

## THE USSR AND THE CREATION OF THE COMMISSION OF INVESTIGATION CONCERNING GREEK FRONTIER INCIDENTS

In the UN Security Council on December 19, 1946, when Andrei Gromyko, together with other representatives on the Council, raised his hand in favor of the United States draft resolution — slightly amended in the course of the debate<sup>1</sup> — which proposed the setting up of the body that became known as the Commission of Investigation Concerning the Greek Frontier Incidents, many observers experienced a feeling of happiness or at least of relief. It seemed as though some measure of harmony was being restored in the relations of the five permanent members of the Security Council, with implications of vital importance not only for the smooth functioning of that organ which is vested by the Charter with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security but also for the peaceful progress of global affairs generally.

But astonishment, too, greeted this Soviet gesture. Three months earlier — minus a day — that same hand had been raised not to approve of, but to veto another United States resolution which proposed the establishment of a commission, consisting of three individuals selected by the Secretary General on the basis of their competence and impartiality, for investigating on the spot the incidents along the northern Greek borders and for reporting back to the Council, as soon as practicable, information that

---

1. These amendments were the following: 1. The scope of the investigation was to be "northern Greece and . . . such places in other parts of Greece, in Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, as the Commission considers should be included in the investigation;" under this amendment the communists were successful in broadening the scope of the investigation beyond the Greek frontier area. 2. The membership of the Commission was expanded to include all the members of the Security Council, instead of just the permanent members plus Brazil and Poland, as proposed by the U.S. 3. It was decided that the representatives of the Balkan countries would participate in "liaison," not as observers or consultants. 4. The commission was also invited to make proposals for averting the repetition of the border incidents and disturbances in the areas concerned.

would help the determination of the reasons for these border incidents.<sup>2</sup> Why this extraordinary Soviet about-face in December?

Several solutions to this somewhat neglected enigma of Soviet foreign policy in the United Nations have been offered. None of them, however, takes into account the international setting as this might have appeared to the Soviet Government at the time its officials were pondering the question of how to deal with the American proposal — the third one since 1945<sup>3</sup> — for coping by international action with the troubled situation that had developed along the Balkan borderline between East and West.

James F. Byrnes, then Secretary of State, attributes this interesting change of Soviet Mind to his powers of persuasion. He recounts that early in December he had argued over the matter with Molotov — then in New York for the session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (November 4 - December 11, 1946) — and the Soviet Foreign Minister had placed the blame for the disturbed situation along the northern borders of Greece on the policies of the Greek Government. Byrnes countered this allegation by saying that the information Molotov had from sources on which he relied, or professed to rely, greatly differed from that which the Greek Premier, C. Tsaldaris, had given him — Byrnes. He felt certain, he added, that if the Soviet Government were to use its influence with Yugoslavia, Albania, and Bulgaria, the situation along the northern borders of Greece would improve. The upshot of this conversation was, Byrnes writes, that Molotov instructed Gromyko to support the United States resolution in the Security Council.<sup>4</sup>

---

2. United Nations Security Council, *Official Records*, 1st Year, 2d Series, 393-96 (U.S. representative's speech and draft resolution).

3. Department of State *Foreign Relations of the United States. The Conference of Berlin, 1945* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1961), II, 1065 - 67, United Nations Security Council, *op. cit.*, 228 - 29. These sources reveal that on July 28, 1945, the State Department instructed its charge d'affaires in Belgrade to recommend the setting up of a commission composed of military and political representatives drawn from the American, British and Soviet missions in Belgrade, and the American and British missions in Athens, to investigate Yugoslav charges against Greece and to submit recommendations. The Greek Government, in September, agreed to a dispatch of a commission to the region involved, the investigation also covered Yugoslav Macedonia, but no answers were received either from the Soviet or the Yugoslav Government.

4. J. F. Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1947) pp. 302 - 03; also, by same, *All in One Lifetime* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1958), pp. 384 - 85.

A more sophisticated explanation of the Soviet decision not to veto but to vote for, the establishment of this Commission — the only one to date that ever carried out an investigation on Soviet bloc territory — bases its interpretation mainly on a comparative analysis of the first and second American resolutions.

