements after unification, i.e. join NATO. Only if the Soviets accepted this as the basis upon which to develop a broader security system for Europe were the Western Powers prepared to go forward. The Soviets, unsurprisingly, were no more prepared to loose their grip over East Germany for a united Germany to join the West than they had been in 1954. Their proposals included the end of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact before German unification and the construction of an entirely new pan-European security structure. The Western Powers, equally unsurprisingly, saw this as little more than a ploy to exclude America from Europe and expand Soviet influence into a disunited West.

The prospects for a settlement at the Foreign Minister's conference were discussed at a meeting of the FLINT Committee on the 19th October.⁴⁴ If by way of concession to

42 In his memoirs Macmillan records that he made a note of his impressions of the final "informal" meeting with the Soviets on the 22nd July. In its substance this very closely accords with the points that he made at the Cabinet meeting on the 26th of that month, see *Tides of Fortune*, p. 622.

43 Khrushchev in his memoir was quite specific on the issue of what the Soviets wanted to avoid in Germany, *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 394. The order in which he lists the opposition is worthy of at least passing note,

[W]e knew that the number one goal which the English, American, and French would be pursuing in Geneva would be what they called "the re-unification of Germany", which really meant the expulsion of Socialist forces from the German Democratic Republic: in other words, the liquidation of Socialism in the German Democratic Republic and the creation of a single capitalist Germany which would, no doubt, be a member of NATO. As far as our own position on this issue, we wanted simply to sign a peace treaty that would recognise the existence of two German states and would guarantee that each state be allowed to develop as its own people saw fit.

44 CAB 130/111, GEN 506, FLINT, Minutes of 1st meeting, 19th October, 1955. Macmillan began the discussion by reference to the following points arising from press speculation about the Foreign Minister's meeting at Geneva.

[T]he "Times" leading articles of the 15th and 18th October had caused some apprehension in Germany. These articles argued that the Russians would never agree to the reunification of Germany simultaneously with the conclusion of a European Security Pact, and drew the conclusion that we should offer the Russians some concessions on European security now, in

the Soviet view unification were entered on first without an acceptable security structure Macmillan thought that,

[S]uch a course would be bound to bring upon us the hostility of the German Federal Government. Some concession would be justified to secure Russian agreement to German reunification, but he shared the view expressed by Sir William Hayter (telegram no.158 from Moscow) that the Russians were not prepared to leave Germany. It was, therefore, very important that, despite the arguments which were likely to be put forward by misguided sections of opinion in Western countries, we should maintain our attitude that German reunification and a European Security Pact must go together [ensuring the German right to enter NATO].⁴⁵

This proved to be a reasonable summary of why the the Geneva Meeting of Foreign Ministers was to prove entirely sterile.⁴⁶ Both Eden and Macmillan seem to have considered that the focus of the cold war had now shifted away from a relatively stable Europe over which, if only de facto, there seemed to have been an agreement to differ.⁴⁷ There were certainly no grounds on which to develop a mutually agreeable settlement of the German question. Furthermore, the Foreign Minister's meeting defined clearly the limits of the "Geneva Spirit", limits which had already become apparent with the Czech agreement to supply arms to the Egyptian Government in September (on which see the following chapter). Indeed, perhaps the most interesting issue to arise from the October

advance of German unity, in the hope that as time went on we might be more amenable. [The Germans had been assured that this was not British Government policy]

⁴⁵ FO 371/116654 NS 1021/69, Confidential, from Sir William Hayter, Moscow to Macmillan, 4th October, 1955, is the despatch to which Macmillan refers in the quote. Hayter commented on the remarks Grotewhol, the East German leader, had made in the East German Parliament on the 26th September on the guarantees he had received from the Soviets regarding the future of his country,

Put into English, this means "the Russians have promised to keep us in power until such time as Communists, fellow travellers or neutralists control Western Germany". ... Soviet policy may change. But a promise of this kind must undoubtedly have been given. In these circumstances German unity is not now, or in the immediate future, achievable.

⁴⁶ For a full record of the proceedings see *FRUS* 1955-57, Vol. IX, pp. 537-808.

⁴⁷ *ibid.* Hayter went on to make the following damning appreciation of the Soviet attitude to security guarantees.

We are sometimes inclined to think that the Russians badly want a system of security in Europe. Perhaps they do. But they want it not because they think it would really offer them security against attack (they have no more confidence in paper guarantees from us than we would have in paper guarantees from them), but because they regard it as a step towards the liquidation of N. A. T. O. and the consequent withdrawal of American troops from Europe. [thus Soviets unlikely to agree to a Security System that maintains both arrangements] No doubt the elaboration of security proposals including these elements is useful exercise from the point of view of Western public opinion; but we delude ourselves if we think it is likely to have any charm for the Russians. the Soviet Government do not go in for refinements. Their approach to most questions is unsophisticated and crude. So it will be to this question, and their answer is not difficult to foresee.

get-together was the light it threw on the diminishing position of Molotov within the Soviet leadership.⁴⁸

"THERE AIN'T GONNA BE NO WAR"

It is perhaps putting a little too fine a judgement in comparing the emphasis placed by Eden and Macmillan in their 26th July report to the Cabinet on the Summit meeting to conclude that there was a major difference between the views of Her Majesty's Prime Minister and Her Foreign Secretary. However Macmillan's over-riding concern with the nuclear dimension to the conference was shortly to be made much clearer in a private memo of the 8th August. It was given a limited, secret circulation amongst certain important members of the cabinet.⁴⁹ These included Butler and Lloyd, who were at this point Chancellor and Minister of Defence respectively and also, appropriately enough given the slip of paper handed to him during the formal session of the Conference on the 21st July, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick. The note was, as he minuted to Kirkpatrick, "...a little paper I have composed, to try to clear my own mind."⁵⁰ Although too much ought not to be read into what seem to have been jottings, it seems reasonable to take them as a fair statement of the process of thought which Geneva had caused Macmillan to embark upon. He expanded upon the crucial impression which Geneva had left with him regarding the Soviet's new attitude towards war in a thermo-nuclear age. His thinking was very much a development of the comments of the Moscow Embassy and the Northern Department in the lead up to the Summit on this subject. It was also a clear insight into the policy implications of the speech Eden had made to the Summit on the 18th July, quoted from above.

He began by stating very starkly what it was that had forced the Soviets to be so terribly nice to the West at Geneva,

⁴⁸ Molotov's position had faded very considerably since his 8th February, 1955 foreign policy speech. Indeed so low had it fallen by October that many had expected him to be replaced before the Foreign Minister's Conference, not least because of criticism of his methods in the journal *Kommunist* of the 10th October. Molotov's performance at Geneva was in stark contrast to that of the Berlin Conference in 1954 when he had been confident and authoritative in his diplomacy. By October, 1955 he appeared thrall to other authorities within the Kremlin to whom he was forced to refer final judgement. FO 371 116641 NS 1017/98, Memorandum, Hayter, Moscow to Macmillan, "The Power Relationship in the Soviet Union", 28th November, 1955. At this point Hayter's analysis still saw a vibrant future for the principle of collective leadership, albeit with Khrushchev in an increasingly powerful position.

⁴⁹ Again Macmillan was to be quite specific in his memoirs as to how Geneva affected his attitude towards the Soviet Union itself and consequently his whole philosophy of defence. He makes the following comment about his attitude to Geneva immediately after the conference was over,

In reflecting on Geneva, a strange, and to me novel, experience, I felt some encouragement, largely because of the strong impression left in my mind that all the great nations who were in the nuclear game now accepted that modern war, that is nuclear war, was quite impossible and could only lead to mutual destruction.

⁵⁰ He described the note in the following terms in a covering letter to Butler of 10th August (FO 300/668), "Please destroy or return my little memorandum. It is nothing more than a few notes - not fit for any formal purpose".

1. Everyone knows that the improvement in relations between the Communists and the Free World which became evident at Geneva, is really due to Fear, not to Love. It is the first dividend of nuclear weapons. 2. But nobody likes to say this - except with some courage, Mr. Crossman in the Sunday Pictorial (7.8.55) 3. At present the Soviets are held back by fear of the American H bombs. In a few years everyone will be held back by fear of each other's H bombs. 4. This development, paradoxically enough, has brought a greater sense of security to the world than we have had for some time.

Little doubt was left in Macmillan's mind that the Soviet attitude towards thermo-nuclear war was effectively synonymous with that of his and the British Government generally. There then followed a grand construction from this basic premise which was to have fundamental implications for the future of British defence policy both before Macmillan's rise in 1957 and, more particularly, after.

5. If disarmament means - agreement to abolish nuclear weapons, it follows that insecurity will result - at any rate in the Free World, a) because no real system of control or inspection can be devised, b) because another "conventional" war waged with all modern weapons short of nuclear would be destructive of European life and civilization, c) because we should probably lose such a war. 6. Security may best be maintained if nuclear weapons are held by the Great Powers and known to be so held.

In his memoirs and at the time in private Macmillan expanded upon this point, laying bare the fallacy, as he saw it, at the heart of the argument for nuclear disarmament.⁵¹ If it were fear of nuclear annihilation that kept the world at peace, it was no solution to remove the cause of fear. His philosophy of defence was based on a clear perception that the Soviets had just as great a horror of the consequences of thermo-nuclear war as did the west. Upon this premise a calculation was erected which may have been utterly abhorrent in the event of its inaccuracy or a human error, but was nonetheless rational.⁵²

51 Macmillan records in his memoirs the following note penned on the 25th July, *Tides of Fortune*, pp. 624-625,

"Peace", say all the leader-writers, etc., "is now assured because everyone knows that there can be no victor in war today." The after a few intervening paragraphs, they go on to say "Ban the nuclear bomb." But is this syllogism really sound? Is the deduction correct? If we abolish the nuclear bomb (which has abolished war) shall we not bring back war? This is a danger, even if we succeeded in a water-tight system of control, inspection and all the rest, which is impossible.

52 Macmillan is here frighteningly logical in his balancing of the argument. This contrast starkly with the kind of thought processes imputed to political leaders in respect of thermonuclear weapons by such proponents of disarmament as Bertrand Russell, albeit in the following with reference to Khrushchev and Kennedy in 1961,

The most important question before the world at the present time is this: is it possible to achieve anything that anyone desires by means of war? Kennedy and Khrushchev say yes; sane men say no. On this supreme question Kennedy and Khrushchev are at one. If one could suppose them both capable of a rational estimate of the probabilities, we should have to believe that the time has come for Man to become extinct. [Bertrand Russell, *Has Man a Future*, p. 120]

It seems clear from Macmillan's ruminations of July and August 1955 that Geneva was a turning point in the development of this crucial perception by the British Government of Soviet foreign and defence policy.

Macmillan's memo of the 8th August was sent to Butler with a covering note of the 10th August. It reflected on one of the main problems which was to concern the Eden Government until the Suez Crisis broke; namely defence review. This serves, once more, to underline the fundamental importance that the impressions garnered at and around the Geneva Conference had upon British thinking about the cold war.

It is now clear to me that nuclear weapons are the real protection of the world against war...[he then discussed the desirability of conventional defence cuts, particularly in the sensitive area of the British army in Germany] ... I really believe that our economy cannot stand defence expenditure on the present scale indefinitely, and that we ought to consider abandoning those parts of it which are really useless...⁵³

The whole process of defence review is accorded a good chapter in Eden's memoirs. It would seem impossible, given the tenor of Macmillan's thinking after Geneva, to divorce from these policy considerations the British Government's developing understanding of the changes which were happening in the Soviet Union through 1955 and into 1956.⁵⁴

It was not, however, apparent to the British in the summer of 1955 quite how far the Soviets wanted to go towards a lasting settlement of the cold war. Indeed given that Soviet policy was in a period of flux it would be surprising if the British attitude were in turn anything more than plastic. Although the Geneva Summit had made it quite plain that the Soviets did not want to leave East Germany and reduce their insurance against another resurgence of German power, the British Government seem to have harboured quite expansive hopes for the future of East-West diplomacy. This is revealed most instructively in the correspondence which Macmillan initiated with Dulles over an American move to publish certain conference documents unilaterally in the August of

53 FO 800/668, Note from Macmillan to Butler of 10th August, 1955. Macmillan also displayed a more subtle approach to the problem of deterrence than arguably was to prevail in the United States until MacNamara and "graduated deterrence".

It looks to me as if we ought to work towards a position when we have: (a) nuclear weapons to protect us against total war, and (b) the rest of our forces by land and sea and air carefully organised for two purposes: (1) in Germany to prevent minor aggression across the frontiers so that small incidents can be dealt with without calling the appalling sanction of nuclear attack, and (2) all the various semi-police purposes, Malaya, Kenya and all the rest

54 Eden makes the following interesting comment on the issue of defence review in his memoirs, *Full Circle*, pp. 368-369.

One consequence of the evolution from the atomic to the hydrogen bomb was to diminish the advantage of physically larger countries. All became equally vulnerable. I had been acutely conscious in the atomic age of our unenviable position in a small and crowded island, but if continents, and not merely small islands, were doomed to destruction, all was equal in the grim reckoning... I knew that the Russians were busy applying the new lessons. we had to do so in a situation made more difficult by our limited resources.

1955. Macmillan thought this a very bad idea for the following reasons, which were expressed in a note to the Prime Minister of the 8th August.

This American proposal seems to me most undesirable and I have already instructed Sir Roger Makins to do what he can to discourage the State Department from perusing it. My main considerations are: (a) our general objection to unilateral and premature publication of the proceedings of international conferences; (b) the understanding at Geneva was that our discussions should be confidential except for the opening and closing statements. I am sure that this was one of the factors which enabled us all to speak more frankly...; (c) *we are on the threshold of what is generally accepted to be a continuing process of conference and discussion with the Russians. This makes it particularly undesirable to set the pattern of publication, which can only diminish the chances of success. We should aim at "open agreements secretly arrived at"* [my italics].⁵⁵

Eden scribbled upon this minute, "I agree entirely" on August 10th. The substance of the above was then relayed to Dulles in a telegram of August 13th.⁵⁶ Dulles reply of the 15th August, although satisfactory to Macmillan, was far from the liking of Eden. Eden objected particularly to the suggestion that the restricted sessions themselves might have to be made public. "There can be no more conferences if Americans even think of publishing restricted sessions", Eden scribbled on the Washington telegram containing Dulles response.⁵⁷ Given that the most valuable discussions as far as the British were concerned had happened outside the Conference hall altogether, it is perhaps a little strange that Eden should have been so insistent on this point. Clearly, however, both Macmillan and Eden, impressed by Soviet candour at Geneva, were eager that the most should be made of the new opportunity for diplomacy to flourish. Their approach to relations with the Soviet Union was wholly pragmatic.

Despite this August hope for the future of the Geneva Spirit, it was soon to become apparent that the Soviets' willingness to negotiate was severely circumscribed within set limits. By the Foreign Ministers' Conference of October 1955, with the Czech Arms deal and Bulganin's edgy response to "Open Skies" there was little room left for illusion as to the possibility of any concrete agreements on the main points at issue. Sir William Hayter in a despatch of October 4th 1955, in which he thought at best the Soviets wanted "...breeder conferences in an endless series", delivered his considered judgement,

55 PREM 11/879, PM 55/99, Note to Prime Minister from Foreign Secretary, 8th August, 1955.

56 PREM 11/879, Tel. No. 3672, F. O. to Washington, for Dulles from the Foreign Secretary; 13th August, 1955.

57 PREM 11/879, Tel. No. 1893, Washington to F. O., for the Foreign Secretary from Dulles, 15th August, 1955. Also see *The Failure of the Eden Government*, p. 128, where this exchange undergoes what might be termed the Suez effect, viewed as it is through the refracting lens of its significance for developments in 1956. Lamb contents himself in drawing the following conclusion, "This betrays Eden's attitude to Dulles after Geneva, which was not a good omen for the remainder of the premiership." There is no consideration of the light which it might throw on the British attitude to Geneva and the Soviet Union generally in the August of 1955.

Soviet foreign policy now can, it seems to me, be summed up in five words (most of them foreign); detente and the status quo. My U.S. colleague [Charles Bohlen] has formulated the same thought as "peace at no price".⁵⁸

Macmillan's idea of a thermo-nuclear "stand-off" was to prove correct. Furthermore his brash, publicity conscious pronouncement "there ain't gonna be no war" seems an admirably apposite summary of the Conference's fundamental achievement.⁵⁹

The 1955 Summit holds a crucial place in the British Government's perception of the development of Soviet policy; most importantly in the conviction that the Soviets now saw nuclear war as a self-defeating exercise in global suicide. It is here that the importance of the conference lies. That it came to no concrete settlements of any of the issues it sought to explore is in this sense irrelevant. That was not, afterall, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Ambassador in Moscow quoted above what the Soviets themselves had wanted the Conference to achieve. In communicating an awareness of certain rather appalling strategic facts, Geneva was a resounding success, so much so that in the words of Eden's memoir,

[T]he Geneva Conference taught some lessons, which were powerfully to affect the course of events in the next few years. Each country present learnt that no country attending wanted war and each understood why. The Russians realized, as we did, that this situation had been created by the deterrent power of thermo-nuclear weapons. In the minds of men who commanded power in the world, the lessons of the Conference might result in a reduced risk of total destruction to the human race.⁶⁰

Eden went on, however, to comment

A less comfortable conclusion could also be drawn. the communist powers would continue to prosecute their purpose by every means. To do this, they would work in areas and by methods, including the use of conventional weapons, which they believed would not entail retaliation by nuclear weapons.

Quite what these weapons and areas were to be is the subject matter of the following two chapters.

⁵⁸ *op. cit.* From Sir William Hayter, Moscow, 4th October, 1955.

⁵⁹ *Macmillan*, p. 361.

⁶⁰ *Full Circle*, pp. 306-07. Interestingly Eden goes on to comment that this lead to a Soviet determination to develop her nuclear technology to its fullest potential. This was also clearly implicit in Macmillan's private memo of August 8th 1955 as a priority for Britain.

Chapter 6

The Czech Arms Deal and the Aswan Dam

Descent from Pisgah

"The news of the proposed deal between Nasser and the Russian Government for the supply of munitions of the order suggested is a serious blow to all our interests in the Middle East".

Harold Macmillan

During 1955, Khrushchev's new foreign policy encompassed considerable complexities which in Whitehall's view seemed at times to reach the proportions of downright contradiction. Whilst courting the graces of Western statesmen and the press at Geneva in July, 1955, the Soviets must already have been well advanced in sponsoring a Czechoslovak offer of arms to the Egyptians.¹ This was done, most probably, in the full knowledge of the hostile way the West would react to such a development. Nor was the Czech arms deal the only event to disturb the "Geneva Spirit", which the Soviets had seemed so singularly eager to foster in the summer of 1955. During their tour of India, Burma and Afghanistan in December (see Chapter 7), Bulganin and Khrushchev whilst obsequiously courting potential allies would do their utmost to offend the feelings of the British, who as the ex-colonial power were a particularly obvious target. When this was considered in tandem with the economic blandishments which the Soviets offered, or seemed about to offer, to the newly independent "under-developed" nations, the Kremlin seemed to have opened up an entirely new "front" in their prosecution of the Cold War. The Middle East and South East Asia, hitherto areas where Western influence had been dominant, were now targets for peaceful Soviet penetration on a level which caused something akin to panic in Whitehall. This was not a straight forward way of ensuring the relaxation of tensions.

However, to British observers, the contradictions in this new policy proved, on reflection, to be little more than apparent. By January 1956 the British Embassy in

¹ See David J. Dallin, *Soviet Foreign Policy After Stalin*, p. 279 who makes the following point about Soviet policy during the Geneva Summit:

However, "relaxation of tensions" among the great powers was not the sum total of the Soviet foreign political course of the time. Behind the screen of "coexistence"... the Soviet government - and here Khrushchev was again the driving power - was pursuing a grand offensive in the underdeveloped countries of Asia and Africa. As the Geneva Conference was being prepared, the Soviet-protected Bandung Conference was declaring its offensive against the West; this was followed by secret Soviet-Egyptian negotiations concerning Soviet and satellite arms for Egypt. At the very time that Bulganin and Khrushchev were attending a summit conference to "lessen international tensions", Dimitri Shepilov was in Cairo for talks with Colonel Nasser.

Also Mohammed Heikal in *Sphinx and Commissar, the Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Arab World*, pp. 57-60 substantiates Dallin's view from the Egyptian perspective.

Moscow was expressing the view that the Soviet desire for détente and their probing of new ground in Asia, were in fact merely two facets of the one policy. The Soviet leaders were anxious that relations with the West should not deteriorate to the extent that nuclear war became likely; given the annihilation which would ensue if it were to lead to the use of the new hydrogen weapons that were being developed on both sides. However, despite this limitation, Communism was still to be victorious over Capitalism. The rivalry between the two world systems was merely to be sublimated into a battle between their respective domestic economies' capacity to provide a better society and for political and economic influence over the neutralist countries of Asia and Africa. A war which was to be prosecuted by loans, technicians, arms supplies, propaganda and superior economic organisation. The Cold War appeared to change radically in the aftermath of the junketings at Geneva, but it most certainly did not go away.

The British had indeed noted a number of indications that the Soviets were becoming interested in new worlds to conquer early in 1955. By January of 1955 Khrushchev had already made clear his determination that in the area of economic and scientific competition with the West, the Soviet Union would catch up and overhaul their rival as soon as possible. In a despatch dated the 24th of that month, Sir William Hayter reported on indications given in the Soviet academic press of a new much freer attitude to scientific enquiry. The old Stalinist rigidities were, it seemed, to be a thing of the past. No longer was it acceptable merely to deride Western scientific research, it was now to be learned from and improved upon. There was also to be much greater emphasis on the application of science to industry. Hayter ended the despatch by commenting:

I think it can be concluded from all this that the present Soviet regime not only attaches the highest priority to making the Soviet Union the leading country in world science, but is at last beginning to go the right way about it. Originality is being encouraged: there is to be no more dictatorship in science, and the Soviet scientists who take an active interest in foreign science will now run little risk of "toadying to the West". At the same time a more sensible attitude to science is supported by an immense effort to train the new generation of scientists and technicians. In 1954, according to the latest plan results, there were 1,732,000 students following courses in higher educational establishments. This new stimulus, which is now being given in the Soviet Union to science and technology, deserves, I think, our most careful attention.²

2 FO 371/116709 NS 1103/31, 24th January, 1955. Hayter quoted from two academic journals which were the *Literary Gazette* (of January 11) and *Questions of Philosophy* (No. 6 of 1954). Hayter pointed out that the *Literary Gazette* article by Academicians I. Knunyants and L. Zubkov, "whose names mean nothing to us", carried the development of a freer attitude to scientific enquiry "a stage further". A process which though started by Stalin as early as the summer of 1950 in his articles on linguistics, had to await his death for any further significant development. Khrushchev seemed to have taken an important part in the process, not least by helping to pull Lysenko from his pedestal during 1954. The movement appeared to be gathering pace. Although the Party itself was still reluctant to comment directly on the issue itself (Hayter pointed out that this was though very much in line with their policy of trying to get away from Party edicts in science), *Pravda* of the 20th January 1955 had complained of the conservatism of many Soviet "industrialists" in their attitude towards new technology. Hayter commented, "the party is at present deeply concerned with the

This was a trend that was to continue despite the fall of Malenkov in the February of 1955. Indeed as the above report indicated it was Khrushchev more than anyone else who was associated with its development. In a despatch of the 22nd April signed by Cecil Parrott, the Minister at the Embassy, for the Ambassador, the following comment was made to London,

In several recent reports I have drawn attention to the attitude of the present Soviet leaders to science and technology. They have allowed and presumably inspired the publication of articles for the encouragement of different schools of scientific enquiry. Even more than in Stalin's day they have stressed the need to create a closer link between science and industry and to promote the application to industry of the latest scientific and technological advances. Khrushchev himself has more than once said that much may be learnt from the capitalist countries, and scientists have been told that they must not neglect the scientific achievements in foreign countries because of the idealistic form in which, in capitalist society, positive contributions to scientific progress are often couched.³

The despatch went on to point out that the Presidium itself seemed to be taking an increasingly important role in the campaign. This role was further emphasised by the part played by leading figures in the "All-Union Conference of Workers in Industry" that was held in the Kremlin between the 16th and 19th of May 1955. In a despatch dated the 27th of May, Hayter commented that all available members of the Party Presidium and Secretariat had attended, with Bulganin giving the opening address and Khrushchev "winding" the proceedings up. Hayter concluded,

Finally I have suggested that a motif running through the conference was the lively consciousness of competition with the West. In the last few weeks many articles have quoted from Lenin to the effect that the decisive factor in economic competition between capitalist and socialist countries will be the relative success of each system in developing productivity per worker. Bulganin expressed confidence that in the economic competition between the two systems the Socialist system would win, but said that "in order to beat capitalism in economic competition, we must aim at better organisation of production and higher labour productivity".⁴

question of the practical application of science to the economy." This was a theme to be developed on a grand scale by the 20th Party Congress.

3 FO 371 116709 NS 1103/31, 22nd April, 1955, the despatch made reference to a Presidium decision to hold a more wide ranging conference on 16th to 20th of May for all workers in industry on the application of new technology. This was the conference reported on in the despatch of the 27th of May.

4 FO 371 116709 NS 1103/31, 27th May, 1955. Hayter began his despatch by commenting on the important organisational reforms which the conference introduced in control of the economy. Gosplan, the state economic planning bureau, was to be split into two, one half forming a new Economic Commission. The responsibilities for long and short term planning were to be divided between these institutions. Also a State Commission for questions of Labour and wages was to be formed under the Chairmanship of Kaganovich. Hayter closed his report by assessing the importance of these structural changes.

To sum up, I suggest that the industrial policies of the present Soviet leaders show little originality. The economic and technical measures which they are propagating are much the

Clearly the Soviet idea of "peaceful competition" was in the process of formulation long ere the 20th Party Congress gave it the gloss of a new dogma. Nor was the idea of the competition of domestic economies the only theoretical development whose gestation was traced by the Foreign Office at least from early 1955. An increase in Soviet interest in economic links with "under developed" countries was also remarked upon by the Embassy and Northern Department. Indeed as early as the 14th January a circular was sent around concerned embassies, under the name of no less a person than Sir Anthony Eden, asking for details of Soviet economic activity in their respective countries.⁵

In a letter of March 25th Mr Slater of the Moscow Embassy commented that there had been a number of articles in the Soviet press in recent weeks on the theme of economic relations between the Soviet Union and "under-developed" nations.⁶ He went on to say,

The Soviet policy of economic penetration of under-developed countries for political ends is of course not a new one, but what is interesting is that this policy does not appear to have been affected by the change in priorities which we regard as mainly responsible for recent Soviet behaviour in the field of trade with the industrialised West. However, it remains to be seen whether words will be matched by deeds as far as the under-developed countries are concerned

R. M. Russell of the Northern Department minuted on this letter on the 31 March that the Soviet offers of steel to Burma and of a power station to India, which were then current, were examples of what the future may well have held in prospect for Soviet economic diplomacy. Although the attitude evident in this commentary seems positively languid when compared to that taken over the Czech arms deal of the following September, these indications of how Soviet interests were developing were very definite straws in the wind.

If the Northern Department could still afford to be languid in the March of 1955 the view of the Board of Trade expressed in a memo dated as late as June 6th was positively complacent. It set out to survey in detail the extent of Soviet interest in large scale construction projects in Asia and Africa and after a somewhat confused narrative came to the conclusion that at the time of its writing there seemed to be little to worry about. The Northern Department were themselves not particularly impressed. Mr. R. A. H. Hibbert minuted on the 15th of June as follows,

same as those which they have advocated for many years... The organisational measures which have been adopted suggest political manoeuvring as much as economic need. I do not think, therefore, that any remarkable rise in industrial productivity in this country can be expected. Meanwhile there are signs that the relative economic stability of the Western world and our continuing technological progress are having a salutary effect on the Soviet leaders.

⁵ FO 371 122094 N 1123/1, 14th January, 1955.

⁶ FO 371 116716 NS 1123/3, Moscow, Embassy to Lord Jellicoe Northern Department, 25th March, 1955. The minute by Russell, dated 31st March, is in the same envelope. Slater referred to the most important article in the then recent Soviet press as "The Development of Economic Co-operation of the Countries of the Socialist Camp with Under-Developed Countries" by A. Chistyakov in *Questions of Economics* (No. 1 for 1955). The article underlined the willingness of the Soviet Union to sign trade agreements with under-developed countries.

