Record of meeting at the Kremlin, Moscow between Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs A. Eden and Mr. Molotov on 10 October 1944, at 7pm[[1]](#footnote-1)

RECORD OF MEETING AT THE KREMLIN

Mr. EDEN suggested that Bulgaria and the Balkans in general should be discussed[[2]](#footnote-2).

M. MOLOTOV suggested that they should first discuss Hungary in connection with what Marshal Stalin had said to the Prime Minister. Marshal Stalin thought that, in view of the considerable losses sustained in Hungary, the Red Army would not understand it if a principle of 50/50 were allotted. M. Molotov had been instructed by the Marshal to raise this question and to give his opinion.

Mr. EDEN said he would be glad to hear Molotov’s opinion.

M. MOLOTOV began by saying that the 75/25 principle was what the Soviet Government proposed, for the reason that Hungary bordered on the Soviet Union and the Red Army was operating in that country and suffering losses. Hungary had been and always would be a bordering country. Russia’s interest was therefore comprehensible. Russia did not want Hungary to be on the side of the aggressor in the future. At the same time, Russia had no territorial claims on Hungary.

Mr. EDEN remarked that His Majesty’s Government would certainly consider the question of Hungary, but he would prefer to have a chance of thinking it over[[3]](#footnote-3). […]

M. MOLOTOV pointed out that in Germany there would be three zones of occupation and the comparison with Germany was not clear. He had not heard of zones in Bulgaria. Marshal Stalin had said it would be for Russia to have 90 per cent interest in Bulgaria. If they could agree on a proportion of 90/10 then agreement could easily be reached on all the rest.

Mr. EDEN pointed out that this would put Britain in the same position as in Romania.

M. MOLOTOV agreed it would be so as regards the principle, but as regards the form of procedure a way could be found. It might be possible to think out a way to meet American and British wishes. For instance the conditions might be discussed in London. The machinery of the Control Commission[[4]](#footnote-4) might be made more favourable for Britain.

Mr. EDEN said the American formula if accepted by the Soviet Government attracted him, but he was quite ready to consider anything the Russians proposed provided Britain had a little more in Bulgaria. It was necessary to act with speed. Delay was bad.

M. MOLOTOV agreed about the necessity for speed, but said he could not understand the American proposal. How would the three representatives act in Bulgaria where there were no zones? Did the Americans and British contemplate stationing troops in Bulgaria? How could there be proper management in Bulgaria after the end of the war with Germany? It was obscure and might mean friction. He considered that 90/10 as proposed by Marshal Stalin was fair.

Mr. EDEN replied that there was no intention to station troops in Bulgaria[[5]](#footnote-5). He suggested there might be a permanent Soviet chairman on the Control Commission.

M. MOLOTOV refused to consider this as three representatives would decide affairs which would mean that the British and Americans would have 33 per cent, each and the Soviet Union 1 per cent, more than they because the President was a Soviet citizen. They would have 34 per cent instead of 90 per cent. He asked what was the object of the proposal.

Mr. EDEN pointed out that in Romania the British and American officers were observers. For the period of hostilities with Germany they accepted that position also in Bulgaria. But after the surrender of Germany they would like to be more than observers and have active participation. He had no views as to how to express this. Britain’s share was less than the Russian because Russia had troops and administration in Bulgaria.

M. MOLOTOV thought it would be a strange kind of management where no indication was given of who was responsible.

Mr. EDEN said the main responsibility would lie with the Soviet Union.

M. MOLOTOV declared that despite this responsibility the Soviet Union was asking for 90 per cent and not 100 per cent.

Mr. EDEN said he did no know much about these percentages. All he wanted was a greater share than we already had in Romania. In Romania we had 10 per cent, which was almost nothing.

M. MOLOTOV pointed out that the idea of percentages arose from the meeting on the previous day, and it was worthy of consideration. Could they not agree on the following: Bulgaria, Hungary, and Yugoslavia 75/25 per cent, each?

Mr. EDEN said that would be worse than on the previous day.

M. MOLOTOV then suggested 90/10 for Bulgaria and 50/50 for Yugoslavia.

Mr. EDEN pointed out that had not agreed about Bulgaria. He was ready to meet M. Molotov’s wishes with regard to Hungary, but he asked for M. Molotov’s help to get some participation in Bulgaria after the Germans had been beaten. Possibly some other formula would be acceptable. For instance, we and the Americans might each have an officer on the Control Commission who would not be as important as the Soviet representative.

M. MOLOTOV suggested 75/25 for Hungary. If this were adopted, then Bulgaria should be 75/25 and Yugoslavia 60/40. This was the limit to which he could go.

Mr. EDEN said he could not make this suggestion to the Prime Minister who was greatly interested in Yugoslavia. He had been at pains to champion Tito and to furnish arms[[6]](#footnote-6). Any range in Yugoslav percentages would upset him. Mr. EDEN suggested Hungary 75/25; Bulgaria 80/20; Yugoslavia 50/50.

