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**THE BIG THREE AFTER WORLD WAR II:
New Documents on Soviet Thinking about Post War
Relations with The United States and Great Britain**

VLADIMIR O. PECHATNOV

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The question of Soviet post-war aims remains critical to understanding not only Allied diplomacy at the end of World War II, but also the origins of the Cold War itself. Whether the latter was rooted primarily in an expansionist Soviet agenda shaped during the war or resulted from a more complex interaction of the Big Three's conflicting interests after the war has long been a subject of historical debate.¹ Yet this debate remains largely inconclusive due in no small part to a lack of hard documentary evidence on Soviet post-war plans and intentions. Particularly scarce has been direct documentation on what the Soviet leaders really thought about their Western Allies and future relations with them. Thus historians' conclusions and suppositions on Soviet thinking in this regard have been deduced or inferred from Soviet foreign policy rhetoric and diplomatic exchanges during the war, memoirs, and occasional glimpses into unofficial Soviet pronouncements behind the scene.²

This picture has not been substantially changed by the most recent writings based upon new Russian archival materials: most of the new Cold War history has tended to deal with various aspects of the post-war period, only occasionally tracing their wartime origins.³

Yet there are some newly available documents from the Russian archives which are directly related to Soviet wartime thinking about the future relationship among the Big Three. The purpose of this paper is to examine several analytical reports from the records of the Russian Foreign Ministry archives, that is, the Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, written by three prominent Soviet diplomats—Ivan M. Maisky, Maxim M. Litvinov and Andrei A. Gromyko—between January 1944 and the summer of 1945. These men, the most experienced Soviet experts on the West and all active participants in the forging of the Grand Alliance, were by then at the forefront of Soviet post-war planning: Litvinov as Foreign Minister V. M. Molotov's deputy and chairman of the Ministry's special Commission on post-war order and preparation of peace treaties; Maisky, another Assistant People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, in charge of the reparation program; and Gromyko as an Ambassador

¹ Vojtech Mastny's *Russia's Road to the Cold War: Diplomacy, Warfare and the Politics of Communism, 1941-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979) remains the most prominent exposition of the first view; for recent alternative interpretations, see Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992) and Lloyd C. Gardner, *Spheres of Influence: The Great Powers Partition Europe, from Munich to Yalta* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993).

² Marshall Shulman, *Stalin's Foreign Policy Reappraised* (New York: Atheneum, 1969); William O. McCagg, *Stalin Embattled, 1943-1948* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978); William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy: From Entente to Détente to Cold War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982); William C. Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions during the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993); Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962); Vojtech Mastny, "The Cassandra in the Foreign Commissariat," *Foreign Affairs* (January 1976); Andrei A. Gromyko, *Pamiatnoie*, Kn.1-2 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1988); Molotov Remembers: *Inside Kremlin Politics—Conversations with Felix Chuev*, (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 1993); Valentin Berezhkov, *At Stalin's Side: Interpreter's Memoirs from the October Revolution to the Fall of the Dictator's Empire* (Birch Lane Press, 1994).

³ One exception is David Holloway's monumental *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), but it does not deal with broader dimensions of Soviet policy. For an update on the recent research based on new archival materials see the *Bulletin* and working papers of the Cold War International History Project.

to the USA leading the Soviet team at the United Nations preparatory talks. That is probably why their reports, while unconnected directly and different in scope and interpretation, shared common themes and a futuristic orientation which distinguish them from the main body of routine diplomatic reporting.⁴

All three authors in their own ways were wrestling with essentially the same basic questions at heart of Soviet thinking about the post-war world: What kind of a new global alignment of power was likely to emerge out of the war? In particular; what would be the relative weights of and the dynamics of relations between the other two principal players, the USA and Great Britain? What should be the Soviet policy line in that strategic triangle—who would be the best partner, how could Moscow exploit Anglo-American differences without antagonizing either power? Finally, could vital Soviet interests be made compatible with a preservation of Big Three cooperation after the war and if so, how could this be achieved?

Ivan Maisky's report, undertaken soon after his return from London in late October 1943, is the earliest attempt to deal with these questions.⁵ The report, running to 40 double-space pages, has no title and is registered simply as "Maisky's memo"; most likely it was written on Maisky's own initiative as "a fruit of long-time reflections" and his policy-planning debut.⁶

Addressed personally to Molotov and dated 10 January 1944, it is the most comprehensive and ambitious of all the documents under this review: in it Maisky attempted to lay out the fundamentals of Soviet foreign policy strategy for no less than "the next 30-50 years." This time span, in Maisky's view, should be sufficient, first, to insure that the Soviet Union "becomes so powerful as not to be threatened by any aggression in Europe or Asia," and second, that Europe "at least, its continental part, becomes socialistic, thereby excluding the possibility of war itself in this part of the world."⁷

Then followed Maisky's prescriptions for Soviet postwar aims on a country-by-country basis which are more limited in scope and less ideological in nature. Germany ("the main question") was "to be rendered harmless for the said period" through a combination of dismemberment, allied occupation for a period of "about ten years," "military, industrial and ideological disarmament," reparations, and

⁴ Some of these documents have already surfaced in the recent literature: a rough translation of Gromyko's report is attached to Amos Perlmutter's *FDR and Stalin: A Not So Grand Alliance, 1943-1945* (Columbia & London: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 259-278. (Perlmutter twice misquotes this document: compare citations on U.S. economic competition with Germany and on possible U.S. support of pro-fascist regimes on p. 93 with corresponding passages of the document's translation on pages 269 and 270.) Maisky's memorandum and one of Litvinov's reports covered in this review have been examined by Russian historian Alexei Filitov of the Institute of Universal History—mostly from the standpoint of the German and other problems of post-war settlement in Europe ("Problems of the Post-war Order in Soviet Conceptions of Foreign Policy during the Second World War," paper presented at the International Colloquium at Cortona, September 1994). But there has been no attempt as yet to examine these reports in their totality with a focus on this central theme.

⁵ For the circumstances of his recall see Maisky's own *Memoirs of a Soviet Ambassador: The War: 1939-1943* (New York: Scribner & Sons, 1967), 365, 380-381.

⁶ "Maisky's memo," 11 January 1944, Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (hereafter AVPRF), f.6, op.6, d. 147, ll.14, 1-40.

⁷ "Maisky's memo," l. 13.

“re-education” (in reparations, de-nazification and de-industrialization policies some resistance from the Western Allies was to be expected).

The second most important Soviet strategic goal on the continent was, in Maisky’s view, “to prevent the formation in Europe of any power or combination of powers with powerful armies. It is in our best interest that the post-war Europe has only one great land power—the USSR, and only one great sea power—England” (this vision of the European balance of power gets Molotov’s attention). That is why France “is to be restored but not to its former military might.” Italy was strategically insignificant; so far as Spain was concerned, “the Soviet Union is interested in the liquidation of the Franco regime and restoration of the republic (preferably with Negrin in charge of the new government).”

Poland should be independent and vigorous, but “not too strong or too big for nobody can be certain that this traditional enemy of Russia in the past would really become its friend in the future”: her borders were to be redrawn accordingly (that is, roughly the way they were redrawn eventually). In general the USSR must be restored to its 1941 borders plus the Kurile Islands and southern Sakhalin; it should also obtain transit rights through Iran and military bases in Finland and Romania.

Maisky described a “strong Czechoslovakia” as “capable of becoming the main conduit of our influence in Central and South Eastern Europe,” so if “during the final rearrangement of the European map it would be possible to cut out something extra for Czechoslovakia, it should be done.” A “strong” Hungary, conversely, was “not in the Soviet interest.” In the Balkans as a whole, the USSR should strive to weaken (and ultimately “exclude”) Turkish influence by concluding mutual defense pacts with Romania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. It was also deemed necessary “to undermine Turkey’s position as a ‘sentry’ at the Straits.” The Soviet plan for strategically important Iran should be to preserve and expand the Anglo-Soviet-Iranian treaty (with a possible inclusion of the United States) in order to maintain and develop communication lines to the Gulf, as well as to “build up Soviet economic, cultural and political presence in the northern part of the country.”