I do not think this paper is very well done. After reading it I have no clear impression on the degree of Soviet competition which we are facing...I think the correct conclusion should be that the dangers of competition from the Soviet Union in the Overseas constructional market are at present small, perhaps even insignificant, but we may shortly witness a rapid growth of Soviet competition which would be aimed particularly at scooping the market in the under developed countries, and particularly in S.E. Asia. This threat could develop in the next few years and might become serious even in the short term. In the long term it would certainly be serious as it would mean that the Soviet Union was staking out the biggest claims in the market which held the biggest promise for the future.⁷

The concern expressed by R. A. H. Hibbert was to be shared on a much wider scale by the end of 1955. Clearly although there was an awareness in Whitehall that the Soviet Union was interested in expanding its economic role in the neutral nations of Asia and Africa, that awareness was limited in its scope. However the dramatic events of the autumn and winter were to underline what the Soviets were trying to do in their economic diplomacy, that is to supplant Western influence. By the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary's visit to Washington in early 1956 concern had grown to a sufficient level for there to be very serious talk of a Soviet economic offensive.⁸ From 1954 the British were dimly aware that the Soviet understanding of the Cold War was undergoing a profound change. This was gleaned by observers in Whitehall and the Moscow Embassy from the shifting emphasis in Soviet propaganda and official policy from early 1955. Yet it was a change that had nothing to do with a new identity of interest between East and West, save

7 FO 371 116716 NS 1123/7. The Board of Trade Paper was entitled, "Soviet Competition in Bidding for Overseas Constructional Projects" and dated 6th June. It was not accredited to any particular individual, clearly being a statement of departmental policy which was sent on in due course to the Northern Department for their comment as the experts on Soviet policy. Hibbert went on to minute,

As regards details, points which spring to my mind are that Burma was offered a small arms factory for which we and the Germans also bid (and the Burmese finally made no award) and a Soviet economic mission has recently visited Sudan and may be going to tender for equipment for a dam there in which we are very much interested. I think too I have seen a report that the Russians have put out feelers as regards building bridges in Burma. There is no mention in the paper of South America and it may be that the Russians have not entered the South American construction market, but there has certainly been a fair amount of Russian propaganda about trade with South America and the B. O. T. ought to be sure that there is no fire behind the smoke. (para 3) As regards reference to technical assistance at the end of the B. O. T. minute, the point is I think that almost all countries have been reluctant to take up offers of Soviet technical experts, and the Russians themselves have not made it easy for anyone to find technical experts of the right quality. However a large Indian mission is at present in the Soviet Union inspecting Soviet training facilities and we may see a growing stream of trainees from under-developed countries going to the Soviet Union for technical education and training. I doubt whether it is altogether safe to describe this as a long term political matter. The under developed countries are not rich in technically trained persons and if an important portion of their technical experts receive a year or two's training in the Soviet Union, we may find that in two or three year's time that some of the countries begin to show a preference for Soviet equipment.

8 FO 371 116716 NS 1123/12. Despatch from Moscow to Foreign Office, 2nd December, 1955, and Northern Department minuting of the 30th December, 1955, being early uses of this military metaphor.

in the most general sense of the need to avoid thermonuclear war. It was a radical but in no sense a fundamental change. This at least was the British perception by the end of an eventful year in Anglo-Soviet relations.

THE CZECH ARMS DEAL WITH EGYPT.

Before going on to examine the impact of the Czechoslovak Government's agreement to supply arms to Egypt on the development of a new understanding of Soviet foreign policy in Britain, a little background might prove helpful. It would be quite wrong to suggest that considerations of Soviet power had no influence on British policy before the Czech arms deal was concluded. However the threats posed by the Soviet Union before and after that date seemed in Whitehall to be of quite different natures. Up until the Czech arms deal the Soviet Union was conceived as a potentially very serious military challenge to Western pre-eminence in the area, but this was in the specific context of war. Only in the event of actual hostilities was the Soviet Union considered to be dangerous. The Baghdad Pact was in its initial conception a military alliance to provide the same kind of protection against potential Soviet aggression as NATO did for Western Europe. It was in this sense that it was referred to by the Americans as the Northern Tier, a physical barrier against the incursion of the Red Army southward as NATO was westward. Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh outlined one of the main principles of British policy on the Middle East, whilst he was the Foreign Office Under-Secretary for Middle Eastern affairs from May 1954 until June 1956, as follows,

For the defence of the area and the oil against *outside* (author's italics) threat the idea was that our bilateral treaties with countries like Iraq and Jordan should be replaced by multilateral defence arrangements (Northern Tier, Baghdad Pact, etc.) which would have a less "imperialistic" connotation for local opinion and which would spread the burden more evenly amongst allies.⁹

In the everyday political and economic relations between Britain and the Middle East if anyone it was the United States who was considered to be much the most serious threat to the British position.¹⁰ The Czech arms deal with the Egyptian Government gave Middle Eastern affairs, as much as the Cold War, a novel turn. The Soviets had entered into open rivalry for political and economic influence in an area that had hitherto been exclusive to Western and especially British influence.

This new Soviet policy was a radical divergence from Stalin's which had viewed the world in a rigidly bipolar way. Working on the theory that if a country was not specifically for Communism than it must be against, there was no room for the

⁹ *Descent to Suez*, p. 210. Shuckburgh gives a brief resume of British policy in the Middle East in the mid-fifties up to the Suez Crisis on pp. 206-214.

¹⁰ On the ins and outs of Anglo-American relations over Egypt up until 1956 see Peter L. Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-1956: Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War*, *passim*.

development of friendly relations with newly independent colonial countries eager to espouse the cause of "neutralism". The new regimes of post-imperial India and Egypt were little more than the lackeys that the departing British had put in power. However under Khrushchev that view was to change dramatically and it was the negotiation of the supply of arms to Egypt via Czechoslovakia which was the first bold success for this new foreign policy. One commentator describes it in the following terms,

When Khrushchev leapfrogged over Turkey and Iran into the thick of politics, his political-military interest in non contiguous regions was something very new in Russian and Soviet diplomacy. It signified the globalization of the Kremlin's outlook. Khrushchev exposed the weaknesses of the U.S. policy of containment in the Middle East and demonstrated to Arab (and other Third World) regimes who had little first-hand experience with the Soviet Union that Moscow was prepared to help those who opposed the west's efforts to retain a major influence in the region through its network of interlocking military alliances.¹¹

Which brings us to the British understanding of what the Soviet Union was trying to achieve in Egypt in September, 1955.

Although negotiations between Nasser's government and the Soviet Union had been going on at least since the summer of 1955, it was not until late in September that the British learned of what was afoot. There seems though to be some confusion in the work of later day commentators as to when exactly the news broke in Britain. Keith Kyle maintains that

On 21 September 1955, the Foreign Office got the first word ("from a delicate source") of an event that altered the Middle Eastern scene radically and was the first step leading to the Suez crisis. This was the Czechoslovak arms deal, which Colonel Nasser defiantly affirmed to be a Soviet arms deal in his Alexandria speech of 26 July 1956.¹²

However Richard Lamb in his book on the Eden Government blandly states that "On the 22nd [September, 1955] the news of Nasser's arms deal burst around the world".¹³ Lamb does make the point that Nasser's sudden truculence with the British and Americans in negotiations over the "Alpha" proposals on the previous day was due to his conclusion of the secret arms deal with the Soviets ("Alpha" was the code-name for a tortuous Anglo-American proposal to bring peace between Israel and the Arab states by a complicated territorial compromise. Shuckburgh was the principal British fixer involved in the project). Shuckburgh's diary entry for the 21st September gives no hint of any indication of what Nasser had been about, rather concentrating on Herbert Morrison's muck-raking

11 Alvin Rubenstein, *Moscow's Third World Strategy*, p. 24. In Chapter one Rubenstein talks of a "Khrushchevian watershed" in Soviet foreign policy. However, he does tend to simplify the international situation circa 1955 in terms of a straight US/Soviet split.

12 Keith Kyle, "Britain and the Crisis, 1955-1956"; in W. R. Roger and R. Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956, the Crisis and its Consequences*, p. 105. Kyle does not go on to illuminate quite what the "secret sources" he refers to in the above quote were, although they seem definitely to have been contacts of the American Ambassador and not the British.

13 *The Failure of the Eden Government*, p. 172.

in the debris of the Burgess and Maclean scandal. On the 22nd however he comments, "our calm deliberations about the next step in "Alpha" have been broken in upon by the news that Nasser is going to buy arms from Russia."¹⁴

The record of the PREM papers would seem to indicate that in fact the 22nd was the date. In a telegram from the U.K. delegation at the UN dated 22nd September Sir Pearson Dixon reported that,

Mr. Dulles told me at luncheon today that he had had word from Byroade (the US Ambassador) in Cairo that the Egyptian-Russian arms deal had been concluded and would probably be announced within the next twenty-four hours. He was very worried at this development"¹⁵

This is the first indication in the PREM file on the "Supply of Military Equipment to Egypt by the Soviet Union" of what the two countries had been contriving behind the backs of the West. However, this chronological problem possibly has more to do with the length of time it took for Ambassadorial telegrams to filter up to the higher reaches of the Civil Service and Westminster. For there is on file a telegram dated 21st September, 1955 of Sir Humphrey Trevelyan's from Cairo indicating that his American counterpart, Byroade, had been informed by a secret, but reliable source that Nasser had clinched a deal with the Czechs.¹⁶ Kyle does after all refer in the quote above specifically to the Foreign Office. And there can be no doubt that London was aware something regarding arms supply was being negotiated between the Egyptians and the Soviets well before a deal was confirmed. It would seem that both Kyle and Lamb are right about slightly different things.

The first Ministerial comment was a minute of the 22nd from Macmillan to Eden, in which Macmillan noted that the Arms Deal was a very serious issue. On it Eden, as was his wont, scribbled, "Yes, very grave".¹⁷ Indeed the initial reaction on the part of the British government was very strong indeed. Harold Macmillan expressed the following view on the 23rd September, for communication via the Washington Embassy to Dulles,

The news of the proposed deal between Nasser and the Russian Government for the supply of munitions of the order suggested is a serious blow to all our interests in the Middle East. I am sure the American Government will agree that this cannot be allowed to go on.¹⁸

¹⁴ *Descent to Suez*, p. 278.

¹⁵ PREM 11/1291, Sir P. Dixon from the UK. Delegation at the United Nations, New York to London, 22nd September, 1955.

¹⁶ FO 371 113673 JE 1194.140, Sir Humphrey Trevelyan, Cairo to F. O., 21st September, 1955. There is further detail on this in Kyle's recent book, *Suez*, p.74. The Americans seem to have had a rather better information network set up in Egypt, perhaps because there was more respect remaining for them among members of Nasser's government than there was for the British. See *FRUS* 1955-57, Vol. XIV, pp. 481, 483-84 and 492-93.

¹⁷ PREM 11/1291, Minute for Prime Minister from the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 22nd September, 1955.

¹⁸ PREM 11/1291, F. O. to Washington Embassy, from Macmillan for Dulles, September 23, 1955.

The views minuted in the Foreign Office were more particular as to the threat that the Soviet move posed for the British position in the Middle East. In a minute of the 23rd of September to Macmillan Shuckburgh made the following terse estimation of the ramifications for British policy of the Soviets' move.

We are faced with the disagreeable truth that we must somehow keep Egypt on our side even to the extent of paying a very high price which may well include having to abandon Israel. It has long been evident that we were retaining our position and interest in the Middle East only because the Russians were not interfering. Once they start bidding for Arab support as they are now doing we are compelled either to outbid them or to lose the main source of power on which our economy now depends.¹⁹

Shuckburgh's fright seems to have taken him to the extent of considering dropping support for Israel completely in the prosecution of Britain's policy in response to the Soviet move. Sir Harold Caccia's note on the above minute was rather more restrained in its summing up of Britain's position in the light of this development. Although Soviet competition would have to be dealt with vigorously, he wondered if before giving up Israel completely the British might not have to get rid of Nasser, "Especially if he becomes publicly committed to the (arms) contract". An opinion that sounds an ironically percipient note in the light of what was to happen shortly thereafter.²⁰ The gut reaction of the British underlines the novelty of the situation that they faced. The Soviets were on no accounts to be left to pull off their coup and enter for the first time into the Middle East as an active political player. Shuckburgh in particular seems to have been keenly aware that Britain's position, hardly strong without Soviet competition, was now little short of parlous.

However the initial reaction was softened in a surprisingly short space of time as it became clear that the Arms Deal would have to be accepted as a fact of life.²¹ There was indeed very little that the British could have done to force the Egyptians to change their minds.

Immediately after the British became aware of what was afoot there followed the process of clarification. The Ambassador in Cairo, Humphrey Trevelyan, attempted to gain from the Egyptians confirmation that the deal had actually gone through and specific

19 FO 371 113674, Shuckburgh to Macmillan 23rd September 1955, quoted in Kyle op. cit. p.106. In his diary entry for 22nd September Shuckburgh put the same analysis in more dramatic language. "The folly and fragility of our Palestine policy is beginning to come home to roost at last. As long as the Russians played no role in the ME we were just able to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. But now they are obviously beginning to make a bid for Arab support", *Descent to Suez*, pp. 278-279.

20 *ibid.*

21 *ibid.* Kyle puts it rather effectively as follows,

What is intriguing is to follow the traces of Britain's line towards Nasser's Egypt through the next few months. It started with Harold Macmillan's instinctive reaction to the arms deal- "This cannot be allowed to go on"-changed to "I do not wish to reproach Nasser unduly" in a cable to Sir Humphrey Trevelyan, the new British Ambassador in Cairo.

details as to what the Soviets were offering. In a telegram to London of the 26th September Trevelyan reported a conversation with the Commander in Chief of the Egyptian army, with whom he had dined the previous night. The Commander had confirmed that the deal had been concluded and justified it by reference to the Egyptians need for arms in the face of the threat from Israel, arms which they seemed able to get only from the Soviets. It was emphasised that the Arms Deal had been undertaken not out of choice, but out of necessity. The Egyptian army, it transpired, wished to continue with British training, the Soviet connection was purely for the supply of essential equipment. In a following telegram Trevelyan made clear that the Commander's confessions were not literal but implicit in what he had said. Trevelyan came to the conclusion that the British Government would have to assume the American reports that the Arms deal had been sealed to be reliable.²² An opinion which gives an interesting oblique hint at the origin of Britain's information.

Trevelyan took a relatively tolerant view of the Egyptian move, a tolerance of Egyptian foibles which was not, sadly, to be shared in Downing Street over the coming year. He summarised the motives behind it as follows,

In the last six months the Israelis have demonstrated their military strength and their readiness to use it. Nasser has told me that his policy and thinking has been dominated since February by his fear of Israeli intentions, which has increased as a result of the Israeli elections and expansionist speeches made during the campaign by Ben Gurion and Beigin. His major preoccupation had become the strengthening of the Egyptian forces to meet the Israeli threat.²³

The Egyptians could hardly be blamed if, despite their best efforts to find a western alternative, the only willing supplier of the needed arms had been the Soviet Union. The Ambassador pointed out that it seemed that the Soviets had "offered him (Nasser) arms in the spring when resentment at the Turco-Iraqi pact was at its height and the impact of neutralist influences at Bandoeng fresh." Yet it was not until after intensified efforts to gain arms from the West had failed that Nasser had been forced back onto the Soviet offer. The British policy of trying to maintain a balance between the Israeli and Arab sides in the Middle East had apparently afforded the Soviets their opportunity to move into the area as a political force, hence Shuckburgh's agonised comments on the need to drop the Israelis altogether.²⁴ Trevelyan saw no reason to doubt that Nasser only turned to the Soviets in desperation, what had happened was not part of a fundamental change in the policy and alignment of his regime. Nasser's Egypt remained basically anti-Communist. The Ambassador advised against the taking of any harsh retaliatory action

²² PREM 11/1291, Telegrams No. 1319 and No. 1320, from the British Embassy Cairo to the F. O., 26th September, 1955.

²³ PREM 11/1291, Telegram No. 1325 from the British Embassy, Cairo to the F. O., 26th September, 1955.

²⁴ See *Suez*, pp. 7-76 for an examination of Anglo-Egyptian relations in the lead up to the Czech Arms Deal.

counselling that they should at least wait and see how big the arms deal was actually to be.²⁵

Macmillan's reply of the 26th September to the above series of telegrams was, however, still rather tart in tone. He telegraphed back to Cairo as follows,

I can understand Nasser's motives in turning to the Russians for arms though as you know he exaggerates in saying that he has obtained "nothing" from us. I do not wish to reproach him unduly but rather to bring home to him that he has underestimated the risks for himself and for Egypt in such a course. With the best will in the world we cannot regard this action as anything but a grave danger to Egypt's relations with the West. It is not at all consistent with the spirit of the Anglo/Egyptian treaty on Suez. Nasser himself has frequently made the point, when discussing Middle East defence, that by this treaty and the mention of Turkey in the reactivation clause, he in effect entered into a defence relationship with the West.

Macmillan went on to rail against the absurdity, in the light of the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian agreement, of having Soviet aircraft on Egyptian airfields. Furthermore, Macmillan complained, Nasser was hardly being frank over details and his assertion that there had been no agreement with the Soviets over technicians, did not impress at all. Macmillan considered it an "equivocal statement". The presence of Soviet technicians in Egypt would, he went on, be "quite incompatible with the base agreement".²⁶

He suggested that the real answer to Nasser's anxieties over Israeli defence expenditure was to work for a general settlement for the Arab/Israeli dispute, to which end, he added, the British Government intended "to make a further serious effort" to get talks between the Egyptians and Israelis going. Not only was a satisfactory solution to the areas problems at stake, but also British and American aid in the development of the Egyptian economy. Macmillan concluded as follows, "it would be folly to throw away these prospects for the sake of an obviously baited arms offer from the Russians".

However the most dramatic action which Macmillan took was a direct approach to Molotov, who was also attending the United Nations at New York. Shuckburgh, who had accompanied Macmillan to New York in his capacity as the Foreign Office chief for Middle East affairs, records in his diary of the 26th September that "H.M. seems keen on taking it up with Molotov." Dulles and Macmillan met that evening and according to Shuckburgh, who was present,

25 PREM 11/1291. Telegram No. 1327 from the British Embassy Cairo to the F. O., 26th September, 1955.

26 PREM 11/1291. Telegram No. 846 UK. Delegation to the UN, New York to the F. O. Addressed to Cairo telegram No. 88 of September 27th. Macmillan's complaint continued and in referring to the effect that the deal would have on domestic politics made the following concise summation of the effect of the deal. "British public opinion will be astonished to learn that before we have even completed our withdrawal from Suez under the agreement which was designed to establish new relations of co-operation and friendship with Egypt, the Russians are moving in." He went on to warn that Nasser should also take into account Israeli opinion and the destabilising effect the deal would have on the situation in the Middle East in general. Macmillan cautioned of the dangers of an arms race from which no one, least of all Egypt, would benefit.

[G]ot more and more worked up against the prospects of a Soviet arms deal with Egypt as they warmed to the subject. The thought of Soviet technicians sitting on the airfield we built, and to which we have to return in case of an emergency under the Treaty, was too much for H.M., and Dulles could not bear the Egyptian ingratitude for all the money US has spent on her. So they decided to go for Molotov...²⁷

This Macmillan did "after dinner" on the 28th September when he attempted to lecture Molotov on the intricacies of the balance of power in the Middle East. However, in the words of the Macmillan's own record, Molotov, phlegmatic as ever,

[R]eplied that, although Mr. Dulles had spoken to him on this subject already, he was perhaps insufficiently briefed. At the time when he had left Moscow he knew that "not one rifle and not one bullet" had been sold to Egypt. He knew, however, that certain requests had been made to Soviet representatives.²⁸

Molotov then turned to an exchange of information between East and West on their respective supplies of arms to the Middle East. Macmillan records that he "naturally fluffed the answer to this question."²⁹

This suggestion was clearly not received too seriously by Macmillan. Eden, on the other hand, seems to have been quite taken by the concept, novel though it was. In his reply to Macmillan of the 28th September he suggested that it might not be such a bad idea after all, particularly if the alternative was an arms race in the Middle East.³⁰ He expressed the hope that Macmillan, Dulles and Pinay would agree to take Molotov at his word. Indeed this belief, that in the rational exchange of views solutions were to be found for most international problems, seems to have been something of a leitmotif in Eden's diplomacy.³¹ However, it was not an opinion that was widely shared either in the Foreign Office or by Macmillan's American and French colleagues.³²

27 *Descent to Suez*, pp. 280-281.

28 Or perhaps, given his declining authority, Molotov was being honest

29 PREM 11/1291, Telegram No. 848, from UK. Delegation UN to F. O., 28th September, 1955.

30 PREM 11/1291, Telegram No. 1304, London to UK. Delegation UN, to Secretary of State from Prime Minister, 28th September, 1955.

31 See *Full Circle*, p. 9 for Eden's own outline of his rationale on re-entering the UN in 1951 as the new Foreign Secretary. In this he tended to look at international problems from the other end of the telescope to Churchill, whose summits were conceived with consciously vague agendas. The idea being that out of discussions on the broad sweep a more detailed settlement could be worked out. Eden on the other hand took matters from the small up to the general. In this his suggested approach to Bulganin over the Czech Deal was typical. Shuckburgh's comments on "shades of W. S. C." below were in consequence possibly a little unfair.

32 Shuckburgh made the following comment in his diary on 28th September on Eden's telegram,

I had been worrying a little as to whether London would think we have made a mistake in approaching Molotov about Egypt (though' actually Dulles did it first, on his own, and there was really no option for us) when a telegram arrived from the PM urging us on in the most explicit terms - in fact even suggesting that we should agree to four-power consultations on Middle East matters, and the he (A. E.) should if necessary telegraph to Bulganin. Shades of W. S. C.! H. M. was very much surprised at this, and said that it was "the same illusion that Winston had, that there is a sort of club of men at the Summit. There is no such thing as

Macmillan's reply of the same day was noncommittal. Deferring first of all to the need for consultation with the Americans and then the French, he went on to point out the danger of bringing in the "Russians on too wide a front". Although he did think it might have been possible to narrow the consultations down specifically to the Palestine problem.³³

Eden answered on the 29th September that he quite understood that the Russians were not wanted in on all Middle Eastern affairs. However over the arms deal he seems to have been quite convinced of the benefits of some kind of mutual discussion. Enclosed with the telegram was a draft of a letter for Bulganin pointing out the nature of the Western policy of arms control in the Middle East.³⁴ In consequence of Eden's prodding Shuckburgh was despatched to Washington for consultations on this issue with Dulles on the 29th.³⁵ Macmillan followed him there on the 1st October.

Shuckburgh found the State Department "much concerned" about the problems attendant on any such invitation to Molotov. Although they were not entirely negative, they were "anxious" to find means of keeping discussion limited to the arms deal.³⁶ Meanwhile Macmillan was engaging in further after dinner "footsie" in the company of the Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs himself. After asking for clarification as to quite exactly what "exchange of information" meant, Macmillan was entertained to a rather vague and inconclusive conversation. At the end of which Molotov, with engaging candour, added that he had not yet received any further information from his own Government.³⁷ Clearly Macmillan was not getting far in his attempt to reason with the Soviets directly.

Bulganin in that sense." He can also see that A. E. is anxious to make peace all over the place, without much regard for the consequences."

Shuckburgh then suggested that the best way around Eden would be to push matters towards the UN, already involved in Palestine, and so try to limit any discussion merely to the Palestine problem. *Descent to Suez*, p. 282.

33 PREM 11/1291, Telegram No. 865, UK. Delegation UN to F. O., to Prime Minister from Secretary of State, 28th September, 1955.

34 PREM 11/1291, Telegram No. 1327, London to UK. Delegation UN, to Secretary of State from Prime Minister, 29th September, 1955.

35 For the comments that Shuckburgh committed to his diary see *Descent to Suez*, pp. 283-284. He seems to have reluctantly conceded that "since we almost certainly can't stop Cairo, there is no alternative to trying Molotov." But he strongly emphasised the need to keep discussions limited specifically to Palestine by dealing with it through the Security Council. On p. 284 follows a more acid commentary on the Eden approach as "even more ridiculous than that of approaching Eisenhower over Dulles", and how closely Eden seemed, in a "perverted way", to be modelling himself on Churchill. Perhaps, though, Eden's appeal to Bulganin displayed a more astute perception of where power really lay in the Soviet leadership and in the development of Soviet policy towards Egypt.

36 PREM 11/1291, Telegram No. 2323, Washington Embassy, Shuckburgh to UK. delegation UN, 29th September, 1955.

37 PREM 11/1291, Telegram No. 881, UK. Delegation to UN to F. O., from Secretary of State, 29th September, 1955. Either Molotov was lying quite brazenly, or, perhaps more probably, this is a striking indication of how tenuous his hold over the formulation of Soviet foreign policy was becoming.

The general Foreign Office view at this point still seems to have been that the deal should be stopped at all costs. In a Telegram to Macmillan of the 30th September Sir Harold Caccia put forward what might be termed an intermediate position. The first aim was to stop the deal and the second to demonstrate to the Egyptians that "the policy of concluding such deals behind our backs does not pay", almost like chastising an errant school boy. This was to be done by an extra round of goodies for pro-Western states, particularly Iraq, and American adherence to the Baghdad Pact. However Caccia, and the collective view of the Foreign Office, was on the whole against punitive sanctions,

Our dislike at this early stage of a policy of "squeezing Egypt" is that it might help to make a national martyr of Nasser in Egypt and gain rather than lose him support elsewhere. It may be that later we should consider holding up sterling balance releases or getting the Americans to make it clear that there would be no money for the High Aswan Dam or other projects. But we are extremely doubtful whether that would be wise policy at this stage.³⁸

Caccia concluded that they "were no more enthusiastic than the Americans about taking the Russian deal to the Security Council". Strangely, Eden minuted on this telegram "I strongly agree with it all".

On the 30th Eden, harried the hapless Macmillan with a further telegram. Quite obviously the adverse reaction which his idea had produced had forced a certain tempering of tone. Now he wanted merely to "warn them (the Soviets) of the grass", in the process of which reference could be made to Anglo-American policy on arms control.³⁹ Dulles however remained unimpressed with the British suggestion.⁴⁰

On the 1st October Trevelyan sent a report to London which further clarified the situation in Egypt. After a meeting with Nasser himself, Trevelyan had been unable to persuade the Egyptian Government to change its mind and reject the Soviet offer. Nasser it seemed was adamant that he had no alternative given the position of Israel. Moreover, "he said that he must tell me frankly that it would be impossible to abandon the deal. If he did, there would be a revolution in the army the next day".⁴¹

38 PREM 11/1291, Telegram No. 1349, From F. O. to New York, for Secretary of State from Sir H. Caccia, 30th September, 1955.

39 PREM 11/1291, Telegram No. 1340, F. O. to New York, for Secretary of State from Prime Minister, 30th September, 1955. The telegram was sent off in reaction to Macmillan's initial suggestion that he should first sound out Dulles. This Eden thought "An excellent plan...".

40 PREM 11/1219, Telegram No. 2339, Washington Embassy to UK Delegation UN, to Secretary of State from Shuckburgh, 30th September, 1955. Shuckburgh reported that Dulles considered it would give the Soviets too great an opportunity to widen out the discussion onto other Middle Eastern matters.

41 PREM 11/1219, Telegram No. 1361, from Cairo to F. O., 1st October, 1955. This was also sent to the Embassies in Washington and Moscow as well as the UK delegation, New York. In telegram No. 1360 of the same date, Trevelyan outlined the beginning of his conversation with Nasser. He also reported that it had been revealed that morning in an Arab News Agency interview with Nasser that the arms were actually to come from Czechoslovakia. Trevelyan thought this made no difference to the situation. Nasser confined his comments on specific details merely to confirmation of where exactly the arms were to come from.

Trevelyan himself was of the opinion that, although Nasser probably exaggerated the weakness of his position, nevertheless,

On reflection, I can see no hopeful course for the moment other than to press here and in Israel for a Palestine settlement without insisting on a prior abandonment of Egypt's arms deal. I doubt whether we can stop the deal in present circumstances unless we buy the Egyptians off with a more attractive offer or buy Molotov off at probably a stiff price.⁴²

These reports seemed to persuade Eden and Macmillan that there was no point in taking further measures with the Egyptian Government to try to stop the deal. On October 3rd Macmillan reported the state of play in America to be as follows.

In the light of the reports of our Ambassador from Cairo we do not believe it possible to force Nasser to call off the deal altogether by threats of retaliatory measures. I had, of course, specially in mind Trevelyan's warnings on this point to which you called my attention. So we shall have to live with it, even if we can limit it. Our interest, therefore, is not to represent it as a great diplomatic defeat but rather to try to minimise it and concentrate on increasing our benefits, moral and material to the other Arab States. The Americans accept this general policy and will follow it as far as they are able.⁴³

Interestingly, this seems to indicate that Eden came round more quickly than Macmillan to an acceptance of the deal as fait accompli.

Macmillan and Dulles met on the 3rd October and more or less finally set the Anglo-American attitude.⁴⁴ Both tended to take a relatively benign view of the motives behind Nasser's move. Dulles made the quite acute comment that Egypt seemed to be acting in the manner of Tito in trying to get the best from both sides in the Cold War. He considered that the Soviet⁵'s arms deal would only become critically important if it were to lead to an extension of their role in the Middle East generally.

Macmillan's line was though subtly different. He emphasised that from the reports of British and American Ambassadors in Cairo, it seemed that Nasser had felt there to be no alternative to the deal. Nasser "was a bit shaken by the reaction of the West" and did not want to "quarrel with the western powers". He was, according to this line of argument, forced into the hands of the Soviets against his better judgement and regretted it. Although accepting that the deal could not now be stopped Macmillan thought they should still try to force Nasser to give them details of exactly what was involved in the deal, and get an undertaking that he would not allow Soviet technicians into Egypt. This

42 PREM 11/1219, Telegram No. 1365, From Cairo to F. O., 2nd October, 1955. Trevelyan and the American representative in Cairo, Mr. Allen, had a series of conversations with Nasser from which Trevelyan came to the conclusion quoted above.

43 PREM 11/1219, Telegram No. 2362, From Washington to London, for Prime Minister from Secretary of State, 3rd October, 1955.

