A POLICY OF DRIFT: U.S. RELATIONS WITH EASTERN EUROPE, 1945 - 1947

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The establishment of informal diplomatic relations between the United States and the national front governments of Eastern Europe in 1945 represented for the Americans a temporary and minimal acceptance of Russian domination of Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Hungary. The presence of the Red Army was the central reality which faced the U.S. diplomats who entered these countries. Aside from the threat which the Soviet troops posed to the peaceful future of Western Europe, the continuing presence of alien armies in the heartland of the continent contradicted the guarantees of the Atlantic Charter, the Declaration of the United Nations, and the Yalta Declaration on Liberated Europe. The last of these had called for "the earliest possible establishment through free elections of governments responsive to the will of the people." The Declaration on Liberated Europe had also restated the Atlantic Charter goal of self-determination for the small nations of Europe, but it had not included provisions for effective implementation. The promise of "restoration of sovereign rights and self-government to those peoples who have been forcibly deprived of them by the aggressor nations" would henceforward be the subject of consultation

among the Allies.[1]

It was in Poland that the Russians for the first time since 1939 demonstrated their capacity for manipulative terror thereby making Poland the test case to determine the durability of the Grand Alliance. A realistic acceptance by the West of its failure there to uphold the lofty rhetoric of the wartime declarations might have lessened later disillusionments in the other countries, but moralism prevailed over realism in Washington, and the policy of rhetoric gave way to a policy of drift.

Planning with regard to the postwar status of Poland had presented a dilemma to the Roosevelt administration as early as 1941. The U.S. government's insistence on the postponement of territorial settlements until the end of the war met with opposition from the British and the Soviets. In the summer of 1941, rumors of a British-Soviet accord on the postwar status of Eastern Europe led Roosevelt to seek assurances from Churchill that "'no postwar peace commitments as to territories, populations, or economies have been given.'" When the two statesmen met in August, they issued the Atlantic Charter, which began as follows:

> First, their countries seek no aggrandi-

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[1]The Declaration on Liberated Europe, February 11, 1945, U.S., Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, The Conference at Malta and Yalta, 1945* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955), p. 972.

> zement, territorial or other;
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> Second, they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned;
>
> Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them; ....

These statements were not enough to prevent British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden from negotiating with Stalin in early 1942 regarding a secret protocol defining the future frontiers of Eastern Europe. The State Department reacted with alarm to such a flagrant attempt to abrogate the Atlantic Charter, and the Americans insisted that the British reject the Soviet demands. Another sign of American disgruntlement was the fact that the Russians received no response from the United States to their announcement in January 1943 that the Ribbentrop-Molotov line would be the frontier between Poland and the Soviet Union.[2] In December of that year Roosevelt told Stalin at the Teheran Conference that the boundary line should be "'moved further to the west.'"[3]

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[2]Lynn Etheridge Davis, *The Cold War Begins: Soviet-American Conflict Over Eastern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 11-38.

[3]Eduard Mark, "American Policy Toward Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1946: An Alternative Interpretation," *The Journal of American History*, 68 (September 1981), 315.

The task of resolving the controversy over Poland fell first to W. Averell Harriman, U.S. ambassador in the Soviet Union. When the issue of Poland's future attracted Roosevelt's active concern during the election of 1944, Harriman urgently recommended that the British be permitted to work out an agreement with the Soviets. "It seems clear that the longer the situation drifts the more difficult a solution becomes," he advised the president on October 5, 1944. "I assume that you will have no objection if the Prime Minister [Churchill] can work something out with Stalin provided you are not involved or committed to any line of policy at this time."[4] On the matter of Poland, however, Churchill accomplished no noteworthy results at Moscow in 1944.[5]

At Yalta in February 1945 Stalin assured Churchill and Roosevelt that elections would take place in Poland within a month or two. In the interim there was to be a coalition government composed of members of the Lublin Committee (which was currently exercising power in the areas liberated by the Soviets), members of the London-based prewar government, and "democratic leaders from Poland itself." Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin

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[4]U.S., Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1944*, vol. IV *Europe* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), p. 1003.

[5]Winston S. Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy*, vol. IV of the Second World War (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1953), pp. 235, 237-241.

appointed a commission to choose from the three groups ten or twelve Poles who could form a government. The commission, which met in Moscow during March and April, could not agree on a group of Poles to invite for consultations, and Truman decided to send Harry Hopkins to Moscow in May to break the deadlock. As Hopkins would tell Stalin, "the question of Poland *per se* was not so important as the fact that it had become a symbol of our ability to work out problems with the Soviet Union."[6]

While Hopkins negotiated in Moscow, Churchill argued in London with Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, former prime minister of the London government. Mikolajczyk had denounced the Yalta agreements, and Churchill had advised him to recant and to consult with the commission in Moscow. Mikolajczyk would recall a portion of their conversation later:

> So go, for the sake of Poland. The Lublin Poles have no real authority among the Polish people. They need you.
>
> 'All they need is the Red Army and the NKVD,' I said.[7]

Mikolajczyk went to Moscow, but his fears turned out to have been justified when he saw no other choice but to agree on June 21, 1945, to bring the Peasant Party into a coalition govern-

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[6]Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), p. 898.

[7]Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland: Pattern of Soviet Aggression* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1948), p. 118.

ment. It would participate with the Communists in a ratio of one to two. On the same day the Poles also announced the possibility of holding elections within the year, and they stated categorically: "The Red Army, as well as all other civilian, party and security organs of foreign powers, will be evacuated."[8]

The Poles from London and from within Poland who had come to Moscow to consult on the formation of the provisional government were approximately equal in number to the Lublin Poles.[9] It might appear, therefore, that Hopkins had succeeded in his mission. Yet the bilateral nature of Hopkins's conversations with Stalin did not augur well for the coordination of an Anglo-American foreign policy. Stalin had not only deceived the West by appearing to concede to its point of view regarding representative government in Poland, but he had alienated the British from the Americans on the issue which Churchill had singled out as symbolic. That Truman, Harriman, and Hopkins could have allowed this to happen is even more surprising in light of their probable awareness of the restraint which the British had thus far exercised over their dissatisfaction with conditions of government in Eastern Europe. The Foreign Office had not vigor-

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[8] *Ibid.*, p. 126.

[9] U.S., Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1945, The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference)*, vol. I (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), pp. 722-23.

ously protested the manner in which the Soviets had installed the Groza regime in Rumania because, as Churchill later recalled, "I did not want to do anything about Rumania which might harm the prospect of a Polish settlement .... Far more than Poland was involved. This was the test case between us and the Russians of the meaning of such terms as democracy, sovereignty, independence, representative Government, and free and unfettered elections."[10]

After the Poles in Moscow decided on a provisional government, the British suggested to the Americans in an obvious attempt to save face that their announcements of recognition of the new government contain reminders that the regime had pledged itself to hold elections in accordance with the Yalta agreements. Truman acceded, and the two countries extended recognition on July 5, 1945.[11]

The Polish Provisional Government which emerged from the Moscow consultations included six new ministers out of a total of twenty. Mikolajczyk became Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture while Edward Osóbka-Morawski, a member of the Polish Socialist Party, remained Prime Minister and President

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[10]Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy*, pp. 420-21, 422.

[11]State, *Foreign Relations, 1945, The Conference of Berlin*, vol. I., pp. 724-25. See also U.S., Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1945*, vol. V, *Europe* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), pp. 337-38.

of the Council of Ministers.[12] For Mikolajczyk the first months of the new regime were harrowing as he and his colleagues in the Peasant Party found themselves in constant danger of assassination. At one point in his memoirs he recounted a confrontation with Wladislaw Gomulka, Secretary General of the Polish Workers Party, during which he told the Communist that it would be impossible to keep the people captive forever:

> He [Gomulka] leaped from his chair and charged me, his hand on the revolver in his pocket and the outline of his gun pointed at my chest. I sat there for there was nothing else to do, while he stood over me, twitching and speechless with rage.
>
> 'Give me a cigarette, please,' I asked.
>
> Gomulka wheeled away from me and paced the office for a time.
>
> 'We'll get the people,' he swore. 'And we'll get you, too.'[13]

The security police served as instruments of intimidation of the populace, and their organization came under the jurisdiction of a Communist. This was contrary to the Moscow agreement which had provided that Wladislaw Kiernik, a member of the Peasant Party, should be Minister of Public Administration with full control over the police.[14] Ambassador Harriman foresaw the logical

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[12]State, *Foreign Relations, 1945*, vol. V, *Europe*, p. 353.

