Dealing with Democrats.
Decision Making and Policy Formation within the British Foreign Office's Central Department with regard to the Czechoslovak political exiles in Britain and the Czechoslovak Question, 1939 to 1945.

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, part of the University of Surrey.

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Abstract

This study seeks to analyse decision making and policy formation within the British Foreign Office's Central Department in regard to the Czechoslovak political exiles based in Britain and the wider Czechoslovak question between 1939 and 1945. This thesis will examine the general interaction between the British and Czechoslovak authorities during this period and will study the development of British policy on a number of crucial issues that defined this relationship. These are the recognition question, the influence of military considerations, tripartite relations with both the Soviet Union and the Polish government in exile, relations with the Sudeten German exiles in Britain and the evolution of British policy on population transfers from Czechoslovakia, and finally the role played by the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Particular emphasis will be placed on the manner in which British policy evolved, the external influences on this process and the extent to which the exiles themselves were able to shape the prevailing course of British policy.

This study is based on a detailed and systematic examination of primary materials held by the Public Records Office and in other archives. This research incorporates materials from a number of departments and from other governmental and non-governmental institutions that played a role in the creation of British policy during this period. Much use has also been made of official sources, published documents, diaries, private papers, memoirs, and the canon of secondary works on this subject in both English and in Czech. The secondary works on this subject, written during the Cold War, are of particular interest and this study seeks to undertake a critical examination of the conclusions they contain and to compare them against the current state of archival research and new developments and approaches in historical studies. This is not least as these works, predominately written by
Czechoslovak émigrés based in the west after 1948, continue to have a disproportionate influence on our understanding of Anglo-Czechoslovak relations during this period.
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Introduction

The polarised effects of Cold War politics have seriously distorted the history of Anglo-Czechoslovak relations between 1939 and 1945. After the Communist *coup d'état* in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 both the Communist authorities and their opponents created their own accounts of this period. As a result, the history of the Czechoslovak government in exile, an organisation of democratic émigrés led by Dr Edvard Beneš, and its relations with the British authorities were made subservient to the prevailing ideological and political currents that then existed and many of the texts that emerged during this period were highly mythologised. While the Communist version of this history has been thoroughly discredited since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, the opposing anti-Communist version produced in the west remains largely unchallenged, and it is this version of history that has come to dominate the subject, especially as so few western historians have researched this topic. This is not to suggest that this interpretation is wholly inaccurate, but rather that given the politicised climate in which it was produced and the absence of accessible primary materials significant errors of analysis can be identified. Moreover, these errors continue to be uncritically replicated by Czech, Slovak and western historians. The Czechoslovak writer, Erazim Kohák, addressed these issues in his essay ‘Making and Writing History (Edvard Beneš 1943-1948)’ where he accused émigré historians of politically influenced anachronism, in other words, of consistently portraying myth as

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1 The term Anglo-Czechoslovak relations is one that is often found in the Foreign Office files and for clarity this thesis will confine itself to the use of this term to refer to relations between the British and Czechoslovak authorities.


history.\textsuperscript{4} It is necessary; therefore, to undertake a critical examination of this subject and to compare these received interpretations against the current state of archival research and new developments and approaches in historical studies.\textsuperscript{5}

In order to develop a more balanced and accurate, post-Cold War, history of the British position on the Czechoslovak question during this period this thesis will examine policy formation within the British Foreign Office and its Central Department, which was the primary nexus for relations between the British authorities and the Czechoslovak government in exile. While several British historians have examined this subject in recent years, no comprehensive examination of Anglo-Czechoslovak relations from the British perspective has been undertaken in English. As a result, there remains a gap in the literature on this subject. A systematic and detailed examination of the Foreign Office’s archives at the Public Records Office, as well as those of related departments, and a comparison of these documents with related primary and secondary sources in English and Czech reveals that many of the commonly accepted interpretations of this relationship can be shown to be inaccurate.\textsuperscript{6} These discrepancies are not so much of a chronological or factual nature, as the key events and personalities that defined this period of exile have long been


known, but are rather issues of interpretation, nuance and context. Consequently, certain key conclusions about relations between the British authorities and the Czechoslovak government in exile need to be revised.

It is necessary, therefore, to outline the literature that has been generated on this topic, and to examine the various interpretations they contain, paying particular attention to those works produced by Czechoslovak emigrés in the west during the Cold War, as it is this material that continues to dominate the subject. The reason for this is simple; writers and historians of Central European origin have produced the vast majority of work on this topic. No scholarly monographs, collections of documents or secondary works were produced by British or western historians on Anglo-Czechoslovak wartime relations before 1989, in contrast to the wealth of material on the Munich Agreement of 1938. Although references to the Czechoslovak exiles in London appear in a number of British works on the war itself, and in a number of diaries and memoirs, no comprehensive accounts were produced. Even the memoirs of the two Britons who experienced the closest contacts with the Czechoslovak exiles, Robert Bruce Lockhart and Frank Roberts, only contain a limited amount of relevant information. In many respects the dearth of material parallels the amount of time the British authorities actually spent considering Czechoslovak issues during the war.

The literature on this subject can be divided up into five phases. First, those primary materials created during the war itself and up to the end of 1947. These

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include the documents and propaganda materials produced by the exiles themselves, their allies and their enemies.\textsuperscript{10} In particular there are books and articles written by Beneš, Hubert Ripka, Milan Hodža and Josef Polišenský.\textsuperscript{11} Second, those materials produced after the Communist \textit{coup d'état} and throughout the 1950s, both the official Communist version of history and the opposing émigré / dissident accounts produced in the west. Particularly works by John Brown (a pseudonym), Josef Korbel, Václav Král, Jozef Lettrich, Ripka, Eduard Táborský, Jan Stránský, and Pavel Tigrider, who founded the highly influential émigré journal \textit{Svědectví} [Testament].\textsuperscript{12} Another commentator on this subject was Wenzel Jaksch, a Sudeten German Social Democrat who had also been in London during the war, and whose work focused on the forcible transfer of the Sudeten German population from Czechoslovakia after the war.\textsuperscript{13}

Third, the work produced in Czechoslovakia, and elsewhere, during the brief liberalisation of the Communist regime in the 1960s, prior to the Warsaw Pact invasion of 1968. Notable are those works by Jan Křen, Radomír Luža and Rudolf Ströbinger, and the collections of published primary documents that began to appear at this time, particularly those volumes by Libuše Otáhalová and Milada Červinková


\textsuperscript{13} W. Jaksch, \textit{Europe’s Road to Potsdam}, London, 1963, first published in German in 1958.}
and by Vilem Prečan. This phase was especially important as it represented the first academic reassessment of this period based upon primary documentation. Fourth, those works produced in the west after 1968 up until the revolution of 1989. These included works by Luža, Vojtech Mastny, Colonel František Moravec and Victor Mamatey. Equally important was the work of the German historian, Detlef Brandes, one of the first people to examine the Foreign Office files released in the early 1970s, although his work is clearly sympathetic to the Sudeten German interpretation of events. Finally, those materials produced after 1989, a period marked by a growth of interest in this subject by western historians and the publication of further volumes of documents; particularly works by Callum MacDonald, Mark Cornwall, Michael Dockrill, Jan Kuílík and Zbyněk Zeman. More important still are the volumes of published documents now available on President Beneš’s Decrees, the transfer of the Sudeten German population, plans for a post-war Czechoslovak-Polish federation and Czechoslovak-Soviet relations.
The most significant point to make about this canon of work is that between 1948 and 1989 the subject was dominated by émigré writers, none of whom had complete access to all the relevant primary documentation. Indeed, most of the works produced in the west during the 1950s relied heavily on oral recollections from opponents of the Communist regime; the lack of reliable information amongst the émigré community in the west encouraged narratives that were based upon rumour, supposition and innuendo. Thus, as Kohák notes, no work on this subject can be considered to be definitive or complete even before the politicised effects of the Cold War are taken into account. Obviously, the Czechoslovak and Soviet archives were not generally accessible before 1989, but it should be recognised that access to the relevant documents in the west was also restricted. The British Foreign Office archives were only opened in the early 1970s and further materials, such as those dealing with the Special Operations Executive (SOE), were not released until the mid-1990s. This lack of access to primary materials is one that has slowly begun to be rectified over the last decade, but there remains much work to be done in this area. It is also clear that there was insufficient time between the end of the Second World War and the events of 1948 to establish a measured historical assessment of the government in exile’s work.

