

**‘The Usual Bulgarian Stratagems’: The Big  
Three and the End of the Bulgarian Occupation  
of Greek Eastern Macedonia and Thrace,  
September–October 1944**

The evacuation of the territories occupied by Bulgaria during the Second World War has hitherto not been the subject of much attention. Greek and Bulgarian historiography has treated the matter as an outstanding debt, extracted for Bulgaria by force of the German arms in 1941, returned by Allied decision in 1944 and confirmed for Greece in the Peace Treaty. Indeed, after the end of the war, in Greece the whole matter was overshadowed by the civil war; and in Bulgaria by the communist takeover. However, the evacuation of the Bulgarian-occupied territory has wider implications, both for the countries concerned and for the wider region. It is argued that the way in which the territorial settlement was reached is an early symptom of the Cold War; furthermore, the mechanics by which the decision was arrived at shed light on the relations between all powers, great and small, that were actively involved in the affairs of the region in 1944.

Bulgarian territorial aspirations against its neighbours were probably the single most important factor influencing Bulgarian foreign policy since the creation of the Bulgarian state in 1878. At the turn of the twentieth century, the struggle for Ottoman Macedonia was such an attempt at territorial expansion; in 1913, Bulgaria turned against its Allies, Greece and Serbia, and fought the second Balkan war against them, dissatisfied with the division of the spoils of the first Balkan war; and during the First World War, German offers of territory in the Balkans induced Bulgaria to join the Central Powers. All the above attempts

failed, and during the inter-war years Bulgaria was set squarely among the revisionist states. Bulgarian territorial aspirations were partly realized in September 1940, with the cession of Southern Dobroudja; and when, in 1941, Nazi Germany awarded it the administration of further territories in Yugoslavia and Greece, Bulgaria was obviously satisfied. At last, Bulgaria was successful in realizing virtually the limit of its longstanding territorial aspirations, the borders of the Greater Bulgaria of San Stefano, ranging from Lake Ohrid to the Aegean Sea, even if this was land 'received . . . as a gift'<sup>1</sup>, by riding behind the German Wehrmacht.<sup>2</sup>

However, by early 1944 the basis of this settlement was becoming obviously shaky: the tide of war was clearly going against the Axis and Bulgaria was in danger of losing its territorial gains once more; elation was quickly being replaced by despair. Given the central position territorial expansion had in Bulgarian policy, concerted efforts were made to retain at least part of the territorial gains. One could argue that any effort to hold on to some territory would have been better directed towards southern Yugoslavia: after all, the Bulgarian ethnological case was stronger there. Instead, Bulgarian policy seems to have concentrated all its efforts towards retaining the Greek provinces of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, while minimal (if any) effort was made to keep Yugoslav territory.

Bulgarian efforts were in vain. In October 1944, after some transparent attempts at delay, the Bulgarian civil and military authorities and armed forces evacuated the Greek provinces they had been occupying since 1941. The evacuation was neither spontaneous nor voluntary. It was rather a product of Allied pressure on Bulgaria; indeed the Allies had made the evacuation a specific precondition for the signing of an armistice with Bulgaria.

However, the international situation at the time could have easily led to a different outcome, allowing the Bulgarians to retain temporarily or even permanently the Greek territory they were occupying, were it not for a series of events and policies that interacted and interlinked. This paper aims to examine the events of the period from the last days of August to the end of October 1944, with a view to explaining the attitude of Britain, and to a lesser extent the US and the USSR, regarding the evacuation of Greek Macedonia and Thrace by the Bulgarians; an outcome

which, in view of later developments, effectively resulted in the final settlement of the Bulgarian claims on these areas.

This paper is based on four basic premises. The first is that during the crucial period of September and October 1944, when Bulgaria changed sides almost overnight, the main British foreign policy makers, Churchill, Eden and the Foreign Office, consistently followed a policy of clear and strong support of the Greek demand for the evacuation of the Greek (and Yugoslav) territory which Bulgaria had occupied since 1941.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it was British insistence that made the evacuation of occupied territory a precondition of the signing of the armistice with Bulgaria. The reasons for the Foreign Office's stance form a complex, even convoluted web: they are related to wartime declarations in favour of the territorial integrity of Greece, but more important, to the need to bolster the authority of the Papandreou government and to contain the Greek Communist Party (KKE); even more important for British policy is the wider picture of the balance of British and Soviet strategic interests in the Balkans, with the gradual loosening of the 'Big Three' wartime alliance.

Secondly, while following this line of quasi-hostility to Bulgarian demands, Britain did not suffer any substantial loss: after 9 September 1944 Bulgaria was essentially occupied by the Red Army and so under Soviet control; the USSR was behaving in a manner showing apparent intent to maintain and further strengthen its hold on the country. This was understood by Churchill, who in his 'bluff' in Moscow in October 1944 offered, in the percentages agreement, the Soviets parts of Europe they held in return for parts they did not yet hold, though these were within the grasp of the Red Army. Greece was one of these areas.

Thirdly, US policy, though it differed from the British position, agreed somewhat reluctantly to accept it, albeit with reservations.

Finally, the line the USSR pursued was related to changing Soviet aims in Eastern Europe; and the final outcome of the struggle for Greek Macedonia and Thrace was directly related to the recognition of these aims by the British, a recognition realized through the 'percentages' agreements, reached in Moscow in October 1944. The evacuation is therefore yet another example of Stalin's post-war policy of non-intervention in Greece, even at the expense of countries traditionally close to the USSR, such as Bulgaria.

In early September 1944, the situation in Bulgaria was extremely confused. Since the previous May the country had been in the throes of a protracted government crisis; three governments had come and gone between May and early September 1944. Secret negotiations with the Western Allies, begun in January 1944, had continued; yet no Bulgarian government saw fit to abandon the territorial gains, regardless of how they had been acquired. The Bulgarians followed a policy of either trying to retain at least part of what territory had been acquired or of refusing outright to discuss the matter; instead they procrastinated.<sup>4</sup>

This unstable Bulgarian domestic situation was coupled with some uncertainty about the policy the USSR would pursue. During the war the Soviets had at times exerted pressure on Bulgaria to alter its policy and leave the Axis or maintain a strict neutrality. Bulgaria had signed the Anti-Comintern Pact on 1 March 1941.<sup>5</sup> It had also declared war on the US and Britain, but not the USSR; in fact, the USSR had maintained its Legation in Sofia throughout the duration of the war. During the war years, the Soviet attitude towards Bulgaria varied, with bouts of hostility in the form of barrages of diplomatic notes, and times of quiet indifference.<sup>6</sup> Since it was not at war with Bulgaria, the USSR had not participated in the previous rounds of armistice negotiations that Bulgaria had conducted with Britain and the US during 1944.<sup>7</sup>