44 PREM 11/1291, Record of a Meeting Between Mr. Dulles and the Secretary of State, Held at the State Department Washington on 3rd October, 1955.

was as deep as Macmillan's analysis seems to have gone. It was Dulles who made the following very acute summary of what the Soviets were now about,

These events flowed from the Geneva Conference and from all that was implied in the relaxation of tension between the Soviet Government and the Western Powers. There had been a complete change in Soviet policy in that instead of treating everyone who was not on their side as an enemy they were now seeking to flatter and penetrate more independent States. This was likely to be most dangerous for the Western position, and incidents such as the Czechoslovak-Egyptian arms deal were likely to happen in all sorts of countries.⁴⁵

The discussion ended with agreement that conversations with the Soviets on the Middle East were not a good idea, both because of the possibility of giving away too much on Western policy and of Soviet devilment. And indeed on this issue that is very much were it was left to lie. To the "amazement" of Macmillan and Shuckburgh, Eden sent off a message to Bulganin on his own initiative on the 4th October, after it received Cabinet approval on the same day. However it was a message that the Foreign Office had succeeded in emasculating by excising the invitation to discussions between the two sides.⁴⁶

Macmillan did not take Dulles' analysis of the change in the Cold War particularly to heart. When he addressed the Cabinet on the issue of the arms deal on the 4th October he merely stated that,

The implications of these developments were serious. It seemed likely that, with the situation in the Far East stabilised and a situation of stalemate in Europe, the Russians were turning their attention to the Middle East.⁴⁷

Macmillan expanded on this idea in the Cabinet of the 20th October saying, "[I]n the Middle East the Russians had clearly embarked on a deliberate policy of opening another front in the cold war".⁴⁸

Nor was Macmillan to limit his point of view merely to the ears of the Cabinet. On 17th December, 1955, he broadcasted a chatty resume of the state of foreign affairs on the B.B.C. Home Service. He explained why the Government had not been willing to accede to Soviet requests for the disbanding of NATO and the banning of nuclear weapons at the Geneva Summit. Then he described the stalemate that had descended on

⁴⁵ Shuckburgh has some interesting comment in his diary entry of 3rd October on this meeting, which he attended,

Dulles treated us to a very interesting philosophical statement about methods of handling the Soviet "new policy". He said that if we consider ourselves entitled to go visiting Moscow, talking to the Russians, dealing between East and West, how can we complain about small countries like Egypt doing the same."

This hardly seems to be the narrow minded, bigoted Dulles of popular legend. The inverted commas around "new policy" are also interesting. *Descent to Suez*, p. 287

⁴⁶ CAB 128, CM(55), 34th Conclusion. Minute 8, 4th October, 1955. Also *Descent to Suez*, p. 286.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ CAB 128, CM(55), 36th Conclusions Minute 1, 20th October, 1955.

Europe after the failure of the Foreign Minister's Conference that October. As at the same time the situation in the Far East had calmed down, the Soviets were now turning their attentions to pastures new,

[T]he Russians have opened up, as you have seen, a new front in the Middle East. They looked about there and found that in that part of the world they could do great damage to ourselves and our friends. Why is this? Partly because the Middle East is one of the great stores of oil which is now being developed increasingly year by year... So obviously, if the Russians can get some control of the Middle East or at least throw it into turmoil, they can cause discontent and perhaps revolution among the peoples there and deal a serious blow to the economy and standard of living of the West.⁴⁹

Macmillan ended with a stirring call to the British people to resist the Soviets in their "turning to Asia", in the same manner as they had resisted them in Western Europe.

However, this is surely a little too facile. Macmillan's analysis viewed the change in the Soviets foreign policy as little more than a matter of tactics. Denied opportunity in the old battle grounds they were simply in the process of turning to new areas where there were opportunities. Yet the change was surely of a profounder nature than that, beyond merely the implementation of policy or the opening of a "new front". As Dulles had pointed out, in his meeting with the British on the 3rd October referred to above, there was a radical alteration going on in the ~~fundamentals~~ of policy, a view that by the end of the 1955 had much currency in the Northern Department. This was a concept which British politicians do not seem quite to have grasped at this point. Eden's comments at the Cabinets of the 4th and 20th October did nothing to expand on or detract from his Foreign Minister's view. Indeed his most striking idea on the 4th was on the question of Britain's role in the world in general. After concentrating on the effects of the Soviet's move specific to the British position in the Middle East, he went on to assert, in the words of the Cabinet minute taker,

Our interests in the Middle East were greater than those of the United States because of our dependence on Middle East oil, and our experience in the area was greater than theirs. We should not therefore allow ourselves to be restricted overmuch by reluctance to act without full American concurrence and support.⁵⁰

Evidence that Eden conceived of Britain's world role in singularly independent terms.

THE ASWAN DAM RIPOSTE

It is clear that Eden and Macmillan were rattled by what the Soviet Union had achieved in concluding its deal via the Czechs with the Egyptian Government. The extremity of the initial reaction can be explained by reference to shock as much as anything else. The

49 A copy of this address is to be found in the Northern Department files at FO 371 116695 NS 10520/40.

50 CAB 128, CM(55), 36th Conclusions Minute 1, 20th October, 1955.

Soviets had in A. Rubenstein's words "leapfrogged" over the painstaking defence structure the British had been developing through the Baghdad Pact. Yet, although they were impressed by the novelty of Soviet Foreign Policy in September 1955, they were not yet quite aware of what the significance of that novelty was. It was Dulles whose judgement proved more perceptive in this matter. The Cold War changed in 1955 and the Czech Arms deal was as important a part of that change as the Geneva Conference which preceded it.⁵¹ British policy in the Middle East, and the rest of the "under developed" world, could no longer be conceived in the way it had been. The Soviet Union had entered the contest for political favour and influence in areas previously denied it. Although it was to take a little more time for the exact formulation to work its way up through the Foreign Office, in practice British policy quickly had to accommodate itself to a new situation. The attitude that the British Government took to the financing of the Aswan Dam was the first clear example of this.⁵²

It soon became apparent that the Soviets were not to be content to let the matter rest at the supply of armaments. On the 10th October the Soviet intention to offer finance for the Aswan Dam, amongst other projects, was made public in Cairo.⁵³ On the 14th October Trevelyan made the following estimation of the Egyptian attitude to the Soviet offer,

If the Russians make offers which will ostensibly enable Egypt to accelerate her development projects, the Egyptians will find them very attractive. The Egyptians may want to show their political independence by accepting some Russian offers, but they may also want to show the West that they have not fallen completely into the Communist lap.⁵⁴

Shuckburgh in his diary entry for the 17th October looked back on a "desperately busy week" and concluded that his "main objective now is to prevent Egypt taking economic aid from USSR - e.g. for the High Aswan Dam".⁵⁵ It was directly in terms of competition with the Soviet Union that the British Government now set about canvassing support for a Western counter bid.

51 Most studies of Soviet policy toward the Third World take the Czech arms deal as their starting point e.g. A. Rubenstein op. cit. or F. Fukuyama and A. Korbonski (eds.), *The Soviet Union and the Third World, the Last Three Decades*. It was effectively the first salvo in the "new cold" war that Dulles referred to in his discussion with Macmillan above.

52 Diane Kunz in *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis*, pp. 48-57, sees the Anglo-American bid to finance the Dam in the context of a new "economic diplomacy".

53 R. Lamb, op. cit., p. 173. Lamb makes reference to a Foreign Office paper at FO 371 115876, in which it was stated that "there was a serious danger that the Middle East "will slip away from us... the Egyptians, the Saudi Arabians, and now the Russians are making great efforts to undermine our position and spending large sums of money"". It was pointed out that the Middle East was not only vital as a source of oil, but it also provided Britain with some £600 millions in earnings on assets held in the area, which went a considerable way to paying for Britain's energy requirements. Eden's approach to the Middle East when talking with the Soviet leaders whilst they were in London during April, 1956, was informed by such considerations, see Chapter 8.

54 PREM 11/1282, Telegram No. 1442, Cairo to F. O., 14th October, 1955.

55 *Descent to Suez*, p. 290

At the Cabinet meeting of 20th October the Chancellor of the Exchequer raised the issue of the need to gain American support for the financing of the Western offer.⁵⁶ It was pointed out that at least half of the necessary money would have to come from the United States as Egypt could certainly not afford the £33-£46 million the Dam was estimated to cost. This information, along with the rationale that underlay British policy, that is the forestalling of the Soviets, was relayed to the Washington Embassy on the same day.⁵⁷ In the following negotiations with the Americans it transpired that they tended to view the situation in a less dramatic light. At the Cabinet meeting on the 25th October it was even suggested by Eden that Britain might try to put forward a package without American support, such was the importance he attached to it. The Cabinet Minutes record his opinion as follows,

The Prime Minister said that this contract, if it could be secured for the consortium, would provide the most effective counterpoise possible to Russian penetration in Egypt for it would give us a controlling influence over the Nile waters... But it would be essential to act quickly if we were to avoid the risk of the contract slipping through our hands.⁵⁸

American reluctance might be stepped around by approaching private American construction firms individually, or by going alone into the deal with the Europeans. Although the finance ministers at the meeting were rather less enthusiastic about this idea than Eden, nonetheless it is a striking indication of how seriously the Government, and Eden in particular, took the threat of Soviet economic diplomacy in Egypt.⁵⁹

It was not until the 17th December that the Western offer was finalised by the World Bank and the United States and that was only after further agonising flutters that Nasser was leaning towards the Soviets after all.⁶⁰ In the aftermath of an eruption of nervousness on the 27th November Trevelyan telegraphed to London that Nasser, "has not yet made up his mind to get the dam financed from the Communists", and that though he had authorised tentative negotiations with the Soviets he still would prefer to accept a Western offer.⁶¹ However, ultimately it was the British and Americans who were to balk at carrying the project through despite painstaking negotiations up to the Summer of 1956. But this an issue to which we shall return later.

56 CAB 128, CM(55), 36th Conclusion, Minute 1, 20th October, 1955.

57 PREM 11/1282, Telegram No. 4831, F. O. to Washington, 20th October, 1955.

58 CAB 128, CM(55), 37th Conclusions Minute 3, 25th October, 1955.

59 The President of the Board of Trade, Peter Thornycroft, and the Chancellor, R. A. B. Butler.

60 For detail on the discussions see *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis*, pp. 52-55.

61 PREM 11/1282, Telegram No. 1815, Cairo to F. O. Shuckburgh put the panic rather luridly in his diary.

There is a terrific scare that the Egyptians are going to give the Aswan Dam Project to the Russians. It begins to look as if Nasser is even more unreliable than he seemed, and may even be consciously handing over his country to Communism. But I do not quite believe that. I think he thinks himself supremely clever, and is playing East off against West to the last moment.

* * *

In September, 1955, the British Government faced a radical new departure in Soviet foreign policy. Although it was not yet fully apparent to many in London, not least Macmillan and Eden, quite how profound this development was, Whitehall was sufficiently exercised by the Soviet diplomacy to undertake an expensive and uncertain counter attack in the shape of the Aswan Dam proposal. For the first time London felt it had to take account of an intrusion of Soviet political influence into an area of traditional British pre-eminence. This was an intrusion which was to develop far outwith the confines of the Middle East even as 1955 came to an end. With the Bulganin and Khrushchev tour of India and Burma British observers of the Soviet Union began to see a very clear pattern emerging. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 7

Soviet Economic Diplomacy in the "Under-developed World"

Bulganin and Khrushchev go to Asia

"The moment of decision is upon us in a big way on world economic policy. So long as the Soviets had a monopoly on covert subversion and threats of military aggression, and we had a monopoly on Santa Claus, some kind of seesaw game could be played. But now the Soviets are muscling in on Santa Claus as well, which puts us in a terribly dangerous position".

C. D. Jackson

The Czech-Egyptian arms deal was not to be the only new adventure in Soviet foreign policy during 1955. In late November and early December, 1955 Bulganin and Khrushchev went on an extended propaganda drive around India and South East Asia, spreading economic blandishments and anti-Western vitriol wherever they went. Before going on to examine the effect which this had upon the British understanding of Soviet foreign policy, there follows a precis of the itinerary.

The tour provided the Soviet leaders with an opportunity to pay back the visits which Nehru and U Nu, the Premier of Burma, had made to Moscow earlier in 1955. Khrushchev and Bulganin caused the greatest publicity splash whilst in India from 18th November to 1st December, being given a tumultuous welcome by the Indian people. From the 1st December to the 7th they moved on to Burma where their rhetoric seemed less effective on a popular level, but their economic assistance was more warmly received by the Burmese Government. As a coda the Soviets went to Afghanistan where their contact with the public was severely circumscribed by the antediluvian Afghan Government. The Afghan leader's logic did not go so far, however, as to temper their enthusiasm for Soviet economic aid. All in all it was judged in Moscow to have been a considerable success.¹

It was less successful in maintaining the Geneva Spirit, already considerably reduced by the beginning of the tour. The British, as the former colonial power, felt targeted by the comments which Khrushchev and Bulganin had felt it appropriate to make. Khrushchev in particular had said some things which were not to be forgotten easily in London. Whilst in India Khrushchev blamed Britain directly for the partition of the old Empire on its dissolution and went so far as to claim in a speech of the 24th November at the Indian-Soviet society reception in Bombay that "the British, French, and Americans started the Second World War, sent troops against our country and

¹ At least if we judge by the reports which Bulganin and Khrushchev gave to the Supreme Soviet on the 30th December which were published in *Pravda* of the same day. There are English translations of these speeches in *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, Vol. VII, No. 51, pp. 13-17 and No. 52, pp. 14-20. See *Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II*, pp. 148-163 for an evaluation of the significance of Khrushchev's new policies towards the "under-developed" world.

these troops were the troops of Hitler's Germany".² This was the most notorious outburst of a number of tub-thumping speeches which Khrushchev gave. Bulganin maintained rather more reserve, but in essence dealt with similar themes.

Moreover, there was unease in Whitehall as to the implications of the tour for future Soviet foreign policy. The emphasis which the Soviet leaders had placed upon economic assistance and the suitability of Soviet models of economic development to the "under-developed" world heralded a serious challenge to residual British economic interests in India and South East Asia. It is this analysis of the Soviets activities and their implications for Britain in turn which the following chapter will examine.

Not content merely to look on, the visit in January, 1956, of Eden to Washington was conceived as something of a counter blast. However the understanding of Soviet foreign policy held in Whitehall was not, as we shall see, always identical to that of Downing Street.

THE BRITISH ANALYSIS

The British interpreted Bulganin and Khrushchev's tourism on two levels. For the Politicians the most important consideration seems to have been the spleen that had been vented in Britain's direction, both implicitly and directly. This caused a great deal of offence in London, even to the extent of bringing the planned visit by the diumvirate to Britain into doubt. Eden and the Cabinet spent a substantial length of time discussing this question and it was not until February 1956 that they finally decided that they should not cancel their invitation to the Soviets. Khrushchev and Bulganin were apparently blithely unaware of the contradictory impressions that the two sides to their policy of peaceful coexistence were creating.

However there were also important long term developments which were of more concern in Whitehall. Firstly the Soviets' tour signified to British officials a new enthusiasm for Asia in preference to Europe as the cold war's battle ground. Although this point was equally obvious to politicians, where Civil Servants and their masters differed was in the appreciation of quite how fundamental a change in the Soviet's attitude to the cold war that this development implied. Secondly it seemed to the Foreign Office, as well as the Treasury, the Board of Trade and the Ministry of Supply, that the armoury the Soviets were using was profoundly different from that to which they had become used. The Asian tour underlined the fact that the new and crucial weapon in the fight for political influence in the area was to be economic aid. Aid to non-aligned countries, which despite tending to an anti-western bias, were by no stretch of the imagination Communist. This was complementary to the military

² Published in *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, 26th November. There is a translation of the speech in *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, Vol. VII, No. 48, pp. 3-4. Indeed there is a pretty full compendium of the Bulganin and Khrushchev South East Asia Opus in Vol. VII of the *Current Digest*.

assistance which had heralded the Soviet's dramatic entrance into third world politics in Egypt. By the Twentieth Party Congress in February, 1956, British officialdom was already quite familiar with the new policy which Khrushchev gave his ideological imprimatur to.

There was indeed some consideration outwith the Foreign Office given to the issue of Soviet economic diplomacy in the "under developed" world immediately before Bulganin and Khrushchev's tour.³ As was discussed in the previous chapter concern for Soviet activity in this area had been growing since 1954. The Minister of Supply, Reginald Maudling, expressed his worry about the potentialities of the Soviet economy in the fight for influence in the non-committed world in a letter to R. A. Butler of 24th November, 1955.

I believe I have mentioned to you before my concern that the Russians may start using their economic strength in the cold war. With the resources they have and, even more important, the control over their economy and their export prices that they can exert, it is clear that they could easily stage a major economic offensive and it is difficult to see why they have not done so before.⁴

He went on to question what the British attitude should be if the Soviets were to expand from their first moves in the Middle East, particularly of course in arms, and their offer of a steel mill to India. Should they attempt to forestall the Soviets at every turn, or given the hideous expense of such a policy, would it be better to "call their bluff".

The Treasury also took a relatively sanguine view of the Soviet economy's capabilities. In their opinion, although heavy industrial products tended to be crude by Western standards, they were competitively priced and might even have certain advantages in third world markets. Sir. G.L.F. Bolton sent his positive analysis of Soviet economic potentialities to Sir Leslie Rowan on 19th December, 1955, a letter which Rowan thought important enough to circulate around a number of departments including the Foreign Office. Bolton came to the following conclusion,

3 *FRUS* 1955-57, Vol. IX, pp. 8-10. There were also those in America who were becoming concerned. On 10th November, 1955, C.D. Jackson an ex-special assistant to the President sent a letter to Nelson Rockefeller, who was still a special assistant, emphasising his concern for the new Soviet economic policy. He expressed himself pithily, if rather simplistically as follows,

The moment of decision is upon us in a big way on world economic policy. So long as the Soviets had a monopoly on covert subversion and threats of military aggression, and we had a monopoly on Santa Claus, some kind of seesaw game could be played. But now the Soviets are muscling in on Santa Claus as well, which puts us in a terribly dangerous position.

Needless to say this analysis ignores the substantial role already played covertly by the US in operations such as the overthrow in 1952 of the Prime Minister of Iran.

4 FO 371 116716 NS 1123/16. Maudling to Butler, 24th November, 1955. Clearly Soviet economic potential was very soon to be cashed in. Maudling's letter was timely. The Chancellor's response, dated 6th December after the deluge had begun, was to suggest the initiation of further study and discussion. These studies formed the briefs background for the Washington Conference, see below.

We are now faced by the entry into world trade, not only as a seller but as a buyer as well, of a power disposing of far greater resources, human technical and material, than, for example, Japan, when she emerged in the latter years of the 19th century as an industrial power... There is no prospect of stopping this development (except by force) than there was of stopping the expansion of North America, and it is in North American terms that we should think of the emerging economic power of the Soviet Union and its satellites.⁵

As far as the Foreign Office was concerned the "economic offensive" had in fact already begun. On December 2nd, 1956, Sir William Hayter sent a despatch to London which examined the situation vis a vis Soviet-British trade over the past year. Although he came to the conclusion that there had been little increase in Soviet trade with the West generally over the period and did not think that it was likely any would happen in the future, Soviet external trade policy had undergone an important change in other directions.⁶ Hayter drew attention to a particular trend which he thought had disturbing implications for the future.

There is however one field in which a dramatic change has occurred, i.e. Soviet trade with the Middle East and South East Asia. Though the direct effect on British trade is not yet great, this development is potentially dangerous to us both politically and economically.⁷

Furthermore, as Maudling did, Hayter thought that the Soviet command economy had certain advantages over the West in using economic aid in the battle for political influence. It could target the projects of greatest political impact, and undertake them, regardless of their basic commercial viability. Western businessmen were not free to act with such financial indiscretion. Nor was Western aid necessarily exploited to best propaganda advantage. Businessmen acted as individuals, and their assistance was

5 FO 371 116716 NS 1123/20, Bolton to Rowan, 19th December, 1955.

6 FO 371 116716 NS 1123/12, Sir William Hayter, Moscow, to Selwyn Lloyd, London, 2nd December, 1955. Hayter thought that the Soviets would buy from the British what they needed if the prices were competitive, but that they would be more likely for political reasons to favour West Germany. He summed the situation up as follows,

Foreign trade does not represent more than 1% of the gross national product of the Soviet Union, and it is estimated that four fifths of that trade is carried on within the Soviet orbit. It seems to me unlikely that the Soviet Union will ever expand its trade with the West very significantly. It is inconceivable that the Soviet Union would rely on the West...

7 *ibid.* Hayter went on to detail some of the indicators of this new trend,

Mr. Malcolm Macdonald's [the High Commissioner in India] despatch no. 160 of November 15 notes that Indo-Soviet trade has expanded six times since 1953. The Soviet Union has been a major participant in trade fairs throughout the Middle East and South East Asia, Soviet technicians are erecting a steel plant in India and the services of Soviet technicians are offered abroad. The satellites are playing a large part in this campaign. I note that it is estimated that the Soviet bloc could export to the free world £500 million worth of capital equipment annually; this might have a telling effect if directed towards undeveloped countries.

Hohler in his reply to the above despatch did however question the figure of £500 million. He suggested that it was probably a typing error as according to all their information the figure was about half the Embassy's estimate.

often hidden in wider international frameworks, such as the Colombo Plan. Meanwhile the Soviets, acting on the level of a collective state, could draw out maximum political kudos from their economic aid. Also, Hayter cautioned that Soviet capabilities should not be underestimated, either in technology or in their ability to produce the kind of capital equipment that the "Under Developed" World needed. He concluded his report as follows,

I am not competent, nor have I the facts here, to decide how great is the Soviet threat to *areas where our political and economic influence has not hitherto suffered serious challenge except from an ally*. [my italics] I do not think that we have yet much to fear in the world as a whole from the Soviet Union as an external trader. But in certain areas, particularly the under developed countries, on which it seems that the Soviet Government is now concentrating its attention, we have much to lose and I do not think we shall hold our ground without great effort.

Not only were Soviet methods new, but she was also expanding into terra nova. This is a point which was to be repeated again and again by British officials and politicians in the succeeding months. The cold war was expanding its scope.

The Northern Department expressed strong agreement with this in its reply to Hayter's despatch.⁸ In his minute on it of December 30th H. A. F. Hohler, in line with Hayter's time scale, commented that the change in Soviet policy had been developing over the past 18 months. Unlike Maudling the Foreign Office was aware that matters had been coming to a head for some time. The despatch, according to Hohler, was opportune as Whitehall was abuzz with what the Soviets were trying to do in Asia, which had been dramatically underlined by Bulganin and Khrushchev's flamboyant progress.⁹

However as far as the politicians were concerned the most immediate problem caused by the Soviets' Asian antics was their inflammatory rhetoric. This comes out quite clearly as the main concern in Eden's brief treatment of the effects of the tour in his memoirs.¹⁰ The first indication given to the Foreign Office of the unease that

8 *ibid.* Hohler made the following comment in his reply,

Your despatch... of December 2 about Soviet trade policy has been read with very great interest in Whitehall. It arrived most conveniently at a time when everyone here in London was devoting much thought to the significance of the Soviet economic drive in the under-developed countries, and to the relationship between this and the prospects for our own and other western trade with the Soviet Union.

9 See above on the Northern Department's view of Soviet interest in the third world from early 1955 and below for the British Ambassador to Burma's interesting view on the length of the "economic offensive's" gestation.

10 *Full Circle*, pp. 354-355. In this two page treatment Eden deals specifically with whether or not the visit by Bulganin and Khrushchev to Britain should be allowed to go on, giving his rationale behind the decision not to cancel. In only one sentence does he refer to the matter of deeper concern in the Foreign Office, and for that matter in other Departments of State, namely the Soviet economic offensive in Asia.

Khrushchev's comments were causing Eden was reported to Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick by Macmillan in a minute of the 5th December.¹¹ He commented that some of the Prime Minister's Cabinet colleagues were pressing him to send a message to the itinerant evangelists, intended to lead either to the end of anti-British propaganda or the cancellation of the visit to Britain. Macmillan was "not very keen" on this idea and thought that it would be better to await the Soviet leaders' return home before taking any action. In the meantime he asked if Hayter could be quizzed as to exactly what the Soviets were trying to achieve. Whether they really wanted to go on with the visit, or were they attempting to push the blame for cancellation on the British?

Before Hayter's reply came through, the Cabinet met on the 6th December to discuss how they should react to Khrushchev's speechifying.¹² There was no discussion at all of the implications of economic diplomacy for Britain's position. More crucial to the Cabinet seems to have been the question of national honour. The Marquis of Salisbury in particular considered that if the Soviets had not withdrawn their calculated insults by the time of the April visit, it would cause great damage to British prestige if it were not cancelled. However Salisbury, a man for whom questions of personal integrity and self-respect were unusually important, was something of a lone voice.¹³ The "general view", according to the minutes, was more hesitant and a decision was deferred until further discussion and consultations had taken place. Presumably this referred, amongst other things, to the Embassy's view on what the Soviets were attempting to achieve.

The Cabinet then generally agreed the following rationale behind the Soviet's actions,

[I]t might be that having concluded that the risk of early nuclear war was slight, they saw the immediate struggle for power in terms of a struggle for influence over Eastern peoples, and had decided that abuse would help them in undermining the confidence of Eastern countries in Western powers.

There was no mention at all of the role played by economic aid in the realisation of this Soviet objective. The Cabinet conclusions present an interesting and rather immature view of what peaceful co-existence actually meant.

In spite of the provocation which had been offered it was too early yet to take the view that peaceful co-existence with the Soviet Union was unattainable and until we were in a position to bring all the neutral powers into the

It was obvious that the direct references to Britain must cause offence in this country and make many doubt the value of a visit from the Soviet leaders in such circumstances. *It also seemed clear that Marshal Bulganin and Mr. Khrushchev were, for the present, more interested in making friends and influencing people in Asia than in Europe.* [My Italics]

11 FO 371 116687 NS 10512/115. Minute from Macmillan to Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick. 5th December, 1955.

12 PREM 11/1606, CM(56), 45th Conclusions, Minute 3, 6th December, 1955.

13 See *Anthony Eden*, pp. 365-371 and 381. Rhodes James makes clear that this side to Salisbury's nature had led him to risk resignation threats on a number of occasions.

Western orbit it would remain to our advantage to pursue a policy of peaceful co-existence, if the terms on which it could be secured were not humiliating.

Clearly the executive still cherished the Churchillian idea of a grand settlement of differences that would lead to a general peace, on all levels of Great Power activity. Equally clearly, at least in retrospect, and in prospect by early 1956, this was not what the Soviet themselves wanted.

It was pointed out by persons unnamed in the Cabinet minutes that over the years some pretty stiff things had been said by members of British Governments about the Soviet Union. Having agreed that excerpts from both the most notorious of Khrushchev's speeches and the most acrid British comments should be circulated together, the Cabinet deferred its decision until further discussion. Indeed the decision was not to be made for some time. The next Cabinet meeting to consider the matter was not held until the 11th January, 1956 and only by the 16th of February was a definite decision made in favour of going ahead with the visit. In between there was to be some degree of humming and hawing between the Moscow Embassy and London.¹⁴

Hayter's response to Macmillan's inquiry came back in two telegrams of the 7th December.¹⁵ He argued that the Soviets had not intended to make quite the anti-British splash that they had. Rather they became carried away by their own rhetoric. Hayter also made a clear distinction between Bulganin and Khrushchev, the latter being the main perpetrator of offending propaganda.¹⁶ The Northern Department was not so charitable in the construction which it placed on events.¹⁷ They agreed with the view that the Cabinet had taken the previous day.¹⁸ Nevertheless the Department did not think that the Soviets were trying to get the British to cancel the visit. All effort, they thought should be taken to ensure that the odium of cancellation should fall on the Soviets. After considering a variety of possible reactions, the best seemed to be a calm and measured public answer to Khrushchev's "slanders" by either the Prime Minister or Foreign Secretary. This was the line which Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick had taken and

14 PREM 11/1624, CM(56), 3rd Conclusions, Minute 4, 11th January, 1956 and CM(56), 15th Conclusions, Minute 7, dated 16th February 1956.

15 FO 371 169487 NS 10512/119. Moscow Telegrams No. 1443 and 1444, 7th December, 1955.

16 Although he admitted that this might have signified little more than the differences in their two personalities.

17 FO 371 116687 NS 10512/119. Minute by J. G. Ward, 7th December, 1955.

18 Ward added the following to the Cabinet's opinion.

There also seems force in the Yugoslav Ambassador's comment to Sir I. Kirkpatrick that the Soviet leaders are probably victims of their own propaganda and genuinely believe much of the abuse they level at the Western record in Asia. In any case, this anti-British campaign in India fits in with recent manifestations of a sharper Soviet policy shown at Geneva and by their drive in the Middle East.