The second United States resolution, as compared to the first one which Gromyko had vetoed on September 20, represented an American compromise proposal, a negotiation — in the broadest sense of the word — with the Russians, who with the raising of the Ukrainian complaint on August 24 and the debates that ensued in the Security Council, had argued insistently that the blame for the disturbed situation lay exclusively with the Greek Government. The new resolution, unlike the previous one, yielded certain advantages to the USSR and, because of these advantages, became acceptable to the USSR. For it not only authorized the investigation of the border incidents but also permitted the study of the “causes and nature” of these incidents and “*disturbances*” (italics added). Thus the proposed Commission would provide — as it did — an excellent forum for the USSR and its satellites on which to carry out a propaganda campaign, through official speeches and the calling of hostile witnesses, with the aim of discrediting the Greek Government and undermining its prestige<sup>5</sup> — even of discrediting the West.<sup>6</sup> The fact that the Commission proposed would consist not of impartial individuals — as provided for in the earlier American draft resolution — constituted, it is suggested, another factor in the success of United States foreign policy makers in persuading the USSR to stay its vetoing hand.<sup>7</sup> As seen more recently during the controversy both over the late Dag Hammarskjöld’s handling of Congo problems and Secretariat problems as well — Marxist-Leninist ideology does not recognize that unbiased, impartial individuals can exist. In brief, Soviet foreign policy makers, according to this interpretation, attached such extraordinary

---

5. C.E. Black, “Greece and the United Nations,” *Political Science Quarterly*, LXIII (December, 1948), 553, 555. Edgar F. Puryear, *Communist Negotiating Techniques: A Case Study of the United Nations Security Council Commission of Investigation, Concerning the Greek Frontier Incidents*, Doctoral Dissertation, Princeton, University, 1959, pp. 29 - 33.

6. L. M. Goodrich and A. P. Simons, *The United Nations and the Maintenance of International Peace and Security* (Washington: The Brookings Institution 1955), p. 47.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 193.

importance to the propaganda possibilities which the proposed Commission offered that they were willing to incur the risks of having a UN body carry out on the spot an investigation in the territory of Soviet satellites, not only of Greece.

While this interpretation correctly takes into account the Soviet inclination toward using the UN for purposes of agitation—a habit that goes back to decisions taken by the Russian Social Democrats in 1906 about the desirability and purpose of taking part in the State Duma—a hitherto neglected sector of political “opinions,” the communist view, and especially the view of the Communist Party of Greece, suggests a new interpretation of this puzzling Soviet about-face.

After three days of (stunned?) silence, the press organ of the Communist Party of Greece tacitly justified the Soviet decision of December 19 by claiming that the Security Council’s decision was no victory for the Greek Government but had upset its position from that of a plaintiff to that of a defendant.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the text of the resolution—in another compromise?—lent itself to such an interpretation because it presented the setting up of the Commission not as a result of the Greek Government’s complaint but as the consequence of a decision taken by the Great Powers acting from above and in unison. Moreover, that same newspaper, at the time the Commission began its work in Athens, made the intriguing assertion that the Greek Government, in raising its complaint before the UN Security in December, “on the instructions of its foreign protectors,” had counted on a Soviet veto.<sup>9</sup> If this view was shared by Soviet foreign policy makers in December 1946, a new clue is provided for Soviet motivations in voting in favor of the American resolution on December 19. In taking their decision, Soviet foreign policy makers would have taken into account not merely proposals and procedures presented by the United States within the framework of the UN but the overall picture—as they saw it—of developments and trends in British and American policies toward Greece, the eastern Mediterranean, and the entire Near and Middle East.

During the three months that had elapsed since the Soviet veto of September 20, 1946, this picture showed ominous developments from the Soviet point of view, especially in the sector of relations of Britain and the United States with regard to Greece—not to mention certain moves

---

8. *Rizospastis*, December 22, 1946.

9. *Ibid.*, February 2, 1947.

behind the scenes which may not have been visible to the Soviet Government though they often were to the British.