Japan, of course, was to be defeated and eventually demilitarized, but, in Maisky’s view, the former should be done exclusively by Anglo-Saxon arms. His reasons were rather devious and far-reaching: this would not only “save us material and human costs” and be “our revenge for their foot-dragging on the second front,” but “would also force America and Britain to squander additional blood and treasure, thus cooling off a bit America’s imperialistic ardor for the post-war period....” As for the Kuriles and Sakhalin, they, in Maisky’s view, could be gained by “politico-diplomatic maneuver...without firing a single shot.” China’s direction remained too uncertain; so while the Soviet influence there should be maintained and increased, massive involvement would have to wait until the “democratic progressive way” there became more likely.⁸

⁸ Ibid., II. 4-22.

Maisky (probably under the impressions of his own recent trip through that area) also foresaw “new opportunities” for an expansion of Soviet “economic, cultural and political influence” in the Middle East, but recommended to move carefully there, avoiding conflicts with both Great Britain and the United States. Colonial areas, according to Maisky, would be an important arena of Anglo-American competition in which the U.S. would strive “to take Britain’s place by economic means.” So, even though the Soviet Union had no economic interest in colonies, this would become an important problem and “we should urgently begin preparing ourselves for this prospect” (this advice was noted by Molotov).⁹

After this tour de horizon Maisky turned to the question of future political regimes in Europe as a factor for Soviet policy. In France, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Norway, Holland and Belgium he foresaw a natural emergence of democratic popular front type governments which, from the standpoint of Soviet interests, would also be the most favorable environment. Much more difficult challenges were presented by the former Nazi satellites (plus Poland and Yugoslavia), where “to create real democracies, some outside pressure would be necessary, coming jointly from the USSR, United States and Great Britain.” “We should not hesitate to use this kind of ‘interference into the domestic affairs’ of other nations,” argued Maisky, “since democratic government is one of the main guarantees of durable peace.” Here the Anglo-Americans had “an extraordinary role” to play and while Maisky was not quite confident about the prospects of Big Three cooperation in spreading democracy (given the “retrograde,” in his words, record of the Western powers in supporting conservative forces in Europe), he still hoped that such cooperation “would be possible, if not always easy.”¹⁰

Finally, in a summary subtitled “On the correlation of power which may be expected,” he dealt with the prospective core relationship among the Big Three, starting, as a good Marxist, with their economic dynamics and interests. With the primary Soviet task after the war being economic reconstruction, the USSR would be “extremely interested” in American (and to a lesser degree British) economic assistance, which he listed as the third main pillar of reconstruction, after domestic resources and reparations. Rather cleverly, Maisky urged a speedy solicitation of this post-war Western assistance (first of all credits) while the allies still “experience some remorse” over their delay in opening the second front and “are hypnotized by the ‘war atmosphere’, rather than later when their routine mercantile psychology of peace would take over.”

The post-war USA he described as a “stronghold of extremely dynamic imperialism,” seeking further expansion in the Western Hemisphere, Asia, Africa and Pacific, and touching Europe as well. But, qualified Maisky, it will be “the expansion of a new type—not so much territorial or military, as financial and economic annexation,” driven by America’s enormous trade and technological potential

⁹ Ibid., 1. 27.

¹⁰ Ibid., II. 23-24.

accumulated during the war. The objective and yet variable nature of this expansion was underlined by Maisky's confident prediction that "with Republicans coming to power—which sooner or later is inevitable—this imperialist policy of the USA would acquire a more blatant and cynical character than under Roosevelt." Since there were "very few domestic restraints" on this expansionist policy, the world, warned Maisky, "should brace itself" for this coming American challenge.

Great Britain, by contrast, would emerge from the war "impoverished and weakened," with diminished resources and an increasingly unruly Empire; so hers would be "a conservative imperialism," concerned "not about new acquisitions, but rather about holding to what it already has" (although the British imperialists "would still be willing to grab whatever lies handy"). As a result, concluded Maisky, "it is perfectly obvious that the world situation in the postwar epoch would be colored by the Anglo-American contradictions...with the United States playing an offensive and the British—a defensive part." Yet, in Maisky's view, this rivalry was not likely to lead to a military confrontation, given "systemic, traditional and cultural closeness" between the two as well as the "broker's skill" of British diplomacy, which "would be playing the American card against the Soviet Union and the Soviet card against the United States."

As a result, he saw the triangle of the Big Three as fairly stable—except in the case of new proletarian revolutions, which would push the systemic contradiction between capitalism and socialism to the forefront, turning America and Russia into "two opposing poles of social tension." Absent that scenario, there were "no grounds to expect that relations between the USSR on one hand, and the USA and England on the other, would be bad." The Soviets would be interested in maintaining good relations with both for the economic reasons and for the preservation of peace (for the latter task, stressed Maisky, "our cooperation with these countries is an absolute necessity"), while neither Americans nor the British would have major territorial or economic disputes with the USSR. On the American side, even its above-mentioned expansion could be seen as more of an opportunity than a threat because it: a) "would largely bypass the Soviet Union" geographically; and b) would provide an additional incentive for the U.S. to keep Russia "at least neutral for the sake of the realization of its imperialistic plans." As for England, "the logic of things would be pushing her toward us, since her main conflict would still be with the USA." A cooperative England, in turn, would be quite useful for the Soviet Union "to balance the imperialist expansion of the United States."¹¹

Whereas Maisky argued for closer ties with Britain than with the U.S., he also warned—rather prophetically—that potentially the latter might be much more dangerous if antagonized (indeed his whole tirade sounds like a polemic response to those in the Soviet leadership prone to think of the USA mostly as a distant economic giant): "Of course, the USA is not a powerful land power (and is not likely to become one); of course, we are separated from it by the two oceans which make our country

¹¹ Ibid., ll. 33-39.

relatively invulnerable even to the U.S. Air Force (at least during the initial post-war period). But it cannot be excluded that should in the more distant future there be acute contradictions between the USA and the USSR, America can create many serious troubles for us ...by stimulating the resurrection of Germany and Japan..., by building up an anti-Soviet bloc in Europe using such countries as France... Even more dangerous would be the U.S.-Chinese alliance spearheaded against the USSR.” (On this last concern he noted: “American technology plus Chinese human numbers may become a big threat for the Soviet Union ...—especially in the next 20-25 years.”)¹²

In conclusion, Maisky summarized his program as follows: “strengthening of friendly relations with the United States and England; exploiting to our benefit the Anglo-American contradiction with the prospect of a closer contact with the British; expansion of Soviet influence in China; making the USSR a center of gravity for truly democratic countries and forces in all countries, especially in Europe. Keeping Germany and Japan helpless internationally until (and if) they are willing to take to the path of real democracy and socialism.”¹³ Among other things Maisky's analysis is particularly interesting because of the early and precise depiction of Soviet geopolitical interests as well as his revisionist interpretation of American expansionism.

The origins of Andrei Gromyko's report, “On the question of Soviet-American relations” (also addressed personally to Molotov and dated 14 July 1944),¹⁴ are not entirely clear. Too long (34 pages) for a cable, it is registered in Molotov's files as “a political letter” (a genre reserved for important political reporting) and may have been brought to Moscow by Gromyko himself when he came there for pre-Dumbarton Oaks consultations.¹⁵ In all likelihood it was also a self-initiated paper designed to boost the young ambassador's analytical reputation in the stern eyes of his superiors. Rather revealingly Gromyko started his analysis of Soviet-American relations with the year 1939—the beginning of his Washington tour—which makes the paper look even more like a personal report on where this relationship has come from and where it is going under his watch. So after a brief survey of recent history and a more detailed analysis of current trends Gromyko turned to the future. He began his forecast with a bold basic presumption: in all likelihood the United States after the war “would be interested in economic and political cooperation with the Soviet Union,” and such cooperation would “greatly determine the nature of post-war international relations.”

In support of this scenario, Gromyko offered the following interpretation of the U.S. internal developments and interests as largely favorable for the USSR:

- 1) The U.S. has broken away from isolationism and will remain actively involved with the world at large; that involvement is likely to remain beneficial for the

¹² Ibid., 1. 39.

¹³ Ibid., 1. 40.

¹⁴ "On the Question of Soviet-American Relations," 14 July 1944, AVP RF, f.6, op.6, d.603, p.45, ll. 1-34.

¹⁵ See Gromyko, *Pamiatnoe*, Kn.1, 165.