This seems rather closer to the appreciation of the South East Asia tour's significance which was eventually to prevail.

which Eden was to take in the House of Commons on the 12th December. As regarded the actual visit itself Macmillan chose, in line with the Cabinet, to defer his decision.¹⁹

Thus Eden, by way of a stop gap measure, in his reply to the adjournment debate on the 12th December, rebutted the specific Soviet allegations about British colonialism. In response to Khrushchev's charge that Britain had sought to steal the last crust of bread from the mouths of the Burmese, he pointed out that in reality substantial economic aid had already been given by Britain through the Colombo Plan since 1951.²⁰ He argued that it was in fact the Soviets who were the modern colonialists and that they had been recognised as such by politicians in non-committed countries. It was on this point that the matter was allowed to rest, at least in the public eye, until the final decision about the visit had been made.²¹

Expanding a little from the narrow theme of Khrushchev's rhetoric, in a letter dated December 13th 1955, Sir William Hayter offered his interim comment on the significance of recent events in relation to Soviet foreign policy.²² Although deferring any more permanent assessment until matters had been made clearer at the meeting of the Supreme Soviet scheduled for December 23rd, the wisdom of which the Northern Department entirely agreed with, he did make the following points.²³ Europe had apparently been "put on ice" at Geneva and now the Soviets were turning to pastures

19 This he scribbled on the 8th December at the end of Ward's 7th December, Northern Department minute.

20 Khrushchev made a variety of such accusations while in Burma, for example at Mandalay airport on 6th December, of which a translation is in the *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, Vol. VII, No. 49, p.6. Khrushchev also repeated his peculiar analysis of the cause of World War II at Rangoon in which Hitler acted as Mr. Chamberlain's poodle. Khrushchev went on to cite the Crimean War as evidence of Britain's undying hostility towards the Soviet Union without any apparent irony. He also made much of the Soviet's ability to absorb Burmese rice surpluses. His diatribe was duly printed in *Pravda* 7th December, 1955. There is a translation in the *Current Digest*, Vol. VII, No. 49, pp. 6-9. On the Colombo Plan See *Ernest Bevin, Foreign Secretary*, pp. 743-750.

21 *Hansard*, Vol. 547. Clos. 955-957. There followed an analysis of peaceful coexistence on similar lines to that of the Cabinet's on the 6th December. After reasserting that "fundamentally" Communist policy aimed at world domination he went on to say,

How then-and here I come back to the Asia problem-can there be real co-existence between Soviet Russia and ourselves, since we would never accept Communism or they, presumably, the kind of Parliamentary system in which we believe? Well, we have always been willing to try to work out this problem, and we are still willing to do it now, because we cannot believe that any Government, knowing the real nature and consequences of modern war, would lead their country to the brink. But, co-existence, if it is to succeed, has to be a two way traffic, and equal tolerance and understanding has to be shown by the countries on either side.

22 Edén had clearly not yet cottoned on to the idea that what the Soviets were up to in Asia was in truth all part of their peaceful coexistence policy. Indeed there is something of a logical hiccup here. After asserting that Communism did still want to dominate the world, he then expressed the implicitly idle hope that the Soviets could be made, somehow, to agree to forget their reason for existence.

22 FO 371 122782 NS 1021/8. Sir William Hayter to Mr. J. G. Ward, Moscow, 13th December, 1955.

23 The Northern Department was also in agreement with the preliminary assessment which Hayter went on to lay out. FO 371 122782 NS 1021/8, Minute by Mr. J. G. Ward, 20th December, 1955.

new in Asia.²⁴ Bulganin's and Khrushchev's romp to Burma was the most significant indication of this fundamental geographical shift in their interests.²⁵ This was by now becoming something of a commonplace. Hayter made the following wry comment on where the summer Summit amity fitted in,

In this context the proposed visit to England is probably a slight embarrassment. It was accepted in the full flush of the July Geneva bonhomie, but is now somewhat inhibiting when the policy is one of attacks on the Western position in Asia, and to a lesser extent N.A.T.O.

However considering that the acceptance of a British invitation for a Parliamentary visit had just been published in the Soviet papers, Hayter did not think that Bulganin and Khrushchev wanted to cancel.²⁶ With this J.G. Ward in London also agreed. There was no mention of the role of Soviet economic power in their diplomacy, the letter being conceived as an answer to the specific problem of where the proposed visit to Britain fitted in. The letter met with the approval of Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick and was passed on to No 10 where it "was read with great interest" according to the note of appreciation which Ward sent of to Moscow in reply. Clearly the Embassy's view on the points above was not uncongenial to that of Eden.

²⁴ This very much calls to mind the view that Macmillan took of Soviet policy by late 1955, See above.

²⁵ FO 371 116694 NS 10520/6. Mr. H. A. F. Hohler in a letter of 13th December to N. J. A. Cheetham of the British Delegation to NATO headquarters commented that the slant of the Soviet's propaganda was another indication of where their interests had turned.

[Cheetham had rather condescendingly suggested that Khrushchev's comments on the causes of World War Two were for the consumption of the "gullible illiterates" of Asia] I do not think that in general Soviet propaganda to illiterate or semi-illiterate peoples tends to dwell very much on the origins of the Second World War, as the peoples in question can only have a small interest in matters so far removed from their own experience. Khrushchev and Bulganin's descent into South-East Asia is a new development in Soviet policy, and the main lines of Soviet propaganda which they have been concerned to put across have dealt with the history of problems nearer to hand to their audiences.

²⁶ Hayter made the following comment on the personal morality of the Soviet leaders,

A rather disquieting feature of recent weeks has been the increase in unashamed mendacity, both in the speeches of Soviet leaders and in the press. Khrushchev must know perfectly well that his account of the causes of the last war, [that Hitler had attacked the Soviet Union with the connivance of the West] his description of the partition of India and his statement that the people of Kashmir has made its choice in favour of India are all inaccurate and misleading, and the servile press here follows this lead with alacrity.

H. A. F. Hohler, however, in his letter quoted above [footnote 21] of 13th December thought that, "it is very likely that Khrushchev himself believes in the version of history which he sought to propagate in South-East Asia, and which stems after all from the basic premises of Communist dogma, that there is an irreconcilable opposition between capitalism and Communism, and that capitalism breeds war".

THE VIEW FROM THE EMBASSIES AND THE HIGH COMMISSION

The importance of economic aid in the Soviets' strategy became even more apparent to British observers as 1955 wore to its end. Reports were sent to London from the Embassies in Burma, Afghanistan and the High Commissioner in India, giving their assessment of what the Soviet's tour had achieved. It was clear to all three posts that the most singular development was the Soviet use of economic power in an attempt to undermine western influence. Khrushchev's rhetoric had, in their opinion, been the least successful part of his diplomacy. More dangerous in the long term was the aid which the Soviets were now prepared to offer to noncommitted Asian countries. Particularly in Burma the Soviets made very effective use of this new asset in their flirtation and the British Embassy in Rangoon expressed its grave concern for the consequences of this success. In India and Afghanistan a more phlegmatic attitude prevailed on the part of British officials towards the Soviet achievement. Largely, it would seem, because Soviet offers of economic goodies met with much less receptiveness, or were much less efficacious, there than in Burma.

The South East Asia and Middle East Department of the Commonwealth Relations Office put out the following preliminary appreciation of the Soviet's intentions in India, dated 17th December, 1955. They considered that the Soviets had had two main objectives,

- (a) To persuade Indian government that policy of non-alignment was compatible with close political relationship with Soviets and that Soviet policy was to support the aspirations of peoples in Asia against Western Powers who still have imperialist designs.
- (b) To make a direct appeal to the people of India by playing to the crowd.

At the level of P. R. the tour had been an undoubted success. It was, the C. R. O. observed somewhat condescendingly, the kind of thing the Indian people enjoyed. However, Government circles and "the more responsible newspapers" had quickly become disturbed by the vehemence of the Soviet's anti-Western speechmaking. Indeed they thought that the propaganda aspect might actually have been counter productive. Nor had the Soviets succeeded in pressing their economic or military favours on the Indians. Overall the only advantage gained might have been in Communism's popular appeal.²⁷

27 PREM 11/1606. Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office No. 368, to UK. High Commissioners. 17th December, 1955. On the issue of economic aid it made the following comment: "the economic announcement makes it clear that the Soviets have failed in their objective of concluding precise economic arrangements during the visit which would bind the economies of the country closely together and enable Soviet technicians to enter India". Technicians seem to have been regarded as a particular bugbear in the mid-1950's. The report concluded that to the official mind the tour may have highlighted the attractiveness of the Commonwealth and the dangers of co-operation with the Soviets.

This initial prognosis was further expanded on in a C. R. O circular to U. K. High Commissioners of 28th December, 1955, which was produced after consultation with the High Commissioner in India himself.²⁸ It made a similar assessment to that above about the effect of the visit on the population. It considered that Bulganin's and Khrushchev's championing of the anti-colonialist and non-aligned causes had won them sympathy. Indeed they even considered that their flattery of India's policy had resulted in a less critical Indian attitude towards Soviet activities. This they feared might lure Nehru further into the Bear's den than perhaps he had bargained for. Yet even so the anti-Western acid which they had spilt had caused some offence in Government and journalistic circles. Although the Soviet visit seemed to have enjoyed little tangible economic success, fears were expressed for what might yet happen on this still novel front. There had been a commitment to sell a further one million tons of Soviet steel to India, but this was not considered important. More ominously, despite the lack of public agreements on economic aid or arms supply which the British had feared would be made, they were worried that behind the scenes negotiations had been started towards more substantial Soviet involvement in the Indian economy. There was concern that the long-term situation might still move in the Soviet's favour because of their ability to offer very large financial inducements. It was this, rather than Khrushchev's hyperbole, that posed the most serious threat to the Western interest.²⁹ Overall they considered, due to the lack of any tangibly immediate result, that, "in terms of immediate practical results visit has in the main been less value to the Soviet Leaders than was to be feared".

This rather sanguine view of the Soviets' achievement was not reflected by the Burma Embassy's report on the road show halt in their patch. Indeed the Burma leg saw the most vicious and specifically anti-British attacks, delivered in a series of impassioned speeches by Khrushchev. The British Ambassador, Mr. Gore-Booth, in his despatch of 19th December put the visit in the context of a growing Communist campaign in the "under-developed" world. A campaign which he dated back to 1954,

The visit marked a climax of Communist psychological, political and economic penetration, begun by the visit of Chou En-lai to Rangoon in the summer of 1954, furthered by the Burmese Economic Mission to Moscow and the Satellite capitals in February 1955, and by U Nu's [The Burmese Prime

28 PREM 11/1606, Outward Telegram from the Commonwealth Relations Office No. 384 to UK. High Commissioners, 28th December, 1955.

29 This matter was to cause increasing concern. The effect of Soviet economic penetration into India was the subject of a Commonwealth Relations Office Brief of 23rd January for the Washington Conference, FO 371 123203 ZP 28/90. It stressed the importance of encouraging the Americans to increase their aid to India as a means to forestall the Soviets.

They [the Americans] have been inclined in the past to talk of restricting their aid to India. As is said in SSC(56)4 [a Cabinet Office Brief by the Treasury which I have sadly been unable to trace], which has been prepared as a Brief on the Soviet Bloc's economic offensive for use during the Prime Minister's visit to Washington, we do want to urge the Americans to give more aid to India.

Minister] subscription to the doctrine of positive coexistence on the occasion of the visit of Marshal Tito in February last.³⁰

Khrushchev, Gore-Booth conjectured, saw Burma as an Indian and British sphere of influence.³¹ This was not a situation which Khrushchev was prepared to allow to continue,

As the Soviet visit progressed it seemed to be the intention of the visitors to deliver direct blows at the British position in Burma and, having undermined our economic position here, to inflict the maximum damage on our surviving influence to remove a barrier to long-term Soviet plans for the Communist domination of Burma;...

Interestingly though Gore-Booth did not consider that the most publicised and obviously anti-western part of the visit, the speechmaking, had had a particularly important impact. Khrushchev's antics were an "interesting example of the diplomacy of appealing to the people over the heads of their Government", but little more. On the whole, he thought, the Burmese had already passed through their intense anti-colonial phase immediately before and after independence and so Khrushchev had failed quite to hit the right note. Moreover the behaviour of the Soviet contingent had been "boorish and inconsiderate by any standards", to the extent of causing embarrassment to the Burmese leaders. Although some noted hot beds of Communism, such as the University, received the speeches enthusiastically, more dangerous to Western interests in the Embassy's opinion was the economic aid that the Soviets had offered.

If the propaganda speeches were addressed to the youthful and semi-literate, the economic results were such as to appeal direct to the Government. At one stroke the Soviet leaders gave the impression of removing the Burmese fears of a rice surplus by simply offering to take it whatever its size. This was the supreme gesture of Russia's ability and willingness to help Burma in her economic problems and in the implementation of her development programme, so recently placed in jeopardy by the failure of the rice market. The implication was obvious. The Soviet Union could help where the West

30 PREM 11/1606 DB 1631/25, British Embassy Burma. Mr. Gore Booth to Mr. Macmillan, dated 19th December, 1955. The quote continues

Chou En-lai had beguiled U Nu with his personal mixture of charm and impressiveness, and had inflated his confidence in his ability to handle the Communist powers. Thakin Tin in his [economic] mission to Moscow had revealed Burma's financial plight, her desperate anxiety for her economic future, and [particularly for her rice trade], in the absence of any help from the West; Marshal Tito's theories had spread before U Nu the vision, particularly attractive to him, of serving the cause of peace by treating the Communists and the West on equal terms.

31 Largely due to Tito's 1955 February visit and the surprise he expressed at the extent of surviving British "traditions, ideals and influence". These opinions, he thought, may well have arrived in Moscow via Belgrade.

had failed, and where the United States had aggravated Burma's troubles by her surplus rice disposal policy.³²

There was little doubt in the Embassy that the success of the Soviet visit had hinged on their ability to buy the Burmese with massive economic subsidies.³³ This was the crucial difference between it and the Indian leg of the tour. Whereas little in the way of economic blandishment had been accepted, or perhaps offered, in India, Burma had been eager for anything that the Soviets had to give and the Soviets had come bearing a wide variety of gifts. This is what caused the rather different British assessments of the tour's success. Even in India unease was expressed that more Soviet aid might be in hand for the future. Economic diplomacy had clearly become central to the new Soviet foreign policy.³⁴ It had also become a matter for grave concern to British observers in the field.

The last stop of the tour in Afghanistan was by contrast a much less spectacular affair. Largely because of their authoritarian and reactionary nature, the Afghani leaders were keen to play down the importance of the visit. There was to be no repetition of the grandiose and "surprising spectacle" that had hit India and then, going up a gear, swept on to Burma.³⁵ The visit was advertised as routine and Khrushchev was not allowed opportunity for further posturing as demagogue. This was a visit between leaders. Furthermore, Afghanis did not want to indulge in "unnecessary burning of Western bridges", according to the British assessment.³⁶

32 Since the 1930's American agricultural policy had been geared to stimulating production and sponsoring price stability by lush government subsidy. This resulted in huge surpluses which by the 1950's had reached embarrassing proportions. At the start of his administration Eisenhower set out to introduce some kind of market discipline, but without success. See Charles C. Alexander, *Holding the Line, the Eisenhower Presidency, 1952-1961*, p.39 and pp. 163-164. Also, Elmo Richardson, *The Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower*, p. 47. The depression of prices caused by this on world-wide markets for agricultural produce was substantial, a problem to which the Soviets seemed to offer the Burmese a quick solution. See also *FRUS* 1955-57, Vol. IX; pp. 13-18, "Study Prepared by the Policy Planning Staff, Soviet Economic Penetration", 4th April, 1956.

33 On this the Burma Embassy report ended.

There seems little doubt that in the present circumstances it is this economic element in the Soviet approach to Burma which contains the most serious threat both to British interests and to Western influence generally. The threat is the more serious because it is hard to bring home to the Burmese leaders the danger in which they are placing themselves.

34 There is an interesting aside in Gore-Booth's account on the nature of the Chinese-Soviet relationship,

One is bound to ask oneself whether the visit was undertaken in consultation or competition with the Chinese. There is in Rangoon little evidence on which to build an answer. The disposal to North Vietnam of rice acquired by the Soviet Union from Burma argues a considerable degree of Sino-Soviet co-operation. On the other hand, there is little doubt that Soviet and Chinese efforts to penetrate Burma contain an element of competition. We shall watch closely for any indications one way or the other.

35 This was Churchill's description, *Soviet Foreign Policy Since Stalin*, p. 308.

36 PREM 11/1606 DA 10338/1, Sir Daniel Lascelles to Selwyn Lloyd, Despatch No. 76, 23rd December, 1955. He referred to the "resolute and able evasion of attempts to get them to criticise the Baghdad Pact" as evidence of the Afghani unwillingness to do more damage to Western contacts than entirely necessary.

Indeed, the British Embassy in Kabul displayed similar sang-froid to the C.R.O. in its view of the impact of the Soviets' visit.³⁷ The Soviets had made substantial offers of economic aid and diplomatic support for Afghani efforts to break the large ethnic Afghani minorities from the West of Pakistan. The Afghanis hoped to use Soviet support to force the creation of a new "Pushtunistan" on the countries eastern border.³⁸ However the British did not think, on past form, that Afghanistan would give much in return. They had always proved adept at accepting subsidies without any feeling of obligation and there was no reason why this should not apply to Soviet monies as much as those of British India.

Even so Lascelles feared that the reactionaries in power, who would be "first in the firing line" in the event of a Communist take over, were not "fully conscious of having brought their country into peril of extermination." The Soviet threat loomed in a more direct and traditional way than in either Burma or India. The subtleties of economic diplomacy were in consequence of rather less importance. He ended his despatch with an expression of unvarnished contempt for Afghanistan's leaders, "they are merely ignorant, over-confident and grasping gamblers with a dislike of the West which is a by-product of their territorial greed".

Clearly in the case of India and Burma although the inflammatory rhetoric had been the greatest cause of concern in the Cabinet, those on the ground took a relatively dim view of its efficacy. Indeed although it may have won the Soviet leaders some popularity among the masses, its effect on Governing circles tended if anything to be negative. More important to British observers in South East Asia, and particularly Burma, were the attempts that had been made to exert Soviet influence through economic aid. For the first time the Soviets were trying to use their economic muscle to buy political influence in countries which remained resolutely non-communist. The direct threat that this posed to British and Western interests was keenly felt in Whitehall. This was the issue which was to concern it as Eden and Lloyd prepared for their departure to Washington in January 1956.³⁹ By mid-December studies had

37 Dallin argues that although small, Afghanistan was at that point attracting considerable attention because of its strategic position in relation to the Middle East. He comments, "the visit proved to be of considerable importance. It was more than a new stage in Soviet relations with Afghanistan; it affected the entire power structure of the Near East". *Soviet Foreign Policy After Stalin*, p. 311.

38 See *Soviet Foreign Policy After Stalin*, pp. 312-313 on this issue. Pushtu was one of the variants of the Afghan language's name. This would, if achieved, have substantially weakened Pakistan, member of the despised Baghdad Pact and recipient of large amounts of American military and economic aid. The Soviets, the British Embassy reported, had offered to the Afghanis a loan of 100 million US dollars.

39 FO 371 116716 NS 1123/4. One western politician particularly concerned by this economic offensive was Lester Pearson the Prime Minister of Canada. Maudling, whilst visiting Canada, sent a note to Lloyd of the 6th December 1955, giving Pearson's view,

I also had a word with him about a particular hobbyhorse of my own at the moment, which is the need to organise our defences against the new Russian economic war... I find that Pearson is also keenly interested in this point and I gather he was thinking of raising it at the NATO meeting. His idea is that we should consider calling the Russian bluff by some such step as

already been put in hand and they were to provide much of the material for the Washington Conference briefs.⁴⁰ Evelyn Shuckburgh graphically expressed this concern for the tide of events in his diary,

Clark [Sir William Clark, Deputy High Commissioner in Delhi]...tells me that Nehru has given us explicit assurances of his continued independence of policy, refusal to buy arms from Russia, etc., but in the lucid watches of the night I could not avoid the conclusion that all of Asia is moving steadily out of our ambit and that our Western civilisation will soon be strangled and subjected, with its bombs unusable in its pocket. Fortunately in the daylight such gloomy prognostications are overlaid by veneers of busy confidence.⁴¹

Nor was there to be a let up in Bulganin and Khrushchev's boorish behaviour towards Britain at the 4th Session of the Supreme Soviet from the 26th to 30th December 1955. Cecil Parrott, the Minister at the Moscow Embassy, sent a gloomy report to London dated 6th January.⁴² The main item had been a "long and objectionable" survey by Khrushchev on foreign affairs, the gist of which was a further dig at the old colonial powers, chief of whom was Britain. Western economic aid was, according to Khrushchev, nothing more than an age old vice wearing a new hat. Although he included a few flattering comments as to the present character of the British people, Parrot concluded,

But these perfunctory insertions did nothing to alter the fact that this speech, so far from furthering his alleged object of reducing tension, can have done nothing but raise it; and it was obvious from his delivery that he enjoyed the whole proceeding.

Just as disturbing, from Britain's point of view, was the self assurance with which the Soviet leaders had made their comments. The East Asian tour had considerably boosted their confidence and this was reflected not only in Khrushchev's Supreme Soviet speech but also in Bulganin's New Year toasts,

In one of the toasts which he proposed at the New Year's party at the Kremlin Bulganin said: "May 1956 be a better year than 1955 has been; but 1955 was a very good year indeed". He received much applause for this statement. The Soviet leaders seem to be saying in effect that there defensive positions

asking them to come in with us on a big scale in helping the under-developed areas, on condition that the aid were channelled through some United Nations organisation.

40 FO 371 116716 NS 1123/14. At FO 371 123199 ZP 28/6, there is a note by Patrick Hancock of the Foreign Office for the Secretary of State setting out the Prime Minister's main concerns as to what they wanted from the talks. There follows a summary of the Treasury and Foreign Office briefs. Sadly as they were subsequently classed as Cabinet papers they were removed from departmental files to the Cabinet Office. As far as I am aware from the Cabinet indexes, these briefs are not available to public scrutiny. Their titles were, "Russian Capabilities, Russian Intentions and Action Already Taken by the United Kingdom".

41 *Descent to Suez*, p. 310.

42 FO/371 122765 NS 1015/2, Despatch from Mr Parrot, Moscow, to Northern Department, 6th January, 1956.

are in good order and that their offensives on the other fronts are going very well. Sooner or later the weight of the offensive will be again directed against Europe.⁴³

Not only were the Soviets engaging in a novel form of cold war, but they also seemed supremely confident that they would win it. It is then hardly surprising that so much attention should have been given by the British in the lead up to the Washington Conference to this very problem.

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE.

The Washington Conference which took place at the end of January, 1956, was conceived not only as a reaction to the direct political threat that the new Soviet policy posed, but also as a propaganda counter attack. Eden's treatment of the meeting in his memoir is instructive. Although he dates its genesis back to the failure of the Geneva Foreign Ministers' Conference in November and the lack of agreement over Germany's future, he points out that the most immediate problem seemed the situation in the Middle East.

This was the main topic which I wished to discuss in the United States. Soviet arms continued to flow into Egypt from Czechoslovakia, and Moscow was showing an increasing determination to intrude into Middle Eastern affairs. This was traditional Soviet policy, making itself felt at a time of growing confidence.⁴⁴

This is despite the concern in Whitehall that the Conference should deal with the most disturbing recent development, the Soviet's flexing of their economic muscle.

In a telegram to the Washington Embassy of December 28th Eden had made very similar priorities clear as those laid out in his memoir. He added in reference to the proposed joint declaration that,

I would like us to be able to set down together in plain and simple terms what it is that our two countries should stand for in world policy; what we believe should be the pattern of international relations and our own beliefs in civil

43 Parrot made a further interesting comment on the indication this seemed to give of Khrushchev's political strength.

In comparison to the relatively unobtrusive role he played in the last session of the Supreme Soviet in August, he seemed now to stand as the arbiter of the whole of Soviet policy, both internal and external. While Khrushchev was speaking, Molotov sat in the back row and indeed took no active part in the session at all.

44 *Full Circle*, p. 331. Quite what is meant by traditional Soviet policy is not made clear. It was apparent to the Foreign Office that what the Soviets were doing was something new. Re above, e.g. *Descent to Suez*, pp. 278-279. Perhaps the great statesman was referring to Imperial Russia's fishing for influence in the region throughout the 19th century and into the 20th. Although that had really more in common with Stalin's bullying tactics in his policy towards Middle Eastern States contiguous with the Soviet Union after 1945. See *Soviet Foreign Policy After Stalin* pp. 20-21 and pp. 101-110, also Galia Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East* pp. 8-9.

rights and individual freedom. This seems all the more important now when the Russian vehemence in Asia and elsewhere may have created a certain reaction against them. We must show that we have a positive face to match their barbaric garb.⁴⁵

Eden had obviously digested something of the opinions expressed by his officials in the field, at least as far as Soviet rhetoric was concerned. Capital was to be made out of the unease that the Soviets¹ had caused their hosts. The Washington Declaration was conceived as a specific reply to Khrushchev's acrid attacks on the west in South East Asia. The Conference, in Eden's view, was to address the problems that the Soviets¹ policy had created for the west. But these were not necessarily the same kind of problems which his permanent officials were discussing in preparation for meeting the Americans. Eden concentrated in particular on the difficulties that Britain now faced in the Middle East. It was in basis to be another opportunity to go over a number of old chestnuts, including American involvement in the Baghdad Pact. Arguably it was Eden's understanding that savoured of traditionalism, rather than Soviet policy. There was no mention of the Soviet Asian tour and the impact of economic diplomacy on Britain's position. Eden's myopic view was to have a stultifying effect on the Conference.

In the minuting that was spawned before the Conference a different view emerges of what it was about. Not only was there concern as to what should be done about the new Soviet offensive, but it was frankly admitted by some that Britain was in a very poor position to do much herself. There was, in certain cases, a clear understanding of the profound implications for Britain's position in the world of the Soviets' move towards a global policy under Khrushchev.⁴⁶ On 3rd January, 1956 Guy Millard, one of Eden's private secretaries, made the following comments in an aide memoire for his master,

You may wish to be reminded before your next meeting on Washington preparations, that you said that you would like to discuss the question of economic aid for the Middle East and other under-developed countries. The points which you had in mind were I think the following: Are we going to try to meet the threat of Russian economic penetration wherever it appears, by outbidding them for offers of economic support? Or would it be better to invite the Russians to match their promises with performance, in the expectation that they will not in fact be able to do so? If the latter policy is considered too dangerous, then where are we to find the extra resources which

45 PREM 11/1334, Telegram No. 6200, Prime Minister to Washington Embassy, 28th December, 1955. In a Foreign Office telegram of the same date the following was put top of the agenda, "World Review - Russian intentions, capabilities and tactics, and counter measures with special emphasis on the Middle East and Asia". PREM 11/1334, Telegram No. 6200, Foreign Office to Washington.

46 On the dramatic change which Khrushchev initiated in Soviet foreign policy and the development of its role as a global superpower see Alvin Rubinstein, *Moscow's Third World Strategy*, pp. 19-31.

we shall need to devote to economic aid? They can only come from economies in the military sphere.⁴⁷

Millard's note went on to suggest that money might be found through a reduction in the size of the British army in Germany. There was, though, no indication that Britain might not be capable of coping with the situation, even if with difficulty. Others were less sanguine.

In a minute of 10th January, 1956 Peter Thorneycroft, President of the Board of Trade, went even further in his gloomy prognosis of Britain's financial ability to meet the new challenge of Soviet economic diplomacy. In the process of stating trade matters which had been of particular concern to his department and the Americans he began with the following,

THE ECONOMIC COLD WAR: We need the U.S. to give all financial assistance possible towards paying for large capital projects in the Middle East and South East Asia as a counter to Russian penetration: for economic reasons we hope that this aid would as far as possible be "untied" to U.S. exports."

Clearly the gloss that Eden lays on the Washington visit in his memoirs will not entirely do. The Government was well aware that any departure into the realms of economic diplomacy would have to be paid for out of already strained budgets. Thorneycroft went even further, insisting that an essential purpose in discussions with the Americans must be to persuade them to undertake the main financial burden in any economic counter offensive. The British, he blatantly admitted, were dependent on American strength in this new cold war as Britain simply did not have the wherewithal to meet the Soviet challenge. Nor was Thorneycroft's a lone voice. In a telegram from Eden to the Washington Embassy of 28th January, 1956 sent whilst en route, he passed on the government's assessment, and that most definitely included his officials, of what Britain wanted from the Conference. It started,

(1)General: (a) acceptance by the United States of nature and scope of the Soviet threat, notably in the Middle East. (b) Understanding that the United Kingdom will continue to do all it can; but main share of any new economic measure must fall on the United States. (c) agreement on continuous consultation for balanced programme of aid. (i) to allies, c.f. Baghdad pact and (ii) to uncommitted countries c.f. Sudan, Libya, Indonesia and India.

Implicit in this was the need to persuade the Americans of the seriousness of the situation and the minute continued to make this quite explicit.⁴⁸ Indeed it seems that

47 PREM 11/1334. Note for the Prime Minister by G. E. Millard, 3rd January, 1956. It continued interestingly as follows, "one possibility might be to withdraw a Division from Germany. But we might have to face the risk that the Americans would wish to do the same. This is a point which you said that you might want to discuss with the President. It might be that General Gruenther could get along now with fewer divisions".

48 The penny, in relation to what the Soviets meant by peaceful co-existence, seemed to have dropped at least with the Civil Service drafters.

the British did not think that their ally viewed the Soviet economic threat with sufficient gravity. In a Minute of 30th December by Patrick Hancock of the Foreign Office for Lloyd, Eden's main concerns for the Conference were set out. They concentrated very heavily on the Russian "probing... all round their periphery" and what should be the appropriate western response. Hancock went on to comment,

The P.M.'s points (a), (b) and (c) [summarised above] had been in the forefront of our minds in making preparations for the discussions in Washington. This particularly since Mr. Dulles opined at the last NATO meeting that the Russians had only a surplus of obsolescent arms, technicians and hot air. We do not agree with this view, which we think dangerously complacent.⁴⁹

Hancock went on to outline the Treasury and Foreign Office briefs, which put forward the very serious view the British took of Soviet capabilities. These were to be sent to the Americans in advance of the Washington meeting.