This is illustrated by an examination of the changing interpretations regarding the successes and failures of the ‘action abroad’ over the last 50 years. Perhaps not surprisingly, the materials on the ‘six years in exile’ produced prior to 1947 stressed Beneš’s international successes and paid less attention to internal political relations.

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21 FO 371 Series and the HS Series.
The central focus of these works was the struggle against Nazi Germany, the difficult task of re-constructing a Czechoslovak state within her pre-Munich frontiers and justifying her role as a bridge between the eastern and western Allies, and not, as would subsequently become the case, conflict with the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSC). The accounts of the exile written in the west after 1948, however, rejected these original, positive conclusions and substituted for them a new set of conclusions that took the Communist seizure of power – not the Second World War - as their starting point and context. These narratives, often devoid of primary references, increasingly focused on a narrow series of key events; the failure of Czechoslovak- Polish talks on a post-war federation, the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty of December 1943, the surrender of Podkarpatska rus (Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia) to the Soviet Union, the uprisings in Slovakia and Prague and most of all the exiled government’s relations with Moscow. These accounts, Korbel’s work in the United States provides the clearest and most well known example, sought to link the activities of the exiles in London to the Communist takeover. They tended to focus on those political issues related to what many regarded as Beneš’s naïve, and overly enthusiastic, diplomatic relations with Stalin and the Soviet Union, views that were prevalent in the British Foreign Office during the 1940s. It would be inaccurate to suggest that the accounts produced in the west after 1948 were totally homogeneous, however, and differences in interpretation and motivation can be identified, not least in Táborský’s and Luža’s work. Yet, the prevailing interpretations of these émigré

24 Korbel, Twentieth Century Czechoslovakia, pp 156-217.
writers, largely formed in the 1950s, continue to be viewed as a legitimate and accurate history of this period.

The effects of the Cold War are even more clearly observable in the literature (in Czech, German and English) that deals with the planning, execution and consequences of the post-war transfer of the Sudeten German population from Czechoslovakia, a policy initiated by the government in exile and developed in close cooperation with the British authorities and sanctioned by the Allies at the Potsdam Conference in 1945. The resulting diskuse o odsunu [discussion on the transfers] clearly demonstrates how the Cold War polarised and mythologised the debate on this question.26 For example, the Sudeten German expellee groups consistently inflated the number of Germans who died during the transfers, claiming 250,000 fatalities, and these figures were widely and uncritically accepted as fact in the west right up until the downward revision of these figures, to some 20-30,000, in the late 1990s.27 The transfers were also inaccurately linked to the KSČ and the coup of 1948.28 In fact, the way in which history was made subservient to the political imperatives of the Cold War was made explicit in 1951 when the National Committee for a Free Europe, created and funded by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), encouraged Czechoslovak émigrés in the west to accept the Sudeten German version of events, regardless of their veracity.29 As the historian Eva Hahn has commented, ‘anti-Communist Czech dissidents and emigrants, as well as the post-Communist elites that adhere to fundamentalist anti-Communism, still view the world through the eyes of

28 Jaksch, Europe’s Road to Potsdam, p383.
the national-conservative right-wingers in Germany. Quite simply the opinions and conclusions formed during the Cold War continue to exert an influence on how this history is comprehended today.

The events of 1948, therefore, can be shown to have had a profound effect on the history of the ‘action abroad,’ not least because they revised the exile’s own interpretation of their activities, but also because they established two opposing, yet intertwined, narratives in the absence of any original studies by British historians. The first was the Communist interpretation and the second the opposing émigré / dissident account. The former was dedicated to legitimising the Communist’s seizure of power and discrediting the non-Communist exiles in London, while the latter was devoted to proving the lack of legitimacy of the new regime and apportioning blame for the coup. Consequently, the opposing camps became locked in a cyclical dialogue with each other, each trying to disprove the other’s position, yet neither party was actually engaged in a constructive historical dialogue with the past. The history of the ‘six years in exile’ was effectively re-written by Communists and anti-Communists alike during the Cold War, a process that dislocated accounts of the ‘action abroad’ from their original context. If this analysis is correct, then clearly, this fact must be recognised, and a re-assessment of these mythical interpretations must now be undertaken.

This thesis will begin by examining the general interaction between the British and Czechoslovak authorities during the war and will detail the development of British policy on a number of crucial issues; the recognition question, military relations, relations with the Sudeten German exiles, the evolution of British policy on population transfers from Czechoslovakia, tripartite relations with both the Polish

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30 M.D. Brown & E. Hahn, ‘The Sudeten Dialogues,’ Central Europe Review, 7.5.01, Vol. 3, No.16,
government in exile and the Soviet Union and finally relations with SOE. The same chapter will also detail how the course of the war, and the subsequent creation of the Grand Alliance, influenced the formation of British policy on the Czechoslovak question. The following chapters will then examine each of these issues in more detail and analyse the development of British policy in each case. It is important to recognise that the Czechoslovak question was never a high priority for the British authorities and at no time between 1939 and 1945 was there a coherent British strategy on how to deal with the exiled government's long-term political objectives, such as the reconstruction of the Czechoslovak state within its pre-war frontiers. As a result British policy was consistently formed in reaction to the course of events and the political pressures applied by Beneš and his colleagues.
Chapter One

Outline of Anglo-Czechoslovak Relations, 1939 to 1945.

The German occupation of Czechoslovakia, on the 15 March 1939, proved to be a defining moment in Anglo-Czechoslovak relations and one that was possibly more significant, at least in the short term, than the conclusion of the Munich Agreement five months previously.\(^1\) Not only did this event herald a major shift in British foreign policy, it also marked the beginnings of an exiled Czechoslovak 'action abroad' dedicated to the liberation, and eventual re-establishment, of the democratic Czechoslovak Republic.\(^2\) Led by Dr Edvard Beneš, the former Czechoslovak President, this movement used the final collapse of Czechoslovakia to begin a determined, and ultimately successful, campaign to restore that state within her pre-1938 frontiers.\(^3\) Although this organisation originated in the United States, where Beneš was then based, it moved to London in the summer of 1939 and, staffed by numerous Czechoslovak exiles, soon established working links with the British government through the Central Department of the Foreign Office.\(^4\) This department and its officials became the primary nexus for diplomatic relations between these émigrés and the British authorities and, as a result, it played a crucial role in the

\(^1\) The First Czechoslovak Republic was dissolved in November 1938 and the resulting Second Republic was referred to as Czechoslovakia, hyphenated as to reflect the greater autonomy given to Slovakia. When Germany invaded on 15 March 1939 a German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was declared, Slovakia had declared its independence the day before. Technically, therefore, Czechoslovakia had ceased to exist. This linguistic differentiation was to play a central role in British policy during the early period of relations. The Foreign Office referred to the exiles as Czecho-Slovaks in order to avoid recognising the pre-Munich borders of the former state, on the whole the Czechoslovak émigrés ignored these linguistic niceties. The use of the hyphenated form ended after Britain recognised a Czechoslovak Government in Exile in July 1941. For clarity this thesis will confine itself to the use of the term Czechoslovak.


formation of British policy on the Czechoslovak question during the Second World War. The German invasion of Czechoslovakia, therefore, provided the stimulus for six years of close, though often turbulent, Anglo-Czechoslovak co-operation up until the liberation of Prague in May 1945.

These relations were shaped and influenced by a number of interconnected factors, such as the long drawn out process of British recognition of Beneš and his colleagues as an official government in exile, the course of the war itself and the Czechoslovak contribution to the Allied war effort. In addition, Anglo-Czechoslovak relations with the Polish government in exile, the anti-fascist Sudeten German exiles in London and with the Soviet Union also played a major role in shaping British policy. This was not least because these contacts led to plans for a Czechoslovak-Polish federation, the transfer of the Sudeten German population from Czechoslovakia and, controversially, Beneš’s decision that his foreign policy had to be based ‘between east and west.’ This last aspect was to prove especially important because after the Soviet Union’s entrance into the war the Czechoslovak exiles strove to regularise their relations with Moscow and the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ). This policy, although necessary from Beneš’s perspective to guarantee Czechoslovakia’s frontiers and her future security, placed an increasing strain on his government’s relations with the British authorities. After spending the war in London, Beneš was obliged to return to Prague via Moscow in early 1945.