USSR because of strong public support for Roosevelt's policy and in the longer run because "U.S. essential interests in cooperation" would survive even a possible change of the guard in 1948;

2) The U.S. "will remain interested in the military defeat of Germany and her subsequent economic and military enfeeblement": aside from security considerations this interest, according to Gromyko, was determined by the clear fact that the "industrial-financial bourgeoisie of the USA in any case would be interested in the prevention of Germany's reemergence as a serious economic competitor after the end of the war in Europe";

3) More originally, Gromyko predicted that "the U.S. after the war would have an interest in preserving international peace" to secure their "greatly enhanced world positions": describing the emerging American predominance in trade, finance, economic and technological development (including the "increasing economic and political dependence of England on the U.S."), Gromyko logically concluded that conditions of peace would allow the U.S. "the maximum utilization of the gains and advantages already achieved and those still to be achieved before the war is over";

4) Even more remarkably, he forecast, the U.S. was likely to be a force not only for peace, but also for democracy—"the U.S. would be sympathetic to and facilitating in establishing bourgeois-democratic political regimes in Western Europe, and first of all in Germany" (except in cases of "socialist revolutions," which Gromyko did not consider very likely); in short, the U.S. "at least for some time would be an opponent of fascist-type governments";

5) Finally, both United States and the Soviet Union would have mutual economic interests: the Americans, in looking for new markets and raw materials; the Russians, in seeking credits, technical assistance, technology transfer and scientific cooperation (as a former economist Gromyko particularly emphasized the potential benefits of cooperation with highly-developed American agriculture and of "utilizing the advanced experience of American industry").¹⁶

Having described the opportunities, Gromyko then turned to what he cautiously called "possible difficulties" in Soviet-American relations. Number one on that list were possible disagreements over postwar treatment of Germany: the U.S., noted Gromyko, was likely to be considerably softer on Germany (especially on reparations) than the Soviet Union.

Number two was the continuation of the hostile campaign of the Catholic church and "the anti-Soviet press" against the background of "the general ideological hostility of the U.S. ruling class toward

¹⁶ "On the Question of Soviet-American Relations," II. 15-26.

the USSR.”

The third problem was the “future of Eastern Europe”: here Gromyko refers to “the concern among American government and business circles with the prospects of social change and of establishing Soviet-type regimes in some of those countries.”

“The so-called Baltic question” came next: although the current administration accepts that this issue “would be resolved by itself during the liberation of these countries by the Red Army,” Roosevelt, warns Gromyko, “due to domestic political circumstances would not support a recognition of the Baltic republics as constituent parts of the USSR.”

Fifth, “the U.S. aspiration to increase its influence in the Near and Middle East (particularly in Iran)... would not be in the interest of the USSR.” Citing as an example the American insistence on free transit rights for civil aviation over the Soviet and adjacent territories, Gromyko arrived at a more general conclusion: both for strategic and political reasons the “consolidation of an American presence in countries neighboring us would be clearly not in the Soviet interest.”

Gromyko saw the postwar competition in propaganda as another possible source of trouble. The U.S. government, in his view, would be more active both in indoctrinating its own people (since “coming economic crises are likely to further increase Americans’ receptiveness to truthful information about the USSR”) and in “expanding its propaganda in the Soviet Union itself,” building upon the new, more positive image of America created in Soviet minds during the war.

Finally, post-war reconstruction aid may also become an issue of contention since the U.S. is likely to “drag its feet” in supplies of capital goods and equipment not directly related to the war effort.¹⁷

Yet, despite this fairly impressive inventory of potential problems Gromyko remained quite optimistic about the future. Here is the solemn conclusion of his report: “In spite of possible difficulties, which from time to time may emerge in our relations with the United States, the necessary conditions are clearly present for a continuation of cooperation between our two countries in the post-war period. To a great degree these future relations would be determined by the very nature of the relationship which has already been shaped and is still being shaped during the war.”¹⁸

Even as he made an effort in his cover note to Molotov to balance this optimism by allowing that “serious conflicts” and “perhaps even military clashes” between the two countries “cannot be excluded” (since the “political and ideological hostility of the ruling classes of the USA and other capitalist countries toward the USSR would remain”), Gromyko still considered such a prospect “unlikely at least for a certain period after the end of this war.”¹⁹

Among the sources of Gromyko's optimism one can detect a sort of “professional optimism” rooted in any diplomat’s vested interest in the current relationship and an instinctive desire to project it

¹⁷ Ibid., ll. 29-33.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1. 34.

¹⁹ A. Gromyko to Molotov, 14 July 1944, *ibid.*, 1. 2.

into the future. Another important factor was the timing since the report was written at the peak of inter-Allied good feelings in the wake of the opening of the second front in Europe a month earlier. Still, even with these qualifications in mind, Gromyko's report seems remarkably and authentically positive, especially in its unusually benign interpretation of basic U.S. interests after the war which is in striking contrast to Gromyko's public pronouncements of later years. This sanguine prognosis is even more remarkable coming out from a younger diplomat of "the Molotov school" known for its distrust of the West and total subordination to the whims of the bosses:²⁰ Molotov's 35-year-old protégé would have hardly risked a dissenting view on such an important subject. Also visible in this report is a characteristic continuity between the early and "late" Gromyko—the emphasis on centrality of Soviet-American relationship be it of the Cold War or détente-condominium variety.

In Litvinov's case we are dealing with several documents which he submitted in his capacity as chairman of the Foreign Ministry's Commission for the preparation of peace treaties and on post-war order. (Its permanent members were two other Molotov deputies, D. Manuilsky and S. Lozovsky, as well as three foreign policy experts close to Litvinov: I. Suritz, B. Shtein and E. Tarle, a famous historian.) Not unlike its American counterparts at the State Department, the Commission had a broad mandate but little power. Its database seems to have been quite broad, including open Anglo-American sources on post-war planning, but Litvinov himself had no access to current diplomatic traffic, a fact about which he complained in his reports and which in his own words forced him "to confine [himself] to matters of general forecasting."²¹ In this sense the Commission among other things seemed to have been designed by Molotov for using Litvinov's and his colleagues' brains without giving him real power. Yet, as revealed by its recently opened records, the "Litvinov Commission" in its two years of existence was able to produce a substantial amount of interesting analysis and recommendations on post-war problems, some of which were then used for policy-making purposes with little or no attribution.²² Prepared with the help of a small staff of experts and written largely by Litvinov himself, more important papers were then discussed by the commission as a whole and sent to the top leadership. Although the discussions were often serious and sometimes heated, Litvinov dominated that body so fully that we can regard the commission's final papers as reflecting (or at least congruent with) his personal views.

The three reports in question—"On the relationship with the USA," "On the Prospects and the Basis of Soviet—British Cooperation," and "On the Question of Blocs and Spheres of Influence" (dated correspondingly 10 January 1945, 15 November 1944 and 11 January 1945)—were prepared over roughly the same time period and constitute a fairly integrated body of analysis of a future

²⁰ See Molotov's own estimate of his ambassadors' role: *Molotov Remembers*, 69-70.

²¹ "On the Relationship with the USA," 10 January 1945, AVP RF, f. 6, Op. 7, d. 173, p. 17, l. 47.

²² This interesting period of Litvinov's life has escaped the attention of his most recent biographers; see, e.g., Zinovii Sheinis, *Maxim M. Litvinov: Revolutionsier, Diplomat*, (Moskva: Politizdat, 1989), and also Hugh Phillips, *Between the Revolution and the West: A Political Biography of Maxim Litvinov* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), who writes off Litvinov's planning position as "a powerless sinecure" (p. 171).

relationship between the Big Three.

The papers on the U.S. and Great Britain were very similar in design. Each is a competent and perceptive historical overview of that country's relationship with Russia followed by an analysis of their prospects together with policy prescriptions.