The picture is perhaps a little reminiscent of that in 1946-47 in Greece, Iran and Turkey. In 1955 Britain faced a new Soviet threat with which she was not economically competent to cope. This was certainly not the first time that Britain had felt disadvantage by an inadequate economic performance, however her inadequacies were being probed in a new and taxing way. The Soviets were now bidding to replace western markets for raw materials and to supply manufactures and development aid to governments which were not Communist and in which Britain still had considerable economic interests. Once more she was forced to turn to the United States. Just as in 1946 there was also apprehension expressed that the Americans would need persuading both of the threat's seriousness and Britain's own financial inadequacy.⁵⁰ In fact, according to their advisers, Eden and Lloyd were supposed to be going to Washington in 1956 with something of a mendicant air.⁵¹

In our view the Russian threat of *competitive co-existence* [my italics] is serious in itself and requires strenuous efforts to hold our allies and uncommitted countries. It is essential we agree on the nature and degree of the Russian threat. If so, we should have fruitful discussions on problems in various parts of the world, of which the Middle East is the most threatened.

49 FO 371 123199 ZP 28/6, F. O. minute by Mr P. F. Hancock, 30th December, 1955.

50 *FRUS* 1955-57, Vol. IX, pp. 10-12. Eisenhower certainly seems to have been rather less panicked in December, 1955 than were the British. In a letter to Dulles of the 5th December, 1955 from his retreat at Gettysburg he concentrated on the innate economic strengths of America and the free world, although he did go on to acknowledge that the Soviets had the advantage of attack and could concentrate their aid more effectively. Eisenhower's more reassuring assessment has stood the test of time rather better than that of British officialdom.

51 This is very clearly expressed in the C. R. O. Brief of 23rd January, 1956. FO 371 123201 ZP 28/90, on India and Soviet economic penetration already quoted above. Its conclusions demonstrate something of the illusion that officials seem to have laboured under in regard of what the Conference was actually for, "the forthcoming visit to Washington will deal with the steps necessary to counter the Soviet economic offensive. In SSC4 it is suggested that the Americans should be asked to give special consideration to India." It then went on to outline the matters of detail which could be discussed if the issue provoked further conversations and the pressure that should be out on the Americans to increase the amount of aid they were giving. As it turned out the Washington Conference hardly touched on what the C. R. O., clearly thought was its main function.

On this Lloyd is rather more candid in his memoirs than Eden. He makes the following point,

Those who contend that Suez was a watershed in our national history often maintain that Eden's Government still regarded Britain as capable of independent action on a global scale. It needed Suez, they say, to convince us that we were no longer a great power. This is very wide of the mark. We knew the facts only too well. During our talks in Washington [in January, 1956], Eden put in a paper on our economic situation. The Second World War had turned us from the world's greatest creditor to the world's greatest debtor. We could not undertake any more external commitments.⁵²

The record is very much on the side of Lloyd's account, although there is a point on which he subtly obfuscates.

Oddly enough despite the crystal clarity with which the Civil Service summed up what Britain wanted out of the Conference, the actual negotiations in Washington were something of a disappointment. There was little discussion of either economic diplomacy or the need for America to take pay for most of the work. Conversations concentrated on the general European situation, the Middle East and the need to find a solution for the Arab-Israeli problem, the Buraimi Oasis dispute between the Sultan of Oman and Saudi Arabia, China and atomic matters.⁵³ The issue of Soviet economic diplomacy was most directly addressed during the visit to Canada that followed after the Washington discussions ended. There Lester Pearson, as Reginald Maudling had commented, seemed to have made something of a speciality out of the issue.

There was one discussion between Lloyd and Dulles on the issue of Soviet economic penetration in the "under-developed" world during the Washington leg of the trip. On February 1st they met in the State Department to discuss the issue as well as the progress of the World Bank's discussions with Nasser over the Aswan Dam. The Americans do indeed seem to have taken a more casual attitude than the British. The following exchange serves to illustrate this difference,

Mr Allen [of the State Department] said that there was a point of view that we should carry on as though the Russians had made no move in the Middle East. If the Russians were prepared to offer impossible terms such as the loan to Egypt of \$600 million for 50 years at 2 per cent, we should not pay much attention. Sir Harold Caccia remarked that unfortunately some projects were too dangerous to treat in this way.⁵⁴

52 *Suez 1956*, p. 42. He went on to say, "Our gold and dollar reserves only covered three months' imports. All this made the safeguarding of our supplies of oil from the Middle East the more important. What we did not foresee were the actions that would be taken against us by the United States Government".

53 See *Suez 1956*, pp. 41-42. There is a bulky print record of the Washington discussions in PREM 11/1334. Also the American record at *FRUS 1955-57*, Vol. X, pp. 304-312 and Vol. XI, pp. 467-68.

54 PREM 11/1334, Record of a Meeting Between Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Dulles in the State Department on Wednesday, 1st February, 1956, at 10.30.

However there was basic agreement between the two sides that as they could not be expected to undercut every offer the Soviets made, the Western response would have to be flexible. Yet there was no mention of the need for American to take the main part of the financial burden. Nor was there even any discussion of the necessity to take concrete measures to counter the Soviets' move. The matter was taken no further than an agreement that a "mechanism should be set up through the British Embassy in Washington for the exchange of information on Soviet economic penetration". This seems pretty small beer in comparison to the grandiose objectives which had been set out during British preparations for the Conference. On the Aswan Dam, perhaps the most singular example of the way the new cold war was to be fought, discussion amounted to little more than Dulles informing Lloyd that negotiations between Nasser and the World Bank were close to collapse. This Dulles blamed on Nasser and went on to suggest that he did not even think the Egyptian economy was strong enough to sustain the expense. Lloyd made a suitably non-descript noise in return.⁵⁵

Equally in Canada, although Lester Pearson was much concerned by the need to respond to the Soviets' new strategy, discussions with the British did not get much beyond agreement to exchange information.⁵⁶ On the 7th February Eden, Pearson and Lloyd in Ottawa discussed the issue leaving the matter hanging on the need for further consultations. Just as in the United States nothing concrete was decided upon at all.

Much of the Washington Conference's time was in fact taken up by rather windy rhetoric, the chief of which was the Joint Declaration.⁵⁷ It emphasised the principles of freedom and individualism which it stated the Free world stood for against those of collectivist darkness.⁵⁸ Eden also delivered speeches to Congress and the Press which played on similar themes and underlined the important change which seemed to have occurred in the Cold War.

The Declaration was written with Khrushchev's rhetoric in South East Asia very much in mind. On 6th January Evelyn Shuckburgh, who was to take part in the final process of drafting in Washington, minuted Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick about his concern that the Declaration should have some relevance to Asia. He hoped that it would not

55 *ibid.*, "Mr. Selwyn Lloyd suggested that if it meant we gained an element of control over the Egyptian economy [which was exactly why Nasser was so against the conditions the World Bank was trying to impose], it might be advantageous, but at present our contributions to the Dam looked like a reward for vice". This was a very half hearted defence of a project which in the aftermath of the Czech-arms deal the British had been hysterically keen should fall to the West.

56 The discussions lasted from 3rd to 8th February. There is a print copy of the minutes at PREM 11/1334.

57 See *Descent to Suez*, pp. 328-332. Most of January 31st and February 1st were taken up by the drafting of the Declaration and Communiqué. Shuckburgh did not have a very high opinion of the performance of Eden and Lloyd at the conference, "I envy the Americans having Ike and Dulles to deal with over their foreign affairs. It seems to me that these two have continuity of policy, serious ideas and courage, and that our team by comparison is frivolous". *Descent to Suez*, p. 330.

58 Miscellaneous No. 1 (1956), Cmd 9700.

be confined to "stale clichés from the European cold war".⁵⁹ And indeed the finished product made substantial reference to what had already been achieved by the West in the way of economic aid in Asia, moreover insisting that such aid was not intended to increase Western economic or political power. Yet the Declaration and its following Communiqué were confined to very broad generalities. No specific new proposals were brought forward at all in answer to what the Soviets had embarked upon in Asia, rather they contented themselves by a well worn reference to the Colombo Plan.

Similarly Eden's speech to the U.S. Congress on the 2nd of February, 1956 confined itself to the general. It did make a very clear analysis of the way in which the threat from the Soviet Union had changed.⁶⁰ In the face of thermo-nuclear annihilation a "mutual deterrent" against war on a world scale had been created. However this had not led to peace, but rather forced the rivalry down to a subtler plain of economic blandishment and political influence.

Brought to a halt in Europe, Soviet expansion now feels its way south and probes in other lands. There is nothing particularly new in this. You can read it all in Russian imperialist history. But the emphasis has changed, and the symbols and methods too. This is a struggle for men's minds, once expressed in these regions by conflicting faiths, but now in rival ideologies. From the Kremlin streams forth into the lands of what we call the Middle East, and into all Asia, a mixture of blandishments and threat, offers of arms and menaces to individuals, all couched in terms of fierce hostility for Western ideals.

Eden continued to look at the ways in which the west should respond to this new challenge. As in the declaration, there was nothing more than vaguery on Anglo-U.S. unity, the settlement of regional conflicts and the flexibility of approach that should be taken in seeking to counter Soviet economic aid. Eden did not even make reference to the need for America to take the major part in this new campaign. His emphasis was firmly on partnership.⁶¹

By way of contrast the discussions between Eden, Lloyd, Eisenhower and Dulles while the former were in Washington concentrated on details rather than a general, fundamental reappraisal of where the cold war was going and what needed to be done about it by whom. On this point Lloyd's account is a little misleading. He gives the impression that it was Eden who "put in a paper on the economic situation" which clearly laid out Britain's financial weakness. during the talks.⁶² This would have been

⁵⁹ *Descent to Suez*, p. 317.

⁶⁰ Extract from the Congressional Record (Senate) for 2nd February, 1956. 91956 (Cols. 1627 and 1628).

⁶¹ Opinions differed on the effectiveness of Eden's speech. According to Shuckburgh, both he and Sir Leslie Rowan thought at the time that the speech was poor even though it seemed a popular success, *Descent to Suez*, p. 332. Lloyd in his memoirs considers it to have been "brilliant" and "perhaps the best feature of the Conference", *Suez 1956*, p. 42, which possibly says more about Lloyd's view of what the visit itself achieved than Eden's speechmaking.

⁶² *Suez 1956*, p. 42.

entirely in line with the objectives which had been set out before the British arrived in Washington by the Civil Servants. However the only paper that resembles Lloyd's outline in his memoirs was not in fact delivered by Eden, nor written by him. It was entirely the work of permanent officials at the Treasury and designed, on the suggestion of Sir Leslie Rowan, to be left with the Americans and Canadians as a kind of aide memoire.⁶³ After making clear the financial and economic precariousness of the British position, with particular reference to the inadequacy of British gold and dollar reserves, it underlined the following point, "[w]e cannot take any more external commitments". The note finished with a futile opinion as to the purpose of the "Statement at end of meeting". "We hope this can contain both declaration and definite decision for actions, which are essential in present dangerous situation". Such expectations of concrete proposals were to be frustrated. The Statement was to be no more than a banal assertion of Anglo-American unity.

The clear implication of Civil Service opinion was that the Americans would need to be invited to take the lead in this new cold war. Yet there does not even seem to have been an attempt by Eden or Lloyd to make such an invitation during the discussions. The minuting and briefing for the Washington visit makes quite plain that the Civil Service's main concern, and indeed that of a number of politicians, notably *Thorneycroft*, was the Soviet's economic offensive in Asia and the need to persuade the Americans to pay for counter measures. Lloyd's memoir gives the impression, by reference Rowan's note, that Eden had a clear appreciation of the predicament that the British found themselves in early 1956. However the opinions that the aide memoire so pungently expressed were those of officials and not Eden. The "paper" was in fact in the nature of a round robin letter.

This gap between official advice and the politicians' activities came out in the 9th February, 1956 report to the Cabinet on what the Washington visit had achieved. Neither Eden nor Lloyd once mentioned economic diplomacy, concentrating instead on the minutiae of Anglo-American relations and the general position in Europe. Eden

63 FO 371 123203 ZP 28/94. Sir Leslie Rowan's covering note of the 28th January suggested that the aide memoire should be left with the President. The Treasury note went as follows,

Our major problem is the magnitude of U.K.'s continuing external commitments. Last war turned us from world's greatest creditor to world's greatest debtor. Our gold and dollar reserves are now only about \$2,100 million. These are backing for the whole sterling system, which finances half the world's trade and payments and for which there is no alternative. These reserves are entirely inadequate... equal to under 25% of cost of our imports... we cannot take any more external commitments.

Compare this to Lloyd's summary of "Eden's paper" in *Suez 1956*, p. 42.

The Second World War had turned us from the World's greatest creditor to the world's greatest debtor. We could not undertake any more external commitments. Our gold and dollar reserves only covered three month's imports.

The phrasing is too similar for mere coincidence.

reported that on Germany the two sides held very similar opinions.⁶⁴ However, there was some divergence over European unity and the Messina Conference. On the Middle East both sides reaffirmed the validity of the Tripartite Agreement of 1950 and agreed that more effort was needed on the settling of the Arab-Israel tension. Yet despite British eagerness to drag them in, the Americans remained unwilling to do much more than give moral and some economic support to the Baghdad Pact. On other areas of concern in the area, in particular the Buraimi dispute and Saudi misuse of financial muscle, the Americans had made soothing noises in response to British complaints. China and Chiang Kai-Shek remained a source of disagreement. Eden ended his report by reference to the discussions on Atomic energy. Here he expressed the hope that information that the President had agreed to pass on would save some money.

At this point it would be instructive to recall the objectives which were set out by officials for the talks as discussed above. Despite their advice and concern with fundamentals of strategy, discussions did not get beyond immediate details which had been British concerns long before any great change in Soviet policy had been perceived. Such brief reference as there was to economic diplomacy did not make clear British inadequacies or come to any concrete decisions for action. More important to Eden seems to have been the formulation of high sounding oratory. It is therefore little wonder that Lloyd expressed his disappointment with what the conference had achieved in his memoirs.

The talks in Washington with Eisenhower and Dulles were rather disappointing. I have always been doubtful about highly publicised meetings between heads of government.⁶⁵

They had in fact hardly touched at all on priorities which the Civil Service, if not the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, clearly perceived. It almost seems that as soon as the two statesmen stepped off the *Queen Elizabeth* they conjured a new agenda of their own in blithe disregard for their advisers in the Treasury, Foreign Office and Board of Trade. After expressing his opinion on the success of the proceedings Lloyd's account goes on to make an interesting comment on the incompetence of Heads of State in dealing with issues of policy.

If there has been full preparation before and there is some specific and realisable objective they may be successful. After a good dinner at the Embassy in Moscow in 1959 I told Khrushchev and Macmillan what I thought

64 PREM 11/1334, a draft minute of 9th January, 1956 by Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick for the information of the Americans laid out the British position on Germany. It made clear that there had been no change in British policy since the Geneva failure. The West German population and Adenauer seemed to have taken the end of hopes for reunification well, and the primary objective was therefore to build on this and draw Germany into the Western European community. Thus the West would make certain that even after Adenauer, West Germany would be sufficiently anchored to resist such temptations as the Soviets might offer.

65 *Suez 1956*, p. 40.

of them. I said: If one side says 3 and the other side says 5, you Heads of Government are competent to agree on 4. If it is more complicated than that, you have not the time to prepare adequately or to be properly briefed on detail; you will probably do more harm than good. I do not think that either was very pleased, but it is so and when it is seen that nothing important is achieved at a Summit Meeting there will be a feeling of anti-climax. This applied to our meeting in Washington.⁶⁶

Both Eden and Lloyd were very hard worked men, but even at that it is striking and somewhat mysterious that their actions should have been at such variance with the advice of their experts. Moreover it is very odd that they should deal so lightly with a matter which had become of crucial concern to Whitehall in the aftermath of the Bulganin and Khrushchev tour of South East Asia. This is an important point which surely would bear further examination. For it was Eden and the Egypt Committee, and not the permanent officials, who jealously guarded the decision making process through the Suez Crisis.

* * *

The Washington Conference proceedings were vapid and in consequence are generally considered of small importance. And yet in January 1956 permanent officials, if not quite all politicians, perceived that a crucially important development for the future of Britain's role as a great power had occurred. The Soviet leader's tour in Asia signified a further step towards a global policy. Whitehall realised all too well that as the Soviet super power moved out into the wider world, British power would be forced to recede before it. Just as in 1947, the crucial objective then became to get the Americans to take their place. Lloyd's memoir implicitly admits that this is where the significance of the Washington Conference lay. Although in a limited way Eden was trying to increase American support for Britain's position by securing an American commitment to the Baghdad Pact, he put the emphasis in his conversations with Eisenhower and his speeches on partnership. Yet matters had long gone beyond this point. The reality of Britain's dependence on American economic muscle in this new economic cold war was readily admitted by the likes of Sir Leslie Rowan and Peter Thorneycroft. It would take Suez for the scales to fall completely from Eden's eyes concerning economic weakness.

Bulganin and Khrushchev's tourism at the end of 1955 played an important part in the British Government's (if not Eden's) understanding of the changing nature of Soviet foreign policy. By the 20th Party Congress more or less all the innovative themes which were to be raised by Khrushchev had been put into practice during the following year. The "Zone of Peace", for example, was an established fact of Soviet foreign policy in British eyes by the end of 1955. However, the importance of this

⁶⁶ *ibid.* pp. 40-41.

change and its implications for Britain had not been fully digested by Eden. It was not until after Bulganin and Khrushchev extended their tourism to include Britain that the gap between the permanent officials' understanding of the limits of Soviet style coexistence and the Prime Minister's was fully closed.

Chapter 8

The Impact of the 20th Party Congress and the Soviet Visit to Britain Taking Tea with Dukes and Duchesses

"Back at Number 10, I had to decide what our policy should now be. The present Soviet rulers had as much confidence as their predecessors in the ultimate triumph of communism. They were unshakeably determined. The methods they would employ might be different from those of Stalin and they might be harder to meet... We had to consider the adjustments needed in our policies to cope with a new situation, for a new situation it undoubtedly was".

Anthony Eden

Our attention must now turn to developments after the visit to Washington which were further to confirm the Northern Department in its analysis of Soviet foreign policy. The 20th Party Congress provided a theoretical proof for what had already become apparent in practice. It was also increasingly difficult for Eden to evade the fundamental importance of what had happened in the Soviet Union, the visit of Bulganin and Khrushchev to Britain in April of 1956 was to prove particularly important in this context.

Consequently, the issue of a response to the Soviet "economic offensive" which had been put on a backburner during the visit to Washington, basically relegated to discussions with the Canadians, became increasingly important. Indeed the wider realities of peaceful coexistence in a thermonuclear age were to provide much of the inspiration behind the defence and foreign policy review which Eden presided over in the lead up to the Suez Crisis. There were even those who argued that the manner in which international rivalry was developing and would in future express itself might provide Britain with a way out from her financial difficulties. Impecunity, as ever, provided a powerful stimulus to innovation.

However, the long-term significance of all of this is less important for the purposes of this thesis than the evidence it provides for changing British perceptions of Soviet policy. By the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference of July, 1956 in London there was essentially a consensus within the British Government, both in terms of what was happening in the Soviet Union and its significance. The gap between the opinions of permanent officials and politicians had been closed. The crises in Eastern Europe and the Middle East which degenerated into violence during the second half of the year fitted quite comfortably into this new framework.

The process of sorting out what implications this analysis had for British policy in turn was disrupted by Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal. This, effectively, is the point at which the curtain falls upon my research. However, I shall, amongst other things, suggest in my conclusion that the British Government's understanding of Soviet

foreign policy had a profound and often undervalued influence upon Eden's reaction to this "theft".

THE PARTY CONGRESS

As the Soviet Communist Party geared up towards its Twentieth Party Congress the attention of the British Embassy in Moscow was focused on the implications which it might have for Khrushchev's position within the leadership. In preparation for the main event, the Communist Parties of the Republics which made up the Soviet Union, as was the tradition, held their own congresses. Sir William Hayter, in a despatch of the 3rd February, 1956, commented on the prominence which had been given to Khrushchev at a number of these events. This indication of the First Secretary's growing importance was further bolstered by shifts in the Party hierarchy which seemed to favour his supporters. Hayter concluded that the all Soviet Congress was likely to be the vehicle for a substantial entrenchment of Khrushchev's position once more at the expense of both Malenkov and Molotov, although he very much doubted that Khrushchev would be powerful enough to assail directly their personal positions on the Presidium.¹ The British Embassy's attention at this point was firmly set upon the implications which the Congress might have for the future of the Soviet leadership.

However, it soon became apparent that the 20th Party Congress was not merely to be another demonstration of Khrushchev's command of political infighting. Although there could be no doubting that his position was enhanced by the Congress there was no indication that any decisive move towards a despotic grasp on power had been made. Furthermore, in some ways the Congress manifested the limitations of Khrushchev's position as much as the strengths.² It was, rather, in the arena of

¹ FO 371 1227767 NS 1017/4, Despatch, Hayter to Selwyn Lloyd, 3rd February, 1956. The difficulties which Ponomarenko and Shatalin were facing in the process of re-election and the promotion of Dudorov as Minister of Internal Affairs were adduced as further evidence of Khrushchev's rising influence. The former were, of course, "Malenkov men" and the latter was a "Khrushchev man". Hayter also thought that the 1955 plan results and the 1956 Budget seemed increasingly to suggest that there had been a very real division over economic policy in 1954/55, rather than merely a political struggle dressed up in industrial clothing. The 1955 Plan results in particular showed a very sharp change in economic policy in the course of the year, with a shift back to heavy industrial production. FO 371 122862 NS 1102/6, Despatch, Chancery, Moscow to Northern Department, 7th February, 1956. This view had already been put forward tentatively by the Embassy to the Northern Department in the immediate aftermath of Malenkov's fall almost a year earlier, FO 371 116638 NS 1017/37, Letter from Hayter to Hohler, 18th February, 1955. See *Power and Policy*, pp. 270-271.

² FO 371 122770 NS 1015/109, Despatch, Hayter to Lloyd, 8th March, 1956. In this the Embassy provided a detailed analysis of changes in the Party's composition and the effect of the Congress on the leadership. Khrushchev's "authority" seemed to have been substantially increased but,

[I]n attacking the cult of the individual personality, many members of the Central Committee may have wanted to warn Khrushchev as much as anyone else that there must be no more Stalins. The re-election of the same eleven members of the Presidium, and the tone of personal authority with which many of them spoke, also suggests that Khrushchev's power is genuinely limited by the need to agree with his closest colleagues. In short, I think that the 20th Party

general policy that the Congress was to provide most of its interest. The two speeches which Khrushchev delivered, on the 14th February in public and the 24th February notoriously in private, were provoking. The first excited by its ideological novelty and the second startled by its historical candour.³

At the beginning of the Congress British observers suffered a bout of *deja vu*.⁴ This was not because they did not understand the importance of the ideological innovations contained in Khrushchev's 14th February speech, but that they seemed little more than the logical corollary of the practice of Soviet foreign policy over the previous three years, and in particular 1955.⁵ The new formulations on different paths to socialism, the nonsense of war in a thermonuclear age and peaceful competition did not cut a great deal of ice in London. The implications of the Secret Speech took a little longer to become clear, not least because the Congress had ended before news of Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin began to filter through to the western world. As far as British observers were concerned it was this aspect of Khrushchev's reformism, when they were fully apprised of it, which was the most unusual.

In a despatch of the 29th February, 1956, Sir William Hayter did go so far as to suggest that,

It is probable that the 20th Party Congress of the Communist Party will be chiefly remembered for the promulgation of the two new doctrines on the possibility of future wars and on differing ways to socialism.⁶

Hayter was particularly impressed that the Congress had ended the Soviet Communist Party's long adherence to the doctrine of the inevitability of war. As late as 1953, he pointed out, Stalin had been underlining it in his *Economic Problems of Socialism*. Indeed, Stalin was now altogether *passe*,

Congress has increased Khrushchev's authority and stature; but it has made it more unlikely than ever that he will become personal dictator.

3 English translations of both speeches, Khrushchev's Central Committee Report and the Secret Speech are respectively to be found in Leo Gravliow (ed.), *Current Soviet Policies II, The Documentary Record of the 20th Communist Party Congress and its Aftermath*, pp. 29-59 and pp. 172-188. The former was published by *Pravda* on the 15th February, 1956, the latter is in the English translation of Khrushchev's own apologia, *Khrushchev Remembers*, pp. 341-353. For detailed treatment of the domestic and political importance of the Secret Speech in particular see *Khrushchev, the Years in Power*, pp. 66-74; *Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership*, pp. 33-39 and *Power and Policy*, pp. 263-291. On Khrushchev's ideological innovations in foreign policy which were outlined in his Central Committee Report see "Action and Reaction in Khrushchev's Foreign Policy", pp. 237-260 and *Soviet Foreign Policy*, pp. 61.

4 There is a very bulky printed record of the avalanche of reports and despatches which Sir William Hayter sent back to London on the Congress at FO 371 122770 NS 1015/109.

5 Edward Crankshaw argues in his 1966 book, *Khrushchev, a Biography*, p. 227, that "the importance of these modifications - which amounted to a rewriting of Leninism - was not grasped in the West at the time because of the not unnatural tendency to regard all statements of policy as exercises in deception". Crankshaw's comment is not entirely applicable to the British Foreign Office. They did not discount Khrushchev's theorising as bogus, but rather tended to down play its practical importance as they considered it already to have been put into effect.

6 FO 371 122770 NS 1015/109. Despatch, Hayter to Lloyd, 29th February, 1956.

Lenin was the dominating figure of the 20th Congress, which was represented by most speakers as a loyal return to his teachings, and it is indicative of the practical approach of the present Soviet leadership that even Lenin can be repudiated when it suits their book.⁷

However, in a further despatch specifically on the Congress' treatment of foreign policy issues Hayter was less enthusiastic.⁸ He pin-pointed the three most important themes, already stated, which Khrushchev had raised in his speech of the 14th February and which had not been substantially added to or modified by any subsequent comment. Hayter went on to present a summary of the salient points.

Khrushchev had begun his speech by stressing the economic confidence with which the Soviet Union faced the West.⁹ He continued to "contrast the behaviour of the war-mongers with that of the peace-lovers", a theme which fitted in well with his development of the new "Zone of peace" doctrine.¹⁰ After a few relatively moderate gibes against colonialism, Khrushchev had once more emphasised his Government's desire for better relations with Western Powers, particularly Britain and France; although Hayter pointed out that nothing new was on the table regarding any outstanding international questions such as Germany. Finally Khrushchev's attention had turned to the favourite topic of the moment, peaceful coexistence. Although admitting that the report's tone had been reasonable, Hayter made of it a withering summary,

The report in general is characterised by a more marked degree of dishonesty than one is accustomed to expect even from Soviet leaders. Khrushchev cannot really be so ill-informed as to believe that shrinking Western domestic markets are a feature of the Western economic scene. Nor, of course, can he believe the fiction, repeated once again, that Hitler was helped by the West. He does not pause to reconcile his praise for the heroic struggle of the communist parties abroad with his ardent advocacy of the five principles [Nehru's five principles of neutralism]. His "zone of peace" concept is a patently dishonest attempt to suggest that the states concerned are following

7 *ibid.*

8 FO 371 122770 NS 1015/109, Despatch, Hayter to Lloyd, 1st March, 1956.

9 *ibid.*, Hayter took pleasure in exposing some of the flaws in Khrushchev's assessment of the economic situation,

In stressing the embarrassment for capitalism of the expansion of the socialist market, the Soviets are of course being thoroughly inconsistent. If the expansion of the socialist market is intensifying the difficulties of the capitalist world, why the impassioned plea for a greater volume of trade which figures in a later section of the report? Why rail against the stultifying effect on East/West trade of discriminatory practices by the West, if by following these practices capitalism is contributing to its own decay? For there is no question of the socialist camp requiring this commerce; "The development of the countries of socialism", says Khrushchev, "is characterised by their complete self-sufficiency...". Once again the fraudulence of Soviet pretensions to favour an expansion of trade with the West stands exposed.

10 *ibid.*, Hayter interpreted this to include at least India, Burma, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Egypt, Syria as well as neutral countries such as Austria and Finland.

the same foreign policy as the Soviet Union. He is apparently unconcerned by the inconsistency between condemnation of the policy of "massive retaliation" and his own threat of a "crushing repulse to the aggressors". And he caps it all by characterising perversion of the truth as a peculiarly bourgeois vice.

The Ambassador concluded his despatch thus,

To the extent that it is covered by this despatch [i.e. foreign policy], the Party Congress can only be regarded as a grandiloquent restatement of Soviet foreign policy in its ideological context. As such it is of interest, but I can see no sign of any new line emerging.