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Before focusing in detail on the various interconnected factors that influenced British policy on the Czechoslovak question it is necessary to provide an overview of the key events that defined this association. The purpose of this approach is threefold. First, to depict accurately the historical context in which British policy was created and pursued. Second, to provide a chronological outline of the development of these various issues. Finally, to examine the interaction between the formation of British foreign policy and the course of the war itself, principally because British decision making was inexorably linked to, and subservient to, the prior actions of other states and the success or failure of military action.

Anglo-Czechoslovak relations can be divided into three distinct periods. The first lasted from the beginning of 1939 up until the outbreak of war in September; and was marked by the continuing repercussions of the Munich Agreement, by British reactions to the events to March 1939 and the need to deal with the successor entities that emerged from the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. It is worth noting that the Munich Agreement cast a long shadow over Anglo-Czechoslovak relations during the war and was a consistence source of tension between the two parties, particularly as Beneš was determined to annul its terms, while the British authorities were unwilling to reopen what they regarded as an embarrassing episode. This was significant because as Lord Annan later remarked, 'To the Foreign Office embarrassment is almost worse than diplomatic defeat, because embarrassment is a continuing state of discomfort, like a running sore.'

The second period lasted between September 1939 and June 1941 and was largely taken

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up by relations between the emerging Czechoslovak ‘action abroad’ and the British authorities. These included the recognition of a Czechoslovak National Committee and, subsequently, a Provisional Government in exile, as well as relations with the other exiled governments in London.

The last period began immediately after the German invasion of the Soviet Union and lasted up until the end of the war. This final period saw British recognition of a fully accredited Czechoslovak government in exile and, after the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich in Prague in the summer of 1942, an official British denunciation of the terms of the Munich Agreement. In addition, the Czechoslovak government had to re-align its foreign policy in response to the Soviet Union’s growing influence in, and eventual occupation of, Central Europe. Consequently relations with the Polish government in exile deteriorated, plans for a joint federation were shelved and replaced by proposals for the wholesale transfer of the Sudeten German population from Czechoslovakia. This was a situation that resulted in the signing of a Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty in December 1943 and a growing suspicion amongst many British officials that Beneš’s was forming too close an attachment to Moscow. Anglo-Czechoslovak relations deteriorated further when Beneš was forced to recognise the very real limitations of British influence in the region after the Special Operation Executive’s (SOE) failure adequately to support the uprisings in Slovakia.

9 FO 371 30835 C7210/326/12 A. Eden to J. Masaryk, 5 August 1942.
In addition, it is important to consider how British decision makers perceived the Czechoslovak question immediately before the war, especially as these attitudes exerted an influence on their later bilateral relations in London. Attitudes amongst British officials towards the Paris Peace settlement of 1919 and consequently Czechoslovakia and the Sudeten Germans are well known and there is no need to recount them here.\(^\text{12}\) While it would be unhelpful to make sweeping generalisations about British views on these issues, it would be largely accurate to state that these views were generally negative with regard to Czechoslovakia's treatment of its German citizens and broadly favoured peaceful compromise with Germany over German minorities in Central Europe.\(^\text{13}\) This position was compounded by Britain's military weakness on the Continent and her understandable disinclination to go to war over this question.\(^\text{14}\) It was these views that eventually evolved into the policies of appeasement and culminated in the Munich Agreement of September 1938. It would be inaccurate, however, to suggest that such pro-appeasement policies predominated or were held by all in government or the Foreign Office.\(^\text{15}\)

These attitudes centred on two main contentions. First, that a significant proportion of the British foreign policy forming elite regarded many of the new states in Central Europe as artificial creations, with arbitrary borders that would have to be revised


in order to guarantee security in Europe.\textsuperscript{16} Such attitudes had a significant effect on thinking during the crisis of 1939.\textsuperscript{17} John Troutbeck, a Counsellor at the British embassy in Prague, later referred to Czechoslovakia as a ‘distressful and indefensible mosaic’ adding that he hoped it would not be re-constructed after the war.\textsuperscript{18} Even the Permanent Under Secretary of States for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Cadogan, noted that, ‘We must cut our losses in central and eastern Europe – let Germany, if she can, find her ‘lebensraum,’ and establish herself, if she can, as a powerful economic unit.’\textsuperscript{19} Therefore, not only was Britain militarily incapable of defending Czechoslovakia, but some officials were not pre-disposed to defend such a problematic multi-national creation against what they saw as justified German grievances and the threat of war and several were not inclined to see the re-creation of these states after the war had been won.

Second, that many British officials believed that the Sudeten Germans’ claims of discrimination, which had led to the Munich Agreement, were not only entirely legitimate, but that the Czechoslovak government was ultimately responsible for failing to rectify this position.\textsuperscript{20} These attitudes had a long pedigree and had been fostered by a number of British diplomatic representatives in Prague, first by the British chargé d’affaires, Cecil Gosling, then (to a lesser degree) by Sir George Clark, Sir Joseph

\textsuperscript{17} S. Newman, March 1939: The British Guarantee to Poland. A Study in the Continuity of British Foreign Policy, Oxford, 1976, p33.
\textsuperscript{18} FO 371 22898 C1282607/12 Troutbeck minute, 22 August 1939.
\textsuperscript{20} Cornwall, ‘The Rise and Fall of a ‘Special Relationship’?,’ in Brivati & Jones (eds), Themes in Contemporary British History, p132, K. Robbins, Politicians, Diplomacy and War in Modern British
Addison, Sir Ronald Macleay and Sir Basil Newton. Although their collective reports from 1919 to 1938 were by no means entirely disparaging, over time, these attitudes fostered a negative view of Czechoslovakia within the Foreign Office and beyond, not least with Orme Sargent, the Assistant Under Secretary of State with responsibility for the Central Department. These perceptions exerted an important influence on British decision making towards the Czechoslovak exiles in London throughout the war and although they never resulted in demonstrations of open prejudice they did inform the general tone of British relations with their Czechoslovak allies and resulted in a disinclination to support many of Beneš’s political objectives.

Although the German invasion of Czechoslovakia proved to be a decisive juncture in Anglo-Czechoslovak relations, most of the Foreign Office’s time immediately prior to this event was spent dealing with financial and industrial questions that had resulted from the truncation of Czechoslovakia the previous year. These issues clearly reveal the serious difficulties that the British authorities had in constructing a ‘coherent strategy’ towards Central Europe in early 1939. These difficulties were compounded by Britain’s failure to guarantee the new frontiers of Czechoslovakia from renewed German aggression and subsequently allowed Beneš to use the events of March 1939 to launch his campaign for the reconstruction of the Czechoslovak state. In addition, the British authorities soon realised that German interest in Czechoslovakia was now focused on controlling its vast armaments industry and although efforts were made to prevent these

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assets falling under German control, they failed with disastrous consequences. These were concerns that had, since the spring of 1938, seen the Foreign Office press for the use of 'British money and economic strength to buttress the economies of those countries [in this region] against too great a dependence on Germany.' Although these efforts were mainly concentrated on Greece and Romania, British loans to Czechoslovakia and the interest in her armaments industry must be viewed in the light of these wider considerations.

Neville Chamberlain had accepted the idea of a re-constructive loan to Czechoslovakia, but it was the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, who further promoted this idea in Cabinet. This was regarded as being necessary because the promised guarantee of Czechoslovak's post-Munich frontiers had not been finalised in the face of German intransigence and Britain's understandable reluctance to enter into a unilateral guarantee. Consequently, financial assistance proved to be the only way to demonstrate continued British interest in Czechoslovakia. Even so it was immediately apparent to the Foreign Office that such a loan was more of a benevolent, possibly guilty, gesture than a serious attempt to re-create a viable Czechoslovak economy freed from German influence. Negotiations were conducted by the Foreign Office, the Treasury, the French government and a Czechoslovak delegation headed by Dr Vilem Popíšil. The final

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27 FO 371 22893 C95/3/12, F. Roberts minute, 2 January 1939, see also Treasury to W. Strang, 2 January 1939 & Dilks (ed), *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan*, pp 116-121.
28 FO 371 22893 C 702/3/12 Treasury minutes forwarded to Central Department, 14 January 1939.
figure, however, fell well short of the £30 million originally requested. These talks culminated on 27 January 1939 with the signing of the ‘Financial Assistance to Czechoslovakia Act,’ the funds were transferred to Prague on 1 March, and consisted of a loan of £10 million, and a cash gift of £3.4 million. But the time taken to finalise payment meant that the Czechoslovak government had little time to put these funds to any use.