M. MOLOTOV was ready to agree to 50/50 Yugoslavia if Bulgaria were 90/10. If the figure for Bulgaria had to be amended then Yugoslavia would also be changed.

Mr. EDEN pointed out that with regard to Hungary we had made a concession.

M. MOLOTOV repeated that Hungary bordered on Russia and not on Great Britain. The Russians had suffered losses in Hungary. Marshal Stalin had mentioned this to the Prime Minister. What did 60/40 for Yugoslavia mean? It meant that on the coast Russia would have less interest and would not interfere; but she would have greater influence in the centre[[7]](#footnote-7).

Mr. EDEN repeated that Great Britain had been at war with Bulgaria for three years. The Bulgarians had treated us badly. They had beaten British and American prisoners. Russia had been at war with Bulgaria for 48 hours, and then Great Britain had been warned off Bulgaria who had received favourable treatment.

M. MOLOTOV did not agree. Russia had suffered more than Great Britain from the Bulgarians, to say nothing of the last war, but the Soviet Union did not want to increase its number of enemies. It had intended several times to declare war on Bulgaria. The harm done by Bulgaria to the Soviet Union was many times greater than that done by anyone else. Romania and Bulgaria were Black Sea Powers. Neither of them had access to the Mediterranean so that Britain should have little interest in these countries. M. Molotov was not speaking of Greece. The Soviet Union was prepared to help Great Britain to be strong in the Mediterranean, but hoped that she would help the Soviet Union in the Black Sea. That was why they were interested in Bulgaria. Bulgaria was not Greece, Italy, Spain, or even Yugoslavia[[8]](#footnote-8).

Mr. EDEN said that Great Britain had little interest in Bulgaria and was therefore asking very little. But she had been at war with her and the question would be looked at through British eyes. Tito happened to have been accessible and Britain had helped him with arms. When the British public found out that Tito had come to Moscow[[9]](#footnote-9) and their Government had been kept in ignorance there would be criticism and rightly so. Tito was making an arrangement for Bulgarian troops to stay in Yugoslavia, an arrangement between Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Russia. A bad impression would be created and suspicion aroused as to Russian intentions[[10]](#footnote-10).

M. MOLOTOV said he thought Marshal Stalin would agree to the following 75/25 for Bulgaria, but 60/40 for Yugoslavia. He did not think that British sailors would call the Black Sea a “sea,” but only a lake. After such a war and the sacrifices of the Soviet Union anyone would understand that they had to make sure of their safety. As regards Marshal Tito, he had seen him for the first time now in Moscow and Marshal Stalin also had not seen him before. His impression was that Tito was an honest man and friendly to the Allies. There was no doubt about it. Mr Churchill’s son[[11]](#footnote-11) had met him and would be able to speak of Tito’s influence[[12]](#footnote-12). He would confirm what M. Molotov had said about his honesty and friendliness. It was a double mistake for Tito not to have told his British and Americans about his visit to Moscow. He was treating his meeting with Stalin as an advertisement to increase his prestige. In Italy he had met the Prime Minister. M. Molotov thought he was rather provincial. He had spent too much time in the mountains. He liked mystery, but he had no ill will. […]

Mr. EDEN said he did not care so much about the figures. He understood Russia’s interest in Bulgaria and Great Britain accepted it. But she asked for something more than in Romania. If M. Molotov did not like the American formula, any other proposed by the Russians would be considered. For example. instead of calling it the Allied Control Commission it might be called for the Soviet Control Commission, with an American and British representative.

M. MOLOTOV asked whether they could reach agreement in regard to Yugoslavia.

Mr. EDEN asked what they had to decide.

M. MOLOTOV claimed more weight for the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was not concerned with affairs on the coast. They were ready to stay on their “lake.”

Mr. EDEN preferred to have a common policy. There were various questions to decide. When Yugoslavia was free there was the question of the relations between Tito and the Government of London[[13]](#footnote-13). Were they to come together? Was there to be joint administration? It was desirable that the Allies should pursue the same ideas.

M. MOLOTOV agreed that the question required attention. He asked Sir Archibald Clark Kerr for his advice how to proceed.

SIR ARCHIBALD CLARK KERR thought the best way was to bring Tito and Šubašić[[14]](#footnote-14) together if the Soviet Government and His Majesty’s Government used their influence in that direction and then they could decide what form of government they wanted – monarchy, or republic or anything else[[15]](#footnote-15).

M. MOLOTOV said he would report to Marshal Stalin and thought they could find a way out.

Mr. EDEN, summing up, said the one question outstanding about Bulgaria was the Control Commission after the war with Germany was over. They had agreed that the discussions should take place in Moscow, and that there should be joint signature.

M. MOLOTOV claimed that this was bound up with Yugoslavia.

Mr. EDEN disagreed. He appealed for a settlement of the Bulgarian question within 24 hours as the delay was embarrassing.