[13]Mikolajczyk, *The Rape of Poland*, p. 137.

[14]Arthur Bliss Lane, *I Saw Poland Betrayed: An American Am-*

outcome of these events and outlined in a telegram of June 28, 1945, to his superiors in Washington the significance of the Communist ploy calling it "the crux of whether Poland will have her independence, whether reasonable personal freedoms will be permitted and whether reasonable free elections can be held."[15]

Free elections were not the highest priority of the Polish Provisional Government in 1945, but the Communists continued to promise to hold them because they wanted to obtain surplus property from the United States to the value of $190 million as well as reconstruction loans of more than $500 million.[16] Arthur Bliss Lane, the U.S. ambassador in Poland, saw this as an opportunity to bargain for the holding of free elections. "I determined to take advantage of the eagerness of the Polish Government for economic assistance," he later wrote, "and to use it as a lever by which we would obtain fulfillment of Polish commitments under the Yalta and Potsdam decisions, as well as an improvement of the situation of imprisoned American citizens."[17] As it turned out, Lane argued against granting credits to

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bassador Reports to the American People (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1948), p. 139.

[15]State, *Foreign Relations, 1945, The Conference of Berlin*, vol. I, p. 728.

[16]Acheson to Lane, September 21, 1945, State, *Foreign Relations, 1945*, vol. V, *Europe*, p. 375.

[17]Lane, *I saw Poland Betrayed*, p. 227.

Poland on the grounds that they would only bolster the Communist-dominated regime. Financial support would, moreover, indicate acquiescence in the terroristic activities of the security police.[18] Secretary of State James F. Byrnes was responsible for formulating such a policy since he hinted that the holding of elections "would undoubtedly contribute materially to popular support in this country for any program of aid to Poland which might be under consideration."[19]

Prior to the holding of elections the Polish government staged a referendum to decide three questions: (1) whether to abolish the upper house of the legislature; (2) whether to make permanent the land reforms and the nationalization of key industries; and (3) whether to fix the western frontiers of Poland on the Oder and Western Neisse Rivers. The balloting took place on June 30, 1946, and the government reported that there had been majorities of affirmative votes on each of the questions.[20] Soon afterward, Mikolajczyk estimated to Ambassador Lane that the people had overwhelmingly voted "no" on the first two questions and "yes" on the third.[21] The referendum was probably a

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[18]Lane to Byrnes, October 13, 1945, State, *Foreign Relations, 1945*, vol. V, *Europe*, pp. 338-89.

[19]Byrnes to Lane, November 2, 1945, *ibid.*, p. 399.

[20]Lane, *I saw Poland Betrayed*, pp. 240-44.

[21]Lane to Byrnes, July 3, 1946, U.S., Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946*, vol. VI, *Eastern*

rehearsal for the long-promised elections, and the government's fraudulent tabulation of the votes was an attempt to discourage Mikolajczyk and his supporters from further participation in "democratic" processes. The Communists in fact achieved this effect, and Mikolajczyk reported in September 1946, that members of his party planned to boycott the elections scheduled for the coming January.[22]

Ambassador Lane was arguing meanwhile against the granting of a fifty million dollar credit to Poland. He contended that the surplus U.S. Army trucks and bulldozers to be acquired with the credit would be distributed among the supporters of the government. The regime was, moreover, "not master in its own house," and the Red Army would appropriate for its use whatever it needed.[23] From Lane's point of view the refusal of financial aid would stand out "as a mark of sympathy for the people's plight."[24]

The Department of State nevertheless decided to grant Poland two credits totaling ninety million dollars. One was for fifty million dollars' worth of surplus property; the other was from

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Europe; The Soviet Union (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 472.

[22]Lane to Byrnes, September 27, 1946, *ibid.*, p. 497.

[23]Lane to Byrnes, November 13, 1945, State, *Foreign Relations, 1945*, vol. V, *Europe*, pp. 413-14.

[24]Lane, *I Saw Poland Betrayed*, p. 228.

the Export-Import Bank for the purchase of locomotives and coal cars to the value of forty million dollars.[25] Lane greeted with bitterness the announcement of the transactions: "Dept's decision to extend credits to Polish Provisional Govt is most discouraging to me for it indicates either that the Dept has little confidence in my evaluation of Poland during my 9 months here or that for reasons of which I am unaware, it does not wish to accede to my recommendations."[26]

No sooner had the State Department authorized the credits than it saw fit to suspend them. According to Acting Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson, "the Polish Government had failed, in our view, to carry out commitments made at the time of the recent credit negotiations." The Poles had not published the texts of the agreements regarding the credits, they had continued to censor the dispatches of American press correspondents, and they had not given the U.S. government information regarding trade agreements with other nations, in particular with the Soviet Union.[27] In a matter of weeks, however, Poland met the conditions which the State Department had set forth, and the United States agreed to follow through on its commitment of ninety million

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[25] *Ibid.*, p. 236.

[26] Lane to Byrnes, April 25, 1946, State, *Foreign Relations, 1946*, vol. VI, *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union*, p. 436.

[27] Memorandum of Conversation, by the Acting Secretary of State, May 8, 1946, *ibid.*, p. 449.

dollars in credits. Lane again expressed chagrin that Secretary Byrnes had given up the Americans' strongest bargaining counter "without making greatest possible use of this leverage in obtaining concessions on issues which are important to US."[28]

A more forceful American policy might have been successful within certain limits. There was no sense, however, in aggravating the already tenuous position of Mikolajczyk and his party. In response to Mikolajczyk's expressed desire to address a strong note of protest to the Yalta Powers regarding the upcoming elections, Acting Secretary of State Acheson instructed the chargé d'affaires in Poland as follows:

> You may inform him [Mikolajczyk] of note we are sending Pol Gov on subject of elections and point out that appeal by him to Yalta Powers would embarrass our efforts by making it appear that we were backing one particular party in Pol elections rather than carrying out our obligation to insure free elections regardless of outcome .... we felt it would be unwise for any democratic party to boycott elections and we fear that action proposed by Mikolajczyk would lead to situation which would in effect amount to a boycott.[29]

Carefully phrased remonstrances were to bolster the teetering position of the Peasant Party. The State Department ruled out

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[28]Lane to Byrnes, July 15, 1946, *ibid.*, p. 477.

[29]Acheson to Keith, November 18, 1946, *ibid.*, p. 516.

firmer action on the basis of priorities; Poland did not merit the principled stand which Roosevelt had envisioned when he appended his name to the lofty phrases of the Yalta communiqué.

Elections took place in Poland on January 19, 1947. The government bloc maintained that it overwhelmingly won 394 seats in the new parliament while the Peasant Party garnered only twenty-eight.[30] The regime had taken precautions to ensure that the elections would turn out in its favor. Several Poles informed Ambassador Lane by the last week of December 1946 that seventy-five out of 854 Polish Peasant Party candidates were under arrest and that the names of forty other candidates had been removed from the electoral list.[31] After election day Lane reported that the government intimidated voters by means of "mass parades of voter[,] exclusive display of No. 3 government bloc ballots outside and inside polling places, physical scarcity of PSL [Polish Peasant Party] balloting slips, encouragement of voters to place No. 3 cards in envelopes ...."[32] Lane concluded that the election was "a mere formality" by which the Communists had retained power and that his usefulness in Poland had come

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[30]Edward J. Rozek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy: A Pattern in Poland* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958), p. 429.