A few days after this veto — in what the Communist organ in Greece termed “Suspicious Interest of the Anglo-Saxons”<sup>10</sup> — Washington dispatches published in British newspapers reported that Byrnes and Bevin in Paris — where the Peace Conference was meeting — had discussed the situation in Greece. Byrnes was said to have expressed his Government’s concern over conditions prevailing in that country which had been described as virtual civil war. It was understood that a general policy of moral and financial support of Greece would be pursued, though the State Department was refraining from any statement. Because of political considerations and of UNRRA operations, according to these press reports, the United States, it was believed, might decide to increase its financial help.<sup>11</sup> The American policy was understood to include continuation of the tacit approval of the presence of British troops in Greece as long as it was necessary for the stabilization of the country.<sup>12</sup> As for the American press, it disclosed on September 28 that William L. Clayton, Under-Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, had stated that the United States was concerned about reports of armed disturbances in northern Greece and was following the situation there very closely. The United States Government, he said, was very sorry that its proposal in the UN Security Council had not been accepted.<sup>13</sup> Thus, merely from reading these reports and without having access to other sources of information, Soviet and other officials would have deduced that the Soviet veto of September 20 was causing no lessening but rather a heightening of American interest in Greece instead of the reverse — even if they were unaware that three days earlier, on September 25, behind closed doors, Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal and Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson, in the State-War-Navy-Co-ordinating Committee, had endorsed the views of Byrnes from Paris that Greece and Turkey should be helped in every way.<sup>14</sup>

But, since September 20, an escalation was observable in United States economic measures designed to buttress faltering Greece. On Septem-

---

10. *Ibid.*, September 28, 1946.

11. *Daily Telegraph*, September 27, 1946.

12. *Daily Mail*, September 27, 1946.

13. *New York Times*, September 28, 1946.

14. *The Forrestal Diaries*, ed. by Walter Millis, with the collaboration of E. S. Duffield (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), p. 210.

ber 25 and October 4, two successive Army surplus credits of \$ 10 million and \$ 25 million, respectively, were granted to Greece.<sup>15</sup> Then, by October 8, after a Byrnes-Tsaldaris conversation in Paris the previous day, the news was out that the United States would send an economic mission to Greece to study the financial and economic situation there.<sup>16</sup> Toward the end of November, reports of American aid to the Greek Army appeared in the press, when the Greek Minister of the Army, Philip S. Dragoumis, expressed publicly expectations—promptly denied by the British Foreign Office but not unfounded, as diplomatic documents attest—that assistance would soon be provided to the Greek Army not only by Britain but also by the United States.<sup>17</sup> Finally, on December 11, Dean Acheson, Under-Secretary of State, announced the formation of the promised economic mission under Paul Porter—a significant move, according to press reports, in support of Greece in the face of the situation inherent in the fighting and chaos prevailing in the northern regions of the country.<sup>18</sup>

Bruited, too, during the period that followed the Soviet veto of September 20, were plans for an American escalation from the use of naval forces to the use of ground forces. The naval displays in the Mediterranean—a novelty in United States foreign policy in 1946, as far as that sea was concerned—had not ceased. By September 30, Forrestal in a statement released to the press made it quite plain that United States Naval Forces in the Mediterranean—later known as the Sixth Fleet—would constitute a permanent feature in the deployment of postwar American naval power.<sup>19</sup>

---

15. *Greek Government Gazette*, No. 374 (December 31, 1946), 2065 - 68;

16. Greek newspapers reported on Byrnes's promise, e.g. *Kathimerini*, October 9; *To Vima*, October 8 and 10, 1946. The archives of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirm that this promise was made at this meeting of Byrnes with Tsaldaris.

17. E.g. *Rizospastis*, November 26, 1946. Diplomatic documents indicate that behind the scenes, the Pentagon, by early November, had advised the Greek Government through the Greek military attache in Washington, that the United States wished to strengthen the Greek Army, using the existing British channels, "Archives of Mr. Philip S. Dragoumis," Athens.

18. *New York Times*, December 12, 1946. The *British News Chronicle* on December 13, 1946, wrote that the prospect that American dollars might reinforce British pounds in an effort to put Greece back on her economic feet was implicit in the announcement.