In case of the U.S. Litvinov emphasized the positive legacy of Russian-American relationship marked by a "traditional mutuality" of geopolitical interests, American long standing respect of Russian (and even Soviet) territorial integrity; concluding his historical survey he approvingly quoted Sumner Welles in stating that "with no other great country have our interests clashed as little as with Russia." But would this positive historical norm of the relationship survive the test of the post-war problems? Answering this question, Litvinov began with the pivotal concern of wartime Soviet foreign policy: the issue of the USSR's western borders as of 1941. He did not see their restoration as a big problem in relations with Washington: the latter had no major interests in that part of the world and Roosevelt himself was enough of a realist to act accordingly—after few a "ideological" objections he "will ultimately bow to the inevitable and recognize the boundaries adequate to our aspirations." The same went for the Balkans.²³

But what about areas and spheres where Americans *do* have vital interests? Also, what kind of "compensation" would they feel entitled to for *their* part in the war, bearing in mind "the lessons of Woodrow Wilson" and of alleged U.S. altruism after World War I? "If we," wrote Litvinov, "put aside the vague issue of some (military) bases" (this frivolous assumption immediately caught Molotov's suspicious eye and was underlined by his blue pencil), then the first American postwar entitlement would be "opening the doors of the British empire" in terms of trade, markets, investments. The second American interest (largely congruent with the British one) is "a normalization of life in European countries, their full stabilization by means of establishing such bourgeois-democratic or even conservative forms of government which would remove fears of social upheavals." "The differences in approach toward establishing order and system of government in some European countries," continued Litvinov, "may create misunderstandings and tensions between ourselves on one hand and England and the USA on the other." Possible differences among the Anglo-Saxons over this issue would present more problems than opportunities for the Soviet Union; in particular, American resistance to spheres of influence would only complicate possible Soviet deals of this kind with the British.

Another serious conflict of interest might emerge in the Far East, where Litvinov predicted a steady increase of the U.S. influence to the point of "establishing a de facto protectorate over China"; as a result, "the USA may resist our probable aspiration toward expanding our own interests in the Far East."

In a shorter term and on a smaller scale, lend-lease settlement might also become an irritant,

²³ "On the Relationship with the USA," 1. 47.

since the U.S., having no hope of Soviet repayment, “may attempt to use lend-lease for extracting economic and political compensations unacceptable to us.”²⁴

On the other hand, America’s inevitable search for new markets coupled with the enormous reconstruction needs of the Soviet Union might create a new sphere of mutual interest, potentially leading to “an economic basis for the Soviet-American relationship.” Another “possible basis of cooperation,” in Litvinov’s view, might be presented by “the colonial problem,” where the Soviets—depending on specifics of their relations with the British—“may even support these (anti-colonial) aspirations of the Americans.”

Balancing these pros and cons Litvinov summarized his analysis with the following conclusion (underlined by Molotov): “while there are no deep reasons for serious and long-term conflicts between the USA and USSR in any part of the world (with the possible exception of China), it is difficult to outline some concrete basis for their positive political cooperation apart from a mutual interest in the preservation of world peace.”²⁵

A closer Soviet-American connection, as Litvinov the Americanist pointed out, was further impeded on the U.S. side by the public opinion and constitutional obstacles to long-term political alliances. Again, very pointedly he singles out as the most important mitigating factor, “an inevitable intensification of economic competition throughout the world between the United States and the Great Britain” which “should prompt both of them to realize the necessity of maintaining the best possible relations with us in order to preclude our protracted conjunction with one of them against the other. Of no less importance it is for us to undermine their frequent conjunctions against ourselves.” (This notion again drew Molotov’s seemingly positive attention.)

Litvinov concluded this report with a characteristic emphasis on the critical importance of American public opinion which he clearly saw as a unique feature of the U. S. foreign policy-making process: “Our impact on the public opinion is bound to have either a positive or negative influence on the nature and duration of those tensions between our two countries which may become inevitable. Without public sympathy,” he warned, “no possible cooperation and coordination of actions would produce the requisite results.”²⁶

Dealing with Litvinov’s next report we again must omit a very lively and erudite survey of the history of British - Russian/Soviet relations and go directly to their post-war prospects as seen by Litvinov. Overall he viewed this relationship as more intimate and crucial for the USSR (although historically more negative) than its relations with the United States. But some of the old conflicts (propaganda, Russian debts) had disappeared, while others had lost their former salience: Anglo-Soviet competition in Iran and Afghanistan could be cooperatively managed on the model of their treaty with

²⁴ Ibid., ll. 48-50.

²⁵ Ibid., ll. 49, 50.

²⁶ Ibid., ll. 51, 52.

Iran; as for the Turkish Straits, Britain was not likely to block a moderate revision of the Montreaux Convention.

In the meantime, argued Litvinov, there had emerged new powerful common interests between the two: preventing a new German aggression (hence the continuing importance of their 1942 Treaty) and keeping the peace in Europe, which required as its “sine qua non” a cooperation between the two remaining great military powers in Europe. Litvinov saw only one major Anglo-Soviet contradiction which “the post-war era would inherit from the past—a balance of power in Europe. This contradiction may indeed be aggravated as a result of the increased might of the USSR, which after the defeat of Germany and the weakening of France and Italy would become the only great continental power in Europe.” But within that problem, according to Litvinov, lay its solution: “The very gravity of this question should strongly push England to reach an accord with us. And that accord is realizable only on a basis of an amicable separation of security spheres in Europe according to the principle of geographic proximity.” By this criteria, wrote Litvinov, “our maximum sphere of security should include Finland, Sweden, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, the Slavic countries of the Balkans, as well as Turkey. The British sphere should undoubtedly include Holland, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal, and Greece... Norway, Denmark, Germany, Austria, and Italy were to constitute a ‘neutral zone.’”²⁷ Curiously, in his next paper (“On the Question of Blocs and Spheres of Influence”), finished two months later, Litvinov slightly revised this list: Norway now fell within the Soviet sphere, while British claims were extended onto Sweden, Denmark and Italy. Litvinov then also suggested that “these six countries (i.e. Norway, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Denmark, Italy and Sweden) are indeed subject to bargaining and compromise.”²⁸

Two things stood out in Litvinov’s envisioned division of Europe: first, an expanded notion of both Soviet and British security requirements, and second, an unequivocal inclusion of Germany and Austria into “a neutral zone,” which implied a future accord between the Allies to keep Germany neutral and demilitarized.

Still, why would the British go for such an unprecedented deal? Among the factors pushing them in that direction, Litvinov singled out that same Anglo-American rivalry which figured so prominently in Maisky’s report. “The current war will result in a great disturbance of not only the European but the global balance of power, which will especially affect England,” he predicted, noting that the latter was already losing her air, naval and merchant fleet supremacy to the United States. “We should expect an increased U.S. surge to remove British competition from the Western hemisphere and even from the British dominions. Politically this would translate into forcing Britain out from her remaining possessions adjacent to the American landmass or at least acquiring permanent bases there.

²⁷ "On the Prospects and Possible Basis of Soviet-British Cooperation," 15 November 1944, AVP RF, f.6, op. 6, d. 149, p. 14, l. 54.

²⁸ "On the Question of Blocs and Spheres of Influence," 11 January 1945, AVP RF, f.6, op.7, d. 173, p. 17, l. 60.

The struggle for oil and rubber would resume and probably intensify. Faced with such a cheerless prospect England cannot avoid thinking about the expediency of securing a long tranquillity in Europe by way of reaching an accord with the USSR.’²⁹

This basic incentive toward Anglo-Soviet entente would be supplemented, in Litvinov’s view, by the mutual interest of both countries in economic cooperation, in opposing American expansion in the Far East, and, in the shorter term, in a fair lend-lease settlement. He urged Stalin and Molotov to reach this “gentlemen’s agreement” with Britain before the end of the war, since the latter “is already knocking together a security system of her own without, it seems to be, any conspiring with us. When the so-called Western bloc will become a fait accompli Britain’s position in dealing with us would be much stronger....”³⁰ (Writing this soon after Churchill’s last visit to Moscow Litvinov was evidently in the dark about what really transpired between Churchill and Stalin on the night of October 9, when the two leaders initialed their informal “percentages agreement” dividing Russian and British influence in various East European and Balkan countries.³¹)

What would be the nature of these security spheres and how was this Anglo-Soviet condominium to be combined with a stable relationship among the Big Three as well as with an emerging International Security Organization (what ultimately took the form of the United Nations)? In addition to the above report Litvinov dealt with these questions in the last of these three papers, written in preparation for the February 1945 Yalta conference. He described these security spheres rather briefly as zones of strategic predominance of the respective great powers, precluding other great powers from “entering into particularly close relations or reaching agreements with countries within our sphere against our will, not to speak about seeking there military bases....” In a public version of his scheme, published anonymously about the same time in then-authoritative periodical *The War and The Working Class*, Litvinov added two more conditions for establishing such zones: first, that “they should not be detrimental to the independence of the states included in them, and secondly, that the demarcation of the boundaries and extent of those zones should not be affected except by arrangement between the leading states of the continent concerned, to avoid international conflicts and disagreements.”³²

In his top secret report, he linked this first condition with a likely demand by England “for guarantees regarding the nature of government and independence for the countries of the Soviet security

²⁹ "On the Prospects and Possible Basis...", 1. 57.