[31]Lane, *I Saw Poland Betrayed*, p. 278.

[32]Lane to Byrnes, January 21, 1947, U.S., Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947*, vol. IV, *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 411.

to an end.[33] As he was to write later,

> Nothing can more effectively ruin the morale of the Department of State and of the Foreign Service--as well as the very foreign policy which these bodies are required to carry out--if high officers of the government ignore the reports sent by observers abroad and withhold from them information without which those representatives cannot properly carry out their functions.[34]

To continue as Ambassador in Poland would, to Lane's thinking, be to acquiesce in the fraudulent elections. In the same telegram in which he offered his resignation, Lane advised Secretary Byrnes "to state our policy clearly and emphatically, and without diplomatic evasion or reserve."[35]

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Among the other nations which did not meet the requirements of a principled stand was Rumania. The Soviets' claim that it was necessary to retain troops there to guard lines of communication with their forces in Austria was plausible. As Roosevelt informed Churchill in a telegram of March 11, 1945, "... Rumania is not a good place for a test case. The Russians have been in

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[33]Lane to Byrnes, January 23, 1947, *ibid.*, pp. 412-13.

[34]Lane, *I Saw Poland Betrayed*, foreword.

[35]Lane to Byrnes, January 23, 1947, State, *Foreign Relations, 1947*, vol. IV, *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union*, p. 414.

undisputed control from the beginning and with Rumania lying athwart the Russian lines of communications it is moreover difficult to contest the plea of military necessity and security which they are using to justify their action."[36]

In Rumania the forcible installation of a regime dominated by Communists had its origins in the anarchy of the wartime situation. King Michael, twenty-one years old and recently ascended to the throne, had appointed General Nicolae Radescu to be prime minister and minister of the interior on December 7, 1944.[37] Radescu became the target of Communist abuse, and his inability to restore order provided the pretext for the visit to Bucharest of Soviet Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs Andrey Y. Vyshinsky on February 27, 1945.[38] On the following day Vyshinsky informed King Michael that the Radescu regime was unsatisfactory and had to be replaced. Vyshinsky advised that the Soviets' choice of a leader to form a new government was Petru Groza, of the Plowmen's Front Party.[39]

This unilateral Soviet action led Ambassador Harriman to invoke the Yalta Declaration on Liberated Europe. Churchill was

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[36]State, *Foreign Relations, 1945*, vol. V, *Europe*, p. 510.

[37]State, *Foreign Relations, 1944*, vol. IV, *Europe*, p. 277.

[38]Berry to Vyshinsky, February 28, 1945, State, *Foreign Relations, 1945*, vol. V, *Europe*, p. 486.

[39]Berry to Byrnes, March 2, 1945, *ibid.*, p. 492.

reluctant to join the Americans in their protest since Rumania was of less significance to the British than Poland. "Again I am very conscious of the fact that we have on our hands the much more important issue of Poland," he wrote Roosevelt on March eighth, "and I do not therefore want to do anything as regards Rumania which might prejudice our prospects of reaching a Polish settlement."[40]

Harriman suggested to Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs V. M. Molotov on March fourteenth that they, together with Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, British Ambassador in the Soviet Union, undertake consultations regarding the crisis in Rumania.[41] Molotov replied three days later that discussions had taken place in Bucharest while Vyshinsky had been there and that the Americans apparently now considered these "superfluous."[42] The Russian response avoided the issue of renewed consultations and adopted the line that it was the Soviet Union rather than Rumania which was the aggrieved party in this instance. Such a tone of offended pride would characterize most of the Russian replies to U.S. objections in the coming months. The British, with somewhat more sincerity than the Russians, expressed the hope on March nineteenth that the Americans would attempt to

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[40] *Ibid.*, p. 506.

[41] *Ibid.*, pp. 512-13.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 517.

coordinate with them any future remonstrances: "His Majesty's Government would greatly appreciate the opportunity of discussing the whole situation with the United States Government before a decision is taken as to their next step."[43]

Nothing came of the consultations initiated by Harriman's attempt to implement the Declaration on Liberated Europe. Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius, Jr. stressed in a telegram of March 16, 1945 to Ambassador John G. Winant in London the urgency of taking action in tandem with the British. It was vital "that the U.K. and U.S. governments reach a clear idea of and agreement upon the general interpretation to be placed by them on the Declaration."[44] Yet Anglo-American policy making continued to drift, and even in retrospect no clear pattern emerges. Henry L. Roberts, serving as an OSS officer in Rumania in 1945, has recounted the situation as follows:

> As far as I know, American action in Rumania did not extend beyond informing King Michael that the Groza regime was unacceptable, a fact generally known, and indicating approval of measures taken to broaden it. The United States did not have, perhaps unfortunately, a positive, thought-out plan of action.[45]

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[43]The British Embassy to the Department of State, aide-mémoire, March 19, 1945, *ibid.*, p. 518.

[44]*Ibid.*, p. 516.

[45]Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1951),

One consequence was that the democratic elements in Rumania looked forward to Anglo-American support and were bitterly disappointed when none was forthcoming.

King Michael continued, however, to request American and British assistance in removing the Groza regime. He and Iuliu Maniu, a lawyer from Transylvania and a leader of the National Peasant Party there, plotted the overthrow of the government during the spring and summer of 1945. According to a U.S. observer's report of June 8, 1945, "Maniu hinted that if he could receive Anglo-American support, his party was ready to persuade the King to dismiss the present Government and to form a new Cabinet with all parties represented."[46] The Rumanians were obviously unaware that no less a personage than the late Franklin D. Roosevelt had written off Rumania as a poor risk for liberation efforts. Yet in the months ahead Maniu would curry favor with the Western representatives in the hope that the United States and Britain would intervene with more than words.

The Russians sought to win over King Michael by awarding him honors and promising him continuation in office if he acceded to their heavy reparation demands. Michael resisted the

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p. 301n, quoted in Thomas T. Hammond, "'Atomic Diplomacy' Revisited," *Orbis: A Journal of World Affairs*, XIX (Winter 1976), 1420.

[46]The Chief of the United States Military Representation on the Allied Control Commission for Rumania (Schuyler) to the War Department, June 8, 1945, State, *Foreign Relations, 1945*, vol. V, *Europe*, p. 554.

Russian advances and found renewed strength in the unconditional guarantee which Truman presented after his return from the Potsdam Conference. The President reported to the nation on August 9, 1945:

> At Yalta it was agreed, you will recall, that the three governments would assume a common responsibility in helping to re-establish in the liberated and satellite nations of Europe governments broadly representative of democratic elements in the population. That responsibility still stands .... It was reaffirmed in the Berlin declarations on Rumania, Bulgaria, and Hungary. These nations are not to be spheres of influence of any one power.[47]

Michael inferred from this statement that the United States would not establish diplomatic relations with the Groza regime and that it would only sign a peace treaty with a "recognized democratic government."[48] He therefore asked Groza to resign on August 20, 1945, and submitted requests to the Yalta powers for help in the reorganization of the government. Groza refused to resign, and the Soviet general in charge of the Allied Control Commission (ACC) in Rumania supported him.[49]

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[47] *The Department of State Bulletin*, XIII (August 12, 1945), 211. Evidence exists which indicates that the Overseas Information Branch of the Office of War Information broadcast this speech into the countries of Eastern Europe. See Davis, *Cold War Begins*, p. 298, n. 24.

[48] The Acting Representative in Rumania (Melbourne) to the Secretary of State, August 14, 1945, State, *Foreign Relations, 1945*, vol. V, *Europe*, p. 567.