This was, essentially, the view which the Embassy and Northern Department were to share even after maturer reflection. It was also the view which the Northern Department was to pass on to the rest of Whitehall.¹¹ Ideology was all well and good, but the writing had long been on the wall. In his report for the first quarter of 1956, Hayter downplayed the significance of both the end of Lenin's dogma that war formed an integral part in the fall of capitalism and the new latitude afforded in a nations struggle towards socialism. Furthermore, he added a heavy dose of ulterior motivation to his analysis,

These two innovations are interesting and important in form, but they imply not so much a change in Soviet foreign policy as the supply of new implements for executing existing policy. Lenin's doctrine of the inevitability of war was an obvious handicap to a government preaching peace and co-existence, and its elimination was clearly only a matter of time. the new theory of the parliamentary road to socialism is clearly a useful weapon in the present campaign for popular fronts and for the conciliation of nationalist movements with parliamentary beliefs.¹² Neither of these two new doctrines really fundamentally alters the direction which Soviet foreign policy has been pursuing since the death of Stalin.¹³

In its treatment of external relations there was little in the 20th Party Congress to change the apprehension of Soviet foreign policy which the British Government had

11 FO 371 122768 NS 1015/60, Minute by Northern Department, 24th March, 1956. This minute was entitled Twentieth Party Congress of the CPSU and was printed for the consumption of the rest of the Foreign Office and other Government Departments. It considered that the Party Congress "put the seal" on the "steady evolution" of Soviet policy since Stalin's death and that this "achievement" was considerable given the apparent veneer of unity which the leadership had maintained at the same time. However, the organic nature of these changes was once again emphasised, growing as they did from the Soviet Government's attempts over the recent past to come to terms with a thermonuclear age. The Americans had come to very similar conclusions, *FRUS* 1955-1957, Vol. XXIV, p.59 Memorandum of Discussion at the 277th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, 27th February, 1956. For Charles Bohlen's personal recollections see *Witness to History*, pp. 393-396.

12 *ibid.*, Northern Department pointed out that Khrushchev's emphasis on different paths was not entirely new as this had been Khrushchev's theme on his visit to Belgrade in the first half of 1955. The credence given to the parliamentary process was, however, quite novel.

13 FO 371 122769 NS 1015/88, Despatch, Hayter to Lloyd, 4th April, 1956 and Minute by R. A. Hibbert, 5th April, 1956. The Northern Department was in appreciative agreement with the Embassy's prognosis.

developed since 1953, and particularly in the course of 1955. There was certainly no hint that the Cold War was coming, even ever so slowly, to an end.¹⁴ Khrushchev's innovations were explained by Hayter and the Northern Department too adequately within the existing framework for there to be any need of a re-evaluation. Indeed, there seemed good reason for greater concern as to the efficacy of Soviet foreign policy in its continuing attempt to undermine the West. In all of this the British probably did under-estimate the importance of the doctrinal innovations which Khrushchev had launched and certainly do not seem to have been aware of the implications which they had for Sino-Soviet relations.¹⁵

However, Khrushchev's savaging of the Stalin legacy fitted a little less comfortably into the pattern because of its violence. It was not quite so easy to see what the Soviets had to gain by such a move. Clearly Khrushchev was taking a considerable risk in damming the man with whom so much of Communism's credibility, within and without the Soviet Union, was inextricably bound.

The first indications that there had been a secret side to the Congress' proceedings were reported by the Embassy in a telegram of the 12th March.¹⁶ It seemed from "fairly well authenticated rumours" that Khrushchev had kept his most caustic remarks about Stalin to a special meeting at the very end of the Congress. Details at this point were sketchy, but the basic outline was apparent.¹⁷ There were further intimations that

14 FO 371 122765 NS 1015/13, Despatch, Hayter to Lloyd, 17th February, 1956. In his immediate reaction to Khrushchev's 14th February speech which Eden read and agreed with, Hayter philosophised,

A genuine agreement to live and let live with an expanding Marxist State is a contradiction in terms. The only hope is that this State should cease to be expanding, cease to be genuinely Marxist... Are there any traces in this speech of the beginning of such a process? It is, I fear, too early to answer this question in the affirmative. The process, if ever it begins at all, will certainly be an unconscious one, and long after the regime has become essentially conservative it will continue, like the regimes that grew out of the French and American revolutions, to intone revolutionary slogans... I do not think that there is anything in this speech which would justify us in believing that this stage has now been reached, consciously or unconsciously. On the contrary it threatens us with new and more insidious dangers.

Hayter was though rather tickled by Khrushchev's proposal to set up "boarding schools", largely as an attempt to deal with increases in hooliganism among the Soviet young. The Winchester educated Ambassador could not but notice overtones of Dr. Arnold in the rhetoric used to candy the idea by the Communist Party's First Secretary.

15 On this see Donald S. Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956-61*, pp. 39-65, and David Floyd, *Mao against Khrushchev*. Both Zagoria and Floyd in a sense agree with the Foreign Office view of 1956, in so far as the impact of doctrinal reform on Sino-Soviet relations was to take a couple of years to come to its bitter fruit whereas the division over the secret speech and de-Stalinisation became more immediately apparent.

16 FO 371 122767 NS 1015/43, Telegram No. 263, Hayter to London, 12th March, 1956. For the American reaction which was not appreciably different from the British see *FRUS* 1955-57, Vol. XXIV, pp. 72-108. For Khrushchev's account of the genesis of the Secret Speech see *Khrushchev Remembers*, pp. 341-353.

17 *ibid.*, Stalin, it seemed, had tortured and killed to the extent that his lieutenants answered his summons in fear of their lives. Khrushchev had also accused Stalin of ignoring warnings about Germany's surprise attack in 1941 and of having "liquidated" 30,000 of the Soviet armies best officers.

Stalin was also about to be publicly thrown from his place of honour, literally in the removal and destruction of the many monuments to his vanity.¹⁸

Over the following days the trickle of evidence increased, leading the Embassy to conclude that the Soviet Government was attempting to transmit the revelation of this new Stalin to its people gently, so as to cushion the shock.¹⁹ By the end of March sufficient information had become available for Hayter to send a full despatch on the subject to London.²⁰ Indeed by this point a reasonably accurate account of what Khrushchev's speech contained had already appeared in the Western press.²¹ Hayter's despatch fleshed out a little upon the content of the speech. However, the biggest question left in the minds of foreign observers was not about the actual text, but about causation. Hayter stressed that it was not so much the theme of anti-Stalinism which was new, but the vehemence of its expression.

Stalin was gradually assuming life-size, and if this process had been continued the "cult of the individual" could, in the course of a few years, have been eliminated without any psychological upheaval... But Khrushchev and his colleagues have not been content with this, and have decided to tell the Soviet people the whole truth, or a great deal of it, about Stalin's tyrannical ways.

Why should Khrushchev have decided on this new approach? Hayter did not think that the explanation would be found by reference to the Cold War as the confessions of the Congress were much more likely to harm the unity and credibility of the "international Communist movement" than they were to aid it.²² Rather he suggested that there were three factors at work. Firstly, the Cult of Stalin stood in the way of the modern society which the Communist leadership was attempting to create in the Soviet

18 FO 371 122767 NS 1051/54, Despatch, Moscow Chancery to Northern Department, 15th March, 1956. By this point it was known that Khrushchev had also castigated Stalin's self glorification and made some reference to the Doctor's Plot. However, the impact upon graven images was yet limited,

Although Khrushchev is reported to have said that statues of Stalin would gradually be reduced in number, we have so far only heard of one being removed - from the entrance of the hall of the Moscow Conservatory. It seems rather unusual for Soviet musicians to be in the political avant garde.

This situation was very soon to change.

19 FO 371 122767 NS 1015/55, Telegram No. 302, Hayter to London, 19th March, 1956. Hayter reported that "many sources" confirmed the existence of a letter outlining Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin which was being read out at ad hoc meetings of Party Members in "Soviet institutions and factories".

20 FO 371 122767 NS 1015/67, Despatch, Hayter to Lloyd, 23rd March, 1956. So quick had details filtered out to the West that Hayter thought the Soviet leadership must have intended Khrushchev's Secret Speech to be secret only in name. Copies had been available for purchase at a Danish Embassy reception on the 11th March.

21 *The Times*, 17th March, 1956.

22 Robert Rhodes James is, presumably, not referring to the opinion of the British Government when he asserts that Khrushchev's, "[s]ensational repudiation of Stalin had led some to believe that he was likely to be less assertive of Soviet policies outside Russia, a delusion that was to be swiftly dashed by experience of this cruel, cunning, but not wholly unattractive villain". See *Anthony Eden*, pp. 433-434.

Union. Stalin had stood for the stifling of individual initiative, a quality which was essential for the further development of the Soviet economy.²³ Secondly, it may have been that Khrushchev felt it necessary to finish the Congress with his expose in an attempt to win around party members who were not impressed by the new line which had been promulgated during the previous days.²⁴ In this Hayter was referring to the rank and file and not a clique within the leadership. Thirdly, there was perhaps a less "rational" factor to be considered. Stalin's worms might finally have taken a posthumous opportunity to bite back after years of humiliation and suffering at his hands.²⁵ Hayter was quite clear that whatever the leadership's motivation may have been the policy was fraught with dangers,

Once again they have ignored the effect on foreign Communist Parties. They have deliberately taken the risk of offending a large proportion of their own people. They have laid themselves open to the charge of doing nothing to restrain Stalin during his lifetime. All this is a measure of their personal hatred of Stalin and their confidence in the strength of their own position now.

The Foreign Office's understanding of why Khrushchev had indulged himself did not change greatly over the coming months, not even after the final appearance of a complete text of the speech on the 4th June, 1956 by the good office of the US State Department. The resignation in this same month of both Molotov and Kaganovich from their Ministerial posts did lead to some speculation as to the importance of Khrushchev's speech in respect of his control over the leadership. However, particularly in the case of Kaganovich, the issue was by no means clear to British observers.²⁶ But, in the main, Hayter's emphases on the need to foster the initiative of the Soviet citizen and less rational impulses seemed sound. E. E. Orchard, in an

23 Hayter to Lloyd, 23rd March, 1956. Hayter reflected, "they [the Soviet leaders] want to turn the Soviet people into a progressive, efficient, enterprising, scientifically-minded nation; in fact to turn the Soviet Union into a kind of Socialist United States of America... It is easy to imagine that they felt hampered everywhere by the heritage of Stalin". The failure to shuffle off the legacy of Stalin was, of course, to play a fundamental role in the ultimate collapse of Soviet power.

24 *ibid.* Hayter reported that it seemed, "very likely that after Khrushchev's and Mikoyan's speeches at the congress many delegates.. may have defended Stalin and criticised the new line".

25 *ibid.* Hayter postulated, "the Soviet leaders may have wanted for a long time to remove the innumerable monuments to so repulsive a memory. But it is only now, in the flush of confidence after the 20th Party Congress, that they have felt able to take the decisive step to blacken Stalin's name".

26 On the 1st June Molotov resigned in favour of D. T. Shepilov who at this point was a pronounced Khrushchevite and apostle of liberalisation. Kaganovich followed on the 6th June, leaving his position as Chairman of the State Committee on Labour and the Wage Question, see *Power and Policy*, p. 291. There was some debate as to the importance of Kaganovich's decline, not least because Khrushchev had made references in the secret speech to both his and Molotov's Stalinist past which implicated them in the appointment of Yezhov and thus the purges of the thirties. The truth of the matter was not entirely clear to the Foreign Office at the time, FO 371 122771 NS 1015/122, Despatch, Moscow Chancery to Northern Department, 15th June, 1956, and Minutes by T. E. Bridges, 28th June, 1956, and E. E. Orchard, 30th June, 1956. Molotov's position was also the subject of some speculation, not least because of favourable references in *Voprosy Istorii* to his role in 1917. It seemed he was down, but not yet quite out.

Information Department Minute of the 13th June, went so far as to liken the Secret Speech to the Jewish Day of Atonement,

The Russians remain an emotional people and Khrushchev may have felt that a major act of collective political expiation, redeemed by the transfer of guilt to Stalin as the scapegoat, would re-enthuse Soviet society with some of its old Communist fervour... the denunciation of Stalin is also a token of greater personal security. it is quite possible that the intelligentsia and administration will exercise greater initiative the more they sense they are safe.²⁷

The 20th Party Congress acted as a grand confirmation of the Foreign Office's assessment of Soviet policy over the previous year or more. So much so that it seemed at the time to be rather unremarkable in most aspects. The Secret Speech was the one truly surprising development, apparently owing as much to emotion as rational calculation. Certainly it was very shortly to have a calamitous impact upon the stability of the Soviet Commonwealth.²⁸ However, more immediately important in influencing the attitude of Her Majesty's Ministers was Bulganin's and Khrushchev's descent on Britain from the 18th to the 27th April, 1956.

THE VISIT

Khrushchev's and Bulganin's visit to Britain was witness to some very frank talking, particularly on the side of the hosts. However, possibly the most important impact of the event was the influence it had upon Eden's appreciation of Soviet foreign policy.²⁹ The analysis which the Northern Department had developed during 1955 finally seems to have been fully taken on board as a consequence of the impressions which were garnered by both Eden and Lloyd, although there was still to be flickers of the vanity of statesmanship.³⁰

27 FO 371 122771 NS 1015/127, Minute by E. E. Orchard, 13th June, 1956. Orchard further commented that this last point was something of a two-edged sword and that the "initiative" of the Russian people might not always work to the advantage of the Soviet Government. He had begun his piece as follows, "although there is every sign that Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin is the culminating point of a long process which began within three weeks of his death, its emotional impulsiveness and unexpected (though qualified) historical realism have injected the most potent stimulant yet into the post-Stalin system". There was also a Northern Department submission on the issue at FO 371 122771 NS 1015/117, which has not been released under the thirty year rule. It seems, however, unlikely that this would contain any great difference of opinion.

28 By the summer of 1956 it was clear that the Soviet Government was having second thoughts about the wisdom of de-Stalinisation, particularly in relation to Eastern Europe, FO 371 122785 NS 1021/50, Despatch, C. Parrot, Moscow to F. O., 27th June, 1956 and minute by T. Brimelow, 21st August, 1956.

29 For an appreciation of its place in the Soviet schema see, *Détente in Europe*, pp. 68-70.

30 FO 371 122821 NS 1052/307, Telegram No. 2172, from Selwyn Lloyd to Sir Roger Makins, Washington, 18th April, 1956. Clarification of Soviet intentions was the main British objective. The talks were justified to the Americans by Lloyd in the following terms, "we are not optimistic of achieving significant results, but we may have the opportunity of the probing the Soviet mind. I need hardly say that we shall take care not to prejudice the interests of our allies or to get out of step on matters which are of joint allied concern". He then went on to list British objectives which I paraphrase as follows. Firstly, new light on Soviet thoughts on the international situation and what

There had, of course, been some debate within Government as to whether the visit should be allowed to go ahead as a consequence of Khrushchev's virulently anti-British rhetoric in the previous year. However, diplomacy prevailed over *amor propre*, not least because the Soviets made it quite clear that they very much wanted the visit.³¹ Hayter observed the Soviet's concern for the success of the venture in his report for the first quarter of 1956, "relations with the United Kingdom reached a high pitch of synthetic cordiality, in Moscow at any rate,... in preparation for the forthcoming visit of the Soviet leaders to Great Britain".³² He was even invited to address the Soviet people via television in the lead up to the visit, a novelty which seems to have been carried off with some aplomb.³³

British pique was confined to the trimming of the programme of events which was to be enjoyed by the plenipotentiaries of Socialism.³⁴ Even so they were subjected to an intensive introduction to what Whitehall considered the essentials of British civilisation which included Oxford University, a nuclear reactor and Holyrood Palace as well as tea with her Majesty.³⁵ This rather narrow slice of British life was reflected in the apartments chosen for the Soviets in Claridges Hotel.³⁶

their aims really are. Secondly, to repeat criticism of Soviet policies and acts. Thirdly, to probe the possibility of new departures to settle big issues. Fourthly, to cast light on the situation in the Soviet Union, particularly after the deposition of Stalin. Fifthly, to ask the visitors to clarify their recent repudiation of the doctrine of inevitable conflict and how they propose to operate peaceful coexistence and competition. Sixthly, to take them up on their desire for closer contacts.

31 FO 371 122817 NS 1052/187, Minute, H. A. F. Hohler, 13th March, 1956.

32 FO 371 122769 NS 1015/88, Quarterly Report, Hayter to Selwyn Lloyd, 4th April, 1956.

33 FO 371 122820 NS 1052/292, Despatch, Hayter to Northern Department, 20th March, 1956. In a letter of the 1st April the Northern Department congratulated Hayter on successfully walking the tightrope between servility and offence. The text of Hayter's broadcast was also published in *Pravda*, 20th March.

34 FO 371 122809 NS 1052/20, Minute by H. A. F. Hohler, 5th January 1956, submitting reduced programme of events. At FO 371 122832 NS 1052/583, H. A. F. Hohler gave the following justification for the visit despite the adverse turn of the international atmosphere after Geneva in July in a brief dated 30th April, 1956, prepared for Selwyn Lloyd's meeting with the West German Foreign Minister Herr von Brentano,

We nevertheless decided to persevere with the visit as we felt that the increase of tension made talks with the Soviet leaders more, rather than less, necessary. For this purpose London was the most suitable place. Our perseverance has been justified in the course of the long and strenuous talks which took place during the visit.

35 Hayter records in his memoirs misgivings about the itinerary, *A Double Life*, p. 137,

The programme that had been designed for them was not one I should have chosen myself; it took them to a number of historical and beautiful places, but neither of them had any visual sense or interest in history, and they saw little of the modern industrial or agricultural areas in which Khrushchev at least would have been really interested...

Hayter expressed these reservations at the time in FO 371 122838 NS 1052/606, Minute, Sir William Hayter, 3rd May, 1956. Khrushchev had specifically made comment at the end that he would have preferred to see more farms and factories, although Hayter thought Khrushchev most relaxed "at a tea-party in Holyrood Palace attended by every duke and duchess in Scotland".

36 Peter Wright in *Spycatcher, The Candid Autobiography of a Senior Intelligence Officer*, pp. 72-73, recalls the bugging of Khrushchev's suite by MI5 as a considerable technical achievement which produced little, apart from the following, "he [Khrushchev] was an extraordinarily vain man. He stood in front of the mirror preening himself for hours at a time, and fussing with his hair parting. I recall thinking that in Eden, Khrushchev had found the perfect match".

There had, indeed, already been something of a precursor in the visit during March of Malenkov in his diminished capacity as Minister of Electric Power Stations.³⁷ Hugh Gaitskell in particular seems to have gained a very positive impression after a total of five hours of conversation with Malenkov. This experience provided a pointed contrast with the disastrous hospitality which the Labour Party offered Khrushchev.³⁸

Those planning the event in the Foreign Office were much concerned with the potential for embarrassment of Khrushchev's habit of extempore speechifying.³⁹ He had after all built up a substantial reputation in the field since 1953. This was the main factor behind the relatively limited exposure to the Great British public which the Soviet leaders were afforded, although there was also some concern that the wrong sort of people, that is extreme left sympathisers, might provide a supportive audience.⁴⁰ Given the debacle which Khrushchev's one substantial ad hoc contribution caused within the confines of a House of Commons function room in the company of the Labour Party, caution over Khrushchev's behaviour was probably justified.⁴¹ Less so was concern for the reaction of the British people. In fact Khrushchev and Bulganin faced a politely indifferent and at times even hostile populace. So much so that Hayter thought it must have been a confusing experience for the Soviets, given that the capitalist government seemed more genially inclined to them than the oppressed proletariat.⁴²

37 There is a record of this visit at FO 371 122953 NS 16310 and 122954 NS 16310.

38 See Phillip Williams, *Hugh Gaitskell*, p. 412 and also Phillip Williams, ed., *The Diary of Hugh Gaitskell*, pp. 482-493 which contains a record of the conversations. In Harry Hopkins account of the 40's and 50's, *The New Look*, p. 385, there is a striking photograph, taken during the visit, of Malenkov in festal mood sandwiched between two members of the Dagenham girl pipers band dressed as extras from Brig O'Doon.

39 There is a large amount of material on preparations for the visit at FO 371 122812 NS 1052, 122813 NS 1052 and 122814 NS 1052.

40 Khrushchev complains of this in his memoir, *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 409. Lloyd is quite specific on the issue, *Suez 1956*, pp. 62-63, "it had been feared that their visit would provide an opportunity for large left-wing demonstrations". The Northern Department's minuting in preparation for the 17th April makes clear that they expected the Soviet leaders would behave as it was in their interests to put on a good international show. However, the risk of exposing so volatile a man as Khrushchev unchaperoned was not to be taken; FO 371 122813 NS 1052/96, Northern Department Minute, 1st March, 1956.

41 FO 371 122810 NS 1052/31, Minute by H. A. F. Hohler, 23rd January, 1956. Ironically at this point Hohler was expressing concern that such a meeting fitted in with other Soviet attempts to get friendly with European Socialist Parties. He hinted darkly "the idea may have emanated from a Russian source." Dulles was to take comfort from the dinner, illustrative as it was of the difficulties the Soviets would face in encouraging co-operation between Communists and Socialists in Western countries. *FRUS 1955-57*, Vol. XXIV, p. 118. Memorandum of Discussion at 289th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, 28th June, 1956.

42 FO 371 122834 NS 1052/606, Minute, Hayter, 3rd May, 1956. On the diplomatic niceties of the translation of "boo, boo" see also *A Double Life*, p. 137.

A desire to oil the wheels of diplomacy also informed the Foreign Office's attitude to the substantial mail which was received from the public on the visit. Most of it, although not all, was hostile and consequently fobbed off.⁴³

Eden is quite clear in his memoirs that the main benefit gained by the encounter was the chance to speak plainly with the Soviets and develop some deeper mutual understanding.⁴⁴ Indeed he went to considerable lengths to ensure the talks were accorded the kind of secrecy which he thought their importance demanded.⁴⁵ Khrushchev, in contrast, seems to have been rather less impressed by the business side of the visit.⁴⁶ Quite probably this is a reflection of the much more substantial impact which Eden's experience had upon his estimation of the enemy than vice-versa.

The formal talks held at the start of the visit in Downing Street gave the habitual issues of East West debate, inevitably, a British twist.⁴⁷ The two most lively discussions were held over colonialism and Middle Eastern affairs, as might be expected given the difficulties which the British had faced as a consequence of Soviet foreign policy over the previous year.

The first meeting gave Eden a chance to hit back at the Soviet rhetoric in India and South East Asia.⁴⁸ According to the British record, at least, he did so with some dignity and force. Khrushchev and Bulganin asserted that their speeches had denounced colonialism in the abstract rather than the British particular, consequently they considered Britain's offence to have been caused of misunderstanding. So far as Britain was in the process of decolonialisation they were in fact offering a backhanded compliment.⁴⁹ Eden was, however, not prepared to let the matter rest so easily, suggesting that if this was the Soviet view they should publicly compliment Britain's conversion of Empire into Commonwealth. There was also some attempt by the other British Ministers present, R.A.B. Butler and Selwyn Lloyd, to pin the colonialist tag on the Soviets. Khrushchev responded by stressing peaceful evolution as the means by which he hoped socialism might be achieved in other countries. There was, he insisted, no threat of Soviet interference abroad, whether through force or subversion.

43 For example FO 371 122810 NS 1052/34, letter from Mr Barnett Janner MP, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, 6th January, 1956. This letter asked for an interview with Khrushchev in order to raise some less than diplomatic questions. The Northern Department palmed off this request, as so many others, with formulaic and vague platitudes.

44 *Full Circle*, pp. 354-366. There is a substantial printed record of the formal talks, informal conversations and impressions of the Soviet leaders at FO 371 122836.

45 There was even considerable reservations about showing the minutes to the Americans; FO 371 122834 NS 1052/605, Minute by J. G. Ward, 7th May, 1956.

46 *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 404. Khrushchev's account dwells on the sight seeing rather than the plain talking. "substantively our talks didn't add much to what had come out of our Geneva meeting".

47 The old, but persistent chestnuts included European Security, German reunification, disarmament, strategic controls on East-West trade and, as Eden puts it in his memoir, "the hardy biennial so grimly described as "cultural exchanges"". Eden's love of flowers provided in this metaphor a pungence generally lacking from his prose, *Full Circle*, p. 360.

48 FO 371 122836, Record of First Plenary Meeting, 19th April, 1956.

49 *Ibid.* Khrushchev went so far as favourably to compare the French habit of clinging on in Indo-China and North Africa with Britain's more gracious retreat from Empire.

Selwyn Lloyd also took the opportunity to quiz the Soviets directly about their commitment to peaceful coexistence. As the record puts it, "the Foreign Secretary said that there was a view in this country that the new developments in the Soviet Union were only a change of tactics". Which point Bulganin replied to, after some diversion,

They [the Soviets] were amused by the suggestion that recent steps taken by them merely had been a change of tactics. He referred to the Austrian State treaty and the communiques after their visits to Yugoslavia and India. It was impossible to imagine that the recent Congress simply represented a change in tactics. New principles had been set forth relating to both to their internal and to their foreign policy.⁵⁰

The discussion ended with a bland endorsement of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of others.

The second meeting on the 20th April was specifically concerned with the Middle East and provides an interesting indicator of the British Government's understanding of its vital interests. It is important to understand that the following statement was not merely an expression of personal opinion, but the considered view of the British Government which had been established in discussions before the Soviets' arrival.⁵¹ The memo of the 20th April exchange records,

The Prime Minister referred to a matter which affected the position of the United Kingdom. We were dependent in our industrial life on outside supplies of oil. Without that oil we should have unemployment and we should slowly starve to death. Our Russian friends would understand that we were not prepared to allow that to happen. For us the supply of oil, mainly from the Persian Gulf area was literally vital.

Eden went on, in a melodramatic flourish which probably owed rather more to his own inspiration,

He thought that he must be absolutely blunt about the oil because we would fight for it.⁵²

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ FO 371 122827 NS 1052/485, Record of Discussions held in the Prime Minister's Office at the House of Commons, 16th April, 1956. At this meeting the following advice had been given,

There was some discussion of the briefs on the Middle East. Sir William Hayter expressed the view that the best line to take on this was to bring home to the Russians the seriousness of the subject, by explaining the vital nature of our interests. They should be made to realise that interference in the Middle East was a serious matter.

Eden's account of the negotiations in *Full Circle* tends to over emphasise the role he personally played in deciding the British position. Hayter was, of course, in Britain for the duration of the Soviet visit.

⁵² FO 371 122836, Record of Second Plenary Meeting, 20th April, 1956. Eden's concern for "unemployment" provides a quaint contrast with Conservative politicians of our own day. Perhaps the Suez Crisis would not have led to such a mess if Mr. Major had been in charge.

Such frankness seems to have startled Khrushchev.⁵³

Eden's bellicosity is probably more illuminating of his own frame of mind than it was influential over Soviet foreign policy. Not least because by November of the same year his threat was proved most emphatically to be sincere. This was not to be the only expression of concern regarding Soviet involvement in the Middle East. Eden extended a number of feelers in an attempt to sound them out on the coordination of action in the interest of peace, in particular over Palestine.⁵⁴ An equitable settlement of Arab-Israeli disputes would, of course, greatly have been to Britain's advantage.⁵⁵ Khrushchev was not prepared to play ball.

The talks were supplemented by informal conversations which went over much the same ground although at times in a more whimsical style. Selwyn Lloyd especially employed a twee line in diplomatic euphemism, referring to intelligence sources as "little birds" whilst discussing with Khrushchev the problem of Soviet arms supplies to Yemen and the Middle East in general.⁵⁶ These contacts were, in their way, valuable in affording the British a chance to get to know the Soviet leaders and to evaluate the relationship between them.⁵⁷ It seemed quite clear that Khrushchev was the man in authority, although there was more debate over the quality of his personal relations with Bulganin; Hayter thought them to be excellent.⁵⁸

However, the Soviets were not about to make unguarded comments on matters of policy. Despite considerable priming on the issue of de-Stalinisation neither Bulganin

53 Ibid. The record continues, "Mr Khrushchev said that the Prime Minister would hardly find sympathy with the Soviet Government if he said that he was prepared to start a war. They, for their part, would only resort to war if an attack were made on them or on the Warsaw Pact countries". Khrushchev also went on to raise Soviet concerns over the Baghdad Pact. Eden reports this exchange accurately in *Full Circle*, pp. 358-359. Lloyd talks about this session as the "one occasion when they [the talks] seemed to approach a flash point", *Suez 1956*, p. 62. Also see Evelyn Shuckburgh's diary entry for the day which records the reaction of Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, also present at the Downing Street talks, *Descent to Suez*, p. 354.

54 FO 371 122827 NS 1052/492, Record of Conversation between Eden and Khrushchev 18th April, 1956. This was indeed one of the first serious issues which Eden raised with Khrushchev in a private dinner at Claridges on the 18th April immediately after the Soviets had arrived in London. Khrushchev's response, according to the record of Thomas Brimelow who was translating, was not encouraging, "Khrushchev said that he did not see how they could intervene in something that was up to the Israelis and Arabs to settle". Also Ivone Kirkpatrick's report of the visit to Pearson Dixon at the United Nations: FO 371 121236 V 1054/105, Letter, Kirkpatrick to Dixon, 11th May, 1956.

55 See *Descent to Suez*, pp. 209-366. This aim consumed much the most frustrating part of Evelyn Shuckburgh's time after 1954.

56 Khrushchev's account of this makes rather more of the "birdie" metaphor than Lloyd's. Khrushchev retorted that Britain was just as guilty of selling arms in the area. Possibly something was lost in the translation of his following remark, "wouldn't it be nice if all the birdies started chirping the same thing in both our ears - that we should assume a mutually binding obligation not to sell arms to anyone". *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 404. See *Suez 1956*, p. 63 for an entertaining account of the journey to Harwell atomic power station during which the "birds" did their chirping. Also FO 371 122831 NS 1052/573, Record of a Conversation between S. S. O. F. A. and Bulganin and Khrushchev on the Journey between London and Harwell, 21st April, 1956.