³⁰ Ibid., 1. 58.

³¹ See Winston S. Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), 226-28, for Churchill’s account of that deal.

³² "On the Question of Blocs and Spheres of Influence," 1. 60; "The Question of Setting Up An International Security Organization," *The War and The Working Class* (15 December 1944), as translated by the U.S. Embassy in Moscow (Library of Congress, W. Averell Harriman Papers, Container 203, Voina I Rabochii Class folder).

sphere,” but even this camouflaged suggestion was angrily crossed out by Molotov.³³

Writing this in January 1945, Litvinov officially remained hopeful that a “gentlemen’s agreement” could still be reached at Yalta (“the meeting of the three does not preclude our separate conversation with England”).³⁴ Nevertheless, at the same time he noted a growing public concern in the USA over possible balance of power and spheres of influence arrangements, a development which Litvinov viewed as a major obstacle to the realization of his plan: “Personally, as a realist, Roosevelt may well see such future spheres, zones or blocs in Europe as something inevitable, but given the public attitude he would hardly give his consent to them in any form.”

Yet, “objecting to spheres of influence in Europe, Americans are not about to renounce their own sphere in Western Hemisphere”; confronted with the illogic of their position, they might still acquiesce to an implicit security demarcation in Europe, especially if those spheres were integrated with the structure of the emerging International Security Organization by dividing the General Assembly into four “continental sections” (American, European, Asiatic-Pacific and African) in which the great powers would play key roles.³⁵

In sum, this was Litvinov’s general outline for the postwar world: an Anglo-Soviet strategic condominium in Europe, stable but more remote relationship with the U.S., a division of the world into respective security zones among the great powers, sanctioned and liberalized by the rest of the international community through what would become the United Nations. In this synthesis of geopolitical realities, great power cooperation and certain respect for the rights of smaller nations and legitimate rules of the international game, Litvinov’s scheme seems to have been influenced by Anglo-American thinking and is particularly close to Walter Lippmann’s concept of “strategic orbits” in his 1944 *U.S. War Aims* (Litvinov himself refers to Lippmann more than once in his reports); the main difference, of course, being that Lippmann had a much more expansive notion of American strategic interests and combined the U.S. with Great Britain and the rest of Western Europe into a single “orbit”—the Atlantic Community—much to Litvinov’s objection (in one of his reports he finds the Atlantic Community concept “too fantastical and unrealistic to be seriously discussed”).³⁶ No wonder that Litvinov’s private utterings and anonymous writings on the subject were scrutinized by American

³³ "On the Prospects and Possible Basis ...," 1. 55.

³⁴ Privately Litvinov was by then much more pessimistic about the ability of both Great Britain and his own country to come to "an amicable deal" over Europe: Britain (which, as he put it in an off-the-record interview with Edgar Snow in October 1944, "has never been willing to see a strong power on the continent without organizing a counterforce against it") was returning to her old ways, fully backed by America, while Soviet diplomacy failed "to make our purposes clear to the British...." (Edgar Snow to President, 28 December 1944, President’s Secretary File, Diplomatic Correspondence (Russia 1945), Box 49, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, NY.

³⁵ "On the Question of Blocs and Spheres of Influence," 1.60.

³⁶ Ibid.

and British diplomats as indicative of the more positive trend in Soviet thinking about the future.³⁷

* * *

Now the “so what?” question: what is a significance of these documents? What do they really tell us about Soviet thinking and policy? We still know too little about Soviet foreign policy of the period in general and about the circumstances surrounding these papers in particular to give definite answers, but some tentative observations can be made. There is no evidence so far that any of these reports had any direct policy impact. They were attentively read by Molotov, and two of Litvinov’s papers were sent all the way up to Stalin—that is all we know. Yet it would be wrong to treat them as idle speculations or purely intellectual exercises with no political relevance. These are not accidental papers: after all, they were written by “the Big Three” of the Soviet diplomacy with the clear purpose of impressing Molotov and Stalin on the fundamental issues on the Soviet foreign policy agenda. For this reason alone they could not be much out of sync with mental processes in the Kremlin that did not, after all, encourage dissent. So regardless of their policy impact they may be viewed as truly representative of more advanced and sophisticated Soviet thinking about future relationship among the Big Three. Indeed the main significance of these papers for us today is that they provide a rare and fairly extensive glimpse into the Soviet foreign policy elite’s inner thinking, its vision of the USSR security requirements, interests, and vulnerabilities after the war. Although these writings retain a good deal of continuity with the Bolshevik “Old thinking” about the capitalist world as torn by inter-imperialist contradictions to be exploited by socialism, etc.,³⁸ they also contain some interesting departures from that tradition in their presumptions about the capitalist West and the new opportunities for accommodation with it.

Of course, these are different papers written by three very different people with some significant disagreements among them. These disagreements are noteworthy in themselves since they reveal a greater range of views than is usually associated with Stalin-Molotov foreign policy. Among those differences the following two are especially interesting.

The first is a clear division of opinion between “America firsters” and “Britain firsters.” The fact that Litvinov—himself a former ambassador to the U.S.—joined Maisky in the latter group shows, in my view, that this division went beyond the geography of diplomatic representation and was likely to involve a generational dimension as well: groomed in the period of Europe’s ascendancy on the world scene Litvinov and Maisky, though recognizing the new American strength, still tended to think of the British as the key player, while the much younger Gromyko clearly saw the U.S. as the new world leader and number one partner for the USSR.

Secondly, there is an interesting difference between Litvinov on one hand and Gromyko-Maisky

³⁷ Mastny, *Russia's Road to the Cold War*, 220-223, 231-232; for the State Department response to the "second Malinin article," see extract from cable, 6 February 1945, from the Acting Secretary to the Secretary of State, Library of Congress, Harriman Papers, Container 176, Chronological File (CF), February 6-19, 1945.

³⁸ For a useful recent analysis of that paradigm, see Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance*, 42-53.

on the other in regard to the political future of Europe. While the latter two emphasize common interests among the Big Three in having a democratic anti-fascist Europe, Litvinov viewed it more as a field of conflict than one of cooperation—probably because he knew too well how incompatible the Soviet and Anglo-American political practices and notions of democracy really were. This may also be one reason for his greater emphasis on a spheres of influence division as a better way to separate those divergent powers and let them coexist more peacefully.

Still, even more remarkable than those differences in analysis were certain common themes and assumptions running through all of them, for these concurrences point to some stable patterns of thinking which went beyond personalities and were characteristic of the larger Soviet political mentality of that period.

The first of these common themes was *a primacy of Soviet security interests* and concerns in thinking about post-war world. Natural for any country under these circumstances (and indeed paramount in both U.S. and the British thinking of that time), those concerns were especially pronounced in the Soviet case as traditional Russian-Soviet insecurities were magnified by the trauma of the titanic war. Even so, security was seen by all three authors not in absolutist terms of global hegemony or world revolution (except for Maisky's occasional invocations of that prospect) with the described strategic objectives remaining fairly limited and realistic in a Realpolitik sense. The borders of 1941, an enfeebled Germany and Japan, "friendly governments" along the Soviet periphery (particularly in the west)—this strategic desiderata was clearly the starting point of all Soviet thinking about the future after the war and neither Stalin nor his lieutenants made any secret of it.

Indeed the traditionalism of that desiderata, which dates back to the late Tsarist diplomacy, is quite impressive and was clearly understood at the time by experienced Russian observers in the West. George F. Kennan, for one, would not have been surprised by the Maisky-Litvinov objectives: his September 1944 definition of Kremlin's basic goal after the war ("to prevent the formation in Central and Eastern Europe of any power or coalition of powers capable of challenging Russian security")³⁹ is very close even textually to Maisky's formula of the same year: "to prevent the formation in Europe of any powers or combination of powers with powerful armies".