What altered the situation regarding Soviet–Bulgarian relations was the coup of King Michael of Rumania on 23 August; overnight Rumania changed sides, the front collapsed and by the first days of September 1944, much earlier than any strategic plan had foreseen, the Red Army arrived at the Bulgarian border. On 5 September, while Bulgaria was preparing to declare war on Germany, the USSR announced that a state of war existed between itself and Bulgaria.<sup>8</sup> By midnight (after some 5½ hours of ‘war’) the Bulgarian minister in Ankara had sued for an armistice.<sup>9</sup> The two countries continued to be technically at war from 21:00 hrs on 5 September until 22:00 on 9 September. In the early hours of 9 September a coup d’état had toppled the Muraviev government which was replaced by a government of the Fatherland Front; in this the Bulgarian Communists had a strong and soon dominating presence. The ‘war’ with the USSR had continued for a few more hours after the coup, but given that the Bulgarian troops had been ordered to offer no resistance to

the 'invading' Red Army, the situation was farcical. As a Soviet author put it, (quoting none other than the Bulgarian Communist leader, Georgi Dimitrov):

On September 9, 1944, the Soviet troops in Bulgaria terminated military operations, which had been quite unique even before, for they did not involve the use of arms. Georgi Dimitrov said: 'Though the Soviet Union did declare war on Bulgaria, not a single soldier, either Soviet or Bulgarian, was killed in that "war" . . . The entry of Soviet troops in Bulgaria helped to overthrow the fascist dictatorship and assured the future of the Bulgarian people, the freedom and independence of our state.'<sup>10</sup>

A Foreign Office official at the time characterized the situation as 'very Balkan'.<sup>11</sup>

The Soviet declaration of war radically altered the parameters of the situation. By declaring war on Bulgaria, the USSR became belligerent; this fact automatically gave it a place at the armistice negotiations.<sup>12</sup> Given the presence of the Red Army in Bulgaria, the USSR had a *de facto* leading role in the affairs and future of the country; the traditional friendly relations between the two countries were also a well known fact: the special relationship between the two countries had been strong enough to persuade Hitler not to persist in pressing the Bulgarians to either declare war on the Soviet Union or participate in the campaign against the Soviet Union.

The coup and the presence of the Red Army in Bulgaria emitted a loud and clear signal: the USSR was effectively in the driver's seat in Bulgaria. For Greece this translated into serious and well-founded doubts as to the position the USSR would adopt on the question of the territorial gains Bulgaria had made during the war. Ominously for Greece, past Soviet propaganda had explicitly demanded that Bulgaria evacuate Yugoslav territory it occupied, but had largely omitted references to the Greek territory.<sup>13</sup> With the left-of centre Fatherland Front government in power in Bulgaria, the ambiguity the Soviet policy had exhibited until then was quickly transformed to a pro-Bulgarian position. The obvious question in the minds of British policy makers (but also their counterparts in the US), and for Greeks of all political complexions, was how this would affect the Soviet position on the territorial integrity of Greece<sup>14</sup> and whether this would require a re-examination or reorientation of British policy. As Geoffrey McDermott of the Foreign Office put it, 'The Soviet

Government let us and the Americans down badly by not telling us in advance of their intentions; there is very little we can do about it.<sup>15</sup>

What complicated matters further was the position of the US, which remained ambivalent. In the course of the few months preceding September 1944, while negotiations for the withdrawal of Bulgaria from the war had been in progress, the US had at times appeared willing to discuss the Bulgarian territorial gains; the US saw Bulgaria as a country of at least some interest to its post-war plans, provided democracy survived; it appears to have at least considered the question of Bulgarian territorial expansion at the expense of Greece as a means toward the realization of this aim. However, US policy in general remained unclear, even contradictory.<sup>16</sup>

On top of all this, in early September there was no official or unofficial British or American representation in Bulgaria. The diplomatic missions had been withdrawn earlier in the war; military missions with the Bulgarian partisans were virtually non-existent.<sup>17</sup> When in the second half of September a British Liaison Officer stationed in Eastern Macedonia organized — on his own initiative — a mission to Sofia, he was ordered immediately back: the Foreign Office saw this initiative as jeopardizing the general situation, even as offering recognition to the Bulgarian regime and legitimization to its actions. Finally, clashes between rival Greek factions in the still occupied Thrace created a further difficulty.<sup>18</sup> The exit of Bulgaria from the war had complicated enormously an already complex situation.

In the midst of this complex situation, the only one of the 'Big Three' powers with a clear and openly declared policy was Britain. A superficial examination of the events would seem to indicate that this was prompted by Greek approaches; however, this was not necessarily so. It is true that as soon as news of the Bulgarian coup appeared (9 September 1944), George Papandreou, Prime Minister of the Greek government in exile, and Alexandros Svolos visited General Wilson, Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean, and made known their concerns: according to reports, Bulgaria was claiming the status of co-belligerent which would permit Bulgaria to retain its forces on occupied territory. They further put in a formal request for the armistice terms to include evacuation of Greek territory occupied by Bulgaria. The next day (10 September) Rex Leeper, British

ambassador to the Greek government, also reported the Greek concerns.<sup>19</sup>

The initial British response to the Greek demand was somewhat hesitant: 'there is little we can say to the Greek government until our own policy is decided' minuted an official in the Foreign Office.<sup>20</sup> A number of questions were outstanding and urgently required answers: if the British sent troops into Greece, how would the Russians, now firmly in control in Bulgaria, react? The archives even contain a suggestion that the Greeks be asked to approach the Soviets, to clarify the question of military operations by the Red Army on Greek soil, and to press them on the issue of the early withdrawal of Bulgarians from Greek territory; yet this, as Leeper commented on 12 September 1944, would only strengthen the hand of the Greek Communists inside and outside the Greek government.<sup>21</sup> Such an outcome was clearly undesirable for the Foreign Office. For the Foreign Office, the question that gradually emerged was whether the evacuation would be a simple request or a precondition for the signing of the armistice with Bulgaria.

However, this initial British hesitation did not last long: on 16 September, an aide-memoire to the Soviet government, a separate memorandum to the US<sup>22</sup> and a telegram to the Dominions<sup>23</sup> made clear to all directions the policy of the British government on the matter. The evacuation of occupied territory clause was considered essential for inclusion to armistice terms; it was further stated that the USSR had not indicated it would question this issue. When agreement had been reached and before the text of the armistice terms was presented to the Bulgarians, the memorandum concluded, the Greek government would be informed — but not consulted.

At this point, the US signalled its differing views. Lord Halifax, British Ambassador in Washington, reported on 23 September that 'the State Department would prefer not (repeat not) to make the evacuation by Bulgaria a prerequisite to the beginning of armistice negotiations'. Nonetheless, the State Department went on to accept the British preponderance: 'since HM government and the Soviet government are agreed on this point and since the US government do not wish to obstruct the British-Soviet proposal, Mr Steihardt has been instructed . . . to associate himself with his British and Soviet colleagues in sending a tripartite communication as proposed.'<sup>24</sup>

The situation therefore appeared favourable for Greece, especially since as far as the USSR was concerned, Molotov had already agreed in principle as early as 16 September 1944 that 'Bulgaria should be required to evacuate all Yugoslav and Greek territory'.<sup>25</sup> What was a source of worry for Britain was the fact that the USSR took no further action on pressing the Bulgarians to comply with this demand. In fact it did not instruct its representatives either at home or abroad to deliver the request jointly with Britain and the US.<sup>26</sup>