57 At least this was Selwyn Lloyd's opinion, *Suez 1956*, p. 62.

58 FO 371 122834 NS 1052/606, Minute, Sir William Hayter, 3rd May, 1956 and Minute, H. A. F. Hohler, 3rd May, 1956. Hohler pointed out the special police interpreter, a Mr Perry, had detected signs of strain between the two. The Northern Department tended towards Hayter's view.

or Khrushchev gave anything away, saving that they agreed it was a good thing. Indeed, on the 19th April, in the aftermath of dinner at 10 Downing Street Churchill adopted the curious role of Stalin's advocate commenting to Bulganin that he "had always found Stalin as good as his word and a great war leader, but could not speak of pre-war events." Bulganin limited himself to confessing that he "had advised" Khrushchev to make his Secret Speech.⁵⁹ The Soviet leaders proved no more candid abroad than when at home.

Eden informed the British public in a television broadcast after the departure of the Soviet leaders that the talks were "the beginning of a beginning".⁶⁰ The hope was that this dialogue might continue and produce more substantial results than the bland communique which was issued jointly in London.⁶¹ There were even plans made for a return visit by Eden to Moscow.⁶² Overall the "Bulge and Khrush" tour proved a high point of goodwill between Britain and the Soviet Union, carrying the "spirit of Geneva", albeit in a rather scaled down form, into 1956.

There were two notorious incidents which might have turned the aftermath rather more sour, but neither had any substantial impact. The clash between Khrushchev and the Labour Party was clearly no responsibility of the Government. It was caused by a combination of Khrushchev's bombastic extempore speech, made at the request of junior members of the Labour group, including James Callaghan, and the insistence by Gaitskell that the issue of Soviet maltreatment of Social Democrats in Eastern Europe should be raised. Matters were made considerably worse by George Brown's combative response to Khrushchev, who was later to observe that if he were British he would be a Conservative voter.⁶³

The Commander Crabbe Affair was potentially much more embarrassing. It was also fogged in considerable mystery which a House of Commons debate on the 10th May, 1956 did nothing to disperse.⁶⁴ It seems that a relatively minor official had sanctioned an attempt by the retired Commander Crabbe to examine underwater the hull of the Soviet leader's cruiser at anchor in Portsmouth. This was in contradiction of Eden's explicit and very sensible instructions that no such secret operations should occur during the visit to Britain. Crabbe's decapitated body was washed up some time later. However, the Soviets were just as keen as the British to further the atmosphere

59 FO 371 122830 NS 1052/551, Record of Conversations at the Dinner at No. 10 Downing Street, April 19th, 1956. Eden later again introduced the subject of co-operation over Palestine into conversation with Bulganin to little success.

60 There is a copy of the address at FO 371 122835 NS 1052/630.

61 This was published in a House of Commons White Paper, Cmd. 9753, April, 1956.

62 The plan was to visit the Soviet Union later in the same year as a means of keeping the process going. There is a melancholy file full with the ephemera of futile organisation at FO 371 122837 NS 1052. Also *Full Circle*, p. 362. The Suez and Hungarian crises made such a visit impossible.

63 Khrushchev's account and that of Brown and Gaitskell, unsurprisingly, do not agree, see *Khrushchev Remembers*, pp. 412-413. George Brown, *In My Way*, pp. 69-75, *Hugh Gaitskell*, pp. 413-414, *The Diary of Hugh Gaitskell*, pp. 505-518, also *Anthony Eden*, p. 434.

64 *Hansard* Vol. 552, cols. 1760-1764.

of cordiality and so they graciously made no fuss.⁶⁵ Indeed, the controversy surrounding the incident tends to act in the historiography as something of a distraction.⁶⁶

What was much more important than botched espionage or international glad-handing was the final push which the visit gave Eden in reconsidering Soviet foreign policy. Hovering behind the pleasantries remained the darker competitive side of the Soviets' new talk of coexistence. On occasions it came unpleasantly to the fore, as during the discussion on the Middle East. Eden comments in his memoirs that he was quite aware of the limits of Soviet amiability. Indeed in private he dwelt on this as the most important lesson of the visit. He recalled his thoughts on returning from waving Bulganin and Khrushchev off at Victoria station,

Back at Number 10, I had to decide what our policy should now be. The present Soviet rulers had as much confidence as their predecessors in the ultimate triumph of communism. They were unshakeably determined. The methods they would employ might be different from those of Stalin and they might be harder to meet. Many influences had served to bring about this change, including the power of the nuclear deterrent as a major influence against world war. We had to consider the adjustments needed in our policies to cope with a new situation, for a new situation it undoubtedly was.⁶⁷

It would seem that in terms of the Foreign Office assessment of Soviet policy which Eden had essentially ignored during his January visit to Washington, the penny had finally dropped.⁶⁸ This was one of the most important factors which lead him to call for a fundamental re-evaluation of Britain's defence policy which took place in early July, 1956.⁶⁹

65 FO 371 122885 NS 1216/9, Telegram No. 603, Hayter to F. O., 10th May, 1956. Hayter made the following assessment of the Soviet response on the 10th May,

Since my return Bulganin and Khrushchev have been effusively friendly to me... It seems therefore that they are anxious to keep up a favourable atmosphere as regards Her Majesty's Government, while continuing attacks on the Labour Party, and this coupled with the silence of the Soviet press, makes me think that they are unlikely to exploit the frogman incident and that the least said soonest mended should be our motto.

Also see *Anthony Eden*, pp. 436-438, *Full Circle*, pp. 365-366 and *Khrushchev Remembers*, pp. 411-412.

66 For example Lord Blake's treatment of the Soviet visit is entirely taken up with the Crabbe farrago, *The Decline of Power*, pp. 360-361. The errant MI6 officer, Nicholas Elliott is about to publish his memoirs, *The Guardian*, 12th January, 1994. Needless to say he passes the accusation of incompetence further up the chain of command.

67 *Full Circle*, p. 362. Also *Descent to Suez*, p. 353; Shuckburgh, in response to William Barker's impression that Eden was falling for Bulganin and Khrushchev's charm, expressed the following confidence, "I told him that A. E. always looks as if he is falling for that kind of thing; but that in reality he has a very shrewd idea of what he is up against". Barker, an expert on Soviet affairs, was assisting with interpretation.

68 This was also the line which Lloyd took in conversations with the German Foreign Minister, von Brentano during his April visit to London. T 234/67, Record of Meeting in Foreign Office at 3 p.m. on Monday, 30th April, 1956.

69 FO 371 123187 ZP 5/42, Eden to Lloyd, 31st May, 1956. Eden set out the parameters for this review in *Full Circle*, p. 363. Sidney Aster picks up the point in his biography of Eden,

This review was to raise some interesting points about the future of Britain in a world which was increasingly defining international rivalries in economic terms.⁷⁰ Indeed, there had already been rumblings about the pointlessness of preparation for all-out war when the Soviet Union was unlikely to choose such a destructive course of action. Sir Christopher Steel, head of Britain's permanent delegation to NATO in Paris, pointed out in a despatch of the 26th April, 1956 that even if hostilities were to begin despite Soviet intentions, as the defence of the West depended on the use of nuclear weapons, "[Western Europe] would be smoking and impassable wilderness in which man's only thought would be self-preservation and where organised existence, let alone organised warfare had practically ceased".⁷¹ Of what value would a few extra tanks and aeroplanes be then? Eden was himself at last grappling with the response Britain ought to make to so profound a change in the context of Cold War rivalry.⁷²

The review reveals a considerable amount on the opinions held at the top level of Government about Britain's future as a world power and the means by which she was to secure it. Alongside an awareness of her smallness in comparison with the continental giants of America and the Soviet Union, not to mention the potential of China, India or Canada, there was also the problem of keeping up with the industrial competition provided by a renascent West Germany. Much had been achieved since 1945, but most of the money had come from America and no great power could long survive dependent upon charity. However, great store was laid by "prestige" factors which increased Britain's ability to influence events and the question was set confidently in terms of how Britain was to maintain her status amongst the first rank of states.⁷³ Although there may have been some who wondered whether she should really be there at all, their voice did not survive the drafting of position papers.⁷⁴

These issues are not of immediate interest to this thesis. Yet there are profound problems here for any explanation of Eden's behaviour during the Suez Crisis. Why

confusingly given exactly the same title as Robert Rhodes James' book, *Anthony Eden*, pp. 138-140. Civil Servants had been preparing papers for such a review since at least March, substantially before the Soviet visit kindled Eden's enthusiasm for the venture, FO 371 123187 ZP 5/30G, Sir R. Powell Ministry of Defence to P. H. Dean, F. O., 28th March, 1956.

70 There is a considerable amount of material in the F. O. files, FO 371 123187, 123188 and 123191, but the relevant Cabinet papers do not seem yet to be open.

71 FO 371 123187 ZP 5/31G, Sir C. Steel, UK Permanent Delegation, Paris to Sir R. Powell, Ministry of Defence, 26th April, 1956. This despatch was a thoughtful piece on Britain's future defence requirements. It was used by officials from the Treasury, Defence Ministry and Foreign Office in the drawing up of "The Future of the United Kingdom in World Affairs".

72 William Clark, *From Three Worlds*, Memoirs, p. 165. In his diary entry for the 19th June, 1956 Clark, Eden's press adviser, thought this one of the main justifications for his continued support of the administration.

[Y]et for all my personal dislike of the PM... I do realise that in politics he stands for what is best and most liberal and central. It is he who has seen the possibility of reducing our vast burden of conventional arms in the light of the hydrogen bomb and the change in Russia; he has seen the change from Cold War to the trade struggle and told the nation about it...

73 FO 371 123191 ZP 9/12, *The Future of the United Kingdom in World Affairs*. This was put forward for the consideration of the Ministerial committee set up by Eden.

74 FO 371 123191 ZP 9/5, Minute by Sir H. Caccia, 30th April, 1956.

should a Government apparently so clearly aware of its precarious dependence on American financial strength and the importance of prestige in its foreign policy, recklessly gamble with both?⁷⁵

To return to matters more immediate, Soviet deeds continued to confirm their words. In the first half of 1956 there was an increasing amount of evidence feeding back to Whitehall further illustrating the new methods which the Soviets had adopted in their engagement with the West.

ECONOMIC COLD WAR

Whitehall's concern over the use of economic power in the advancement of Soviet influence was particularly acute in the case of Egypt. Although this was by no means the only cause of friction between Nasser and the British, it seems to have played an increasingly important role. By the summer of 1956 it provided Eden with one of his main arguments against continuing Anglo-American support for the funding of the Aswan High Dam. This reversal of the British Government's initial enthusiasm is a measure of how far Anglo-Egyptian relations had deteriorated in less than a year. That it was Dulles who chose, on the 19th July, to break the arrangement off abruptly was a consequence of different American tactics rather than any trans-Atlantic disagreement over strategy.⁷⁶ The episode provides an interesting indication of the seriousness with which the British Government as a whole now viewed "peaceful competition". It also betrays a dangerously feverish streak in Whitehall's assessment of Egyptian politics.

On the 19th April, 1956, the British Ambassador in Cairo sent to London a clear-headed analysis of the threat which Soviet involvement in Egypt posed.⁷⁷ It outlined the general conditions which had over the previous year favoured Soviet foreign policy in the Middle East.⁷⁸ The rise of Arab nationalism and the decline of colonialism had

75 See Diane B. Kunz, *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis*, pp. 186-194 on "the importance of having money". The final refuge taken by Kunz's explanation of British policy in the mysteries of "mid-summer madness" would probably not satisfy most historians of the Crisis, but I think she has a point.

76 There is a considerable controversy over this, see Keith Kyle, *Suez*, pp. 123-130; *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis*, pp. 65-72; *Anthony Eden*, pp. 445-453; *Suez, 1956*, pp. 68-72 and *Full Circle*, pp. 419-422. Also FO 371 119058 JE 1422/297G. Minute by D. A. H. Wright, 27th November, 1956 on Harold Caccia "slinging mud of our own making" at Mr. Hoover in Washington over the American termination of the dam project. The matter is best summed up by Kunz on p. 71 of her book,

As Makins [British Ambassador in Washington] had indicated, British officials had not yet decided to inform the Egyptian Government about the Aswan decision. However, their objections were a matter of form rather than substance, and they recognised that given American circumstances and the fact that this was mainly American money, Dulles had the right to make the decision. Furthermore, British officials betrayed a sense of relief that the irksome dam problem was solved.

77 FO 371 118846 JE 1024/1, Despatch, Sir Humphrey Trevelyan to Selwyn Lloyd, 19th April, 1956.

78 *ibid.*, Trevelyan dated the launch of the Kremlin's new Middle Eastern policy quite specifically to a Soviet Foreign Ministry announcement of the 16th April, 1955. This had been immediately before

created an ideal environment in which their new emphasis on "blandishments and aid" could play merry havoc. The Czech Arms deal and anti-Israeli posturing were now bolstered by the switch of Egyptian staple produce, cotton and rice, from glutted Western to Communist markets. All of which increased the opportunities for Soviet "technicians" to apply directly their baleful influence over Egyptian affairs.

Although at this point the Embassy was careful to keep the issue in perspective, there was no doubting that the relationship posed a serious problem for Britain. Trevelyan cautioned,

I cannot emphasise too greatly the necessity for contriving some means whereby Egyptian cotton can be marketed through Western channels and Egypt's deficits with the Sterling area and Western Europe liquidated, if Egyptian economic dependence on the Soviet Bloc is to be limited.⁷⁹

However, the Cairo Embassy maintained a sober attitude towards Egypt's connection with the Soviet Union, a sobriety which was increasingly at odds with opinions held in London. Up to the final moments of the Western proposal for the Aswan High Dam, Trevelyan continued to think that Nasser would always prefer dealing with Britain or America over the Soviet Union, despite persistent rumours to the contrary. These rumours came to a crescendo during the visit of Demitri Shepilov, the new Soviet Foreign Minister to Egypt in June, 1956.⁸⁰ Furthermore, Trevelyan advised London that even accepting the project's political and financial problems, it offered too much by way of advantage merely to be abandoned, particularly if, subsequently, the Egyptians were to find a Soviet alternative.⁸¹ Trevelyan was not prepared quite yet to regard Nasser as an unsalvageable victim of the Soviet Union.

This view was in contrast to the opinions of important figures within the Foreign Office. On the 7th June, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick made the following guarded reference to the British attitude towards Nasser in a conversation with Eugene Black of the World Bank,

the opening of the Bandoeng Conference of non-aligned states, thus the announcement had initially been interpreted by the Foreign Office as no more than propaganda.

79 *ibid.*, Trevelyan did express some reservations regarding the capacity of Communist markets to absorb Egyptian production. Furthermore, he had considerable doubts about the ability of technicians to interfere with Egyptian society given the stridently hostile attitude which Nasser's Government took against indigenous Communists. However, his concern for the impact of cotton exports seemed to have been shared by Kaissouni, the pro-Western Egyptian Minister of Finance, FO 371 119055 JE 1422/206G, Telegram No. 1086, Trevelyan to F. O., 21st June, 1956.

80 FO 371 118847 JE 1025/10, Despatch, Trevelyan to Lloyd, 28th June, 1956.

81 FO 371 119055 JE 1422/206G, Telegram No. 1087, Trevelyan to F. O., 21st June, 1956. Trevelyan insisted, somewhat inelegantly,

I can only repeat my view that, however distasteful it may be to maintain our offer in the light of recent political developments here, the situation is essentially no different from that which lead us to make the offer in December, 1955, and that it is in our interests to conclude the negotiation on the *aides memoire*.. in view of the most serious effect on Egyptian future relations over many years with the West, if the Communists are to build the dam.

I did not say very much about our attitude except to remark that it seemed to me to be a matter of assessing the political situation in Egypt. If Nasser was really committed body and soul to the Russians, as many people thought, the building of a Dam by some Russians would only be of marginal importance.⁸²

This coy reference to British opinion was, in fact, indicative of the consensus view of the Foreign Office. Archibald Ross, responsible for the African Department, deployed the following argument against the Dam in a paper dated 25th June, 1956, written for the benefit of the Prime Minister.

When the plan was mooted there was a reasonable prospect that the Czech Arms Deal would be, as Nasser assured us, "once and for all" and that he would keep other Soviet technicians out of Egypt if he obtained help for the Dam from the West. This hope has been progressively contradicted by events. The Russian grip on Egypt is already considerable, and it is too late to keep the Russians out. Indeed, whether Nasser realises it or not, he probably could not now free himself from them if he wanted to.⁸³

Ross pointed out that favours for Egypt created tensions with more reliable and less courted states such as Iraq and besides which there was the problem of financing the British contribution. By this point a dangerous combination of impotence, frustration and fatalism had come to dominate Whitehall's thinking on the issue.

All of these arguments, with a little peppering up of metaphors, were in turn communicated to Dulles via Sir Roger Makins as reasons why the British Government was having very serious second thoughts.⁸⁴ Ultimately, the case against proved irresistible. What was the point in spending scarce resources in attempting to tilt the political balance in Egypt when it looked increasingly likely that Western money could have little impact. The British thought that the best policy would be to let the matter chunter on without abruptly turning Nasser down, although he was effectively being written of as a loss to the Soviets.⁸⁵ Dulles, forthright as ever, took more decisive action.⁸⁶

82 FO 371 1199055 JE 1422/190G, Minute by Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, 7th June, 1956. The World Bank was to loan the largest portion of the monies needed to finance the Aswan High Dam, the United States and Britain providing the rest through grant aid. Black, the American President of the Bank, was its main representative throughout the tortured and ultimately futile process of negotiating detail. See *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis*, pp. 58-72 and *Suez*, pp. 82-85.

83 FO 371 119057 JE 1422/270G, Minute by A. D. M. Ross, 25th June, 1956. Ross had just taken over Evelyn Shuckburgh's position in charge of the Levant and African Departments, see *Descent to Suez*, pp. 356-358. Shuckburgh's attitude toward the dam and Soviet influence in Egypt was at one with that of the Foreign Office, "tant pis". If Nasser wanted to play with fire, the best way to teach the error of his ways would be to let him burn his fingers.

84 FO 371 119056 JE 1422/225; Telegram No. 3153 from F. O. to Washington, 10th July, 1956. "...Nasser is already enmeshed in the Soviet net" was substituted for Ross' "Russian grip". This Telegram was drafted in close consultation with the both Eden and Macmillan.

85 FO 371 119056 JE 1422/237G, Minute by A. D. M. Ross, 13th July, 1956.

86 Kunz argues this had more to do with Dulles' desire to demonstrate domestically his "dominance" in the development of American foreign policy. She also argues that this was a clear attempt on the part of the Americans to exert economic influence on Egypt by administering a salutary shock. In

By the summer of 1956 not only was the British analysis of Soviet policy increasingly emphasising the importance of economic aid as a conduit of political influence, it also accorded it a singular success in the case of Nasser.⁸⁷ Yet there was little consideration given to the implications this might have for the British position in Suez. If Nasser really was "enmeshed" by the Soviet's intrigue, Western access to the Canal was surely already imperiled. Indeed one Foreign Office official of the time in looking back has commented that the main reason Nasser's nationalisation came as such a surprise was because of this preoccupation with Soviet intentions, by comparison with Soviet aid the amount of money canal revenues would have yielded for canal building seemed relatively trivial.⁸⁸ That in the long-term Trevelyan's view was to prove more sound does not diminish the importance of the British Government's gloomy prognosis at the time.⁸⁹

As might be expected, thought was being given to the means by which the West should, in more general terms, respond to this type of economic challenge. From the start of 1956 there had been British consultations with allies as to how western aid might best be deployed and increased in order to counter Soviet policy. This had been one of the main issue discussed during the visit of Eden and Lloyd to Canada in February, in contrast to its treatment whilst the pair were in Washington. At this point there had been agreement on little more than informal consultations.⁹⁰

This process took up much of the time devoted to the issue in the first half of 1956, both with individual allies and within NATO. There was considerable discussion over how best to target and coordinate aid to make maximum impact against the Soviet bloc. The one issue over which Whitehall had no doubts was that the British Government could simple not afford to spend any more money itself, how convenient it would be if others might supply that which was lacking. Western Germany in particular was targeted as an ally who had as yet contributed very little development aid. The visit of Herr von Brentano, the German Foreign Minister, between 30th April and 3rd May, 1956 provided an ideal opportunity for the raising of the issue.⁹¹

The first proposal which the British put forward concerned the formation of a group of "blood donor" nations who could channel aid to areas most at risk from the

this Dulles' policy was a resounding failure. *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis*, pp. 71-72 and pp. 192-194.

87 CAB 130/113. GEN/518/6/2(d), Revise; Egypt, Note by the F. O., 23rd June, 1956. It was thought politic to tone down this conclusion at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference as it was likely that the Indians and Sri Lankans would pass the information on to Nasser.

88 This is the view of Sir Harold Beeley in Wm. Roger Louis and Hedley Bull (eds.), *The Special Relationship and Anglo-American Relations since 1945*, pp. 285-93.

89 See *Suez*, pp. 550-551. Also see *Sphinx and Commissar* for a detailed treatment of the bumpy history of Soviet-Egyptian relations up to Sadat.

90 PREM 11/1334, Record of a discussion, Ottawa, on 7th February, 1956.

91 FO 371 120805 VEE 10055/30, F. O. Brief, Aid to Underdeveloped Countries, 30th April, 1956. There is a full record of the conversations at T 234/67.

Soviet offensive which were thought to be the Middle East and South East Asia.⁹² They were keen that this organisation should be separate from both NATO and the United Nations.⁹³ In the first case it was important that aid should not carry with it too obvious a political purpose, precisely the accusation which the west was making about the Soviet's activities.⁹⁴ In the second case, Soviet presence in the United Nations would make it almost impossible to maintain the political ends for which the aid was, of course, intended. Whitehall wanted, not unnaturally, both to have its cake and to eat it.

Prospective confederates in the venture had rather different ideas. The Germans had already expressed a preference for developing existing structures within NATO, Brentano had spoken along these lines whilst in London. The Americans proved not especially keen to reach any final decision; not least, perhaps, because it was they who would have to provide the lion's share of any increased financial commitment to development aid. This had been made quite plain in January by British permanent officials whilst in Washington with Eden and Lloyd. Indeed the British were at times a little irked by their attitude.⁹⁵ However, the most substantial diversion was provided by the French. They put forward a plan in May which allowed for the channelling of aid through the United Nations and it was this plan which dominated much of the discussion on the issue up to and after the Suez Crisis broke. Predictably, it was christened after its chief sponsor Christian Pineau, who was at this point the French Foreign Minister. Needless to say, the British were none too impressed, not least because there was already a UN agency, SUNFED, which was co-ordinating development aid.⁹⁶

It is hardly surprising, given her financial embarrassment, that Britain was unable to stamp her leadership on the argument over how to respond to the challenge of Soviet economic aid. The one nation with sufficient muscle to draw the Western Allies together, the United States, seems to have reacted to the threat with considerably more sang froid. Furthermore, inter-allied discussions were soon to be side-tracked by the

92 *ibid.*, At least these were the areas in which the British felt their own interests were most threatened.

93 Although the British were favourably inclined towards expanding NATO's "non-military activities" at a time when direct Soviet aggression seemed less likely. Nevertheless, if NATO were to have become the main conduit for development aid some members of the Commonwealth, notably India, would be profoundly unhappy. CAB 130/113, GEN/518/6/3(b), Cabinet Committee on Commonwealth P. M.'s Meeting, Note by F. O., 14th June, 1956.

94 There was also the problem of fractious and impoverished allies within NATO, to wit Greece and Turkey. FO 371 120804 VEE 10055/4G, Letter from J. E. Coulson to D. A. H. Wright, Washington, 5th April, 1956. In a reply of 18th April to Coulson's letter Caccia laid out the Government's "blood donor" idea. The problem of Turko-Greek relations would not arise because they would not be invited to join the select gathering. However, the Americans expressed considerable concern over this issue.

95 FO 371 120809 VEE 10055/135, Minute by R. A. Hibbert, 13th August, 1956. In commenting on a State Department positional paper which had been sent by the Washington Embassy, Hibbert complained that although a balanced approach was to be recommended, the Americans "now seem to be in danger of under-estimating the Soviet threat".

96 FO 371 120810 VEE 10055/165, Minute by P. H. Gore-Booth, 31st October, 1956. SUNFED stood for Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development.

onset of a more immediate crisis in Egypt. Yet, this should not be allowed to mask the gravity which the British Government accorded to the issue in the first half of 1956. Although incapable of doing very much herself, Britain was acutely aware that something needed to be done.⁹⁷ Eden's press adviser William Clark recalls in his memoirs,

What was horrifying was our impotence in Britain, which had nothing to do with whether Eden was a strong Prime Minister. The fact was that Britain was weak, especially in the new cold war of economic aid. We could not make it worthwhile for Baghdad to stay with the West, nor Persia where there was bound to be trouble soon. Nor India nor Ceylon. America could do this; but in election year would not.⁹⁸

* * *

By 1956 the main lines of Soviet foreign policy seemed confirmed. There were new developments, not least the radical turn which was given to the programme of de-Stalinisation at the 20th Party Congress, but overall the Soviets seemed concerned with consolidating the changes in their presumptions and tactics which had developed since 1953 and particularly during 1955. Furthermore, Eden was finally awakened to the real importance of what was going on, a fundamental re-shaping of the context, although not the nature, of the Cold War. Indeed, in one key area, Egypt, the Soviet Union's new approach was undeservedly credited with a most spectacular success. A start was also made on the process of assessing the implications for such developments on British policies in turn.

There were, however, still differences between the Prime Minister and his officials. The process of drafting the briefs for the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference at the end of June 1956, provides an interesting vignette of the aspirations to which those in high office are peculiarly vulnerable.⁹⁹ The Northern Department expressed irritation with the recasting given by Sir Norman Brook to their brief on Soviet policy. They had attempted to give it "a somewhat gloomy ring, partly because we were concerned to provide Ministers with a corrective to Mr. Nehru's excessively optimistic outlook".¹⁰⁰ Brook had toned down the difficulties caused by Soviet penetration in Africa and the Middle East and introduced vague and generalised talk about a "major change in Soviet foreign policy" which seemed to hint at

97 There is a valuable Treasury summary of the British attempt to co-ordinate a counter to Soviet economic diplomacy, dated 11th September, 1956 at FO 371 120809 VEE 10055/130G. This was written for the benefit of the British delegation due to attend the annual IMF meeting in Washington. It dates the problem back three years, commenting that "the tempo of this drive has greatly increased over the past year".

98 From *Three Worlds*, p. 163.

99 *Full Circle*, pp. 375-377.

100 FO 371 122785 NS 1021/52, Minutes by Northern Department and J. G. Ward, 21st June, 1956.

something more than the Foreign Office's limited expectations for peaceful coexistence. Patrick Dean explained that this had been done as,

Sir Norman Brook thought it would be useless to put before the Prime Minister something which he would not willingly accept and he therefore suggested a redraft which in his view was closer to the Prime Minister's way of thinking and would be easier to put across to the Commonwealth Prime Ministers without arousing their hostility.¹⁰¹

Eden, it seems, still harboured Churchillian hopes for the possibilities of statesmanship in East-West relations.

However, the view of Soviet foreign policy which was presented to those trusted amongst the Commonwealth Prime Ministers at the conference was essentially no different from that of the Northern Department. This select group included the "white" commonwealth plus Pakistan, but not India, which is an interesting reflection of the Commonwealth's strengths. The following analysis was put forward by Eden for their consumption,

The main threat to our international position is now political and economic rather than military... Big change is realisation by Soviet leaders of what war waged with thermo-nuclear weapons would mean. Now unlikely that, tempted by an enormous superiority in conventional forces, they will take action liable to result in a major war.¹⁰²

This is a quite reasonable summary of the view of Soviet policy which had matured in the Foreign Office before the end of 1955 and became a general perception the following summer. The change in Britain's view of the Soviet threat was firmly established.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, P. Dean and Sir I. Kirkpatrick, Minutes of 21st June, 1956. Dean thought it possible to change certain key phrases, but Kirkpatrick did not think the issue of sufficient importance to cause a fuss. Sadly the brief on Soviet policy is not yet open to public inspection, despite the availability of most of the others.

¹⁰² CAB 130/113, GEN518/6/30, Defence Policy, Notes on "Additional" Meeting with Prime Ministers of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Pakistan and the Federation [Rhodesia and Nyasaland], 30th June, 1956. Eden spoke along these lines at the first meeting of this group on the 3rd July, 1956, although service chiefs seemed rather less keen on the idea of major cuts in conventional defence commitments. FO 371 123187 ZP 5/47, Minute by P. Mallet, 4th July, 1956.

Conclusion

The British Government's understanding of Soviet policy changed markedly in the period after Stalin's death. Indeed on the arguments put forward in this thesis we might go further and assert, according to western perceptions, that 1955 was the pivotal year in this process and that by 1956 Khrushchev's innovations were firmly established.