Slightly more surprising is a second common theme of these papers: *a unanimous acceptance of Big Three cooperation* as the only effective basis for a peaceful and stable postwar world order protective of the Soviet interests at the same time. This was, of course, the official Soviet position during the war and these were chief Soviet "westernizers" who were professionally predisposed toward cooperation with the West. But in a top secret analysis one would expect at least some contingency planning in terms of possible alternatives to the preferred option. Yet no such unilateralist contingencies are even mentioned by our authors: cognizant of the problems involved in such a course, they still

³⁹ "Russia - Seven Years Later," in George F. Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967), 520.

believed that the vital security interests of their country were not only compatible with those of the U.S. and Great Britain, but actually *required* such cooperation for their successful realization (however different their particular preferences were within that basic orientation). Implicit in this sanguine view was a fairly radical revision of the traditional Bolshevik notion of the Western threat: the latter had considerably mellowed if not totally disappeared and the West—at least for a while—is seen as more of a solution than a problem. Such a revision in turn could only become possible as a cumulative result of the wartime cooperation with the Anglo-Americans, who came to be seen as staunch opponents of fascism and German-Japanese militarism, ready (in deed, if not always in words) to recognize Soviet security interests and provide desperately needed economic assistance for post-war reconstruction.

The key issue then became the nature of such post-war cooperation on which again there are no serious disagreements among Litvinov, Maisky and Gromyko: they all see it largely in terms of *a great power concert based upon some kind of a division of the world into spheres of influence*. This “three policemen” formula of cooperation was thought able to provide for the three major strategic imperatives of the USSR: keeping Germany and Japan *down*, keeping the Soviet Union *in* the big council of the world, and legitimizing the USSR’s post-war borders and sphere of influence. Significantly, the Soviet sphere was seen largely in terms of traditional geostrategic dominance and not of sovietization which, as all the three understood, would hardly be acceptable to the Western allies (so even when Gromyko and Maisky made some allowances for a spontaneous emergence of “Soviet type governments” it sounded both as an ideologically correct statement and a warning at the same time).

These Soviet diplomats (particularly Litvinov) were also aware of the dangers inherent in any crude spheres of influence division, above all their potential transformation into hostile blocs confronting each other. Continuing cooperation between the great powers and their respective spheres was accordingly emphasized as a vital preventive step.

But there seems to have been another key pre-condition for the stability of any strategic triangle: all three centers of power should be separate and relatively equal, balancing each other and thus precluding, or at least minimizing, the risk of a combination of two powers against a third. Hence a final and critical common assumption of our authors (especially Litvinov and Maisky), which comes across loud and clear: their *firm belief in an “inevitable Anglo-American contradiction.”* Deeply rooted in the Leninist view of the capitalist world ridden by “inter-imperialistic contradictions,” this belief was as ideologically driven as it was strategically indispensable in order for such a triangular scheme to function. This hope was a key prop supporting the whole Soviet strategy and no wonder that it died so hard in 1945-1946 when new Anglo-American combination came as a bitter and major surprise for the Soviet diplomacy.

Yet the overall picture of the Soviet world view and threat perception that emerges from these

documents is quite predictable and consistent from the standpoint of Soviet interests:⁴⁰ the main potential danger was seen in a re-emergence of German and Japanese aggression, while neither Great Britain (mainly because of insufficient strength) nor the USA (more remote, benign, and sympathetic to Soviet concerns) was regarded as posing a serious threat in the near future; their combination against the USSR was considered unlikely given “the Anglo-American contradiction,” which provided the Soviet Union with additional room for maneuver. The underlying ideological hostility between the USSR on one hand, and the Anglo-Saxons on the other, remained but had receded to the background—at least for awhile—submerged by newfound mutual interests in preventing new wars and aggressions. This view, with its emphasis on the danger of a German - Japanese resurgence to be checked by continued Allied cooperation, was largely mirrored on the Anglo-American side all the way through Yalta.⁴¹

If such were the main parameters of this school of Soviet thinking about the post-war world, then the next question is how realistic and realizable that thinking was. Now, fifty years later, it is easier to see where it went wrong (although perhaps more difficult to understand why). For reasons of ideological and strategic wishful thinking the Soviet diplomats clearly overestimated the potential of Anglo-American antagonism (although this looks much more obvious now than it did then).⁴² This misreading of Anglo-American competition as well as of the U.S.-Great Britain attitude toward Germany seem to have been caused in part by the crude economic determinism underlying the Bolshevik theory of imperialism: since economic interests were held to be paramount and their competition was perceived as a lethal zero-sum game, then it followed not only that Americans and the British would be locked in that economic struggle, but that both of them should be strongly interested in keeping the German economy weak—why promote a future competitor, after all? Illustrative of this logic was Maisky’s advice to Stalin and Molotov on how to sell his German reparations plan to the Western Allies (his initial pre-Yalta proposal was to claim for the Soviet side 75% of reparations “with a calculation of ultimately getting 65%”): “we should make them understand,” wrote Maisky, “that both United States and England in the long run would only gain economically from a disappearance of such a dangerous competitor as Germany. But this should be done rather carefully because due to their intrinsic hypocrisy the Anglo-Americans would not want to openly admit a correctness of this

⁴⁰ For an insightful description of Soviet threat perception at the end of the War (quite similar to what emerges from the documents reviewed here) see, Michael McGwire, “National Security and Soviet Foreign Policy,” in M. Leffler and D. Painter, eds., *Origins of the Cold War: An International History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 60-62.

⁴¹ See, e.g., Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 507-508, 537.

⁴² For a summary of Anglo-American conflicts over policy and military strategy during the war, see, Mark A. Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front. American Military Planning and Diplomacy in Coalition Warfare, 1941-1943* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977), 160-168. On Soviet misperception of Anglo-American competition, see David Reynolds, “The Big Three and the Division of Europe, 1945-48: An Overview,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 1:2 (1990), 125-126.

conclusion.”⁴³ This preoccupation with U.S. trade and economic expansionism helped our authors to miss another American expansion: that of growing security requirements during World War II which made the U.S. far more assertive and globalist in a military-security sense (particularly in Europe) than the Soviets expected.⁴⁴ This mistake again was not entirely ideological since both tradition and common wartime expectations pointed to a more limited postwar U.S. role. Another corollary to this economic determinism of the Soviet thinking was an overestimation of U.S. and British interest in expanding trade and economic relations with the USSR after the war. (But again Soviets were not alone then in expecting a major post-war economic crisis in the West which presumably would have enhanced that interest).⁴⁵

Another striking feature of the Maisky-Litvinov preoccupation with sphere-of-influence arrangements is their almost total disregard of the indigenous conditions and interests of those European countries which were to become subjects of those divisions. The underlying presumption of a docile and welcoming Europe can only be explained as a combination of great power chauvinism and “ideological romanticism” on the part of the Soviet statesmen, who anticipated liberated Europe to be much more hospitable to Soviet power and ideas than it really was.⁴⁶

Finally, even those experienced observers of the West overestimated Western tolerance—both in political and strategic terms—toward a new Soviet geopolitical expansion. Litvinov’s case is especially intriguing, given the subsequent recommendations of his Commission in the summer of 1945 in regard to trusteeships and mandated territories. There Litvinov and his colleagues made a strong case for an attempt to acquire trusteeships over Dodecanese Islands, Tripolitania, Somalia, Eritrea and even Palestine, not to mention some control over the Turkish Straits or the internationalization of the Kiel canal.⁴⁷

Needless to say, most of those claims were made by Stalin and Molotov at Potsdam, London and Moscow in 1945, to the considerable irritation of the Western Allies. That was the same Litvinov who simultaneously was privately complaining to his Western contacts about Molotov’s insatiable demands and blaming the West for having failed to stop them in time.⁴⁸ Again, we do not know to what extent those recommendations were Litvinov’s own initiatives and ideas, but the question still remains:

⁴³ Maisky, "The Formula of Reparations from Germany" (draft), 17 January 1945, AVP RF, f. 6, op. 7, d. 173, ll. 17, 69.

⁴⁴ On the expansion of American security requirements during the war, see Michael S. Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War: American Plans for Postwar Defense, 1941-1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), 198-205; Leffler, *The Preponderance of Power*, ch.2.

⁴⁵ Even most economists were then under the influence of this "crisis psychology"; see, e.g., Wojtech Woytinsky, "What Went Wrong in Forecasts of Post-War Depression?" *Journal of Political Economy* 55: 2 (1947), 143.