British efforts did not stop: on 20 September 1944 A.C. Kerr, British ambassador in Moscow, made a further request for joint action to Molotov. Kerr suggested a joint request to the Bulgarian minister in Ankara by the representatives of the 'Big Three' asking the Bulgarian Government to 'evacuate Allied Territory forthwith'.<sup>27</sup> On the same day, Leeper, when reporting developments, suggested a public warning to Bulgaria by Britain demanding that the former leave Greek affairs in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace to the Allies; the Soviets, he noted, 'could raise no legitimate objection to a little plain speech from HMG to the Bulgarians, considering the latter took the initiative in declaring war on us and have treated our Greek Ally with the utmost barbarity'.<sup>28</sup>

The British government persisted and on 21 September 1944 declared that 'HM Government attach such importance to this [the evacuation of occupied territory] being done without delay' that it proposed to make it a 'preliminary condition for any negotiations for armistice' in the same way as the USSR had advanced a similar request for the Finnish armistice. The British proposals were by now quite precise, formally proposing that the Bulgarian withdrawal should be completed within 15 days and that the fulfilment of the terms was to be verified by representatives of the Allies; the US was consulted and concurred.<sup>29</sup>

What followed was indicative of the position of the USSR: on 25 September 1944 the Soviets accepted the proposal making the evacuation a precondition for the armistice, but drew the attention of Britain and the US to their request that the armistice be signed on behalf of *all* Allies by F. I. Tolbukhin, the Soviet Commander of the 3rd Ukrainian Front.<sup>30</sup>

Britain, however, was not content to simply wait for Soviet action while deliberations continued. The idea of a public warning to Bulgaria, which Leeper had suggested a few days before,



received Eden's approval on 23 September; a Foreign Office official, apparently frustrated by the inexplicable delay, proposed a news release or a Parliamentary Question as a means to put pressure on Bulgaria. It is true that Britain did not have any illusions as to the effect this might have. An official in the Foreign Office minuted on 23 September that the public statement 'might not have any very decisive effect on the Bulgars' who appeared to be in a compliant mood anyway. The problem was that 'we [the Allies] have so far not been able to agree on what we want them to do'.<sup>31</sup> By that time, as another Foreign Office official remarked, 'the Greeks are hysterical'.

The Parliamentary Question was submitted on 28 September 1944 and replied to by Eden himself: the Bulgarian withdrawal from Greek and Yugoslav territory remained an essential prerequisite for armistice negotiations.<sup>32</sup> To maximize the effect, the text of the question and answer was communicated to Balabanov, the Bulgarian ambassador in Turkey, as an answer to his question of 16 September 1944, when he had asked what the Allies wanted Bulgaria to do.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to efforts to force a solution to the question of evacuation on the Bulgarians, the British also attempted to bolster the authority of the Papandreou government in Greece, large parts of which remained occupied. It was suggested that a senior British officer be sent to Thrace;<sup>34</sup> further, the political and military heads of the British section of the Control Commission to Bulgaria were instructed to wait in Caserta (in Italy) in readiness for transport to occupied Greece.<sup>35</sup>

In order to resist the British moves, the Bulgarians attempted a series of counter-actions.

Initially they reported that they had withdrawn their civil authorities from the Greek territory they occupied;<sup>36</sup> they also tried to take advantage of Greek divisions and began to hand the civil authority in Greek Eastern Macedonia and Thrace to representatives of EAM, the communist-controlled liberation movement, which formed the main opposition to the Papandreou government.<sup>37</sup> The Bulgarian ambassador in Turkey even protested that Bulgaria was ready, even anxious to withdraw but was uncertain about who to hand the area over to . . .<sup>38</sup>

Working along the same lines, the Bulgarians then attempted to remain in place by presenting their forces as the solution to

local problems. It was true that conditions on the ground were not good, as different Greek factions were already fighting each other for control of the region. The Bulgarians therefore tried to present their military presence as essential for the maintenance of law and order in the area, though at the same time declaring they were ready to withdraw: 'while the Greek population . . . are fighting among themselves, the Bulgarian troops remain at this moment the only guardian of order in that area.' They also declared that the new Bulgarian government was trying to reach an agreement with the Greek people (interestingly, not the government) until such time as a definite suggestion was made by the three great powers. In the meantime they repeated that while the Bulgarian civil authorities had been withdrawn, military detachments remained, ostensibly for operations against the Germans.<sup>39</sup>

'Operational necessities' gradually became the main pretext for the continued Bulgarian efforts to present their military not as occupiers, but as part of the Allied Force: on 19 September, the Bulgarian government instructed the military commander in the area of Drama to inform a group of British Liaison Officers (BLOs) who arrived in the region that the assistance given to them was 'a military enterprise . . . supporting the efforts of the Bulgarian army in the struggle against Germany'. Then on 2 October 1944 the Bulgarian government submitted a memorandum in which it claimed that 'certain detachments' remained 'not to keep the peace threatened by Greek infighting but solely and exclusively in connection with military operations against Germany'.<sup>40</sup> Bulgarian troops, it was claimed, remained in the area pending instructions from the Allies: on two occasions (2 and 7 October 1944), the Bulgarian government claimed that since 16 September the Bulgarian Army had been under the orders of Marshal Tolbukhin. Since the latter had not ordered the withdrawal of Bulgarian forces from Greece, and as the Bulgarians considered him a representative of the Allied Military Forces in the Balkans, they now requested either a joint communication by the three Allied powers for withdrawal, or categorical instructions from Tolbukhin on the dispersal of Bulgarian forces.<sup>41</sup> As they now stated, 'the Bulgarian government has never refused and will not refuse to fulfil a joint and clearly expressed request by the three Allied powers for withdrawal of all Bulgarian troops from [Greek] Thrace and Yugoslavia.'<sup>42</sup> The

Bulgarians became increasingly bold, abandoning all other pretexts and arguments and professing a readiness to evacuate occupied territory, provided that either a joint communiqué was issued by Britain, the US and the USSR or that Marshall Tolbukhin issued relevant orders.

If this was their main and official defence line, the Bulgarians also employed other, less official arguments. On 19 September a Bulgarian General was reported as urging the British to send troops to Greece, because the Russians would otherwise consider it imperative to send troops themselves, civil war would break out among the Greeks and the Bulgarians would then withdraw leaving chaos behind them.<sup>43</sup> In the last days of September, the Turkish News Agency broadcast a report, attributed to the Bulgarian propaganda minister, that Soviet and Bulgarian troops would shortly occupy Eastern (Turkish) and Western (Greek) Thrace, with a Mixed Advisory Commission to administer the area until the Peace Treaty.<sup>44</sup>

The Foreign Office reaction to the Bulgarian efforts to remain in possession of Greek territory was complex. Initially the Foreign Office appeared relatively relaxed, even somewhat tolerant. On 29 September, the British Embassy in Ankara cabled that 'it seems quite clear that the Bulgarians will evacuate allied territory as soon as they are firmly told to do so.'<sup>45</sup> However, early in October the frustration rose in the Foreign Office:

If the Bulgarian Government can find an excuse for keeping their troops in Greece and Yugoslavia, they will obviously do so. Nor are we likely to get the Russians to agree to the issue of joint orders for the evacuation of all Allied Territory until our representatives are in Sofia;

. . . the hold up in the Bulgarian Armistice negotiations is the root cause of the present situation . . . the Bulgarians can put out this sort of excuse and self justification and retain their troops in Allied Territory;