M. MOLOTOV said that he would do his best[[16]](#footnote-16).

[TNA, FO 800/814/51]

Key words: The Balkans, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania

1. Soviet minutes of the interview are published in: Rzheshevskiy O.А. Stalin i Cherchill’. p. 429–435. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In Soviet minutes this phrase is omitted. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The British version lays out the debate on Hungary in more detail. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Allied Control Commissions, composed of representatives of the victorious powers, were to oversee the occupation of defeated Axis powers and satellites. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. However, in August 1944 at one of the meetings of the Armistice and Post-War Committee, the Deputy to Eden, R. Law emphasized the Foreign Office desire to send to Bulgaria two groups of occupying forces (46,600 personnel) that would be withdrawn from Bulgaria by the end of the first year after Germany’s defeat, in order to ensure control over the transfer of some territories from Bulgaria to Greece and Yugoslavia, as well as to demonstrate the "British interest in Bulgaria”. Even then, members of the Committee expressed doubts in the feasibility of the idea and "the likelihood of the USSR agreeing to it”. (APW Meeting (44) 14th Meeting (in: COS (44) 804 (O), 04/09 / 1944) // TNA, CAB 80/87). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Subsequently, in light of Tito’s apparently increasing orientation towards the Soviet Union, the shrinking of British influence in Yugoslavia for Churchill will go hand in hand with his personal resentment. "You know my views about Tito, whom I never trusted since he fled from Vis. [in September 1944] ... I therefore fully agree that all supplies to Tito should be shut down on the best pretext that can be found”, Churchill wrote to Eden in April 1945 (From Prime Minister for Secretary of State, 18/04/1945 (annex to COS (45) 293 (O), 25/04/1945) // TNA, CAB 80/94). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Molotov’s interpretation of "percentage" regarding Yugoslavia, in comparison with later British estimates, shows the very vagueness and uncertainty of the "percentage" concept in the Soviet-British agreement. For example, Kerr was trying to tie the "percentage agreement" on Yugoslavia to the organization of Yugoslavia’s armed forces after the war: the USSR would be responsible for the ground forces, the United Kingdom - for the Air Force and Navy (telegram to Molotov on March 1, 1945 Published in: Otnosheniya Rossii (SSSR) s Yugoslaviyey, p. 417). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. In the Soviet minutes, Molotov’s conversation is presented in a more abridged form, as important thoughts on how Soviet position in the Black Sea, in a sense paralleled that of the British - the Mediterranean was omitted. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Tito's visit took place 21 - 28 September 1944. From the information communicated in Molotov’s letters to Kerr and Harriman from 26 September (the agreement on the temporary entry of Soviet forces into Yugoslavia, "with the aim of launching operations against the German and Hungarian troops in Hungary"), it was possible to fully conclude that Soviet position in the Balkans would be further strengthened. Tito's visit to Moscow was one of the incentives for Churchill to go to Moscow to clarify Soviet intentions (Gilbert M. Winston S. Churchill. Vol. VII. London, 1986. p. 972-973). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Churchill personally expressed Britain’s negative attitude to any plans for a Balkan federation to Tito during meetings with him in Naples on 12 - 13 August 1944. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Churchill (Spencer-Churchill), Randolph (1911 - 1968) - British politician and military officer. During the war, as a member of Parliament, he was assigned to the Special Air Service and carried out a series of military missions in the Balkan countries. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Upon learning that Randolph Churchill was part of a British military mission with Tito (Churchill wrote to Stalin specifically on 4 January 1944 about his son’s arrival to Tito’s headquarters) the Soviet side became apprehensive and distrusting. In the spring of 1944, when the Germans launched a surprise attack on Drvar, where Tito’s headquarters were, Stalin's suspicions were voiced in a more concrete form (according to the chief Air Marshal A.E. Golovanov): "... Our comrades are unable to communicate with Tito’s staff on either one or another channel. This cannot be a coincidence. After pacing for a bit, Stalin paused and thoughtfully, as if to himself, said: - Whose work is this, I want to know … It looks as though the son does not use his time for nothing" (Golovanov А.E. Dal’nyaya bombardirovochnaya... M., 2004. p. 491). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Formed in London in June 1941, after the capitulation of Yugoslavia and the exile of the country's government. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Šubašić, Ivan (1892 – 1955) – Yugoslavian and Croatian statesman and politician, Ban of Croatia (1939 – 1943), Prime-Minister of Yugoslavian Government-in-Exile (1944 – 1945). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. A joint message by Molotov and Eden to Tito and Šubašić, sent on 13 October was the catalyst for negotiations that were held at the end of the month between the Yugoslav leaders in Belgrade. The negotiations culminated in the signing of the agreement on 1 November (the so-called Tito - Šubašić agreement) to form a coalition government. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The final part of the conversation is described in Soviet minutes more sparingly [↑](#footnote-ref-16)