[49] The Acting Representative in Rumania (Melbourne) to the

The situation reached an impasse when Michael refused to sign any decrees or to receive any ministers. The ACC, consisting of military representatives of Britain, Russia, and the United States, convened on numerous occasions to consider the situation. Brigadier General Cortlandt V.R. Schuyler, the American member of the commission, worried at one point that the Soviets might denounce the armistice agreement and seize military control of the country.[50] He was alarmed, moreover, at the prospect of Anglo-American disagreement over the action to be taken after such a turn of events. As he has written in retrospect:

> London's first messages to Stevenson [UK representative on the ACC] on the subject expressed concern that the U.S. had gone too far in encouraging the King as to trigger actions which neither the U.S. nor the UK could effectively support. However, a few days later, apparently after further discussions in Washington and London, Stevenson was instructed to give his unqualified support to whatever position I might take at ACC level on the matter. This he did most effectively at our later meetings.[51]

Even after the British decided to follow the American lead in

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Secretary of State, August 20, 1945, *ibid.*, p. 574.

[50]Schuyler to the War Department, August 23, 1945, State, *Foreign Relations, 1945*, vol. V, *Europe*, p. 592.

[51]Cortlandt V. R. Schuyler, "Rumania in Crisis: 1944-1947," n.d., p. 30, mimeographed copy of ms. in possession of Professor Thomas T. Hammond, Corcoran Department of History, University of Virginia.

Rumania, the signals emanating from Washington were unclear. Secretary Byrnes notified the U.S. political representative during the first week of the crisis that "we do not think that any advice or assurance should be given to the King regarding his present difficult position vis-à-vis Groza ... though you may apprise him of this Govt's hope that measures which might provoke Soviet officials will be avoided."[52]

Byrnes's concern about the increasing Communist domination of Rumania and Bulgaria caused him to send a fact-finding mission to those countries in October 1945. Led by Mark Ethridge, publisher of the *Courier Journal* and the *Louisville Times*, the group was to provide Byrnes with more objective opinions than he was currently receiving. In an account published in 1951, Ethridge remarked that "the Secretary had indeed felt that his diplomatic representatives in the Balkans might have become too much engrossed in the details of their relations with the Communist regimes to see local conditions in their proper perspective."[53]

Ethridge reported that the most likely means of breaking the stalemate between Michael and the Groza regime was to split

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[52]Byrnes to Melbourne, August 25, 1945, State, *Foreign Relations, 1945*, vol. V, *Europe*, p. 594.

[53]Mark Ethridge and Cyril E. Black, "Negotiating on the Balkans, 1945-1947," in Raymond Dennett and Joseph E. Johnson (eds.), *Negotiating With the Russians* (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1951), p. 184.

the parties comprising the National Democratic Front. "The collaboration between the Socialists and the Communists is a most unhappy one," Ethridge surmised.[54] Michael's continued refusal to carry out his traditional role in the government might result in a disruption of the coalition. Ethridge described Michael as a symbol of Rumania's orientation toward the West and concluded, "it is literally true that the hopes and fears of almost all Rumanians, except the most rabid Communists, and even for some of them, are centered in him."[55]

Ethridge viewed the presence of Russian troops in Rumania as the greatest obstacle to the establishment of democratic processes. He argued that "even if the troops were never used in any instance for political purposes, their very physical presence in the countries constitutes a pressure against which the local population would never make an overt move."[56] The best course of action for the United States to pursue in the current crisis would be to continue to withhold formal recognition thereby creating "an area of greater political and economic freedom" in which the opposition parties could help

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[54]Ethridge Mission, "Report on Political Situation in Rumania," n.d., p. 4, National Archives Building, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File 871.00/1-1146.

[55]*Ibid.*, p. 7.

[56]*Ibid.*, p. 11.

themselves.[57]

While Ethridge was reaching these conclusions, Secretary Byrnes was arranging a conference of the Big Three foreign ministers which was to take place in Moscow in December. He settled the details with V. M. Molotov, Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, and he then announced to British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin the dates of the upcoming meeting. The British objected strenuously to Byrnes's highhanded approach to the problem of Allied unity. John G. Winant, U.S. Ambassador in the United Kingdom, reported the following to Byrnes:

> Situation serious. Unilateral action deeply resented by Bevin and Cabinet. Bevin refuses to talk tonight or to attend conference Moscow .... Bevin realizes that his own party has been seriously critical of his pro-United States position and effort to join with you in forcing recognition of democratic procedures in Eastern European countries.[58]

Bevin eventually relented and agreed to attend the Moscow Conference. Between December fifteenth and twenty-seventh, therefore, the foreign secretaries worked out a compromise solution to the governmental crisis in Rumania which was similar to the nego-

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[57] *Ibid.*

[58] Winant to Byrnes, November 26, 1945, U.S., Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1945*, vol. II, *General Political and Economic Matters* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), pp. 581-82.

tiated settlement that Harry Hopkins had arranged for Poland in May. A commission consisting of Vyshinsky and Ambassadors Harriman and Clark Kerr would go to Bucharest to supervise the inclusion of two members of the opposition parties in the Groza government. The new ministers were to be "without portfolio," and Byrnes did not consult the American representatives in Rumania to ascertain whether the compromise was feasible or even acceptable to the leaders of the opposition.

The "broadened "government was to pledge to the Big Three that it would allow the freedoms of speech, press, and assembly to all parties, and in response the United States and Britain were to formally recognize the government.[59] The Groza regime made the pledge required of it on January 8, 1946, adding, moreover, that "General elections should be held in the shortest time possible."[60] President Truman made a gesture toward fulfilling the American part of the bargain when he announced at a press conference on January eighth that he had recognized Rumania and Bulgaria conditionally. When asked about the Yalta communiqué's guarantees of free and unfettered elections, Truman added that those promises had not been foregone. "I still have the final say on what we will do in these two countries," the

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[59]Schuyler, "Rumania in Crisis: 1944-1947," p. 36.

[60]State, *Foreign Relations, 1946*, vol. VI, *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union*, p. 571.

president asserted.[61]

The situation of the opposition parties did not improve during 1946. The national elections which took place on November 19, 1946, were as fraudulent as everyone had expected. Their only remarkable feature was the blatancy of the falsification of the electoral returns. Burton Y. Berry, the U.S. political representative in Rumania reported, "In fact Govt established new low level for Balkan elections."[62] Berry recommended that final recognition of the government be withheld until Byrnes could again discuss the situation at the level of the Council of Foreign Ministers.

The Groza government maintained that it had won more than seventy percent of the votes, but Berry estimated that the regime might not have had the support of even ten percent of the electorate.[63] He submitted his resignation to the Secretary of State arguing that his usefulness in Rumania had come to an end. "Having been so active politically during the past 2 years, it will be impossible, with elections what they were, for me to be close to Govt without incurring enmity of opposi-

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[61] *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Harry S. Truman, 1946* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), pp. 9-10.

[62] Berry to Byrnes, November 23, 1946, State, *Foreign Relations, 1946*, vol. VI, *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union*, p. 655.

[63] Berry to Byrnes, November 27, 1946, *ibid.*, p. 655.

tion, or close to opposition without incurring enmity of Govt."[64]

Before leaving Rumania, however, Berry sought to have the U.S. government insist on the holding of elections in Rumania which would fulfill the promises of the Yalta Declaration. Iuliu Maniu, president of the National Peasant Party, even suggested going as far as overthrowing the Groza government.[65] Rumors of the plot reached the regime, and on July 14, 1947, Maniu was arrested.[66] The U.S. representatives in Rumania abandoned all hope of new elections, and after Groza announced his intention of prosecuting Maniu, Acting Secretary of State Robert A. Lovett correctly observed, that "continued silence on our part after trial commences might well be interpreted both here and in Eastern Europe as implying U.S. and Brit ... impotence that area and abandonment democratic elements which look to West for encouragement."[67]

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[64]Berry to Byrnes, November 23, 1946, *ibid.*, p. 656.

[65]Maniu, Bratianu, and Petrescu to Byrnes, March 13, 1947, State, *Foreign Relations, 1947*, vol. IV, *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union*, pp. 477-79.

[66]Editorial, *ibid.*, p. 493.