. . . it is maddening . . . not to expect any help from the Russians who agreed that the Bulgarians had no business on Greek and Yugoslav territory but have done damn all to kick them out.<sup>46</sup>

On 9 October, commenting on the Bulgarian memorandum of 2 October (see above), a Foreign Office official noted:

. . . this appears to be a Bulgarian stratagem aimed at self justification. There are several signs of typical Bulgarian duplicity in the affair. . . . no action . . . appears to be expected by the Bulgarians or necessary here unless it be to send tomorrow our views on the worthlessness of the Bulgarian demarche.<sup>47</sup>

By now all hopes for a solution rested on the Moscow Conference between Churchill and Stalin. 'It is hoped agreement [on a joint statement] will be reached in Moscow,' minuted a Foreign Office official.<sup>48</sup> 'We are as anxious as the Greek government that there should be a joint Anglo-American-Soviet statement ordering the evacuation of all Bulgarian forces and officials from Allied territory and we are not unhopeful that one will be issued shortly,' cabled the Foreign Office to Leeper.<sup>49</sup>

Then, suddenly, the matter was resolved. The question of overall control of Greece was discussed between Churchill and Stalin in the first meeting of the Moscow Conference, on 9 October 1944, when the first version of the percentages agreement was discussed. During this meeting, Churchill made clear British intentions by telling Stalin 'that there were two countries in which the British had particular interest, one was Greece'.<sup>50</sup> The specific question of the Bulgarian presence on Greek soil was discussed in the meeting between Eden and Molotov, both on 10 and on 11 October 1944. Both the official record and Eden's diary show clearly that the Soviets were withholding action on the evacuation of Greek territory until 'an agreement could be reached on all points'.<sup>51</sup> When the percentages agreement was initially struck during the meeting between Stalin and Churchill on 9 October, the road was opened; and once the precise percentages were agreed between Eden and Molotov,<sup>52</sup> the Soviets took action. On 11 October 1944, just two days into the conference, the USSR agreed to the delivery by Britain, US and the USSR of a joint statement to Bulgaria; in this the 'Big Three' stated that the evacuation of occupied territory was a preliminary condition for any negotiations for an armistice.<sup>53</sup> The Bulgarian government accepted the precondition on the same day (11 October). On 13 October, Steinhardt, the US Ambassador in Turkey, transmitted an aide-memoire the Bulgarian minister had left him in which the Bulgarian government reaffirmed that it had already handed over the local administration in Thrace to the local Greek population and that in view of the changed military situation, 'the Bulgarian government has hastened to give effect to its decision formerly taken to evacuate southern Thrace and to comply in this manner with the condition precedent demanded by the Allied Powers for the conclusion of the armistice'.<sup>54</sup> The evacuation was reported complete by 25 October 1944, a day before the fortnight prescribed by the precondition. Following

this, the armistice itself was signed in Moscow at 15:00 hrs on 28 October 1944.<sup>55</sup>

The outcome was widely welcomed in Greece and Britain. The evacuation of occupied territories and the return to the pre-war territorial status quo was an issue supported by Greeks of all political complexions; furthermore, both the US and, to a lesser extent, the USSR had in the past expressed agreement with it (at least in principle). It is true that the Bulgarian reluctance to comply had given rise to some concern, especially for the Greek government of George Papandreou.<sup>56</sup> When the evacuation of Greek Eastern Macedonia and Thrace was made a prerequisite for the Bulgarian armistice, this was welcomed, but at the same time it was also expected by the Greek government, which rightly saw itself among the victorious powers and Bulgaria among the defeated. What the Greeks were unaware of was the precise range of contacts and changing relations between the 'Big Three' and the impact they could and would have on the post-war settlement.

This series of events leaves us with three obvious questions regarding the evacuation of Bulgarian-occupied Greek territory. Why did British policy makers act the way they did, following a line embracing the Greek demand for evacuation and so sacrificing any leverage a more flexible policy could have had on Bulgaria? Why did the USSR follow the course of action described above, first accepting the principle of evacuation but then delaying or 'neglecting' to act on its own declarations for some twenty-five days? And finally, what was the US input into the situation?

As far as the Foreign Office was concerned, it can be argued that there was a degree of residual philhellenism as well as some frustration with Bulgaria. The comments cited above contain indications of both. It is, however, unlikely that either philhellenism or frustration with Bulgaria played a major role in British policy formation. The British attitude was first and foremost governed by realism, with British interests and the potential British position in the Balkans in mind. Bulgaria was considered a lost cause, because of its traditional russophilia but also because of the coup of 9 September 1944, and the country's occupation by the Red Army. In fact, the Soviet attitude towards Bulgaria, the declaration of war and the brief, bloodless 'war'

that followed, as well as subsequent events, reinforced the British views about the revival of 'the ancient ties' between Russia and Bulgaria.<sup>57</sup>

Within this framework, Soviet actions could only point in one direction: the USSR was once again laying claim to Bulgaria, which, as Churchill himself admitted, 'owed more to Russia than to any other country'.<sup>58</sup> The Russian insistence that Marshal Tolbukhin sign the armistice on behalf of all the Allies can be interpreted both as a way to sweeten the pill of defeat for the Bulgarians, and as a way of signalling Soviet intentions. Churchill himself acknowledged as much in a telegram to Harry Hopkins on 12 October 1944, when he wrote that the Soviets were 'willing to indict Bulgaria for her many offences, but only in the spirit of a loving parent'.<sup>59</sup> Britain, correctly assessing the situation, decided to pursue its own policy of support of Greece. Indeed, it has been argued that the main reason why Churchill went to Moscow in October 1944 was to solve the problems related to the creation of 'an exclusive British sphere of influence in Greece',<sup>60</sup> a crucial aim for the safeguard of the British imperial interests. In practical terms this translated to keeping Greece (and Turkey) within the Western sphere of influence. Churchill was one of the few statesmen who could have had a general overview of the war situation; in his visit to Moscow in December 1944, he not only attempted to explore Soviet intentions but actually traded Greece for Bulgaria and Rumania.<sup>61</sup>

Within this wider picture the question of Bulgarian-occupied Greek territory was a side issue of no great importance for the Soviets, but of considerable political and strategic importance for Britain. The British insistence that Greek Eastern Macedonia and Thrace be evacuated before an armistice with Bulgaria was signed may be interpreted firstly as a way of ensuring that the Soviets did not arrive on the shores of the Aegean, either directly or through an intermediary, Bulgaria; secondly as means of securing a common border for Greece and Turkey, a geopolitical requirement for post-war British policy, intent as it was to secure the imperial communications,<sup>62</sup> and finally as a means of strengthening the Papandreou government, already facing serious challenges from the Greek Communists.