There was another element that can be identified in British behaviour with regard to these monies and that was the growing unease with which many people in Britain now viewed the policies of appeasement. For however justifiable appeasement may have once seemed, such unease was now increasingly apparent in both political circles and in public opinion. These concerns were evident during the Commons debate on the Act on 7 February, when several MPs highlighted Czechoslovakia’s uncertain position and the questionable effects such financial assistance would have in the absence of any guarantee of her territorial integrity. This polarisation of key British politicians and individuals into, what can be broadly defined, as pro and anti-Munich camps was to have significant political effects in the medium term and was later to be utilised by Beneš and his colleagues to their advantage.

During these talks Popíšil raised the question of German interest in Czechoslovakia’s industrial assets, specifically the Škoda works in Plzeň. These

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29 FO 371 22893 C 862/3/12, E. Phipps, Paris embassy to Foreign Office, 22 January 1939.
30 FO 371 22894 C1128/3/12, Final text of Anglo-French-Czechoslovak agreement, 23 January 1939, and C1408/3/12, details of meeting at Foreign Office on 27 January to sign agreement & FO 371 22894 C2508/3/12, confirmation from the Czechoslovak Legation in London that the money had been received, 1 May 1939.
31 Parker, Churchill and Appeasement, pp192-195. See also Cato, Guilty Men, London, 1940 & Nicolson, Why Britain is at War.
32 Harvey (ed), The Diplomatic Diaries of Oliver Harvey, pp202-203.
34 Beneš, Paměti, p124-125.
35 FO 371 22893 C 543/3/12, minutes of Anglo-Czechoslovak discussions, 11 January 1939.
concerns paralleled continuing British attempts to prevent Czechoslovak weaponry from being circulated in an unstable European environment. These activities had first begun in the immediate aftermath of Munich when Czechoslovak representatives had approached British military authorities to request that they help purchase surplus military stocks. As a result of these talks the British authorities considered a variety of plans to prevent this equipment falling into German hands. These included buying a wide range of military materials, acquiring a controlling interest in certain companies and increasing British orders with Czechoslovak firms. Particular consideration was given to the Vitkovice steel works in Ostrava, which owned the Koskullskulle iron ore mine in Sweden. But due to a variety of logistical and technical difficulties it was concluded that these plans were unrealistic. The War Office did manage to smuggle a prototype anti-tank rifle out of Prague hidden in the departing Ambassador’s wardrobe in May 1939, but this achievement was of limited value. Far more successful was the work done by the London representative of the Zbrojovka arms factory in Brno, František Slaby, in conjunction with the Ministry of Supply (MOS). He prevented the royalties from the manufacture of the Czechoslovak designed BREN light machine gun in Britain falling into German hands and assisted several hundred Czechoslovak engineers to escape to France and Britain with the help of the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). A
number of factories were later established in Britain, India and Afghanistan and production of this crucial weapon proved to be a major contribution to the British war effort, even after relations between Slaby and the MOS had deteriorated.41

Unsurprisingly, Germany was also interested in these industrial resources and they played a significant role in Berlin’s decision to invade Czechoslovakia in March 1939.42 As a result the Germany army acquired a ‘huge stock of war material’ that was estimated to have increased its armament supply by up to 25% and these factories continued to produce arms for the rest of the war.43 Beneš and his colleagues were understandably concerned by this situation and later made frequent requests for the Royal Air Force (RAF) to bomb the Protectorate, although none of these attempts proved to be particularly successful.44 Weaponry made in the Protectorate was subsequently used in Poland and against British forces in France in May 1940 and the hugely popular anti-appeasement polemic, *Guilty Men*, noted that the German tanks that had surrounded Dunkirk, ‘...had been made according to French design in the Škoda works...’45 The Munich Agreement’s impact on Europe was not, therefore, limited only to the political

41 FO 371 22900 C18265/7/12 F. Slaby to Foreign Office, 7 November 1939, FO 371 24290 C6320/1276/12 Roberts minutes, 24 April 1940, FO 371 26391 C11666/550/12 Ministry of Supply to Central Department, 20 October 1940 & 371 47116 N3254/580/12 Slaby memorandum on Caswick Ltd., received 20 March 1945. See also the photographs of some of these engineers at work in C. Mackenzie, Dr Beneš, London, 1946, pp272-273.
44 FO 371 30847 C2915/539/12 Bruce Lockhart to Strang, 15 March 1942, request from Beneš that industrial targets in the Protectorate be bombed & Eden to Sir Archibald Sinclair, Air Ministry, 25 March 1942. See also HS 4/35 for operational reports on attempts to bomb the Škoda factory in 1942, HS 4/35 Beneš letter to Lord Selborne, 23 November 1942, FO 371 47097 N 7907/233/12 Air Ministry memorandum on the RAF’s attempts to bomb industrial targets in the Protectorate during the war, 28 June 1945 & Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), *Dokumenty z historie československé politiky*, p722.
implications of appeasement, its most damaging consequence was the fact that Germany
had been allowed to acquire Czechoslovakia’s sizeable industrial assets.

British interests in the financial and industrial future of Czechoslovakia paralleled
the continued work of the British embassy in Prague, headed by Sir Basil Newton.46 In
addition, so as to reflect Slovakia’s more de-centralised position, an additional Consul,
Peter Pares, had been despatched to Bratislava in February 1939.47 As a result the Foreign
Office was well informed about the separatist tendencies being promoted there by
Germany.48 These pressures led to the dismissal of Monsignor Jozef Tiso from the
government, the introduction of martial law and ultimately Slovakia’s declaration of
independence on 14 March.49 Information about German intentions also reached the
Foreign Office from a variety of ‘unofficial’ sources.50 One of these was Czechoslovak
military intelligence known as the druhý odbor (Second Department or Deuxième
Bureau), headed by Colonel František Moravec, which passed on warnings of a possible
invasion in early March and these allowed SIS to evacuate Moravec and a number of his
officers to London on the morning of the invasion.51 Moravec’s organisation had long
standing relations with the SIS and when combined with the high quality information he
provided and the financial assistance he received from the SIS Moravec proved to be a
vital asset for Beneš’s ‘action abroad.’52 The British were, therefore, well informed about

46 See FO 371 22896.
47 FO 371 22896 C1872/7/12 First report from P. Pares in Bratislava, 9 February 1939.
48 FO 371 22896 C2927/7/12 From N. Henderson, British embassy in Berlin, to Foreign Office, 12 March
1939 & C2873/7/12 From Sir H. Kennard, British embassy in Warsaw, 7 March 1939.
49 FO 371 22896 C 2774/7/12 Foreign Office memorandum on Slovak Crisis, 7 March 1939.
50 C. Andrew, Secret Service, London, 1985, p416, Dilks (ed), The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan,
p155-156 & D. Dilks, ‘Flashes of Intelligence: The Foreign Office, The SIS and Security before the
52 See F. H. Hinsley et al (ed), British Intelligence in the Second World War, Vol. 1, London, 1979, pp 57-
58, 83, 277, 462, Otáhalová & Cervinková (eds), Dokumenty z historie československé politiky, p85,
the deteriorating situation in the Republic, but as is often the case with ambiguous or voluminous intelligence materials these warnings were not acted upon. More importantly in the absence of a formal four-power guarantee of Czechoslovakia’s frontiers it was apparent that there was little Britain could do in the face of determined German actions in Central Europe.

The reactions of the British authorities to the German invasion and the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia were confused and proved to have lasting consequences. Sir Neville Henderson passed a protest note to the German government that explained that the British government now regarded the Munich Agreement as ‘repudiated’; but Slovakia’s newly declared independence prompted Chamberlain to announce in the Commons that this action had freed Britain from any obligations toward Czechoslovakia. After these initial responses Chamberlain’s speech in Birmingham on 17 March provided a clearer indication of the future course of British foreign policy. Chamberlain admitted that war was now a distinct possibility and that Britain, whether she wanted to or not, had to preserve the *status quo* in Eastern Europe.