⁴⁶ On "ideological romanticism" as a factor of Soviet policy, see John Lewis Gaddis, *Rethinking Cold War History* (Occasional paper, Contemporary History Institute, Ohio University, March 1995), 4-5.

⁴⁷ "On the Question of Acquiring Trusteeship Territories", 22 June 1945; "Additional Considerations on the Question of Trusteeships," 28 June 1945, AVP RF, f.6, op.7, d. 174, p. 17; "On the Question of Baltic Straits and Kiel Canal," AVP RF, F. 6, op. 7, d: 175, p. 17.

⁴⁸ Edgar Snow, *Journey to the Beginning* (London: Gollancz, 1959), 357.

how could those experienced and worldly men fail to foresee the Western reaction to their strategic consideration?

Several factors seem to have played a role here. One may be called a euphoria of new horizons opening to the Soviet statesmen by the end of the war: for the first time in its long history, Russia faced no single hostile great power on the Eurasian landmass with her mortal enemies defeated for years to come and her control over adjacent portions of that landmass enhanced. Yet even more so than the United States, Russia was under the spell of what John Lewis Gaddis calls the “insecurities of victory,”⁴⁹ for the war exposed huge strategic vulnerabilities of the Soviet Union and emphasized the importance of strategic strong points and power projection capabilities which in turn led to an expanded notion of security requirements to be met in order to prevent a repetition of the past. How these new requirements were translated into specific military planning can be ascertained only when Russian military records are open, but Litvinov frequently referred to “the experience of the war” in his justification of Soviet claims for the Dodecanese islands and other territories.⁵⁰

Another factor was a new experience of the Allied relationship during the war: again, for the first time in their history the Soviets through the great performance and sacrifices in the war were accepted as full partners in the councils of the great powers, who seemed quite respectful of their interests, rights, and newly gained status. No wonder that even Stalin and Molotov, not to speak of their more impressionable diplomats, came to believe in Soviet parity with the West in terms of the legitimacy of their security requirements and their acceptance by the West, especially since there seemed to be few direct conflicts of interest aside from ideology. No wonder that they now felt entitled to their “fair share” of the war spoils in terms of new territories, trusteeships, an expanded sphere of influence and some strong points in the areas stretching beyond that sphere.⁵¹ And wherever there were conflicting claims over those spoils, the Soviet interest was believed to be protected by the omnipresent Anglo-American division. Thus, admitting “the great strategic importance” of the former Italian colonies in Africa for Britain and anticipating a strong British resistance to Soviet claims to them, Litvinov in his pre-Potsdam recommendations banked on the U.S. help: “To knock Britain down from her positions we would undoubtedly need strong support from the USA.”⁵² Besides, as was already mentioned, the Soviets somehow overlooked a parallel expansion of the U.S. security requirements which went far beyond Kremlin expectations and made Americans much more sensitive to the Soviet claims than Moscow expected. In short, this combination of new opportunities and requirements with a new sense of entitlement goes far in explaining that confidence which ran through much of the Gromyko-Maisky-

⁴⁹ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries Into the History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 20.

⁵⁰ "On the Question of Acquiring Trusteeship Territories," 1. 59.

⁵¹ For a vivid illustration of this mood see, Stalin's remarks to E. Bevin in December 1945: *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, vol. 2* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1967), 775-776.

⁵² "Additional Considerations on the Question of Trusteeships," ll. 63, 64.

Litvinov analysis.

Naturally, this analysis was just a fraction of a much larger and heterogeneous spectrum of Soviet perceptions of the West. We still know very little about information and analysis flowing to Kremlin at that critical period from other sources: political and military intelligence, commanders in the field, the NKVD, foreign communists, etc. Given natural institutional biases and that little what we do know about a broader picture it seems reasonable to assume that the Litvinov-Maisky-Gromyko reports probably offered the most benign option for dealing with the West of all those available to Stalin and Molotov at that particular juncture. But how different was it really from what we know about their thinking and policies during that period?

Both Stalin and Molotov would have little problem accepting the first point of Litvinov-Maisky-Gromyko consensus—the primacy (as well as the scope) of Soviet security interests. To the extent that there seemed to be an ambiguity in the Kremlin about the Soviet “strategic perimeter” it mostly involved the question of maximum goals—how far should the Soviet reach extend? Decades later Molotov, in his oral history memoirs, reproached Stalin for “pushing too far” in the Near East and Africa,⁵³ but his own handwritten comments on Litvinov’s trusteeship proposals indicated a more expansionist posture: he did not question Soviet interest in former Italian colonies and strongly objected to Litvinov’s “leaving aside” former German possessions in the Pacific and Africa (since in the latter’s view they “can hardly present any interest for the Soviet Union”) by the exclamatory “Politically they can!”⁵⁴

The notion of a great power concert as the most desirable post-war arrangement would not sound subversive to Stalin and Molotov either. Both were on record as favoring Big Three cooperation after the war, in no small part—through their collective predominance in the United Nations. In his 6 November 1944 speech in particular, Stalin gave his own estimate of the alliance’s prospects, which happened to be quite in tune with Maisky-Gromyko-Litvinov line: at the basis of the Alliance, he said, were not “accidental or transitory motives, but vitally important and long-lasting interests,” above of all—“preventing new aggression or a new war, if not forever, then at least for an extended period of time.”⁵⁵ If anything, Stalin seemed more concerned and realistic than either Roosevelt or Churchill (or our three authors, for that matter) about the dangers facing the Alliance after the war and the need to find some new substitute for the war-imposed unity.⁵⁶ Another and more significant difference was that both Stalin and Molotov with their deep suspicions of the West would be far more skeptical about the

⁵³ *Molotov Remembers*, 74.

⁵⁴ "On the Question of Acquiring Trusteeship Territories," 1. 60.

⁵⁵ I.V. Stalin, *Sochineniya* (Stanford: Hoover Institute, 1967), vol. 2, 164-170.

⁵⁶ See, e. g., his remarks at the Yalta Conference: Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1950), 869; and at the Kremlin meeting with Senator Claude Pepper: "Memorandum of Conversation with Generalissimus I. Stalin," 14 September 1945, LC, Harriman Papers, Container 182, CF, September 13-19, 1945 folder.

prospects for the Big Three cooperation, always keeping the powder of unilateralism dry. In short, they wanted to have the best of both worlds: the benefits of continued cooperation with the Western Allies and at the same time the consolidation of their newfound positions, the latter being the more vital and ultimately decisive priority.⁵⁷

Calculating on Anglo-American contradictions to maximize Soviet gains was also part and parcel of Stalin's strategy, to which he actively resorted during the war. Having little personal preferences between the two he was more pragmatic and flexible than his three ambassadors in maneuvering between the U.S. and British: thus, during most of 1945, Stalin was more considerate to the Americans (almost to the point of asking them to play a stronger global role), only to turn to the British the following year with a sudden suggestion of closer ties.⁵⁸

Spheres of influence as a concept and practice were, of course, also quite familiar to Stalin and Molotov since their earlier deals with Hitler and then with the British.⁵⁹ But judging by Molotov's lack of comments about Litvinov's suggestion and Stalin's own behavior with Churchill in October 1944, this particular scheme of a comprehensive "amicable deal" with the British did not catch their imagination at that point. For one thing, Stalin obviously saw its unacceptability to the Americans (as suggested by his ready acceptance of U.S. Ambassador Averell Harriman's proposition the Big Three must together decide all major questions, after suggesting the deletion of a phrase in Stalin and Churchill's joint message to Roosevelt that implied a postwar spheres-of-influence arrangement⁶⁰). But more importantly he probably did not want to tie his hands while the Red Army was still advancing through Europe. Seemingly tactical, this difference was very important since instead of trying to win Western trust by displaying his cards and demonstrating the limited nature of his objectives early on (which clearly was the implication of Litvinov's advice), Stalin preferred to maximize his power positions and then to face the West with a *fait accompli*.

Even more serious was the difference between the Soviet leadership and their diplomatic advisers in regard to the nature of spheres of influence. While Stalin and Molotov during the war rhetorically subscribed to the ideals of smaller countries' independence and sovereignty, their unwritten operational presumption was a full freedom of action within those spheres for the great powers. Aside from Stalin's famous dictum as recorded by Milovan Djilas ("whoever occupies a territory also imposes in it his own social system"⁶¹), it is hard to think of a better illustration of this attitude than Molotov's

⁵⁷ On Stalin's "maximum" and "minimum" goals see Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy*, 74-75.