[67]Lovett to the Embassy in the United Kingdom, October 17, 1947, *ibid.*, p. 495.

III

The situation of the pro-Western elements was even less stable in Bulgaria than in Rumania. A group led by Nikola Petkov of the Agrarian Party brought matters to the point of crisis in Bulgaria in August 1945 shortly before national elections were to be held. Petkov petitioned the Communist-dominated government to have the elections postponed, and he received support in his appeal from Maynard B. Barnes, the U.S. political representative.

The provisional government which was in operation in August 1945 had been in existence for nearly one year. At its start the regime had been under the control of a coalition called the Fatherland Front. This grouping of parties included the Communists, the progressive wing of the Agrarian Union, the Social Democrats, and the Zveno National Union. The last of these was a unique political formation brought about by the exigencies of the war. *Zveno* is the Bulgarian word for link, and the Zveno National Union included reserve army officers and leaders of the middle class who sought to bring about a reconciliation between the rural party (Agrarian Union) on the one hand and urban groups (Socialists and Communists) on the other. In conjunction with the Fatherland Front cabinet, a three-member council of regents ruled in place of eight-year-old King Simeon II.[68]

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[68]Mark Ethridge and Cyril E. Black, "Negotiating on the

The elections had been scheduled for August 26, 1945, but by early August all the Agrarian and Socialist leaders had resigned from the government in protest against the terrorist activities of the Communists. The police and the courts were under the control of the ministries of interior and justice respectively, and men subservient to the Kremlin occupied both cabinet posts.

The campaign of persecution initiated by the Communists caused Barnes to recommend that the elections be postponed until the problem could be considered by the Allied Control Commission.[69] Barnes made this move without clearing it with the State Department, and in a stern telegram of August 24, Secretary Byrnes reproached him as follows:

> Dept. is not making representations to Moscow nor can it support your action in requesting Gen Crane [American representative on the ACC] to make the communications to the Chairman ACC .... nor your own letter to MinFonOff set forth in latter message.
>
> Instructions ... authorized you to inform the members of Bulgarian Government of our attitude toward situation existing in Bulgaria but before taking further steps Dept. should have been consulted. The views expressed in Deptel 260, August 18 did not contemplate our

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Balkans, 1945-1947," in Raymond Dennett and Joseph E. Johnson (eds.), *Negotiating With the Russians* (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1951), pp. 186-87.

[69]Davis, *Cold War Begins*, p. 309.

> making specific request for postponement of elections and Dept. has consistently felt the formation of a representative democratic Government in Bulgaria is matter for Bulgaria to undertake and in absence of pertinent provisions in armistice not for consideration by ACC.[70]

As a matter of fact, the State Department had not "consistently felt" anything with regard to Bulgaria, and in view of the difficulties facing Barnes, the Secretary's telegram was overly harsh and could only have a discouraging effect. In any case, it is hard to imagine that Byrnes could have found a foreign service officer better qualified for the position in Sofia. Barnes was a diplomat with a long record of service in areas where Americans were not usually welcomed. From 1940-41 he had been in charge of the American Embassy in Paris while Marshal Petain was collaborating with the Nazis at Vichy. Late in 1941, as U.S. naval forces in the North Atlantic began to operate out of Revkjavik, Iceland, Barnes, as secretary of legation there, had quieted fears of a German attack. After General Eisenhower in 1942 had arranged for the surrender of French West Africa, Barnes had gone to Dakar as counselor and consul general. Finally, in 1944 he became U.S. political representative in Bulgaria as the Red Army liberated the capital at Sofia.[71]

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[70] U.S., Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945*, vol. IV, *Europe* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), pp. 308-09.

[71] *Who's Who in America: A Biographical Dictionary of*

To the surprise of both Barnes and the State Department, the Bulgarian Communists received orders from Moscow to postpone the elections until November 1945.[72] The wisdom of Barnes's initiatives had seemingly been vindicated, but by the time Ethridge arrived in October on his fact-finding mission, the political crisis had grown even more explosive than it had been during the summer. Since the most important decisions of the Bulgarian government appeared to emanate from Moscow, Ethridge decided a week before the elections to travel to Russia and to persuade the authorities there to intervene once again. Ethridge spoke with Vyshinsky intending, as he later recalled, "to impress the Soviet Government with the firmness of the American position that the terms of the Yalta Declaration were not being fulfilled in Bulgaria."[73] Vyshinsky denied that the Soviet Union could advise the Bulgarian government to postpone the upcoming elections, and in spite of Ethridge's efforts, the balloting took place as planned on November 18. The Communist victory at the polls frustrated Ethridge's hopes for reaching an accommodation with the Soviets, and he soon afterward returned

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Notable Living Men and Women, 1946-1947 (Chicago: The A. N. Marquis Co., 1946), p. 131.

[72]Davis, *Cold War Begins*, p. 310, n. 54.

[73]Ethridge and Black, "Negotiating on the Balkans, 1945-1947," in Dennett and Johnson, *Negotiating With the Russians*, p. 193.

to Washington. His report to the Secretary of State, dated December 8, 1945, pointed out that there was little reason to press for new elections until the Americans had modified the conditions which had produced a Communist victory. Much of the problem could be traced to the abstention of the pro-Western elements in Bulgaria: "Feeling that the whole basis of such elections was fraudulent, the Agrarian and Socialist parties, which represented a very important element of democratic opinion, refused to participate in them."[74] In spite of his doubts about the feasibility of seeking new elections, Ethridge remained hopeful that the Russians would realize that tactics of mass terror would only make the situation in Bulgaria more difficult for the occupation forces:

> While the Soviet Government has thus succeeded in exercising a very direct and constant influence ... its policy of exerting its authority through a minority party has led to a rapid decline in Soviet prestige and has alienated the majority parties which at the start were quite willing to cooperate with the Russians.[75]

Nevertheless, Ethridge was not able to explain how a decline in Soviet prestige could be translated into a decline in Soviet power.

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[74]Ethridge to Byrnes, December 8, 1945, State, *Foreign Relations, 1945*, vol. V, *Europe*, p. 639.

[75]Ethridge, "Summary Report on Soviet Policy in Rumania and Bulgaria," December 7, 1945, *ibid.*, p. 635.

Throughout the fall of 1945 the repression of the democratic elements had been most pronounced. Ethridge had discussed with General Sergey S. Biryuzov, the Soviet chairman of the Allied Control Commission, the possibility of removing from power the Communist who was currently minister of interior. According to Ethridge, that ministry had become for the opposition members of the government a "symbol of repression and of forceful imposition of will to rule; to Communists he is symbol of their safety in that they think his fall would bring reprisals."[76] Ethridge's point was that the Communists would remain in power because the Russian occupation forces were there and because the Communists had control of the militia and the police, thus allowing them an easy means of intimidation of the electorate. Biryuzov replied that the opposition parties were "inconsequential" and that, in any case, he did not have the authority to intervene in political affairs.[77]

Ethridge had suggested that Byrnes issue a statement before the elections declaring that the interim government was not representative according to the meaning of the Yalta Declaration and that the United States would not recognize the

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[76]Barnes to Byrnes, October 29, 1945, State, *Foreign Relations, 1945*, vol. IV, *Europe*, p. 355.

[77]*Ibid.*, p. 356.

government resulting from the elections.[78] Byrnes made no formal reply to this proposal, but he suggested to Harriman that he discuss with Molotov "possible steps which could be taken in the circumstances."[79] In an oral history interview years afterward Ethridge would explain that Byrnes "'didn't take seriously enough the situation'" and "'could compromise with the Russians on anything.'"[80]

America's policy of nonrecognition of the Eastern European regimes took on added rigidity after Truman had given consideration to the Ethridge report. The president provided the following comments to the secretary of state on January 5, 1946:

> For the first time I read the Ethridge letter this morning. It is full of information on Rumania and Bulgaria and confirms our previous information on those two police states. I am not going to agree to the recognition of those governments unless they are radically changed.[81]

The occasion for this firm assertion of presidential prerogatives had been provided by the secretary's return from the Moscow Conference. Without consulting Truman, Byrnes had signed a com-

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[78]Barnes to Byrnes, November 3, 1945, *ibid.*, p. 362.