This did not mean, however, that his pursuit of appeasement had ended, but rather that under pressure from Halifax and the Foreign Office, and in response to wider concerns, British resistance to further German expansion in Europe had been stiffened.

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54 FO 371 22896 C2925/7/12 Roberts minute, 11 March 1939.
55 CAB 21/589 15 March 1939.
In the wake of the war scare over Romania, the Italian invasion of Albania and concerns over where Adolf Hitler would strike next, the most important consequence of the occupation of Prague were soon announced; consultations with France, Poland and the Soviet Union. Although these negotiations were ultimately unsuccessful, they did result, on 31 March 1939, in an Anglo-French guarantee of Poland's independence, which was belatedly signed in August. This agreement decisively tied Britain to obligations on the Continent just as the international situation was worsening, responsibilities that Britain had long sought to avoid, and ultimately led to the declaration of war on the 3 September. The final consequence of the events of March 1939 was the Foreign Office's return to the forefront of British foreign policy formation; a position had been undermined during Chamberlain's attempts to reach an accommodation with Hitler.

The Foreign Office had now to deal with the successor entities that had emerged from the break up of Czechoslovakia. The decisions that resulted had lasting consequences, not least because they delayed the eventual recognition of a fully accredited Czechoslovak government in exile until July 1941, a frustrating delay for Beneš and his colleagues. Here too, the immediate British reactions were somewhat confused and resulted in the recognition of the new Slovak state, the de facto recognition of the Protectorate (the embassy in Prague was shut in May) and the continued

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recognition of Czechoslovakia’s legation in London.62 The recognition of these three separate entities was partly due to the re-implementation of the Foreign Office’s standard operating procedure in response to unexpected external stimuli. Quite simply, British foreign policy decision-making returned to being reactive and incremental, not proactive as was the case with appeasement, and would remain so for the rest of the war. Unbeknown to the Foreign Office, however, these decisions would provide Beneš with what he regarded as proof of the ‘juridical continuity’ of the Czechoslovak state and the opportunity to use these inconsistencies to promote his political objectives in exile.63 At the same time, British recognition of these successor entities meant that the Foreign Office was subsequently reluctant to recognise a fourth: Beneš’s ‘action abroad.’64

The British authorities had also to return to financial matters in the aftermath of the invasion, not least to prevent the grants and loans that had just been paid to Czechoslovakia being acquired by Germany. In fact, swift action by the Treasury and the Foreign Office resulted in the enactment of the ‘Czecho-Slovakia (Restrictions on Banking Accounts, etc) Bill,’ on 23 March 1939, which blocked access to all funds from the former Republic held in Britain.65 However, these preventative measures were soon overshadowed by the pace of events when the government found itself embroiled in allegations of having allowed a second, financial, Munich to be perpetrated on the

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63 Beneš, Paměti, p98 & Táborský, The Czechoslovak Cause, p47.
64 FO 371 22899 C13304/7/12 J. Troutbeck memorandum, 1 September 1939.
65 HC Deb., 5th Series., Vol. 345, Cols. 1481-1488, 23 March 1939.
hapless Czechoslovaks. The problem concerned an amount of Czechoslovak gold (approximately £6 million) held in the Bank of England on deposit from the Bank of International Settlements (BIS) in Switzerland that had been originally placed there for safe keeping.\(^66\)

On the day of the invasion German officers had forced the directors of the Czechoslovak National Bank to draft orders to transfer this gold to German accounts.\(^67\) This request presented a particular problem for the British authorities; on the one hand there was an unwillingness to let Germany acquire these funds, as this would undermine British attempts to economically contain Germany. On the other, the founding charter of BIS (an institution created in 1930 to facilitate the depoliticised management of reparations) made it impossible for the British authorities to intervene in BIS decision making and the Treasury was unwilling to compromise London’s position as a major financial centre by blocking, what it saw, as a legitimate request from the BIS.\(^68\) As a result, there was little that the British authorities could have done to prevent the transfer from proceeding, as it did; yet the blame for the BIS gold fiasco was to fall squarely on the government’s shoulders. The acrimonious debates that followed in the Commons on 18 and 24 May demonstrated that many MPs, Brendan Bracken and Winston Churchill in particular, were sympathetic to the Czechoslovak position, and this support was later skilfully manipulated by Beneš to further his political objectives.\(^69\) Unsurprisingly many Czechoslovak exiles reacted negatively to these events, and regarded them as further

\(^{66}\) FO 371 22895 C4023/3/12 Newton to Foreign Office, 24 March 1939.


\(^{68}\) See FO 371 22895 C4543/3/12 & C4770/3/12.

evidence of the lengths that the ‘Men of Munich’ would go to satisfy German demands at their expense.\textsuperscript{70} Somewhat ironically, however, the monies that had been retained by British actions were later utilised to fund the allied war effort and to finance the Czechoslovak ‘action abroad.’\textsuperscript{71}

Before moving on to examine Anglo-Czechoslovak relations during the war itself it is necessary to provide some detail about those Czechoslovak exiles who would lead the ‘action abroad’ and direct its policies. There are two reasons why this approach is necessary; first, that because of a lack of any coherent British policies towards the former Czechoslovakia in September 1939, it was the Czechoslovak exiles themselves who set the agenda and pace of British policy. The Foreign Office, with some exceptions, was continually forced to react to new policy initiatives instigated by these exiles. This was because the Foreign Office, and the Central Department within it, had to deal with a wide range of international issues on a daily basis, with limited resources and under intense pressure. Conversely, Beneš’s far narrower focus allowed the ‘action abroad’ to concentrate solely on the Czechoslovak question. Second, that although nominally a representative, and democratic, government in exile the Czechoslovak ‘action abroad’ was in effect created and directed by Beneš alone, though his policies were themselves influenced by the other factors such as the views of the resistance movements in the Protectorate, his own government and the KSC in Moscow.\textsuperscript{72}

of British relations with the Czechoslovak government in exile must contain some examination of Beneš himself and how he came to lead this organisation.

In the immediate aftermath of Munich, and in response to his own failures, exhaustion and intense German pressure, Beneš resigned as President on 5 October 1938 and soon after he travelled to London to stay with his nephew, Bohuš Beneš, in Putney.73 Ostensibly this marked the end of Beneš’s political career, however, he was an astute, resourceful and experienced diplomat and politician and given his own very personal relationship to the Czechoslovak State and the intensity with which he felt the ‘betrayal of Munich,’ he had no intention of allowing her dissolution to remain uncontested.74 In the pursuit of this aim Beneš could draw upon his previous experiences during the First World War, when, in the company of T.G. Masaryk and Milan Štefánik, he had been able to secure the establishment of a Czechoslovak state.75 In fact, these experiences provided a blueprint for Beneš’s actions during the Second World War.