Regarding the USSR, while overall Soviet policy had probably already been formulated, that was only so in its broadest outline; the actual application and details were still subject to change. In

this sense, it is possible that the Soviet declaration of war on Bulgaria, which was not a strategic necessity, was in essence a means of overthrowing the Bulgarian government, speeding up revolution and propelling the USSR's own protégés to power.<sup>63</sup>

What is also clear is that the USSR was very suspicious of the Western Allies and probably still uncertain about its own capabilities; hence in Moscow in October 1944 Stalin sought (and got) a discussion of 'the whole Balkan situation'<sup>64</sup> with a view to a general agreement on spheres of influence. One may also speculate that, once Churchill had made his priorities in the region clear to Stalin in the course of their initial discussion on the evening of 9 October in Moscow, the latter decided to act. This was possibly intended as a goodwill gesture, proof that Greece was to be left to the Western Allies. However, the request was made by Eden to Molotov during their conversations on 10–11 October 1944.<sup>65</sup>

Finally, another feature of USSR policy is the ease with which it manoeuvred: it is obvious that the initiative in the wider region belonged to the Soviets; Churchill had to bluff his way into a settlement, knowing in advance that the Red Army's presence allowed the USSR a great freedom of movement. The USSR on the other hand was ready and able to act in any way it saw fit to achieve its aims, and was in a position to enforce its will on Bulgaria.

It is interesting that the British followed their policy almost against the wishes of the US. The US had its own, somewhat divergent, views but did not actively oppose or reject a British-Soviet solution that, as part of a package, would de facto divide the Balkans between East and West. Frazier<sup>66</sup> has argued that the US was disinterested in the region generally and in Greece in particular, and that this US disinterest extended to Bulgaria. Roosevelt, the main mover of US foreign policy, carefully avoided involvement in Greek affairs. The position of the US State Department as well as of other prominent American actors differed occasionally, but even when it did, it was a general difference of philosophy and doctrine regarding the shape of the post-war world, rather than a policy of extending or withholding support for an individual country. In the Balkans American objections were raised regarding the issue of spheres of influence in general; however, these objections were not strong enough to cause a serious disagreement between the two big Western

Allies. Similarly, neither Greece nor Bulgaria was important enough to warrant serious US objections to the solution the British pursued. As Stettinius put it, 'American-British-Soviet collaboration is not to be made or unmade over Bulgaria.'<sup>67</sup> The result was that the US de facto accepted British predominance and allowed herself to be associated with the British in demanding that Bulgaria evacuate occupied Greek territory.

Overriding wartime promises, philhellenism<sup>68</sup> or anti-Bulgarian sentiment, the evacuation of the Greek territory that Bulgaria had occupied was the result of hard-boiled Churchillian *real-politik*. Inasmuch as Churchill, Eden and the Foreign Office saw the affair as a confrontation with the Soviets<sup>69</sup> the eventual Bulgarian evacuation of the Greek territory can be explained as an early result of the gradual break-up of the wartime coalition: rather than concede a valuable point for Bulgaria, a country clearly controlled by the USSR, Britain consistently supported Greece, so strengthening its own ally and ultimately its own position in the race for power in the post-war world. Therefore, the evacuation of Greek Macedonia and Thrace can be seen as a result of the wider issue of deterioration in relations between the Western Allies and the USSR and as an early precursor of the Cold War. Luckily for Greece, this outcome was aided to an extent by the well-known preoccupation of Churchill with Greece, combined with a relative lack of interest in Bulgaria. These factors made the recognition of Soviet predominance in Bulgaria relatively uncomplicated as far as British policy was concerned.

In the final analysis, what decided Greek territorial integrity were simply the British priorities and aims in the wider region of the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean. Support of Greece and its territorial integrity was a primary concern for Britain not per se, but as part of the longer-term British interests, a concern serious enough to warrant an active pursuit of this goal. Simultaneously the same process of prioritization relegated Bulgaria to a second or even a third place, its geostrategic position notwithstanding. British interest in Greece was strong enough to justify not only top-level involvement in the discussions in Moscow in October 1944, but even the eventual sacrifice of Bulgaria. As Winant, US Ambassador in the UK, noted at the time in a communication to Cordell Hull, in the Moscow negotiations, 'it is clear that the primary British purpose was to con-



tinue their relationship with Greece and to maintain a sufficient degree of control in Yugoslavia, to protect British Mediterranean interests', even if in the course of the Bulgarian armistice negotiations they had (as Winant put it) 'their pants traded off'.<sup>70</sup>

The eventual success of the British policy was made possible in the light of, first, the relative disinterest of the US in the region; and second, by what appears to be a parallel policy of priority setting and *quid pro quos* on the part of the USSR. After the Moscow conference and the percentages agreement, Bulgaria (together with Rumania) was placed firmly in the Soviet sphere, US reservations notwithstanding. With this goal achieved, Moscow was content not only to sacrifice the territorial awards Bulgaria had received in 1941, but even to abstain from any action in or against Greece that might jeopardize the bargain struck in Moscow; indeed this was a policy generally adhered to for the rest of the 1940s.<sup>71</sup> Even if 'their pants had been traded off' in the process, Churchill and Eden had succeeded in securing Greece for the West; in view of the US attitude in 1944, it may be argued that in this instance the 'West' was synonymous with 'Britain'.

It is clear that the firm position in favour of evacuation adopted by Churchill (and Britain) had paid off. Yet, overall, the price Churchill paid to secure Greece was high; as Churchill himself put it, 'I had obtained Russian abstention at a heavy price';<sup>72</sup> it could be argued that this heavy price paid would in his eyes justify the policy pursued in Greece, both in December 1944 and later. It is also clear that Greece benefited from the policy differences between Britain and the US, from the fact that Britain (for its own reasons) pursued so single-mindedly its own interests (in which Greece played a role), and by the Soviet policy of predominance in Eastern Europe, which aimed at creating a zone of satellite states from which the West would be kept out. Indeed one may assert that despite appearances, in 1944 Greek territorial integrity was achieved not by a concert of the Big Three dispensing justice, but because of their differing aims and diverging policies in pursuing power and security in a divided post-war world.

## Notes

I would like to thank my colleagues Munro Price and Kevin Featherstone for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

The term 'Greek Eastern Macedonia and Thrace' is used throughout this paper to distinguish this region from Turkish (or Eastern) Thrace, as well as the regions referred to at the time as Yugoslav Macedonia and Pirin (or Bulgarian) Macedonia. The above Greek territory totals some 17,138 sq.km. Initially the Bulgarians occupied a little over 14,000 sq.km., while a zone of approximately 3,000 sq.km. on the Greek–Turkish border was occupied and administered by the Germans. The Bulgarian zone of occupation was further extended westwards after the Italian surrender in 1943.

1. See the declaration of a Bulgarian politician, quoted in M.L. Miller, *Bulgaria during the Second World War* (Stanford, CA 1975), 55: 'We were all intoxicated by the idea that for the first time in history we would get our just due, which we had demanded in vain for so long. To be sure, we had somewhat of a bad conscience because we had not fought for and conquered but rather received it as a gift.'

2. Indeed, it is argued that Bulgaria entered the war simply to satisfy its aspirations for territorial expansion. See e.g. Miller, *op. cit.*, 1, 53–5; see also FO 371/29721 R6042 where G.W. Rendell, formerly British Minister in Sofia, reports on 5 June 1941 that 'the real reason why Bulgaria had decided to actively side with Germany was not . . . fear of what Germany would do in Bulgaria if Bulgaria was merely passive, but the knowledge that it was only by actively co-operating with Germany that Bulgaria would hope to recover Macedonia and Western Thrace. I think he is probably right . . . and that it was the bait of these two territories which turned the scale between co-operation and passivity. This suggestion is important and should I think be on permanent record.'