[79]Byrnes to Harriman, November 6, 1945, *ibid.*, p. 363.

[80]Ethridge Oral History Interview, Truman Library, as quoted in Robert Garson, "The Role of Eastern Europe in America's Containment Policy, 1945-1948," *Journal of American Studies*, 13 (April 1979), 76.

[81]Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. I, *Year of Decisions* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1955), p. 551.

muniqué calling for the dispatch to the Bulgarian government of "friendly advice" from the Soviet Union as to the broadening of its base among the electorate.[82]

The President had only learned of these plans after Byrnes had returned to Washington and had arranged for a radio broadcast in which he could describe his accomplishments to the nation. With noticeable irritation Truman would later recall: "Byrnes ... had taken it upon himself to move the foreign policy of the United States in a direction to which I could not, and would not agree. Moreover, he had undertaken this on his own initiative without consulting or informing the President."[83] Before the Secretary went on the air, Truman summoned Byrnes to the White House and reprimanded him for his overly zealous pursuit of compromise.

On January 12, 1946, Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson explained to Barnes in a lengthy telegram the nature of the negotiations which had prompted Byrnes to seek an expedient solution to Bulgaria's political dilemma:

> Stalin subsequently suggested that perhaps the Assembly could be advised to include some members of a loyal opposition in the Govt. Accordingly, after considerable discussion and serious consideration by the US Delegation as to whether it would be preferable to reach agreement in this man-

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[82]Davis, *Cold War Begins*, pp. 328-29.

[83]Truman, *Year of Decisions*, p. 550.

> ner or to make no agreement in regard to Bulgaria, and considering the larger issues involved and overall relationships the text as given in the Conference communiqué was finally agreed.[84]

Thus, the Yalta pledge to help the peoples of the former Axis satellites "to solve by democratic means their pressing political and economic problems"[85] had been sacrificed to "the larger issues involved and overall relationships." The Secretary of State had been concerned at Moscow only with clearing away obstacles to the negotiation of peace treaties with the former Axis satellites.

Meanwhile, in Bulgaria Barnes's best efforts to maintain a low profile were to no avail, and in early 1946 he became the special target of criticism from the Communist Party newspaper, *Pravda*. The Communists accused Barnes of actions "calculated to encourage the representatives of the Bulgarian Opposition to resist the decision of the Three-Minister [Moscow] Conference."[86] Byrnes had seen enough evidence of these activities to have sent Barnes the following warning on February 2:

> It is of primary importance that we avoid any appearance of bad faith toward our allies and we must be meticulous in all dealings with the various contending elements in Bulgaria to make it clear that we intend

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[84]Acheson to Barnes, January 12, 1946, State, *Foreign Relations, 1946*, vol. VI, *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union*, p. 47.

[85]The Declaration on Liberated Europe, February 11, 1945, State, *Foreign Relations, The Conference at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, p. 972.

[86]Quoted in *New York Times*, March 9, 1946.

> to abide scrupulously by our agreement in regard to Bulgaria and to give no grounds for the belief that we would openly or covertly support any faction in a course inconsistent with the letter or spirit of our commitments. I hope you carefully avoid any action or remarks which might give a contrary impression of our attitudes.[87]

Notwithstanding these admonitions, Barnes continued to promise the Opposition parties that the United States would not give in on the issue of recognition until the Communists had agreed to the inclusion of representatives of democratic opinion within the government. When reporting to his superiors in Washington he stated his position clearly: "Either we stand firm now and fight out issue of free elections for Bulgaria to bitter and with Russia or we assent to consolidation of Communist power here that will assure Russia for long time to come utilization of Bulgaria's territory for strategic purposes ...."[88]

The vigor of Barnes's rhetoric should not be allowed to obscure the fact that he cherished no illusion that there would be a sudden change for the better in the Bulgarian political situation. His messages to Washington were interwoven with expressions of the bitter fatalism of one who is battling against insurmountable obstacles. The tone of resignation of the following passage is typical of this attitude:

> Hence it would seem better to let matters "drift" and retain our position of non-

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[87]Byrnes to Barnes, February 2, 1946, State, *Foreign Relations, 1946*, vol. VI, *Eastern Europe; the Soviet Union*, p. 66.

[88]Barnes to Byrnes, January 30, 1946, *ibid.*, p. 63.

> recognition than to hope that by reversal of policy we could influence Russians and Georgiev government for the better. Everyone concerned would interpret this as weakness and situation here from our point of view could only become worse.[89]

The conditions for the Opposition in Bulgaria did progressively become worse. The State Department made one final attempt to reconcile the differences between the democratic elements and their Communist antagonists during the Paris Peace Conference of the summer of 1946. The following is a representative selection from the record of a conversation between Barnes and Prime Minister Kimon Georgiev in Paris on September 3, 1946:

> Prime Minister shrugged shoulders and said political realism requires admission of fact that it is useless in political activity to strive for the impossible .... He pointed out that there had always been political persecution in Bulgaria. Barnes replied that world war had been fought since last elections held by old regime. .... Georgiev denied nothing. He merely reiterated time without number that it is politically unrealistic to strive for impossible. With each reiteration he repeated that he would seek to do what was possible to improve political conditions for Opposition with respect to their possible participation in elections.[90]

The final blow to Barnes's hopes for the reorganization of the Bulgarian regime came on October 24, 1946, when the Communists

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[89]Barnes to Byrnes, February 27, 1946, *ibid.*, p. 83.

[90]The United States Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference to the Acting Secretary of State (Acheson), September 3, 1946, *ibid.*, pp. 140-41.

triumphed in elections during which they practiced fraud and intimidation with unprecedented thoroughness. Barnes made no attempt to conceal his anger at the opportunism of members of the Opposition parties who had collaborated with the Communists. At one point he likened then to "club servants who remain on after hours to look after gambling table; they get their added compensation from the 'kitty' ...."[91]

Weary and demoralized, Barnes relinquished his post in Sofia to John E. Horner on April 22, 1947.[92] In his last important policy memorandum he expressed views which were remarkable reversals of his earlier calls for increased U.S. pressure:

> The leaders who have chosen the Communist way, have done so as free agents. To them only the 'Almighty Soviets' are touchables--the rest of us are to be 'used' only for the greater glory of Communism. Let us leave them to stew in their own juices a while. This may be harsh for Bulgarians as a whole, but then a hard period is before them no matter what we may do.[93]

As a beacon of hope for those Bulgarians awaiting liberation,

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[91]Barnes to Byrnes, October 29, 1946, *ibid.*, p. 164.

[92]U.S., Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1947*, vol. IV, *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 153.

[93]Memorandum by the Representative in Bulgaria (Barnes), "United States Policy Considerations with Respect to Bulgaria," February 14, 1947, *ibid.*, p. 147.

Barnes had apparently accomplished little.