Beneš was in the United States in March 1939, a Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago. His reactions to the invasion were swift; first, he rejected Chamberlain’s contention that the Slovak declaration of independence had annulled the need for an Anglo-French guarantee. Second, he felt the failure to implement the guarantee had destroyed the Munich Agreement and thus released Czechoslovakia and himself from any implied constraints.76 The British authorities would never accept this

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73 Beneš, Paměti, p75-76.
76 Beneš, Paměti, p89.
thesis, even though Beneš and the exiled government would repeatedly press for recognition of the ‘juridical continuity’ of the Czechoslovak State. Nevertheless, Beneš began organising an ‘action abroad’ dedicated to the liberation and re-establishment of Czechoslovakia. So while Beneš had five months to prepare his ‘action abroad’ for a ‘Free Czechoslovakia in a Free Europe’ no comparable consideration was given to this question in the Foreign Office.77

Although an ocean away from the troubles plaguing Europe, the United States was a far more fortuitous location in which to start a Czechoslovak exile organisation than might be immediately presumed, not least as one and a half million Czechs and Slovaks expatriates lived there and offered their political and financial support to Beneš.78 At this stage Beneš realised the weakness of his position and the possibly counter productive results of any pre-emptive declaration of his political objectives. 79 But crucially Beneš decided to make London his base of operations, a decision that was influenced by the links Moravec had already formed with the SIS and the British authorities.80 Although Beneš had no way of knowing when the next war would actually start, he was well prepared for its outbreak.81 Upon his return to London in June 1939 Beneš was soon in contact with what friends and allies he had there and established communications with his supporters in Prague, although by his own admission there was little he could actually do at this stage. These was not least because he had assured his

77 FO 371 22898 C6789/7/12 Washington to Foreign Office, 28 April 1939 & C 7587/7/12, Washington to Central Department, 15 May 1939, memorandum on Beneš’s activities in the United States & Štoviček & Valenta (eds), Československo-polské jednání o konfederaci p28.
78 FO 371 22899 C15433/7/12 Washington to Foreign Office, 28 September 1939 & Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Czechoslovakia Fights Back, p179.
80 Beneš, Paměti, pp138-139 & Moravec, Master of Spies, p145.
81 Beneš, Paměti, p 128.
hosts that he would live quietly in Britain and would not undertake any political actions or do anything that might embarrass the government.82

It was only on 22 August that the Central Department began to deliberate policy toward Beneš and his colleagues after being informed by the Home Office that Beneš intended to proclaim Czechoslovak independence and to form a Czechoslovak legion. The minutes and memoranda that followed this warning illustrated the deep divisions that existed in the Foreign Office over this issue and ranged from open support to outright hostility.83 They also revealed what were to become the central British considerations in the debate over the recognition of the exiles. In the first place that, whatever his limitations, Beneš was the most competent leader for any exiled movement. Second, that any reference to the possible restoration of the Czechoslovak state should be couched in vague terms and would not include any approval of the thesis of the 'juridical continuity' of the Republic or the restoration of her pre-Munich frontiers.84 Moreover that a careful balance should be maintained between the potential usefulness of the Czechoslovak’s military, intelligence and propaganda assets and the amount of political support they would be given in return.85 Lastly, that some sort of a liaison should be appointed to the Czechoslovaks, a post that Robert Bruce Lockhart, an old acquaintance of both Beneš and Jan Masaryk, would soon fill.86

As was to be so often the case in Anglo-Czechoslovak relations during this period the course of events outpaced the speed of Foreign Office decision-making. The German

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82 FO 371 21588 C13246/13246/12 Aide-mémoire by Masaryk, 29 October 1938.
83 FO 371 22898 C12826/7/12 Home Office to Foreign Office, 22 August 1939, & minutes by P. Roberts, Troutbeck, G. Jebb and Cadogan, August 1939.
84 FO 371 22898 C12865/7/12 Additional comments by Rex Leeper 25 August 1939.
85 FO 371 29899 C12865/7/12 Troutbeck minute, 24 August 1939.
invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, and the Anglo-French declaration of war two
days later caused the whole apparatus of the Czechoslovak ‘action abroad’ to swing into
operation. By comparison, although a lengthy memorandum on possible policy toward
the Czechoslovaks had been circulated, no formal pronouncement of British intentions
was made. 87 Beneš opened negotiations when he sent a telegram to the Prime Minister
announcing that he was the spokesman of the Czechoslovak people and that they too
considered themselves at war with Germany. 88 Gingerly, and mindful of the number of
complications that recognition of Beneš would bring, the Foreign Office decided that it
would only accept Beneš as the de facto spokesman of those Czechoslovaks in exile and
although British civilian and military authorities had agreed to assist in the formation of a
Czechoslovak legion in France, it was made it clear that this assistance did not constitute
any sort of political commitment. 89 This exchange marked the beginning of the long
drawn out process of British recognition of a Czechoslovak Government in exile. 90
During the ensuing discussions British political recognition was directly linked to the
amount of military support the ‘action abroad’ could provide. 91 As a result, and in the
face of certain objections and earlier moves by the French authorities the British
government recognised a Czechoslovak National Committee based in Paris on 20
December 1939, though Beneš himself remained in London. 92

87 FO 371 22899 C13304/7/12 Troutbeck memorandum, 1 September 1939.
88 FO 371 22899 C13303/7/12 Beneš to N. Chamberlain, 3 September 1939.
89 FO 371 22898 C13228/7/12 Lord Hankey to Cadogan, 6 September 1939.
90 See Taborsky, The Czechoslovak Cause, pp65-101 for a exhaustive examination of the recognition
process & M. Dockrill, ‘The Foreign Office, Dr Eduard Beneš and the Czechoslovak Government in Exile
91 FO 371 22900 C19983/7/12, War Cabinet Offices to Foreign Office, 6 December 1939 & Dilks (ed), The
92 FO 371 22899 C14071/7/12 Sir Owen O’Malley to Foreign Office, 17 September 1939, FO 371 22900
C202702/7/12 Halifax to Beneš, 20 December 1939 & Beneš, Šest let exilu, p436.
The duration of the Phoney War between September 1939 and April 1940 saw few further developments in Anglo-Czechoslovak political relations. Nor did it see any dramatic alteration in the prevailing direction of British foreign policy, which continued to be cautious as a result of an inability to predict the likely outcome of events.\(^{93}\) Moravec and the SIS maintained their working relationship, the British authorities assisted Czechoslovak refugees in Europe to join the army in France or to travel to Britain and Bruce Lockhart’s regular meetings with Beneš and Masaryk kept the Central Department informed of the Committee’s intentions.\(^{94}\) The only source of British concern was the increasingly conspicuous divisions within the Czechoslovak ‘action abroad,’ largely focused on the activities of Štefan Osusky and Milan Hodža, which festered with the portentous inactivity of the period. Although neither man ever posed a serious threat to Beneš’s leadership and were never regarded by the Foreign Office as credible alternatives, their behaviour did consume a disproportionate amount of time.\(^{95}\)

There were two new elements in relations, however, that emerged during this period. The first was Chamberlain’s decision to invite Churchill and Anthony Eden to join the government. As both men were more sympathetically disposed to the Czechoslovak cause than some they provided a new dimension in Anglo-Czechoslovak relations.\(^{96}\) Second, that Poland’s defeat by Germany and the Soviet Union saw a Polish government in exile join the Czechoslovak National Committee in Paris. The Poles did not suffer from the same political handicaps that had so far encumbered Beneš’s ‘action


\(^{94}\) FO 371 22900 C18276/7/12 F. Slabý to Foreign Office, 7 November 1939, see also FO 371 24288 C4850/2/12 Bruce Lockhart minute, 30 March 1940 & Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), *Dokumenty z historie československé politiky*, p85.

\(^{95}\) FO 371 22899 C16390/7/12 Bruce Lockhart’s memorandum, 17 October 1939 & FO 371 24287 C2331/2/12 Bruce Lockhart’s memorandum on Hodža, 11 February 1940.

abroad' and they were soon fully recognised by the allies.97 Although Czechoslovak-Polish relations never ran smoothly, especially as a result of divergent attitudes towards the Soviet Union, these early contacts soon matured into discussions on a possible post-war Czechoslovak-Polish federation, a policy that was supported and encouraged by the Foreign Office from the outset.98

The resumption of German military actions on the Continent in April 1940 once again forced the pace and direction of British policy. As German forces marched toward the Channel Britain lost her remaining allies in Continental Europe and only managed to recover her own forces from Dunkirk by the slimmest of margins. By July 1940 Britain stood alone and there was a pressing need to gain the greatest possible advantage from the various émigrés now gathered in London, a fact that outweighed the purely political objections against proffering further recognition to the Czechoslovaks.99 These political imperatives, imposed by military defeat, combined with Beneš's unceasing pressure for further recognition (in order, so he argued, to regularise his position vis-à-vis the other exiled governments), a continued flow of intelligence from Moravec and the establishment of Czechoslovak army and air contingents on British soil made further recognition difficult to resist.100 This is not to say, however, that this next phase of the recognition process was conducted swiftly or without difficulties, in fact, the discussions

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98 See FO 371 24289 C 10776/2/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum on Czechoslovak-Polish relations, 7 October 1940, and accompanying minutes by Roberts, Makins, Strang and Cadogan 14-18 October 1940, Štoviček & Valenta (eds), Československo-polská jednání o konfederaci, pp 33-34 & Beneš, Šest let exilu, pp455-456.
and negotiations that led to the British recognition of a Provisional Czechoslovak
government in exile, on 18 July 1940, took over four months.101