See also FO 371/29721 R9758, including a Reuters report of a 'Speech from the Throne' given by King Boris to the Bulgarian Sovranje (Parliament) on 9 November 1941, where one of the three principles of Bulgarian policy is 'the unshakeable fidelity of Bulgaria to the Axis powers and the gratitude of the people to the Axis soldiers whose personal sacrifices have contributed to the triumph of justice in the Balkans'.

Bulgaria did not even (at least technically) declare war on Greece, which it nonetheless invaded and occupied. On the support territorial expansion enjoyed in Bulgaria see e.g. the declaration made by King Boris to the Bulgarian Sovranje on 28 September 1941: 'Thanks to this cooperation [with the Germans and the Italians] Macedonia and Thrace, these lands which have been so loyal to Bulgaria, which have been unjustly detached from her, and for which Bulgaria has been compelled to make innumerable sacrifices in the span of three generations, have now returned to the fold of the Bulgarian Motherland' (quoted in E. Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia: Civil Conflict, Politics of Mutation, National Identity* [New York 1993] 100).

3. It is interesting that Britain outwardly, in public statements and correspondence with the other Allies, does not distinguish between the evacuation of Greek and Yugoslav territory, simply allowing itself to express a somewhat greater degree of interest in Greek territories. However, in internal Foreign Office papers and minutes, there is a clear distinction: British officials do not seem to worry

much about the fate of Yugoslav territory given the strength of Tito and the partisans. Yugoslav territory becomes even less of an issue after the coup of 9 September in Bulgaria, when it becomes clear that the ideological affinity of the Tito movement and the Fatherland Front will easily produce a solution to the problem.

4. The Dobri Bozhilov government, in power since September 1943, had fallen in late May 1944 and had been replaced by a government headed by Ivan Bagryanov; this in turn had fallen and was replaced by a government under Kosta Muraviev on 2 September 1944. Muraviev was overthrown by the coup of 9 September 1944 when a government of the Fatherland Front under Kimon Georgiev was formed.

On the territorial question see e.g. the statement by D. Vasilev, a Bulgarian government minister who on 5 March 1944 in a meeting in Varna (where the Prime Minister was also present) was 'reaffirming the government's position, namely that Bulgaria regards the territorial problem as justly and finally settled. He said that the efforts of the government are directed toward maintaining the frontiers as now established'; text reported in tel. 162R20 from the Consul General in Istanbul (Berry) to the Secretary of State, 10 March 1944, in *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1944*, Vol. III: *The British Commonwealth and Europe* (Washington 1965), 312–13.

5. B. Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Vol. II: The Twentieth Century* (Cambridge 1983), 235.

6. E. Barker, *British Policy in South-East Europe in the Second World War* (London and Basingstoke 1976), 61; V. Dimitrov, 'Revolution Released: Stalin, the Bulgarian Communist Party and the Establishment of the Cominform' in F. Gori and S. Pons, *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943–53* (London and Basingstoke 1996), 274.

7. Miller, op. cit., 191. Nonetheless the USSR had not only been consulted by Britain and the US, but it had also been encouraged to involve itself in the negotiations with Bulgaria, within the framework of the European Advisory Commission (EAC); on the EAC see *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation 1939–45* (Washington 1949), 228–9; on policy of inviting the Soviets to participate see G. Lundestad, *The American Non-policy towards Eastern Europe 1943–47* (Oslo 1978), 258.

Negotiations of one type or another had been going on since spring 1943. By the end of August, Britain and the US had prepared draft armistice terms. On 29 August 1944, the Soviet representative in the EAC informed his colleagues that he would no longer participate in the discussions concerning the Bulgarian armistice terms, as his country was not at war with Bulgaria; see M. Boll, *Cold War in the Balkans: American Foreign Policy and the Emergence of Communist Bulgaria, 1943–47* (Lexington, KY 1984), 30–6 and *passim*; see also L. Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London 1962), 299.

8. The Western Allies were only given a few hours' notice of the Soviet declaration of war; see H. Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: the War they Waged and the Peace they Sought* (Princeton, NJ 1957), 418. It may well be that the Soviet actions were the result of improvisation and the fortunes of war rather than a carefully prepared plan. See e.g. Dimitrov, op. cit., 274–5.

9. Barker, op. cit., 221. These declarations of war gave Bulgaria the dubious privilege of being at war simultaneously with Britain, the US, the USSR and Germany.

10. See G. Deborin, *Secrets of the Second World War* (Moscow 1971), 182–3; the Dimitrov quote is from *Političeskii otchet na TsK na BRP(k) pred V Kongress na partiyata* (Political Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bulgaria to the 5th Party Congress) Sofia, 1951, 68–9 as quoted by Deborin (above). See also tel. 3420, The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State, 11 September 1944, in *FRUS*, op. cit., 410.

11. FO 371/43579, Angora [Ankara] tel. 1509, 6 September 1944, as quoted in Barker, op. cit., 221.

12. Indeed the discussions on Bulgaria of the European Advisory Commission in London were soon eclipsed by the actual armistice negotiations, taking place in Moscow. See Lundestad, op. cit., 259.

13. See FO 371/43589 Eden minute PM/44/585 10.8.1944 in E. Barker, 'Bulgaria in August 1944: a British View', in W. Deakin, E. Barker and J. Chadwick, *British Political and Military Strategy in Central Eastern and Southern Europe in 1944* (London and Basingstoke 1988), 205. On Greek concerns about the Soviet policy as late as 11 October 1944, see the account of a conversation between A.A. Berle, Assistant Secretary of State and the Greek Ambassador in Washington, in *FRUS*, op. cit., 447.

14. The concerns and uncertainty about Soviet policy pre-dated the Soviet declaration of war on Bulgaria; see memo by Stettinius (March 1944), in Miller, op. cit., 192 and note. See also 'Memorandum by the Division of Southern European Affairs' March 1944, in *FRUS*, op. cit., 304–5. We now know that Soviet circles had discussed the issue of territorial expansion for Bulgaria, at least as early as January 1944; also that the Soviet planners had correctly guessed that the British would resist such plans for a Bulgarian outlet in the Aegean. See A. Filitov, 'Problems of Post-war Construction in Soviet Foreign Policy Conceptions during World War II', in Gori and Pons, op. cit., 9, 15–16.

15. See PRO FO 371/43584, McDermott minute of 8 September 1944 printed in M. Kitchen, *British Policy towards the Soviet Union during the Second World War* (London and Basingstoke 1986), 215.

16. See e.g. 'Memorandum by the Division of Southern European Affairs' March 1944, in *FRUS*, op. cit., 304–5, which expects strong championship of Bulgarian claims in the Peace Conference; also tel. 1666 EACOM 10 of 4 March 1944 in *FRUS* 1944, Vol. III, 310, where the US Chiefs of Staff recommending that Greek and Yugoslav territories Bulgaria had occupied should be 'under Allied occupation authorities and should not be assimilated into the national and administrative systems of Yugoslavia and Greece respectively, until the boundaries have been determined as part of the general peace settlement'.