IV

The situation of H. F. Arthur Schoenfeld, Barnes's counterpart in Hungary, provides evidence corroborating the idea that an assignment as political representative in Eastern Europe almost always doomed a foreign service officer to frustration and demoralization. These diplomats had no choice but to acquiesce in the most atrocious travesties of justice when all their efforts to ensure the civil liberties of the pro-Western groups met with failure. Nevertheless, Schoenfeld, in contrast to Barnes, rarely departed in his official correspondence from a tempered optimism concerning the future of democracy in Hungary. Whenever an opportunity arose for him to encourage the Hungarians in the direction of dependence upon the West for economic aid, he took full advantage of it. For example, when the Truman Administration decided to grant Hungary a credit of $10 million for the purchase of surplus property, Schoenfeld erroneously interpreted this to mean that ten million American dollars would be loaned to Hungary. Before Secretary Byrnes had time to discover this misunderstanding, Schoenfeld had given his version of the arrangement to the Hungarian press. Enthusiastically, the diplomat cabled from Budapest to Washington the following summary of the situation:

> Average Hungarian is inclined to assume American loan will be followed by stronger political backing since "Americans would certainly not lend money to a country and then permit it to go Communist." Press has devoted much space to story and its comment, confined largely to non-Communist press, has been jubilant. *Vilag* [Newspaper of the Citizen's Democratic Party] noted effect of loan in combating inflation while other papers pointed out loan exceeds three times total value in dollars of Hungarian note circulation.[94]

One can only imagine Schoenfeld's disappointment when he read the following reply from the Secretary of State:

> Regarding $10 million line of credit for purchase of surplus property Dept wishes to point out that this is not a "loan" and that it does not represent a commitment by the U.S. that surplus property in that amount can be made available to Hungary .... Dept wishes to avoid situation where initial enthusiasm over surplus arrangement reported urtel 405 will give way to disappointment later because of initial misunderstanding and thus result in damage to American prestige in Hungary.[95]

It appears that Schoenfeld had been prey to his own wishful thinking, and his well-intentioned efforts reaped only the State Department's censure.

From Schoenfeld's point of view the most serious threat to Hungarian independence in the postwar era arose from the

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[94]Schoenfeld to Byrnes, February 27, 1946, State, *Foreign Relations, 1946*, vol. VI, *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union*, p. 263.

[95]Byrnes to Schoenfeld, March 2, 1946, *ibid.*, p. 264.

Soviet Union's determination to require reparations far in excess of Hungary's ability to pay them. In an article published in *Foreign Affairs* shortly after he resigned as Minister to Hungary in June 1947, the former diplomat recounted his efforts to have the Hungarian government formulate a plan of national reconstruction upon which the Americans could then base their decisions for aid to Hungary. "The Hungarians explained," Schoenfeld wrote, "that they did not dare submit such a plan without the prior approval of the Soviet authorities, and none was officially submitted."[96] In spite of this fact, the United States carried the burden of the expense of feeding the Hungarian people when starvation stalked the land in the winter of 1946-47. Only after Hungary had been rescued from famine did the Communists decide to seize power. Ruefully, Acheson recalls in his memoirs, Americans financed the rebuilding of nations whose regimes would never learn the meaning of gratitude: "Due to rules built into the charter of UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration] ... the great bulk of relief, largely supplied or paid for by the United States, went to Eastern Europe and was used by governments bitterly hostile to us to entrench themselves, contrary to agreements made at Yalta ...."[97]

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[96]H. F. Arthur Schoenfeld, "Soviet Imperialism in Hungary," *Foreign Affairs*, 26 (April 1948), 555.

[97]Dean G. Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1969), p. 201.

American economic aid to Hungary could not prevent the rise of the Communists to power by means of tactics of intimidation and subversion. As had been the case in Bulgaria, the Communists first seized the ministries of interior and justice through which they could manipulate to their advantage the operations of the police and the courts. While allowing pro-Western sympathizers to retain the posts of Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Communists consolidated their power on the local level. Of course, once American economic aid had been obtained in sufficient quantities, there was no longer any need to maintain the façade of coalition government. With Soviet propaganda assistance the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs were accused of having engaged in treasonable activities during the course of their official dealings with the American and British political representatives. Thus, the Communists could use insinuations of guilt by association to implicate in conspiratorial activities those left-wing agrarians and Socialists who actually had even less use for Schoenfeld than for the Communists themselves.

Schoenfeld recalled in his *Foreign Affairs* article that the Communists, especially their leader Mathias Rakosi, were "energetic and able men."[98] They had shrewdly scheduled a municipal election in Budapest for October 1945 hoping to make a

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[98]Schoenfeld, "Soviet Imperialism in Hungary," 558.

strong showing among the industrial workers' unions there in preparation for the national elections. The Communists were surprised, however, when the Smallholders Party won a majority in the municipal election.[99]

Hungary differed from Poland, Rumania, and Bulgaria in that the Soviets permitted the holding there of free elections in November 1945. The pro-Western Smallholders Party won 246 seats in the National Assembly; the Social Democrats won seventy seats; the Communists won seventy; the National Peasant Party won twenty-three; and the Citizens Democratic Party won two.[100] One historian has called the elections "the zenith of democracy in post-war Hungary."[101] As Schoenfeld reported, "During the campaign and on polling days, the occupation forces made no use of the cruder methods of intimidation that were later applied in other countries in eastern Europe."[102] The fortunes of the pro-Western parties declined precipitously, however, in the months following the elections because the Communists succeeded in obtaining the

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[99] *Ibid.*, 559.

[100] Schoenfeld to Byrnes, November 9, 1945, State, *Foreign Relations, 1945*, vol. IV, *Europe*, p. 904.

[101] Stephen D. Kertesz, "Hungary," in *id.* (ed.), *The Fate of East Central Europe: Hopes and Failures of American Policy* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), p. 229.

[102] Schoenfeld, "Soviet Imperialism in Hungary," 559.

Interior Ministry thereby controlling the police.[103]

The Communists accused members of the Smallholders Party of organizing a conspiracy to overthrow the republic in the autumn of 1946. Events reached the point of crisis when Soviet occupation forces arrested Béla Kovács, secretary general of the Smallholders Party, in March 1947. Secretary of State George C. Marshall instructed the American representative on the Allied Control Commission to examine the facts of the situation and recommend to the Hungarian government "steps which should be taken for an orderly solution."[104] The Soviet chairman of the ACC replied that the U.S. protest was "an attempt to infringe on the legal rights of the Soviet occupation authorities to defend their armed forces ...."[105] The British later objected that the State Department had not advised them of the note to the ACC, and at no point had the British been asked to join in the protest. Acting Secretary of State Acheson explained to Lord Inverchapel, the British ambassador in the United States, on March twenty-first that "action had to be taken with the

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[103]Geir Lundestad, *The American Non-Policy Toward Eastern Europe, 1943-1947: Universalism in an Area Not of Essential Interest to the United States* (Tromsö, Norway: Universitetsforlaget, 1978), p. 130.

[104]Marshall to the Legation in Hungary, March 3, 1947, State, *Foreign Relations, 1947*, vol. IV, *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union*, p. 275.

[105]Sviridov to Weems, March 8, 1947, *ibid.*, p. 278.

greatest urgency if we were to forestall the resignation of the Hungarian Prime Minister."[106]

Ironically, while the U.S. legation in Budapest was remonstrating against the Communists' allegations that the Smallholders were engaged in a conspiracy, President Truman was preparing to sign peace treaties with Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria. In a White House press release of June 14, 1947, he expressed his disappointment that the governments "not only have disregarded the will of the majority of the people but have resorted to measures of oppression against them."[107] The president nevertheless explained that it was necessary to end the state of war which had existed between the United States and the Axis satellites.

V

The major defect of the Roosevelt-Truman policy toward Eastern Europe was its intrinsic evasiveness. It set out to accomplish the goals set forth in the Atlantic Charter and the Yalta Declaration, but the nation lacked the means to accomplish

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[106]Memorandum of Conversation, by the Acting Chief of the Division of Southern European Affairs (Barbour), March 24, 1947, *ibid.*, p. 293.

[107]U.S., Department of State, *Bulletin*, 16 (June 22, 1947), 1214.

the liberation of Eastern Europe. When the gap between rhetoric and reality became embarrassingly evident in 1946 and 1947, the policy makers in Washington postponed decisions on such vital issues as diplomatic recognition and peace treaties with the former Axis satellite states. John Lewis Gaddis has summarized the problem best: "By failing to prepare the American people for Stalin's demands in Eastern Europe, Roosevelt inadvertently undermined the domestic consensus necessary for his postwar policy of cooperation with the Soviet Union."[108]

Early critics of the U.S. policy toward Eastern Europe argued that the very focus of attention on the liberated states of that area was an escape from reality. Walter Lippmann, writing in December 1946, castigated Byrnes and Bevin for dealing with the question of the former Axis satellites to the exclusion of the question of peace treaties with Germany and Japan. Lippmann criticized the diplomats for having

> subjected the small nations, which they meant to befriend, to the cruel ordeal of having to stand up publicly every day and, in the presence of Messrs. Molotov and Vishinsky, to say whether they are with the Soviet Union or with the Anglo-Americans. As a result we have compromised the political leaders and parties in Poland and elesewhere who wished to be independent of Moscow.