19. *New York Times*, October 1, 1946. Admiral Richard L. Connolly, at the time naval adviser at the Paris Peace Conference, in an interview with the author, noted the parallel between this statement and the speech of Byrnes at Stuttgart of September 6, 1946, about the United States intention to stay in Europe.

On December 6, after a visit to Izmir, Turkey, the aircraft carrier U.S.S. *Randolph*, with a suitable escort of other warships, had anchored off Athens. This naval visit had been preceded by press reports late in November — promptly denied by the Pentagon — that the landing of U.S. ground forces in Greece was imminent.<sup>20</sup> In spite of the Pentagon's denial, Moscow Radio, on December 3, in its Overseas Service to North America, asserted that, according to "informed circles," the British were negotiating with the Americans to obtain the latter's consent to the dispatch of at least a small United States force to northern Greece, "to facilitate the British position" and "to create a pretext for the further stay of British troops" in Greece. On December 6, another Moscow broadcast, in Greek this time, sought to conjure up in the mind of its listeners the "intervention" bogey by accusing "American capital" of trying to transform Greece into an "American colony." A number of American newspapers, voice Moscow added, were preparing American public opinion "for a more active intervention of the United States in the internal affairs of Greece by starting an intensive propaganda of the provocative rumors fabricated by the Tsaldaris Government namely that Greece is threatened by an attack on the part of its northern neighbors."<sup>21</sup>

Between September 20 and December 19, another novelty in United States foreign policy toward Greece had been witnessed. During the second half of October, the United States Government departed for the first time from its rule of abstaining from any interference in Greek domestic politics — leaving this function to the British — and had advised the cooperation of all political parties represented in the Greek Parliament in the formation of a coalition government.<sup>22</sup>

---

20. *New York Times*, November 22, 1946. On November 22, 1946, Ankara Radio, on its home service, reported that the U.S. military personnel consisting of officers had already landed in Thessaloniki and that the first contingent of American troops, expected to number about 15,000 men, would shortly arrive in Greece, to restore order in Macedonia, U.S. Government, Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service, Central Intelligence Group, *Daily Report, Foreign Radio Broadcasts*, European Section, No. 234, November 25, 1946, p. N-1.

21. *Ibid*, No. 241, December 4, 1946, p. Q-4; No. 244, December 9, 1946, pp. P-7 to P-9.

22. *New York Times*, November 3, 1946, reported on U.S. dissatisfaction with the failure to form a broad coalition government. Diplomatic documents reveal that the U.S. effort to promote such a broadened government took place by October 18, "Dragoumis Archives," also P. N. Pipinelis, *George II* (in modern Greek) (Athens: 1951), pp. 198-99.

But even in the domain of strictly American politics, there had occurred developments that could appear disturbing from the Soviet point of view. First, in symbolic coincidence, Henry A. Wallace, a proponent of co-operation with the USSR, had been dropped from the Administration the very day of the Soviet veto. Then, in the mid-term elections of November 6, the Republicans had gained control over Congress. While this result might have caused fear in the ranks of the Democratic Administration lest the United States relapse into isolationism, the Soviet Government, recalling Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg's early Philippic against Soviet policies in central and eastern Europe,<sup>23</sup> may have noted the American electoral results with misgivings of another sort.

While such trends were observable in U.S. policies, the policies of Britain in the Greek arena showed quite evident signs of de-escalation, of disengagement. Thus, in spite of rapidly deteriorating economic, financial, and political situation in Greece since September, Britain withdrew one of its two remaining Divisions from the country that month and declared its intention to withdraw one-half of the other division by the end of October. Then, the British Government temporized with regard to the request of the Greek Government late in September for an increase of the Greek Army by 30,000 men, to make possible a more effective handling of the guerrilla uprising. That same month, too, it stated in Parliament that it would continue to provide sterling aid for the equipment and supplies of the Greek armed forces at their existing level only until March 31, 1947.<sup>24</sup> Concurrently, press reports indicated that the British, even as they were taking these de-escalatory measures, — creating, as it were, a Great Power vacuum — were trying to persuade the Americans to share the burden of supporting Greece.<sup>25</sup>

Against this setting of developments during the three months that elapsed since the Soviet veto of September 20, it is not unlikely that the Soviet foreign policy makers construed the Greek recourse to the UN Security Council on December 3, 1946, essentially as a British effort by proxy — in their view, after all, the Greek Government was but an obedient instrument of British policy — to use the UN Security Council for the purpose of transferring to United States the burden of supporting Greece. Sov-

---

23. E. g. his speech of January 10, 1945, in Congress.

24. 427 H. C. Deb. 5s 590 (Statement of Christopher P. Mayhew, Under-Secretary of State).