17. Major Mostyn Davies had had contacts with the Bulgarian partisans, but was killed early in 1944; see M. Mackintosh, 'Soviet Policy on the Balkans in 1944: A British View', in Deakin et al., op. cit., 241. Major Frank Thompson's military mission to the Bulgarian partisans was destroyed by units of the Bulgarian army in May 1944, together with the partisan unit to which it was attached. Thompson and his companions were captured; he was tried and shot in the summer of 1944. See E.P. Thompson, *Beyond the Frontier: the Politics of a Failed Mission; Bulgaria 1944* (London 1997). Another British military mission to Bulgaria was also destroyed; see Kitchen, op. cit., 214.

18. This was Colonel Micklethwaite, who actually reached Sofia; he also requested permission to contact Marshal Tolbukhin and agree with him 'the role of

Bulgarian troops in my area'; see PRO FO 371/43610 R14913, tel. 7889(a) 21 September 1944 and tel. 21 of 20 September 1944 instructing the BLOs to avoid any contact with the Bulgarians; see also FO 371/43610 14721 and 15423. See also S. Rachev, *Anglo-Bulgarian Relations during the Second World War (1939-1944)* (Sofia 1981), 192-3, who refers to a mission to Sofia composed of Major Miller, Captain Reddle and 'two representatives of the Headquarters of the Greek Nationalist units in the Aegean' who arrived in Sofia on 16 September 1944 and were received by the two Bulgarian Deputy Ministers of War, Generals K. Lekarski and B. Ivanov.

On the conflict between ELAS and Nationalist resistance groups see e.g. PRO FO 371/43610 R15976 which includes several telegrams and minutes on the clashes between the rival groups.

19. Alexandros Svolos, a prominent Greek academic and a socialist, was the former President of PEEA and Minister of Finance in the National Unity Government of George Papandreou in 1944. General Henry Maitland Wilson was at the time based in Italy.

A report of the meeting can be found in PRO, FO 371/43610, US 2061 NAF 775, 9 September 1944, General Wilson in Italy to AGWAR. See also tel. 348 A.C. Kirk, Political Adviser, Allied Force Headquarters to the Secretary of State, 10 September 1944 in *FRUS*, op. cit., 408-9.

The question of co-belligerency was resisted by Britain; see Feis, op. cit., 419. For Leeper's report of the Greek concerns see PRO, FO 371/43610 R14377 Leeper to FO, 10 September 1944.

20. PRO, FO 371/43610 R14438, 14 September 1944. British policy had been hesitant on this issue for the previous months; indeed Lord Moyne, Resident Minister of State in the Middle East, had advocated a clearer policy in a telegram dated 20 August 1944, where he urged e.g. the inclusion of 'the evacuation of Greek and Yugoslav territory [. . . in] preliminary conditions' in the Bulgarian armistice negotiations. See FO 371/43596 Cairo tel. 1938 20 August 1944 quoted in Barker, 'Bulgaria in August 1944' in Deakin et al., op. cit., 205-6.

21. FO 371/43610 R 14438.

22. FO 371/43610 R 14463, 17 September 1944.

23. FO 371/43590 WR 222/9/15 tel. 1437, 23 September 1944 from DO to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The file also includes a draft memorandum to the Greek government dated 17 September 1944.

24. FO 371/43590 R15188 Halifax to FO tel. 154 Citizen. The misunderstanding, as Foreign Office officials minuted, was that the clause was not a precondition to opening negotiations, simply to signing the armistice. The FO chose not to discuss the misunderstanding any further with the State Department.

25. FO 371/43610 R16109.

26. Greece had been informed of the Soviet agreement on the 18 October; at the time, the Soviet official who relayed the information blamed the delay on the British; see S. Xydis, *Greece and the Great Powers* (Thessaloniki 1963), 52.

27. FO 3761/43610 R14721 tel. 3098 FO to Moscow and 8313, FO to Washington.

28. FO 371/43610 tel. 29 Leeper to FO.

29. FO 371/43610 R16109. The US was notified with FO 371/43610 R15577 of 21 September 1944.

30. Tolbukhin, who held the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union, was com-

manding the Red Army in the region. See Deborin, op. cit., 182. The matter of a single or joint signature was used by the Soviets as a condition for their accepting the precondition; see tel. 7992 The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant) to the Secretary of State, 25 September 1944, in *FRUS*, op. cit., 436. This demand was subsequently dropped when Eden in his discussions with Molotov in Moscow accepted that the armistice should be signed in Moscow; see tel. 8651, The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant) to the Secretary of State, 12 October 1944, in *FRUS*, op. cit., 450.

31. FO 371/43610, R15616 23 September 1944.

32. FO 371/43610, R15616 23 September 1944.

33. FO 371/43610, R16465.

34. The officer selected was Colonel W.D. Keown-Boyd; see H. Macmillan, *The War Diaries, the Mediterranean 1943–45* (London 1985), 542.

35. FO 371/43610, tel. 21 FO to Leeper, 20 September 1944.

36. R 15663, tel. 1706, Angora to FO, 29 September 1944; also R 16082 Angora to FO, memo by Bulgarian Ambassador to HMG Ambassador, tel. 1761, 7 October 1944.

37. FO 371/43610, Leeper to FO, tel. 29, 20 September 1944. See also Rachev, op. cit., 185–6, and *passim*, where numerous references to fraternization of Bulgarian troops with ELAS partisans are also to be found. The Papandreu government included ministers nominated by EAM; however both the British and Papandreu had doubts as to the policy EAM would ultimately pursue and, given its considerable strength, whether it would make a bid for power. In this light the Bulgarian policy of support for EAM / ELAS in the region acquired considerable importance.

38. FO 371/43610 R15646 Angora to FO 29 September 1944.

39. FO 371/43610 R 15663, tel. 1706 Angora to FO, 29 September 1944; FO 371/43610 R15678, tel. 1721 Angora to FO, 1 October 1944.

40. FO 371/43610 R15814, tel. 1733 Angora to FO.

41. On the operational role of the Bulgarian Army under Marshal Tolbukhin see FO 371/43610 R 16082 Angora to FO, memo by Bulgarian Ambassador to HMG Ambassador, tel. 1761, 7 October 1944; see also tel. 1760, in R 16081. At least one message of similar content was transmitted by D. Velchev, the Bulgarian Minister of War to General Sirakov, Commander of the Second Bulgarian Army Corps stationed in the region; see Rachev, op. cit., 201–2, who quotes a telegram dated 29 September 1944, deposited in the Bulgarian Military History Archives. On the lack of orders to withdraw see FO 371/43610 R15722 tel. 1732 Angora to FO, 2 October 1944, relaying a new memo by the Bulgarian Ambassador. FO 371/43610 R 16082 Angora to FO, memo by Bulgarian Ambassador to HMG Ambassador, tel. 1761, 7 October 1944 includes an explicit demand for either joint action or orders by Tolbukhin.

42. FO 371/43610 R15814, tel. 1733 Angora to FO 2 October 1944, translation of a memo by the Bulgarian ambassador.

43. FO 371/43610 R14913 digest from the field no. 7883, 19 September 1944.

44. FO 371/43610 R 15644, tel. 1710 Angora to FO. This rumour has interesting echoes of the situation following the First World War; it is also interesting that Eastern Thrace figured among the list of demands made by the Greek Left after the end of the war. The truth of this rumour is denied in R15678, tel. 1722 of 1 October 1944 and officially by the Bulgarian News Agency on 1 October 1944 in

R15678, tel. 1721 Angora to FO. According to Xydis, op. cit., 54, this report 'stirred up the feverish fear and alarm of the Greeks to a new highpoint'.