In the wake of this agreement the British and Czechoslovak authorities signed two
further treaties, respectively on financial and military matters. Britain’s financial position
by the late summer of 1940 was increasingly troubled; the costs of re-armament and the
war itself had brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy.102 The Czechoslovak
émigrés were also experiencing financial difficulties, the monies secured by Beneš in the
United States had been almost exhausted by early May and they had to apply for a British
loan.103 As part of the discussions there arose the question of what to do with some £ 7.5
million in gold deposited by the National Bank of Czechoslovakia with the Bank of
England, part of the assets frozen back in March 1939.104 As the further recognition of
the Czechoslovaks was already under discussion the Treasury suggested that the gold
could be signed over to them, in turn it was envisaged that the Czechoslovak authorities
would then ‘donate’ the gold to the allied cause and Britain would cover the, ‘military
and civil expenditure of the Czech government, within the limits of the value of the
gold.’105 These negotiations progressed smoothly and Eduard Outrata, the Czechoslovak
Minister of Finance, and Sir Kingsley Wood, Chancellor of the Exchequer, signed the
agreement on 25 October 1940.106 From this point on the financial future of the ‘action
abroad’ was secured and further loans were granted as required. On the same day a

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101 FO 371 24289 C7646/2/12 Halifax to Beneš, 18 July 1940 & Young (ed), The Diaries of Sir Robert
Bruce Lockhart, p65.
102 W. Churchill, Their Finest Hour, London, 1990, pp491-493 & Overy & Wheatcroft, The Road to War,
pp114-116.
103 FO 371 24288 C6283/2/12 Paris Embassy, to Foreign Office, 8 May 1940. FO 371 24288 C7504/2/12
Original request from Beneš to Bruce Lockhart, 28 June 1940.
104 FO 371 24288 C7504/2/12 Treasury Chambers to Makins, 20 June 1940.
105 FO 371 24289 C8143/2/12 Treasury to Makins, 31 July 1940.
106 FO 371 24292 C13060/8893/12 text of agreement, 25 October 1940.
British-Czechoslovak Armed Forces agreement was signed between Masaryk, the Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Halifax. Both agreements had the effect of further regularising Anglo-Czechoslovak relations and integrating the émigrés into the British war effort.

There were a number of other developments during the second half of 1940 that need to be mentioned as well. The first was the formation of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), an organisation designed to bring the war to occupied Europe that soon established good working relations with the Czechoslovak military authorities. The second was the regularisation of the administration of the government in exile. As the recognition process had now legitimised Beneš’s leadership he began issuing legislative decrees, the first of which established the Czechoslovak State Council that met for the first time on 11 December. Finally, Beneš and his government began developing plans for a ‘solution’ to Czechoslovakia’s complex minority questions that included the possibility of population transfers. Crucially, when the Foreign Office was first informed of these plans they were not rejected and they continued to evolve over the next four years.

Therefore, in just over a year, and against the Central Department’s prevailing advice, the Czechoslovak émigrés had gone from being a stateless people to a recognised fighting ally. This was the largely the result of Beneš’s judicious utilisation of political pressure, applied at opportune moments, and a good deal of luck. It certainly had little to

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107 For text see Beneš, Šest let exilu, pp445-453.
110 FO 371 30930 C2167/241/18 Arnold Toynbee to N. B. Ronald, 12 February 1942 & Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), Dokumenty z historie československé politiky, pp83-84.
do with British policy, which was at best unfocused and regarded the Czechoslovak question as a low priority. Nevertheless, the Czechoslovaks themselves still viewed the ‘Question of Provisionality’ as a form of discrimination and another hurdle to be overcome in the drive towards full recognition that commenced in early 1941.111 This final phase of the recognition process was made all the more tortuous by the Czechoslovak’s insistence on the ‘juridical continuity’ of their state, the restoration of her pre-1938 frontiers and continued demands that British adherence to the terms of the Munich Agreement be officially revoked. But from the Central Department’s perspective the recognition of a Provisional Government in exile was the furthest that they were prepared to go at this time. In certain respects, therefore, this period indicated the high-water mark of Anglo-Czechoslovak relations because from June 1941 onwards they were increasingly complicated by the entry of the Soviet Union into the war and the gradual formation of the Grand Alliance. For all these positive developments, however, as 1940 drew to a close the situation Britain and her allies found themselves in was unrelentingly bleak. Although the Battle of Britain had ended German plans for the invasion of Britain, the Blitz and the draining Battle of the Atlantic had both now commenced and British victories in North Africa were soon blunted by the Italian invasion of Greece on 28 October 1940. The following year offered little respite and witnessed a fresh series of allied defeats in the Mediterranean and the Balkans, developments that necessitated far more consideration by the Foreign Office than the Czechoslovak question.

The invasion of the Soviet Union, on 22 June 1941, proved to have lasting consequences for Anglo-Czechoslovak relations. Not only did the Soviet Union’s entrance into the war necessitate a fundamental reappraisal of British policy towards Moscow and Stalin’s regime, but also the addition of this new ally had an effect on the various exiled governments gathered in London. This was not least because the Soviet Union quickly agreed to recognise a Czechoslovak government in exile and to accept many of Beneš’s political objectives in return for access to Moravec’s intelligence networks. This was a development that obliged the Foreign Office to follow suit, although it maintained its reservations over Czechoslovakia’s ‘juridical continuity,’ her frontiers and the government’s authority over the Sudeten Germans in Britain. Both countries recognised the Czechoslovak government through an exchange of diplomatic notes on 18 July 1941, marking the end of the recognition process. Similarly the entrance of the United States into the war in December 1941, and the formation of the Grand Alliance, further altered the prevailing dynamics in the relationship between the British authorities and the Czechoslovak government in exile.

But the entrance of the Soviet Union and the United States into the war did not reverse the long list of military defeats experienced by the allies. Allied advances in
North Africa were soon reversed by determined German actions. Yugoslavia, Greece and Crete had all been occupied during the first six months of 1941 and the activities of German surface raiders and submarines had a devastating effect on the much needed supplies being sent across the Atlantic. By the time of the German attack on the Soviet Union most of Europe was now either under direct German administration or controlled by sympathetic regimes, and apart from the bombing of targets in Germany by the RAF and the embryonic activities of SOE there was little that Britain could do to alter this situation. Even the invasion of the Soviet Union afforded little relief, as few British officials believed that the Red Army could withstand the German onslaught for long.

As a result, little thought was given to British post-war policy towards Central Europe as it was felt that any pronouncements would have been meaningless in the absence of the necessary military victories needed to implement them. Moreover, the British authorities were in no position unilaterally to implement any post-war agreements, as any arrangements would have to be agreed with the two other members of the Grand Alliance and these partners soon eclipsed Britain’s influence in world affairs and left her increasingly incapable of influencing developments in Central Europe.

The tortuous development of a coherent series of Allied war aims within the Grand Alliance did, however, have an effect on the Czechoslovak government. The western allies’ failure to declare any definite war aims soon become an increasing source of suspicion for the Soviet Union and the smaller allies who had little official information

118 Dilks (ed), The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, p390.
119 D. Reynolds, ‘Churchill the appeaser? Between, Hitler, Roosevelt and Stalin in World War Two,’ in M. Dockrill and B. McKercher (eds), Diplomacy and World Power. Studies in British Foreign Policy 1890-
on what the west’s post war European policies were likely to be. The simple answer was that Britain had few post-war policies apart from adherence to the terms of the Atlantic Charter, and the refusal to discuss post-war frontiers and this was a policy that had few implications for those states located to the west of the Rhine. Some attempts had been made by the Ministry of Information in late 1940 to draft a statement on British war aims, but Churchill had refused to sanction them, stating that, ‘precise aims would be compromising, whereas vague principles would disappoint.’ Churchill’s attitude was quite straightforward; securing victory took priority over post war planning. This was in many ways a perfectly rational attitude to take, but it was not one that was shared by Beneš, the Poles or by Stalin, as he made clear to Eden in Moscow in December 1941.