25. Reuters dispatch in *Rizospastis*, November 24, 1946.



iet analysts may have suspected that the British formula was, in nutshell, *Per UN ad US*. Thence, Soviet foreign policy makers may have easily concluded that the British, in order to achieve their end, were—as the Greek communists asserted shortly after, concerning Greek Government calculations—counting on a Soviet veto. For at this juncture, another veto, in all likelihood, would precipitate the best from the British viewpoint and the worst from the Soviet viewpoint: some new form of United States implementation of its fast-growing interest in Greece—and this outside the United Nations. For another veto would once again dangerously expose before American and Congressional opinion the insuperable difficulties the UN was encountering in trying to deal with a situation that might endanger world peace.

Had not Byrnes, in his speech at the Overseas Press Club on February 28, 1946, strongly implied that the United States might abandon the Hurler approach to international affairs, to the detriment of the USSR? Had he not served notice on the USSR in that speech—and again in his speech of October 18—that, should the Soviet disregard of the UN continue, the United States might be obliged to do likewise, for it would not shirk its responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security, if the UN, to which it attached great importance, was unable to act because of the lack of Great Power unanimity? And had he not also made clear on that occasion that the United States would oppose not only open but also indirect aggression by infiltration or subversion?<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, as far back as the Potsdam Conference, where Truman had suddenly proposed a Big Three guarantee of a revised regime for the Turkish straits,<sup>27</sup> the United States on various occasions had issued official statements about its interest in the entire Near and Middle East. In November 1945, it had approached the USSR urging to withdraw its troops from northern Iran.<sup>28</sup> In January, it had decided to set up a naval force in the Mediterranean, and then, throughout 1946, in several goodwill visits that included ports in Greece and Turkey it had underlined by displays

---

26. James F. Byrnes, *Address . . . at the Overseas Press Club, New York City, February 28, 1946* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1946); *State Department Bulletin*, XV (October 27, 1946), 739-43.

27. S. G. Xydis, "New Light on the Big Three Crisis over Turkey, in 1945," *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 14, 1960, p. 429.

28. United Nations, Security Council, *Official Records*, First year, First Series, Supplement 1, 53-54. The Soviet reply was, in effect, that the matter was not of the business of the United States, *ibid.*, 57-58.

of naval - air power its interest in this part of the world.<sup>29</sup> In March the United States had played a "tough" role, in a new effort to dislodge the Soviet troops from northern Iran.<sup>30</sup> Then, in summer, it had taken an unequivocally firm stand in response to the Soviet note of August 7 to Turkey, which had formally expressed the Soviet desire for joint control of the Straits — to the exclusion of the non - Black Sea powers.<sup>31</sup> All in all, throughout 1946, the United States — as well as the "bourgeois" American press — had shown quite a novel and lively interest in the entire region close to the Soviet bloc periphery from Trieste to Tehran.

Faced, then, with the choice of seeing either the United Nations or the United States take some action in Greece, the Soviet Government opted for "the lesser evil." Hence, its decision not to veto but to accept the setting up of the Security Council Commission on December 19, 1946. To stymie Britain from bringing the United States further into the Greek and eastern Mediterranean picture, and to prevent — or at least delay — another American escalation in that part of the world, these were, it is submitted, the twin objectives of the abrupt and astonishing Soviet de - escalation of December 19. On this occasion, the USSR used the UN essentially as machinery for delaying unilateral action by another Greek Power. Propaganda, of course, remained an important but not primary consideration — except insofar that it, too, could be used for dilatory purposes, as it was indeed, until the "Truman Doctrine."

But what did the USSR hope to gain by delaying action? Time. Time for what?