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[108]John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 134.

> We have sponsored them without in fact being able to support them.[109]

While it is true that the United States and Great Britain incurred a certain obligation to those Eastern Europeans who had come to believe that the Anglo-Americans would serve as bulwarks against the Communist pressure, Lippmann goes too far in attributing the failure of the policy to the West's incompetence. Politicians such as Mikolajczyk in Poland and Petkov in Bulgaria curried favor with the West but were unwilling to shoulder political responsibilities in the coalition governments until it was almost too late. Byrnes and Bevin lacked coordination in their policy making, but the Eastern Europeans were as much to blame for the failure of the peacemaking because they were so slow to face reality themselves.

More recent critics, most notably Daniel Yergin,[110] have taken a deterministic view of American relations with Eastern Europe, stressing either economics or ideology as the main ingredient of policy. Yergin takes a particularly simplistic approach, neglecting the inconvenient fact that the thinking of

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[109]Walter Lippmann, "A Year of Peacemaking," *The Atlantic*, 178 (December 1946), 35-40, reprinted in Norman A. Graebner (ed.), *Ideas and Diplomacy: Readings in the Intellectual Tradition of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 708.

[110]Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1977).

foreign service officers cannot be adequately described by "Riga" (anti-Soviet) axioms or "Yalta" (conciliatory) axioms. Often disregarding the views of diplomats, Roosevelt and Byrnes, the secretary of state who would carry out FDR's Yalta program, formulated their policy with a view toward attaining Wilsonian universalist goals. Indeed, Yergin gives Roosevelt and Byrnes more credit for practical, statesman-like thinking than either deserved.

The Yalta program was a call for a return to the pre-1939 ideal of world order for which "peaceful change" had been the guiding force for the rule of law. Yergin's description of the "Yalta" axioms as anticipating the postwar power of the Soviet Union and moderating American expectations of self-determination in Eastern Europe accordingly does not square with the other accounts we have of Roosevelt's ideas.

Neither does Yergin's Riga-Yalta dichotomy accommodate the fact that a continuing objective of the "Riga" school was the implementation of the Yalta Declaration on Liberated Europe. Such a limited goal--indeed, an objective of the "Yalta" school--was, according to Yergin's reading of the evidence, considered by the "Riga" group to have been a Munich-like form of appeasement. The documents bear witness to the very circumscribed nature of the State Department's Eastern European program. If there ever existed a hard-line school of thought with regard to the Soviet Union, its unity had disappeared by late 1945 as the

problems of Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Hungary moved increasingly to the fore.

Shared by all policy makers concerned with Eastern Europe was a wish for the liberation of the area from outside control. The policy of nonrecognition reflected this attitude for most of the period under study. The State Department by 1947 had realized the futility of the policy and had established diplomatic relations with all of the Eastern European regimes.

It is true that the American policy was not well coordinated. Yet State Department officials were responding to events as best they could with the Declaration on Liberated Europe as their only source of guidance. The latter document was susceptible to highly moralistic interpretations and after Roosevelt's death no one could be sure by exactly what means the president had intended to implement the Declaration. Moreover, having played no part in formulating the Yalta accords, State Department officials viewed with dismay Harry S. Truman's determination to obtain fulfillment of the accords regardless of the consequences for U.S.-Soviet relations.

George F. Kennan was one official who perceived the frustrations which beset the efforts of the State Department gradually to come to terms with Soviet power in Eastern Europe. When he recalled in 1967 his impressions of twenty years earlier, he suggested that the government might have followed a different course of action:

> I saw little to be gained by our having anything at all to do with the new regimes in these countries. If peace treaties were unavoidable, I saw no reason to preserve in this respect the facade of tripartite unity. I would have preferred that we negotiate such treaties independently, and that the documents be as brief and noncommital as possible, consisting in fact of nothing more than a mutual agreement to terminate the state of war. I deplored any and every effort to convey to the American public the impression that our own government had any residue of influence in the Soviet-dominated area, or that the countries in question faced anything less than the full rigor of Stalinist totalitarianism.[111]

Lane, Berry, Barnes, and Schoenfeld might not have begun their assignments in Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Hungary, respectively, with the decided purpose of freeing those countries from Soviet domination, but such a goal was soon to emerge. These diplomats took literally the promise of the Atlantic Charter that American resources would be pledged to ensuring that all peoples might someday choose the government under which they wished to live. These foreign service officers worked to widen their channels of communication with the beleaguered pro-Western political parties behind the gradually closing Iron Curtain thus becoming beacons of hope for the nations awaiting the fulfillment of the wartime promises of self-determination.

Americans had not fought the war in Europe with the expecta-

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[111] George F. Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1967), p. 284.

tion that the Russians would prove so exacting in their demands upon the Eastern European nations. As a consequence, there were no tangible indications of the U.S. status as a victor in Eastern Europe. It was little wonder that American diplomats would eventually resign themselves to the failure of their attempts to influence significantly the situations in Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Hungary. The only way the United States might have impressed the Soviet leaders with the extent of Western dissatisfaction with the status quo would have been to have mobilized U.S. forces situated in far-away Germany. A new war between erstwhile allies would have been impossible for American leaders to have justified to their constituents. Hence, it was not surprising that, when the Eastern European Communists recognized that they negotiated from the position of the vanquished during their dealings with State Department officials, they were ready to acknowledge only the Soviets as victors.

During the initial months that Lane, Berry, Barnes, and Schoenfeld resided in the Eastern European capitals, the Russian occupation authorities took no steps to halt American actions which exceeded the bounds of diplomatic observation. The Soviets might have hoped that by tolerating a degree of interference in an area they considered of vital importance to their security they would be rewarded with loans which would enable them to reconstruct their war-ravaged economy. When they found that such economic aid was not forthcoming, they accelerated their

efforts to extract reparations from Eastern Europe, and in so doing, they brought forth angry protests from the U.S. political representatives.

When it became clear that the peace treaties with the Axis satellites had not fulfilled the promises of the Atlantic Charter and the Yalta Declaration, Byrnes turned to the United Nations as peacemaker of last resort. On March 4, 1947, Byrnes told the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that the United Nations would provide Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria with a forum for the discussion of the injustices which had been visited upon them by the Soviets:

> The treaties authorize the ex-enemy states to make application for admission to the United Nations. Once admitted to membership they subscribe to the principle of the charter and like every other peace-loving state have the right of appeal for the settlement of any problem which might affect their peace and security. They will then have the right to take an equal part in resolving this problem.[112]

There was nevertheless a fallacy in this mode of thought which George F. Kennan had observed as early as 1944:

> An international organization for the preservation of peace and security cannot take the place of a well-conceived and realistic foreign policy ... and we are being ... negligent of the interests of our people if we allow plans for an inter-

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[112] U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Hearings*, 80th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), p. 4.

> national organization to be an excuse for failing to occupy ourselves seriously and minutely with the sheer power relationships of the European peoples.[113]

Ultimately, the futility of U.S. policy towards Eastern Europe must be attributed to the American refusal to come to terms with Soviet hegemony in this region. The policy of drift and postponement confused the American people and led them to expect much more from diplomacy than would ever be achievable. The foreign service officers stationed in the Eastern European capitals bore the brunt of the criticism of the failure to bring about the reorganization of the Communist regimes, but the success of their missions should have been doubtful from the start due to the absence of American power in Eastern Europe.

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[113] Quoted in Herbert Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 436.

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