As far as the British understood it Malenkov had presided over a transitional phase in Soviet history. From the perspective of the 20th Party Congress of 1956 it was clear to British observers that many of the ideological formulations had roots that went back at least to 1953. However, it was only in 1955 that the debate between "conservative" and "liberal" elements within the Soviet leadership came to some kind of resolution. Consequently, Malenkov's foreign policy appeared to offer very little that seemed new. It conceived of Moscow's international interests in much the same way as Stalin had, although there might have been some change in presentation it went little further than that. This repackaging of Soviet foreign policy did in itself cause problems for British interests, particularly over the rearmament of Germany, but did not necessitate any re-evaluation of British foreign policy in turn.

In this environment negotiations were conceived of by Eden and his officials as a hollow game of diplomatic advantage. The one exception was the problem of Indo-China. Here there was sufficient community of interest in avoiding a disastrous escalation of the conflict, and sufficient statesmanship on the part of France, for a compromise to be worked out. Churchill's view was rather different, but then Churchill's political career was littered with many romantic but lost causes. A summit meeting with Malenkov must be added to the list.

1955 and 1956 were to be much more exciting years. Although the fundamental objective set by either side remained constant, the means by and manner in which these objectives were to be realised altered radically. On the simplest, but not necessarily least important plain, Soviet and Western leaders were pleasant to each other in public as they had never been since the end of World War II. In more concrete terms the Soviets gave up their faith in achieving the world socialist utopia through Lenin's "frightful collisions" and a more pacific, though nonetheless "competitive", emphasis on economic developments emerged. Furthermore the Cold War was changing in more than just means and mores. The scene of battle shifted from that which had become so familiar by 1953. The old certainties of Churchill's iron curtain and stalemated confrontation in the Far East were superseded by what might be termed a war of movement on a global scale.

This change had much to do with the development of new weapons technology and in particular the hydrogen bomb. For the first time it became apparent that wars could no longer be conceived in terms of winning and losing sides. Global war could not now be considered as a rational extension of external policy, however desperate the circumstances. British military planners were relatively quick in coming to this conclusion which contributed to the Duncan Sandys defence review in 1957. It was a defence review

which, in all probability, would have been completed under Eden in 1956 if it had not been for the Suez Crisis.

Yet more important in terms of the Cold War were the innovations in Soviet policy which similar conclusions about thermonuclear war led to under the leadership of Khrushchev. Although there is some debate, for example Shulman, as to when the beginnings of "peaceful coexistence" in Soviet thinking should be dated, there is little doubt, and this very much applies to the views of British observers, that it was not until 1955 that it really took off. Indeed, even as late as February, 1955 it looked as if the stale certainties of high Stalinism were about to re-trench themselves. Only after Khrushchev's political ascendancy had been established did any radical departure from the past occur. With the signing of the Austrian State Treaty of that April it was apparent that something rather different was about to break upon the world.

The change in Moscow's attitude was reflected in a two-sided Soviet policy which seemed to the British at times more than a little self-contradictory. The danger of thermonuclear annihilation led the Kremlin to attempt a cooling down of the international atmosphere. This they achieved with some success at the Geneva Summit of 1955 and in their goodwill meetings with the French and British through 1956. The visit of Khrushchev and Bulganin to London in April of that year marked for Britain a high point in the charm offensive. Yet this did not mean that the Eastern lion was prepared to lie down with the Western lamb. Although there may have been an element of "wedge driving" in the Soviet courtship their main concern, as far as the British interpretation went, was to avoid the irrational negation of all that they had been working towards. New means were developed to facilitate the defeat of capitalism which were not synonymous with global apocalypse. Domestically, the need to overtake the West in terms of industrial output was stressed. This theme was given increasing importance through 1955 and emphasised at the 20th Party Congress in 1956. Sir William Hayter thought it part of the explanation for the violence of Khrushchev's attack upon Stalin in his Secret Speech. Internationally, the use of economic strength in the continuing competition between East and West was also crucial and it was this point which was to pose the greatest challenge to Britain's world position.

The Soviets began to turn their attentions towards the independent countries of the "under-developed" world (Khrushchev's "zone of peace") which Stalin, and indeed Stalinists such as Molotov, had tended to dismiss as puppets of the West. Khrushchev conceived his foreign policy in a global rather than a European context. Unlike Stalin he was not prepared to limit direct probing to areas immediately contiguous with the Soviet Union itself. For the first time the Soviets began actively to cultivate the attention of existing regimes in Asia and Africa by offering to supply economic aid and military hardware. Up until 1955 Soviet activity in the area had largely consisted of supporting communist states, parties and insurgents, particularly in Korea and Vietnam, although Stalin's support for the Chinese Nationalists before 1949 was something of an exception.

Khrushchev's peaceful coexistence involved the Soviet Union in the existing structures of avowedly non-communist states such as India and Egypt, states in which Western influence had up till that point dominated unchallenged. It was this aspect of the Soviet's new policy which caused the most concern in Whitehall.

It became slowly apparent to British politicians that the Geneva cordiality was not going to lead on to a grand Churchillian settlement of the Cold War, or even a gentlemen's agreement to differ. The Geneva Summit was not to lead on, as had been hoped, to a process of negotiation terminating with a resolution of the conflict. In fact it was to make Britain's world position more difficult to maintain. The rules, rather than the object of the game, were changing.

Although the realisation of this dawned on officials in the Northern Department by the end of 1955, it was not until after the Soviet visit to Britain in April, 1956, that it had become clear to Eden that the Soviets posed a new type of threat rather than a diminishing threat. The most dramatic herald of this policy was the Czechoslovak arms deal with Egypt in September, 1955, followed quickly in November and December by Bulganin's and Khrushchev's economic diplomacy cum publicity drive in South East Asia. The Soviets were bidding to replace Western influence in areas of traditionally exclusive British interest. Furthermore in the case of Egypt and the Middle East these were, of course, areas considered vital to the maintenance of Britain's economic well being. It was for Britain not merely a matter of nursing her imperial pride, but insuring her industrial future. Eden made quite clear to Khrushchev whilst he was in London that the key issue was access to oil and that Britain would go to very considerable lengths to guarantee it.

The British Government was also aware that this was not a threat which she had the resources to deal with. In the immediate panic of the Egyptian arms deal Eden turned to the United States as the main source of finance for the Aswan Dam project which was also considered a target for the Soviet predator. Equally, in the first half of 1956 when the scope of Soviet economic diplomacy had become apparent it was the Americans to whom the British turned. The "economic offensive", as it had become known, was taken very seriously in the highest circles in London, more seriously it seems than in America for obvious reasons. Indeed by the summer of 1956 the Soviet policy had been accorded a singular success in the case of Egypt. For Britain the stakes included parts of the world which were vital to her survival and also, perhaps perceptions of her own inadequacy increased the sense of anxiety which at times bordered on despair. Egypt, once more, was the cause of great anguish. Britain's world role was shrinking further in the face of a new form of super-power competition which was in the process of development. As in the immediate aftermath of World War II, central to her policy was the need to bring the United States into areas which she no longer had the power to control.¹ This was

¹ Indeed, Selwyn Lloyd sought to justify Suez as the means by which this end was achieved, *Suez*, 1956, p. 256. Also, *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis*, pp. 153-185, Donald Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, *Eisenhower takes America into the Middle East in 1956* and David Devereux, *The Formulation of British Defence Policy towards the Middle East, 1948-1956*, pp. 153-185. On

especially evident in Eden's increasing effort to induce the Americans to take an active role in the Baghdad Pact and in Whitehall's attempt to encourage the Americans in countering the Soviets economic diplomacy.

It is in this context that the Soviet intervention in the "under-developed" world had a further knock-on-effect. For the first time countries such as Egypt enjoyed a free market in arms supply. Ironically, the Soviets introduced choice into an area which had previously been monopolised by the West, if not Britain herself. Whether or not the rather hysterical claims that the British made for the efficacy of Soviet military and economic aid as a conduit for political influence were true, Britain now faced nationalist regimes which had an unprecedented freedom of manoeuvre. No longer dependent on Western sources of aid and materials, Nasser extended his wings, both metaphorical and literal, as never before.

In retrospect British fears were exaggerated. However, Whitehall was not alone in attributing too great a potential to economic diplomacy. Khrushchev himself proved to be over sanguine in the hopes he had for this new form of Soviet influence. The crucial point as regards understanding Britain's policy is that officials and politicians did actually believe that the Soviet economy had the capacity, realised and potential, to pose a very serious threat. It was compared to the rise of America's industrial strength in the 19th century. No one at the time could foresee that the 1950's were to prove the high point for Soviet economic development rather than a launching pad into stratospheric growth. The electronic revolution of the 60's and 70's was to leave the Soviet Union staggering a long way behind as it sank into stagnation and ultimately dereliction. This was all yet for the future. As far as British observers at the time understood, Soviet domestic economic strength would not only pose a direct challenge to the West, it would also increase their ability to out-bid in economic diplomacy. Furthermore, it is easy to forget that the British were facing a direct challenge in areas of the world which were of the greatest importance to her between 1945 and 1955. Prior to 1955 the only substantial power in the Middle East that the British had to compete with in peace-time had been the United States, after 1956 the British were only too glad when the Americans seemed to contemplate taking over. It is hardly surprising that she tended to exaggerate the possible effect of Soviet interference, given the stakes for which she thought she was playing. As Eden said on a number of occasions, the British Government was not prepared to let Britain be slowly throttled. What is important is that the British Government perceived Egypt to be dangerously close to Soviet domination, if not already quite lost to the enemy.

By 1956 the Cold war was a different thing from that which it had been in 1954. Khrushchev had entered the Soviets into a race to out produce and out develop the capitalists. Areas of the world which had been ignored by the Kremlin were for the first

Britain and American policy in the aftermath of World War II see: H. B. Ryan, *The Vision of Anglo-America, the US-UK Alliance and the Emerging Cold War*, and Fraser J. Harbutt, *Churchill, America, and the Origins of the Cold War*. A broader overview is provided by D. Cameron Watt, *Succeeding John Bull: America in Britain's Place, 1900-1975*.

time since the 1920's considered crucial agents in undermining the West. Economic and military aid were the means to influence the alignments of governments which were beyond direct political control. It was against this background that the Suez Crisis exploded in the summer of 1956.

Although it was not originally intended that this thesis should stray into the murky and often dredged waters of the Suez Crisis itself, it seemed important to make some mention of it, at least to mark out ground for future research. The Cold War, as Gladwyn Jebb had said in 1950, was the overall context in which Britain formulated her foreign policy.² Therefore, it seems inevitable that as it expanded to take in the peacetime politics of the Middle East, it should also have had an important effect on Anglo-Egyptian relations. The burden of the above is that it did crucially poison the British view of Egypt through 1955 and 1956. It allowed Nasser an unprecedented freedom of action and created an atmosphere of general despair in British policy making circles. Against this background the desperation of Eden's actions in the October and November of 1956 seem rather less out of proportion to the surroundings.

There are those who argue that the Cold War had nothing to do with British policy in the Middle East. Britain, they assert, was merely trying to retain her position of imperial dominance and that the Suez Crisis must be placed in the context of her attempts post 1945 to deal with the problem of Egyptian nationalism. W. Scott Lucas has recently written a book on Suez which develops such an interpretation. However, this overlooks the fact that from 1955 Britain was forced to deal with a new form of Soviet intrusion. No more was Britain's anti-Soviet planning conceived merely as part of her military strategy, but in terms of political influence during peacetime and the Middle East was one of the main targets of Soviet interest.

It is this general context which has been too much ignored by Historians. The actual details of British complicity in the Israeli attack on Egypt have in themselves acted as something of a distraction. Too much time has been spent in the particular circumstances to **understand properly** the overall framework in which British policy was being made, and this contra Scott Lucas, was a Cold War framework and not one limited to the Middle East. It is little wonder, given this shortcoming, that the role of the Soviet Union during the crisis tends to be ignored or dismissed with the lightest flick of the hand. Although the Soviet role in the actual events was indeed limited, it is impossible to understand the background to the crisis and British thinking during it, without an appreciation of the influence that by 1956 the Soviets had developed, or at least the British thought they had developed, in the area. Consequently, I suggest that this thesis must rest on the side of Keith Kyle who sums up Eden's thinking as follows,

² Quoted by Anne Deighton in Anne Deighton (ed.), *Britain and the First Cold War*, p. 1. This volume of essays contains one by W. Scott Lucas, "The Path to Suez: Britain and the Struggle for the Middle East, 1953-56", which condemns as simplistic attempts to interpret the Crisis as a Cold War conflict. Editor and contributor do not seem to be in harmony.

Eden saw Nasser acting as Russia's stooge to destroy the political and commercial basis of Britain's cheap fuel supply in the Middle East. Having got control of the Suez Canal, he would succeed in all his conspiratorial plans and thus acquire hegemony over oil states like Kuwait, Iraq and even Saudi Arabia... The oil companies would be nationalised, the prices soar upwards and the European economies, just rescued at high cost by the Marshall Plan, would be put in immense jeopardy.³

It would be foolish to claim that there were not a range of other factors involved, not least Eden's own standing within the Conservative Party, but it is equally foolish to overlook so fundamental a matter as the impact of Soviet foreign policy. Sir William Hayter goes so far in his memoirs to lay the blame for both the Hungarian and the Suez Crisis on the new foreign policy which Khrushchev had set in motion in 1955. This is perhaps what you might expect from an ex-British Ambassador in Moscow, but it underlines the turbulence caused by Moscow's dual policy of relaxation of tensions and continued competition.

Both Suez and Hungary were the consequences of actions taken by the Soviet Government. But they were undesired and unforeseen consequences, inspired by the unpredictable reactions of others to Soviet actions designed to produce different results, and they caused the Soviet Government to adopt courses which they did not intend to follow and which vitiated their own previous policies. In Hungary the policy of cautious relaxation of pressure had led to an explosion. In the Middle East Soviet sapping and mining at Western positions, while outwardly professing to respect them, caused the Western Powers to react with unexpected violence...⁴

There is not enough space to say as much on the Soviet Union and Suez as I would like, but there are problems here which I look forward to examining in greater detail in the future.

Something ought, perhaps, to be said by way of a codicil on the connection between the Suez Crisis and the problems which the Soviet Union encountered in Hungary toward the end of 1956. In particular, the impact of the Anglo-French ultimatum to Egypt and Israel upon the Soviet decision to use force against Imre Nagy's revolution. In his memoir Hayter provides a clear account of his opinion at the time closely based on Foreign Office papers and the diary of his wife.⁵ His conclusion seems sensible and balanced. The

³ *Suez*, p. 554

⁴ *A Double Life*, p. 152. Hayter considers that it was this violence that forced Khrushchev to make his belligerent outburst, threatening "rocket attacks", in order that Soviet prestige be maintained in the Arab World. Thus he betrayed the good-will which in 1955 his diplomacy had built up with the West. This view has been developed by several studies of the Soviet role in the Middle East post 1955. See for example O. M. Smolensky's article "Moscow and the Suez Crisis, 1956: A Reappraisal", *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. LXXX (December, 1965) and Galia Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East*. The key point is that Moscow made its threats after it had become publicly clear that the United States would not support its errant allies. For a discussion of the British reaction see *Suez*, pp. 456-60.

⁵ *A Double Life*, pp. 142-154. Hayter does nothing to hide his distress at the foolishness of military intervention in Suez. Indeed he cites it as one of the reasons that swayed his decision to leave the

Soviet Union conceived of Nagy's announced desire to withdraw completely from the Warsaw Pact as a direct challenge to their strength in Europe. So vital was the maintenance of this position that it is very doubtful that the Soviet leadership could have taken any other action than to invade Hungary. However, there can be little doubt that the embroilment of Britain and France in a similarly murky enterprise in Egypt served to strengthen the hand of those such as Zhukov who advocated a violent solution to the problem of too much reform in Hungary. At a crucial point the British and French Governments made it much easier for Khrushchev to accept extreme action and for him to get away with it.

By the end of 1956 "peaceful coexistence" had gone through something of a refining process. The exuberance of amity which Khrushchev had displayed during the Geneva Conference, 1955 and in London, 1956 had been dulled by Hungary and Suez. In this the British thought that he had forced himself into an own goal. However, these two crises did not fundamentally alter the British idea of Soviet foreign policy. In a brief of the 11th February, 1957, the Northern Department advised Selwyn Lloyd that,

Although the Hungarian Crisis has shown the Soviet Union's readiness to defend its vital interests by force... they understand the dangers of nuclear weapons and wish to avoid courses of action which might bring the risk of war. "Peaceful co-existence" is probably only temporarily in suspense

Indeed it was vital to the success of Soviet foreign policy that this be so,

[b]ecause their [Soviet] long-term strategy must still be to turn the flank of the Western Powers by means of penetration of underdeveloped countries and agitation against the Colonial Powers. They have their eyes on Africa as well as Asia and the Middle East.⁶

Seen in this context the Soviet involvement in Egypt becomes symptomatic of a profound development. Britain was not only dependent on American power, as the events of October and November, 1956, cruelly proved. She was also being squeezed by the extension of Soviet political influence into the wider world. This involved the Soviets in areas which Britain had formerly held unchallenged except by indigenous nationalist forces and at times her erstwhile allies. As superpower rivalry extended onto a global theatre, Britain found herself increasingly pushed out of the running. The superpowers were to take an ever increasing share of the limelight in this new Cold War as the traditional European Powers found that they had not the resources to compete.

To read foreign policy histories of the period one might at times almost think that developments in the Soviet Union were peripheral if not irrelevant to understanding the

Foreign Office shortly after his return to London in 1957. Sir Leslie Fry, the British representative in Budapest during 1956, laid emphasis upon the military realities of Soviet thinking, a neutral Hungary was simply unacceptable to them. FO 371 128665 NH 1017/3, Fry, Budapest, to Hayter, London, 21st November, 1957.

6 FO 371 128989 NS 1021/5, F. O. Minute, R. H. A. Hibbert, 11th February, 1957. Brief for the Secretary of State on his visit to Portugal.

dynamics of British policy itself. This was not so. Soviet policy changed in profound ways between 1953 and 1956, at least this was the perception amongst Foreign Office officials and British politicians of the time. It is clear from the available records that by 1956 they felt they were being forced to respond to a radically new kind of Soviet threat. Moreover the context of international rivalry within which this threat was set had also changed with the advent of thermonuclear weapons. The British Government found itself reassured in regard of the unlikelihood of World War Three. However, it also drew some less comfortable conclusions about the trend Soviet foreign policy was taking in other directions. British power was in fact shrinking before a new Cold War where economic rather than military muscle was the deciding factor. This competition, in the guise of Soviet-American rivalry in the Third World, has only just come to an end.

Appendix

Foreign Office Officials

The following will provide a brief resume of the careers of the key Foreign Office officials whose opinions provide much of the raw material for this thesis. These are not intended to be exhaustive, but to provide some idea of where individuals fitted into the overall structure of the Foreign Office and the experience which he or she had of foreign affairs. It will be obvious from what follows that the division between specialist and generalist was very clear in relation to the career paths which individuals took.

The main source for this endeavour is the Foreign Office List, which provides an interesting reflection of the institution's ethos in itself. Whose Who has also been used to supplement the List which is not entirely complete in its information about staff members. One short word ought to be said about jargon. When a person is said to have been awarded an "allowance" for a language it means that they have attained sufficient aptitude in it to be given a financial bonus.

Brimelow, Thomas. Joined the Foreign Service in 1938, becoming probationer Vice Consul at Danzig. During 1942 he was transferred to the Moscow Embassy and in 1945 to the Northern Department in London. In 1948 he was promoted to become the Consul in Havana before returning to Moscow in 1951 where in the same year he gained an allowance for knowledge of Russian. He played an important role in the Embassy Chancery collecting basic data on Soviet Affairs and producing analysis. After a spell in Ankara between 1954 and 1956 he returned to London to become Head of the Northern Department. Between 1973 and 1975 Brimelow enjoyed the eminence of Permanent Under-Secretary and was subsequently elevated to Parliament as Lord Brimelow.

Conolly, Violet. 1943 appointed as an Attache at the Embassy in Moscow. In 1946 she was transferred to London as an Assistant in the Research Department. In 1953 she became an Adviser on Soviet Affairs in the Northern Department acting as a link between Northern and Research Departments. Her influence on thinking about the Soviet Union was thus considerable. She maintained this position throughout the fifties, going on to a notable career as an economic analyst. A good example of the genre is *Siberia Today and Tomorrow: a Study of Economic Resources Problems and Achievements*, which was published in 1975.

Conquest, George Robert Acworth. Joined the Foreign Service in 1946 and remained there until 1956 working in the Research Department. He left for a varied career in Soviet History and Poetry. He was visiting Poet at the University of Buffalo in America during 1959-60 and Literary Editor of the Spectator, 1962-63. He has published a number of books including, *Power and Policy in the USSR* (1961), *The Great Terror* (1968), *Inside Stalin's Secret Police* (1985) and *Harvest of Sorrow* (1986). The first of these works is much relied upon in Chapter 1.

Gascoigne, Sir Alvery Douglas Frederick. fought in the First World War and joined the Foreign Office in 1919. Enjoyed a varied career including the position of Consul General for the Tangier Zone and Spanish Morocco between 1939 and 1944. He was promoted in 1946 to become the UK Political Representative with the rank of Ambassador in Japan where he stayed until 1951. At this point he was transferred to Moscow as the Ambassador, serving up to his retirement in 1953. As such his name and opinions figure prominently in the second chapter.

Grey, Paul. Joined Foreign Service in 1933 and transferred to Rome in 1935, returning to the Foreign Office in 1939. After a spell as Private Secretary to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State between 1941 and 1943 he held a variety of posts, within the foreign office as Head of the South East Asia Department and abroad in Rio de Janeiro, the Hague and Lisbon. In 1951 he was promoted to the position of Minister at the Moscow Embassy where he remained until 1954, acting as the *Chargé d'Affairs*. As such he frequently acted as an understudy to the Ambassador. During 1954 he was appointed an Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office and in 1957 he became the Ambassador at Prague.

Harrison, Sir Geoffrey Wedgewood. Began his Foreign Office career in 1932, went to Japan in 1935 where he gained an allowance for Japanese. There followed a variety of postings including that of Minister at the Embassy in Moscow between 1947 and 1949. He returned to London in 1949 and became the Head of the Northern Department until he was promoted to the rank of Deputy Under-Secretary of State and as such he superintended the Northern Department (although Deputy Under-Secretaries generally had a number of Departments to look after and in this Harrison was no exception). In 1954 Sir John Ward took over the responsibility. During 1956 Harrison went on to become the Ambassador to Rio de Janeiro.

Hayter, Sir William Goodenough. Ambassador from 1953 to 1957, prior to which he had had a varied career in the Foreign Service from postings in Shanghai before the war to Washington between 1940 and 1944. Immediately before going to Moscow he was the Minister at the Embassy in Paris. In early 1957 Hayter returned to London as a Deputy Under-Secretary of State and was, for a brief period, the superintendent of the Northern Department. In 1958 he left the Foreign Office to become the Warden of New College Oxford where he stayed until 1976. He considered resigning over the Anglo-French intervention in the Suez Crisis in the autumn of 1956 and something of the horror he felt over that folly seems to have influenced his decision to leave in 1958, although there was also the more positive appeal of Oxford.

Hibbert, Reginald Alfred. After serving in the Forces between 1942 and 1945, Hibbert joined the Foreign Office in 1946 and during 1947 was stationed at the Bucharest Embassy. In 1950 he returned to London where he remained until 1952 when he was sent to Vienna. In 1954 he became a member of the Northern

Department before setting out for Guatemala in 1957 where he acted as Chargé d'Affairs in 1958 and 1959. Hibbert might be termed a Northern Department regular whose opinions played an important role in the formulation of minutes, briefs, etc.

Hohler, Henry Arthur Frederick. Appointed to the Foreign office in 1934, Hohler was sent to the Budapest Embassy in 1936 where he received an allowance for Hungarian in 1937. In 1941 he returned to London from whence he was posted to Berne, Helsinki and finally in 1949 to Moscow where he was promoted to the rank of Counsellor. In 1951 he was appointed Head of the Northern Department which position he held until during 1956 he went to the Embassy at Rome as the Minister. Thus, Hohler held a key post through the period covered by this thesis. As the man immediately responsible for the Foreign Office's assessment of Soviet Affairs his opinions play a very important role in my interpretation, second only to that of the Ambassador who was supported by the staff of the Moscow Embassy's Chancery.

Hutchings, Raymond Francis Dudley. Employed as a Senior Assistant, working in the Soviet Section of the Research Department. In 1958 he was promoted to Research Assistant Grade 2 and also qualified for an allowance in Russian. Hutchings was one of the "backroom boys" who produced detailed assessments of Soviet affairs.

Jellicoe, Earl. Worked in the German Department of the Foreign Office between 1945 and 1948. In 1948 he was transferred to the Washington Embassy and from thence to Brussels during 1951. After Brussels he returned to London in 1953 and joined the Northern Department which he left three years later to become the Deputy Secretary General of the Bagdad Pact. Subsequent to a career in Conservative politics he became Leader of the House of Lords from 1970-1973. Another Northern Department regular.

Kirkpatrick, Sir Ivone Augustine. Fought with some distinction in the First World War and entered the Foreign Service in 1919. After a wide variety of postings in the inter-war period he became the Director of the Foreign Division of the Ministry of Information in 1940. Between 1950 and 1953 he was the UK High Commissioner for Germany after which he was appointed Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office from 1953 to 1957. As such he was the presiding eminence at the Foreign Office for much of the period covered by this thesis. Most important Northern Department minutes filtered upwards to Government Ministers through his hands.

Morgan, Henry Travers. Served in the Forces between 1939 and 1946. In 1946 he became a member of the Permanent UK Delegation to the U.N., moving in 1948 to the Embassy in Moscow. During 1950 he was transferred to the Northern Department where he stayed until 1954 when he went on to Mexico City.

Mason, Sir Paul. Joined the Foreign Service in 1928 and enjoyed a wide variety of postings including Prague, Lisbon and Sofia. In 1951 he was promoted to the

position of Assistant Under-Secretary of State and in 1954 he became Ambassador at the Hague.

Orchard, Edward Eric. Posted to the Moscow Embassy Chancery between 1948 and 1951 and in 1952 transferred to London as a Senior Assistant working in the Research Department. In 1957 he returned to Moscow. Orchard's role was similar to that of Raymond Hutchings.

Roberts, Sir Frank. Joined the Foreign Office in 1930 and after a number of postings, including Cairo where he gained an allowance for Arabic, he was appointed Minister plenipotentiary to Moscow in 1945. His rise continued and in 1949 he became the Deputy High Commissioner in India. In 1952 he achieved Ambassadorial rank as the UK representative at the Brussels treaty Commission. He was transferred to Belgrade as the Ambassador in 1954 and from thence he became the Permanent UK representative to NATO in 1957. Between 1960 and 1968 he was Ambassador to both the Soviet union and West Germany. His observation of the changing relationship between the Soviets and the Yugoslavs from 1955 to 1957 played an important role in the development of Britain's understanding of Soviet foreign policy.

Steel, Sir Christopher Eden ("Kit"). Joined the Foreign Office in 1927 and enjoyed a wide variety of diplomatic and political postings before and during the war. In 1945 he became a Counsellor and Head of the Political Division of the Allied Control Commission for Germany (British Element). Between 1949 and 1953 he was the Minister in the Washington Embassy. From thence he was appointed the UK Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Council in Paris and in 1957 he became the Ambassador in Bonn. During his time in Paris he maintained close contact with the Northern Department as a principle source of information and analysis of Soviet affairs. In turn he furnished the Foreign Office with a wider understanding of the views of Britain's allies concerning the Soviet Union and the Cold War.

Sykes, Richard Adam. Started his Foreign Office career in 1947 and rose quickly through a number of posts, including Nanking and Peking to become a First Secretary in 1952. In the same year he began work at the Northern Department with responsibility for Soviet Affairs. In 1954 he became Private Secretary to the Minister of State and then went abroad during 1956 to Brussels and 1959 to Santiago. Between 1952 and 1954 he played a similar role to the of Earl Jellicoe and R.A.Hibbert.

Uffen, Kenneth James. Joined the Foreign office in 1950 and during 1953 he was both promoted to Second Secretary and attached to the Northern Department, where he stayed until 1955 when he was transferred to Buenos Aires.

Ward, Sir John Guthrie. Started his Foreign office career in 1931 and was sent to a wide variety of posts in the following years. These included Bagdad where he was given an allowance for Arabic in 1934. In 1950 he became the UK Deputy High Commissioner on the Control Commission for Germany until during 1954 he returned to London and was promoted to the level of Deputy Under-Secretary of State. In this

role he superintended the Northern Department up to his 1957 posting as Ambassador at Buenos Aires, acting as the link between the Department and Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick.

Watson, John Hugh Adam. Began his service with the Foreign Office in 1937. Another official to have earned an allowance for Arabic, during a sojourn at Cairo in 1943. Became the Information Liaison Officer at the Washington Embassy in 1950 where he stayed until transfer back to London as the Head of the African Department. Whilst in Washington he had a considerable amount of contact with the Northern Department, particularly in the relay of American assessments of Soviet developments.

Wallinger, Sir Geoffrey Arnold. Joined the Foreign office in 1926 and served in a wide variety of places including Chungking and Cape Town. In 1949 he became Minister Plenipotentiary at Budapest and after a spell as Ambassador in Bangkok he was transferred to Vienna in 1954 at the same rank. Wallinger was fortunate to be in Vienna at the right moment as it was in 1955 that the negotiations towards an Austrian State Treaty came to fruition and he played an important role in the process as the British representative. In 1958 he went on to represent Her Majesty in Rio de Janeiro.

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