Time for propaganda and propaganda to gain time became inextricably intertwined in the tactics of the Soviet representative on the Commission, as it started its investigation in Athens on January 30, 1947 — a fortnight later than the date prescribed by the UN. A. A. Lavrishchev diligently worked for the expansion of the role of the liaison officers in the Commission debates and for their complete freedom to speak as long as they wished. It soon became abundantly clear that merely in speech - hours the northern neighbors of Greece enjoyed a great advantage over their

---

29. S. G. Xydis, "The Genesis of the Sixth Fleet," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, LXXXIV (August, 1948), 41 - 50.

30. *State Department Bulletin*, XIV (March 17, 1946), 435 - 36.

31. H. N. Howard (ed.), *The Problem of the Turkish Straits: Principal Treaties and Conventions*, U. S. Department of State Publication No. 572, pp. 47 - 49 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1947).

neighbor to the south in promoting their views before world public opinion. And not only for propaganda purposes — the technique of repetition — but also for purposes of cunctation, they sought to exploit this advantage to the hilt. Extending as much as possible the Commission's stay on Greek soil and in the Greek capital and, thus, delaying the investigation in northern Greece and in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania, seemed to have been the short term objective in the overall strategic plan.<sup>32</sup>

Time might let events in Greece continue along their steeply downward course, in the Soviet estimation. Since September 1946, the communist-led guerrillas, whose opening operation had taken place at the end of March, had greatly stepped up the tempo of their activities, and in November of that year, the "Democratic Army" had made its public debut on the Greek scene. "Free areas" had been set up in northern Greece by then, according to press reports of that same month.<sup>33</sup> The Greek Government, on the other hand, was, financially, at its wits end, unable to repay even the three-month loan of \$10,800,000 it had obtained from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York in September, against its meager gold reserves. And, while UNRRA shipments into Greece had come to an end, the dollar gap had reached infinity.<sup>34</sup> But that was not all. After March 31, 1947, the Greek Army which was now almost exclusively involved in fighting the guerrillas, would, in all likelihood, be foundering in ever greater difficulties — unless it received more supplies and equipment from abroad. More time, thus, could be of inestimable value for the achievement of even the Soviet objective: the collapse of the Government and the seizure of power by the communists in Greece with the eventual transformation of the country into another People's Republic — a program openly advocated since early 1945, with resort to guerrilla warfare decided upon since December of that same year, in order to pursue this objective.<sup>35</sup> The

---

32. For propaganda and dilatory tactics, Puryear, *op. cit.*, pp. 104 ff. who, however, does not try to make a distinction between the two.

33. *The Times* (London), November 20, 1946.

34. By the end of December 1946, Greece's expendable dollar balances had dwindled to \$3,200,000, as the Ministry of Supply was requesting \$2,500,000 for importing wheat to permit the Government to meet the bread rations of January 1947, and it was discovered that Greece owed \$700,000 to the British-American authorities in Germany for coals from Ruhr, which, it had been assumed, had been furnished as part of reparations, Gardner Patterson, *The Financial Experiences of Greece from Liberation to Truman Doctrine, October 1944 - March 1947*, Doctoral Dissertation, Harvard University, 1949, pp. 590 - 91.

35. More Details in the author's forthcoming book entitled *Greece and the*

outcome would be the outflanking of the Turkish Straits and the *de facto* neutralization of Turkey.

But for the attainment of the minimum communist program, more time might also be invaluable. Soviet acquiescence in the setting up of the UN Commission had served to bring the USSR back into the Greek picture, whence it had, to a certain extent, excluded itself since the end of August 1946, because of the recall of Ambassador Konstantin Rodionov from Athens. Soviet participation in the UN Commission would, as it were, Big-Three-ize once again the "Greek Question." Thus, perhaps the way could be paved for a solution which the Greek communists had first put forward in April 1946, through EAM, their mouthpiece in international affairs, and to which they reverted in the forum of the UN Commission. Presented to this body on February 18, 1947, this program called for the recognition of the neutrality of Greece within the framework of the UN, and for the withdrawal of foreign troops and the prohibition of bases on Greek territory — among other things.<sup>36</sup>

Did these communist proposals represent a sort of Soviet trial balloon? If they did, the choice of such a channel in the place of Soviet channels — diplomatic or press — may have been motivated by the Soviet Government's desire to spare itself the embarrassment of any similar neutralization proposals on the part of Britain or the United States with regard to those states in central and eastern Europe that were under Soviet control. But of this, one will never be absolutely certain.