45. FO 371/43610 R15646, Helm to Foreign Office.

46. Laskey minute, 5 October 1944; minute, 6 October 1944; D. Howard minute, 6 October 1944; all in PRO FO 371/43610, R15814.

47. FO 371/43610, R16083, McDermott minute, 9 October 1944.

48. Laskey minute, 7 October 1944, in PRO FO 371/43610, R15814.

49. PRO FO 371/43610, R15976, tel. 75, 8 October 1944.

50. See the official British record of the meetings in Moscow in J.M. Siracusa, 'The Meaning of Tolstoy', *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 3, 1979, 446–7, 448.

51. See Earl of Avon (Anthony Eden), *The Eden Memoirs: the Reckoning* (London 1965), 482. For another indication that Eden and Molotov discussed the matter and agreed a new wording for the precondition see tel. 8651 from the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant) to the Secretary of State, 12 October 1944 in *FRUS*, op. cit., 450.

The Greek concerns had also been raised by Papandreou himself when he met Churchill on his way to Moscow in Villa Rivalta, near Naples in Italy, on 8 October 1944 just a day before the Churchill–Stalin meeting. See Xydis, op. cit., 55; also M. Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Vol. VII: The Road to Victory, 1941–45* (London 1986), 988, who however says that the meeting was short and mostly a monologue by Churchill.

52. See Siracusa, op. cit. Once more the official record is quite revealing: on 10 October, Eden twice raised the matter of the Bulgarian withdrawal with Molotov (454, 455), on the second expressing the hope it would happen soon; on neither occasion did he receive an answer. On the contrary, Molotov kept returning to the issue of Soviet involvement 'beyond the borders of Bulgaria' (454, 455) and on the issue of whether Bulgaria was a 'Mediterranean power' (456, 458), a clear reference to a Bulgarian outlet to the Aegean Sea. On the contrary, during the meeting of 11 October, when Eden raised the question of the Bulgarian withdrawal, Molotov replied immediately that he would telegraph to Marshall Tolbukhin 'and it would be published . . . on the following day'. See Siracusa, op. cit., 461.

53. See FO 371/46310 R16109; interestingly, the document is date-stamped 9 October 1944. Eden includes the Soviet agreement in PREM 3/79/3 HEARTY 39, 40, 11 October 1944.

54. See tel. 1958 The Ambassador in Turkey (Steihardt) to the Secretary of State 13 October 1944, in *FRUS*, op. cit., 453; for the acceptance of the term by Bulgaria see also FO 371/46310 R16412.

55. FO 371/43611 R17977 Allied Control Commission to War Office, ACC(B) 81, 4 November 1944. In the end the armistice was signed by both Marshal Tolbukhin for the Soviet Union and General Gammell, representative of SACMED (Supreme Allied Commander Mediterranean). Gammell arrived just in time on 27 October 1944, after some difficulty, from Tehran. See tel. 4107 of 26 October 1944 and tel. 4124 of 27 October 1944 from the Charge in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State in *FRUS*, 1944, Vol. III, 478 and 479 respectively.

56. See e.g. Public Record Office (PRO), FO 371/43610 R14377; the Greek government was especially alarmed (and with good reason) after the capitulation of Bulgaria to the Soviets who promptly began using the Bulgarian army in opera-

tions against the Germans; subsequently the Bulgarians began advancing claims to co-belligerency status.

57. See Gilbert, *op. cit.*, 1003.

58. See Gilbert, *op. cit.*, 993.

59. In the same telegram Churchill stated that he did not like the Soviet attitude towards Bulgaria 'any better than you [Hopkins] do'; he also reported that the Soviets were prepared largely to disinterest themselves in Greece. See Gilbert, *op. cit.*, 1005. Hopkins was Roosevelt's special advisor for Foreign Affairs.

60. See J. Kent, *British Imperial Strategy and the Origins of the Cold War, 1944-49* (Leicester, London and New York 1993), 25 and *passim*. See also R. Frazier, *Anglo-American Relations with Greece: the Coming of the Cold War, 1942-47* (Basingstoke and London 1991), 56-7.

61. But also implicitly Italy and Turkey, in view of previous discussions. See e.g. M. Gilbert, *op. cit.*, 994. There is, however, also the view that Stalin never intended to advance any further south than Bulgaria, in which case the whole percentages agreement must be seen in a different light. See Frazier, *op. cit.*, 56-7.

62. On British geopolitical concerns and thinking along these lines see, e.g. E. Barker, 'Problems of the Alliance: Misconceptions and Misunderstandings', in Deakin et. al., *op. cit.*, 50-1.

63. See also note 10 above.

64. Earl of Avon [Anthony Eden], *op. cit.*, 482.

65. See Eden's diary entry for 11 October. Earl of Avon [Anthony Eden], *ibid.*, 483: 'Molotov at 3 p.m., when all was as smooth as it had been rough yesterday and we obtained what we wanted on almost all points. I should say 90 per cent. overall. In particular they will summon Bulgars out of Greece and Yugoslavia tonight.' If a request for this action was made by Churchill to Stalin — whether explicitly or implicitly — it cannot be repeated with any certainty: the official record contains no such reference.

66. See Frazier, *op. cit.*, 56-7, 179.

67. See Lundestad, *op. cit.*, 262. Furthermore, after 1942, Greece was an area for which Britain had at least military responsibility; it was also an area of low priority for the US; see *ibid.*, 76-7, 67. On US disinterest in Bulgaria and its relationship to the lack of economic interests in the country, see *ibid.*, 260-1.

68. In fact Churchill is reported by Eden to have 'held forth about kings, inveigled against Papandreou, said he would take no more interest in Greece'. See Eden, *op. cit.*, 485.

69. A policy long advocated by, among others, Sir Orme Sargent, Permanent Under-Secretary to the Foreign Office; see FO 371 43589 Sargent minute, 7 August 1944, in Barker, 'Bulgaria in August 1944 . . .' in Deakin et. al., *op. cit.*, 205. On the Foreign Office attitude see Kent, *op. cit.*, *passim*, 15-20.

70. See tel. 8680: The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant) to the Secretary of State, 12 October 1944, in *op. cit.*, 452; the telegram is marked 'Personal to the Secretary only'.

71. See e.g. Stalin's reply to E. Kardelj in February 1948 when the question of stopping the Greek civil war was being discussed: 'No, they have no prospect of success at all. What do you think, that Great Britain and the United States, the most powerful state in the world — will permit you to break their line of communication in the Mediterranean? Nonsense.' See M. Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (London 1962), 164.



72 See W.S. Churchill, *The Second World War, Vol. VI: Triumph and Tragedy* (London 1956), 239. See also Churchill's Personal Minute M.1082/4 to Eden on 7 November 1944 (Churchill papers 20/153): 'In my opinion, having paid the price we paid to Russia for freedom of action in Greece, we should not hesitate to use British troops to support the Royal Hellenic Government under M. Papandreou', quoted in Gilbert, *op. cit.*, 1055.

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