⁵⁸ James L. Gormly, *The Collapse of the Grand Alliance, 1945-1948* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 164-166.

⁵⁹ For a recent review of these policies, see Gardner, *Spheres of Influence*, ch.7; Warren F. Kimball, "Naked Reverse Right: Roosevelt, Churchill, and Eastern Europe from TOLSTOY to Yalta—and a Little Beyond," *Diplomatic History* 9:1 (Winter 1985), 3-7.

⁶⁰ See W. Averell Harriman and Elie Abel, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin, 1941-1946* (New York: Random House, 1975), 356-58.

⁶¹ Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, 114.

handwritten comments on one of A. Vyshinski's memoranda on the post-Yalta reorganization of the provisional Polish government. Here the real Molotov is speaking to his Anglo-American counterparts without diplomatic camouflage: "Poland - a big deal! But how governments are being organized in Belgium, France, Greece, etc., we do not know. We have not been asked, although we do not say that we like one or another of these governments. We have not interfered, because it is the Anglo-American zone of military action."⁶² Here again we have the same notion of parity, sincerely offended by what was perceived as a Western double standard: "we do not interfere in your sphere, so why should you meddle with ours?"

To summarize, while most of these reports' ideas lay within the general framework of Kremlin strategic ends, there were also considerable differences about the means of achieving those ends, with our authors paying far more attention to making them palatable to the West.

In conclusion, it might be useful to compare briefly this line of Soviet thinking about the post-war world with what American and British officials thought at that time about Moscow's post-war plans and future relation with its war-time ally. The first full-scale U.S. estimate of Soviet post-war intentions was not off the mark in presenting the main concerns and dilemmas of Soviet policy planners. The American analysts emphasized the security-oriented nature of Soviet objectives, the severe restrictions on Soviet resources and capabilities, the complicating but not overriding importance of ideology, and the unlikelihood of the USSR's "embarking on [an] adventurist foreign policy."⁶³ The "fundamental problem" of the Kremlin strategy was seen in how to enhance Soviet security positions while avoiding, or at least postponing, a break-up with the United States and Great Britain.⁶⁴ On such a basis the continuing cooperation of the Big Three was still deemed possible. Thanks to Edward Mark and some other American historians we are now familiar with a significant trend within the State Department which went along similar lines of foreseeing a balance of power and spheres of influence accommodation with the Soviets, first of all in the key area of Eastern Europe, provided those spheres remained "open" and limited.⁶⁵ A similar trend, albeit more speculative and short-lived, is visible in the

⁶² "Comments by Comrade Molotov," enclosed in A. Vyshinski to Molotov ("Proposals on the Polish Question"), 16 February 1945, AVP RF, f. 6, op. 7, d. 588, p. 39, 1.1. A muted paraphrase of this outburst found its way into Stalin's Correspondence with Truman: Stalin to Truman, 24 April 1945, *Perepiska Predsedatelya Soveta Ministrov SSSR s Prezidentami SShA i Premier-Ministramy Velikobritanii vo Vremia Velikoi Orechestvennoi Voiny, 1941- 1945* (Moskva: Politizdat, 1957), vol.2, 217-218.

⁶³ Joint Intelligence Committee 250, "Estimate of Soviet Post-war Capabilities and Intentions," 18 January 1945, NA, RG 165, ABC 384 U.N. (17 July 1944), D-2; see also Office of Strategic Services, Research and Analysis Branch, "Capabilities and Intentions of the USSR in the Post-war Period," 5 January 1945, NA microfilm publication M-1221, "Intelligence Reports, 1941-1961," Report N 2669.

⁶⁴ "Estimate of Soviet Post-war Capabilities and Intentions," D-5, D-17.

⁶⁵ Eduard Mark, "Charles E. Bohlen and the Acceptable Limits of Soviet Hegemony in Eastern Europe," *Diplomatic History* 3:2 (Spring 1979), 201-213; Eduard Mark, "American Policy toward Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1946: An Alternative Interpretation," *Journal of American History* 68 (September 1981), 313-336; Gaddis, *The Long Peace*, 50-52.

British Foreign Office documents of 1944-1945 on future Anglo-Soviet relations.⁶⁶ If these Soviet documents under review reveal anything new then it would be a confirmation of the existence of a somewhat parallel current on Soviet side. It was the impression of some U.S. diplomats during World War II, and some historians later, that there were under Stalin contending approaches to the West with “unilateralists” competing against “collaborationists.” These Litvinov-Maisky-Gromyko reports lend new credence to this view. They also put a new twist to the old question of whether it was possible, given this newly-revealed symmetry of thinking among the Big Three, to reach a better post-war accommodation between the Soviet and Anglo-American “orbits” instead of the rigid and militarized division of the European continent.

* * *

Of course, these documents reflect early and preliminary intentions, shaped before V-Day, Hiroshima and other momentous events of that volatile year 1945 which kept changing perceptions and behavior among all of the Big Three. Our authors themselves were responding to a quickly changing environment and trimming their sails accordingly. An adaptable and loyal Gromyko fitted well into the postwar picture, ingratiating himself with the big bosses. Litvinov, while becoming more and more pessimistic,⁶⁷ stuck to his guns of the possibility of a “grand bargain” with the West; only now, witnessing the growing role and strategic reach of the United States, was he turning to Americans as the principal partner in that deal. In one of his last memos to Molotov, written on the eve of December 1945 Council of Foreign Ministers conference in Moscow, Litvinov summarized this new emphasis as follows: “The strategic appetites of the United States, embracing all of the Atlantic and almost all of the Pacific, as well as Western Africa and the countries of the Near East, enable us to approach precisely the American government at the right moment with a proposal “to open cards.”⁶⁸ About the same time “Litvinov Commission” was disbanded as “having discharged its functions.”⁶⁹

Maisky (by then removed from the Allied Reparation Commission) also struggled to the end, still pushing for his and Litvinov’s version of a European division. In one of his last recommendations to Molotov regarding the forthcoming December 1945 Moscow conference, he advised to conduct negotiations on peace treaties with the former Nazi satellites “in such a way as to achieve a de facto recognition of the Balkans (except for Greece) and Eastern Europe by the Americans and the British as a Soviet ‘security zone’ in which they themselves display no significant political or economic activity.”⁷⁰

Yet by then, both Maisky and especially Litvinov were losing whatever remained of their status

⁶⁶ Graham Ross, ed., *The Foreign Office and the Kremlin. British Documents on Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1941-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 164-65, 197-98.

⁶⁷ Mastny, "The Cassandra in the Foreign Commissariat," 373.

⁶⁸ Litvinov, "USA and the Policy of Interference," 7 December 1945, AVP RF, f.6, op. 7, d.175, p. 17, l. 160.

⁶⁹ Litvinov to Molotov, 16 November 1945 (enclosing Minutes of the Commission's concluding meeting), AVP RF, f.7, op.7, d. 66, p.6, ll. 107-108.

⁷⁰ Maisky to Molotov, 29 November 1945, AVP RF, f.7, op. 7, d. 64, p. 6. l. 4.

and influence. Among other things, they appeared at the very bottom of the list of Soviet diplomats awarded decorations for 1945, a fact immediately noted by the U.S. Embassy in Moscow as another indication of changing winds at the Foreign Commissariat.⁷¹ At his farewell remarks to the U.S. Embassy staff in January 1946, Ambassador W. Averell Harriman accurately concluded: “Those who place greater emphasis on unilateral action rather than collective action are now in ascendancy in the Soviet government. Maisky and Litvinov are on the downgrade and the situation does not look good just now.”⁷² But it took a further deterioration between the Big Three in 1946-1947 to make this kind of thinking really unthinkable in Moscow, as well as in Washington and London.

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⁷¹ Am Embassy to State Department, 12 November 1945 (Subject: Awards conferred on Soviet notables), LC, Harriman Papers, Cont. 184, CF, November 8-14, 1945.

⁷² "Notes on Talk by Ambassador to Officers and Attaches of the Embassy, Moscow, January 22, 1946," LC, Harriman Papers, Cont. 186, CF January 17-23, 1946.

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