It is a fact, though, that at this juncture Moscow appeared to be intending some moves also on the Big Three level — or, at least wished to create an impression of such intentions. A Reuters dispatch from Washington reported that the Soviet Government was prepared to negotiate the settlement of Lend Lease, to open the way for talks in connection with granting of a large United States credit to the USSR.<sup>37</sup> Then, there was another report to the effect that Molotov had told the British Ambassador in Moscow that the Soviet Government wanted to reach some sort of broad and basic accord with Britain, as a condition for revising the Soviet-British pact of 1942. Relations between the USSR and Britain, he had said, could not be examined without reference to respective attitudes concerning raw materials, dependent territories, and, above all, the security needs

---

*Great Powers, 1944 - 1947*, to be published by the Institute of Balkan Studies, Thessaloniki.

36. *Rizospastis*, February 18, 1947.

37. *Ibid.*, February 22, 1947.

of each Power in various parts of the world — sea communications through the Arctic, Spitsbergen, and the Turkish Straits included.<sup>38</sup>

Was Moscow at this late hour, at the eve of the Moscow meeting of the Conference of Foreign Ministers, considering some new dilatory maneuver or some genuine de-escalatory move? Was it trying to test the possibilities of reaching some new sort of spheres of interest agreement with Britain, to the exclusion, perhaps, of the United States — whereas, late in 1945, it seemed to have been thinking in terms of such an understanding with the United States — at Britain's expense? No one can say. It is, however, worthwhile mentioning that an American critic of the "Truman Doctrine" who often appears to reflect the Soviet point of view, submits *ex post facto* that, had the "Doctrine" been accompanied by discussions "with Moscow and London," an era of decreased tension might have been the outcome.<sup>39</sup>

Of course, the "Truman Doctrine" shattered both the maximum and the minimum program of the Soviet Government and the Communist Party of Greece. From then on, gaining time was no longer of the essence for Soviet policy — at least in the sector of world affairs. When the program of aid to Greece and Turkey was proclaimed, Lavrishchev, the Soviet representative on the UN Commission, sought out his American opposite number and asked: "What does this mean?" "It means," Mark F. Ethridge answered, "that you can't do it." The Russian grinned and replied: "I quite understand, Mr. Ethridge."<sup>40</sup> Shortly after, Ambassador Lincoln MacVeagh, recalled from Athens for consultation, testified that, until the day of President Truman's speech, the Soviet and Polish representatives on the UN Commission had sought by all means to impede that body's work and to delay its operations — their hope being, it was thought, that before the investigation would be ended the Government in Athens would be overthrown. After Truman's speech, however, evidently discouraged, they had changed their tactics.<sup>41</sup> Finally, by February 1948, Stalin peremptorily was

---

38. *The Scotsman*, February 21, 1947.

39. W. A. Williams, *American - Russian Relations 1781 - 1947* (New York and Toronto: Rinehart and Co., 1952), p. 280.

40. Mark F. Ethridge letter of January 25, 1956, to the author.

41. Greek Embassy dispatch to Athens, "Archives of the Greek Embassy in Washington." A similar view was expressed in a dispatch from the Greek Embassy in Moscow of April 17, 1947. This reported that, before leaving for Greece,

telling the Yugoslavs that the uprising in Greece had to fold up — as quickly as possible. In the face of the opposition of Britain and the United States — “the most powerful state in the world” — he saw no prospect for the uprising’s success.<sup>42</sup>

Columbia University

STEPHEN G. XYDIS

---

Lavrishchev had been instructed not only to try to prove as non-existent the intervention of the neighbors of Greece in Greek affairs but also to prolong the Commission’s work so as to render more difficult Congressional decision-taking, “Archives of the Greek Embassy in London.”

42. M. Djilas, *Conversation with Stalin* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1962), pp. 181-82. Stalin’s advice to the Yugoslavs also reported by V. Dedijer, *Tito* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), pp. 321-22.