Clearly, Churchill and other members of the War Cabinet did have some war aims in mind; the maintenance of Britain’s status as a world power and the integrity of her Empire, but such objectives meant little to the United States, the Soviet Union or to the Czechoslovak exiles. Indeed, American attitudes towards what they saw as British imperialism and protectionism and President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s desire to promote his own brand of American ideology were to result in an increasing divide between the Anglo-Saxon powers. While this lack of war aims actually suited the British style of

120 Woodward, British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, pp 429-448 & J. Charmely, ‘Churchill’s Roosevelt,’ in Lane & Temperley (eds), The Rise and fall of the Grand Alliance, pp96-97.
123 Ross, The Foreign Office and the Kremlin, pp82-87 & Woodward, British Foreign Policy in the Second World War, pp190-193.
125 Charmely, ‘Churchill’s Roosevelt,’ in Lane & Temperley (eds), Grand Alliance, pp100-102, for a definition of Roosevelt’s ideology see O. Arne Westad, ‘The New International History of the Cold War: Three (Possible) Paradigms,’ Diplomatic History, Vol.24, No.4, Fall 2000, pp552-556.
policy formation, as it kept the widest number of future policy options open, it did little to mollify Beneš’s concerns over the post-war settlement.

These issues became one more reason for Beneš to try to secure his political objectives through bi-lateral negotiations with the Soviet Union, which had been far more forthcoming on these topics than the British had – not least on frontiers.126 This fact was originally welcomed by the Foreign Office as a possible means of assisting Anglo-Soviet-Polish relations, though this appreciation quickly abated when it became clear that the Czechoslovaks intended to use these newly acquired advantages to further their own agenda and not Whitehall’s.127 This also gave rise to suspicions amongst certain British officials about the closeness of Beneš’s contacts with Moscow. This is not to say, however, that Anglo-Czechoslovak understandings were not maintained on other issues or that the Central Department was unaware of the Beneš’s desire to maintain a balance between the eastern and western powers in his government’s foreign policy. Indeed, many efforts were made to preserve the understandings reached between both parties during the war, though comments were made about the Czechoslovak’s desire to ‘have the best of both worlds’ (that is east and west) and the inherent dangers of such a position.128

In addition to these developments the appointment of Reinhard Heydrich as Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia in late September 1941 set in motion a particularly important chain of events. These ultimately led to his assassination on 27 May 1942

126 FO 371 30834 C1644/326/12 Nichols to Makins on talks with Beneš, 9 February 1940.
128 FO 371 343340 C12505/525/12 Eden in Moscow to Foreign Office, 25 October 1943.
(abetted by SOE), British denunciation of the Munich Agreement on 5 August and the international community’s gradual acceptance of the principle of transfers as a solution to Central Europe’s complex minority questions. Heydrich’s death and the retribution that followed, specifically the mass arrests and executions in the Protectorate and the destruction of the villages of Lidice and Ležáky, also influenced Anglo-Czechoslovak relations. This was because the reputation of Beneš’s government had been greatly enhanced by this dramatic example of resistance in occupied Europe, and by the widespread sympathy generated after the brutal retribution exacted by Nazi Germany.

The attack on Heydrich also occurred during months of protracted Anglo-Czechoslovak negotiations over a suitable formula to encapsulate a British denunciation of the Munich Agreement. Progress had been hampered by the fact that Central Department regarded this issue as a troublesome and unnecessary expenditure of their time in what was already a crowded and hectic schedule. For the Czechoslovak government, however, this was a crucial issue to which they dedicated a far greater proportion of their time and effort than the Central Department was willing, or able, to do. Furthermore the Central Department were aggrieved because they felt that Beneš was using the publicity surrounding Heydrich’s death to pressurise them to accede to his demands. Consequently the Department’s officials became increasingly exasperated by Beneš’s negotiating techniques as P. F. Hancock noted, “We all know Dr Beneš’s “step-

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129 FO 371 30835 C7210/326/12 Eden to Masaryk, 5 August 1942 and C 7666/326/12 Masaryk’s reply on same date & FO 371 30835 C6867/326/12 Nichols to Beneš, 7 July 1942.
130 Moravec, Master of Spies, p222
131 FO 371 30848 C6235/5404/12 Viscount Halifax, Washington, to Eden, 12 June 1942, see also FO 371 30848 C6627/5404/12 Nichols to Central Department, 1 July 1942.
132 These can be traced through the materials in FO 371 20834 & 20835.
133 Beneš, Paměti, p297.
134 See minutes and comments in FO 371 30834 C5797/326/12, 9 to 14 June 1942.
by-step" methods of negotiation, which are designed to achieve his objects one by one.\textsuperscript{135} These sentiments were echoed by Frank Roberts; ‘Dr Beneš is a very experienced negotiator, which no doubt explains why we are always asked at the last moment for further concessions additional to those which we understood to be more or less agreed...’\textsuperscript{136} Nevertheless, and in part due to the attack on Heydrich, the War Cabinet agreed to a public denunciation of the Munich Agreement on 6 July, a tentative statement agreeing to the ‘principle’ of post-war population transfers and an exchange of diplomatic notes duly followed.\textsuperscript{137} For Beneš and his government this marked a triumphant reversal of what they regarded as the ‘betrayal of Munich.’\textsuperscript{138} The international attention that the exiled government received in the summer of 1942, combined with its enhanced political status meant that Beneš and his government became markedly less dependent upon British political support. This would be illustrated in the spring of 1943 by Beneš’s decision to sign a treaty with the Soviet Union in the face of the Foreign Office’s strenuous objections.\textsuperscript{139}

Heydrich’s death in June 1942 also happened to precede a gradual improvement in the Grand Alliance’s military fortunes. Whereas the period up to the summer of 1942 had been characterised by a seemingly unending series of military setbacks the period

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{135} FO 371 C3130/326/12 Hancock minutes, 26 March 1942.
\item \textsuperscript{136} FO 371 CI 101/326/12 Roberts minute, 2 July 1942.
\item \textsuperscript{137} FO 371 30835 C6788/326/12, War Cabinet deliberations on Eden’s memorandum, 6 July 1942.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Beneš, \textit{Paměti}, p294.
\item \textsuperscript{139} FO 371 34338 C6407/525/12 Roberts minute, 9 June 1943, Sargent, 9 June 1943, Cadogan, 10 June 1943 and Eden, 12 June 1943.
\end{itemize}
from 1943 to 1945 was marked by a growing number of allied victories in the European theatre, not least at Stalingrad and Kursk. Thus, the timing of the assassination, more by coincidence than planning, happened to pre-empt this change in allied fortunes and Beneš and the government in exile were able to reap the political rewards, even with the loss of most of the western-orientated resistance in the Protectorate and a corresponding decline in the warmth of relations with SOE.\(^{140}\)

In the continued absence of any coherent allied war aims and in an attempt to generate support for his government’s international position and its long-term political goals Beneš undertook a series of high-level international visits in 1943. First, he travelled to the United States and Canada in May to June and then to Moscow in December.\(^{141}\) Although the Foreign Office had no direct involvement in Beneš’s trip to Washington, they were kept informed of its outcome.\(^{142}\) Upon his return Beneš told Eden of his intention to sign a treaty with the Soviet Union. Eden immediately objected and informed Beneš that Britain and the Soviet Union had agreed in May 1942 to a ‘self-denying ordinance’ over treaties with lesser allies and that he felt that such an agreement would have a detrimental effect on the Polish exiles in London.\(^{143}\) Months of fierce wrangling then ensued over whether Beneš should be allowed to proceed, although in the end, Beneš won the argument and on 12 December 1943 a treaty of Friendship, Mutual

\(^{140}\) HS 4/5 SOE Memorandum on Czechoslovak activity, May 1942 to May 1943, dated 13 May 1943.
\(^{142}\) FO 371 34343 C5476/791/12 Halifax to Foreign Office, 16 May 1943.
\(^{143}\) FO 371 34338 C7363/525/12 Eden to Nichols, 17 June 1943.
Assistance and Post-war Co-operation was signed in Moscow, with Beneš and Stalin in attendance. However, the months of arguments and disagreements over the treaty had taken a heavy toll on Anglo-Czechoslovak relations and some British officials began to view Beneš’s behaviour as having placed the Czechoslovak exiles firmly within the Soviet camp.

This treaty was signed at a crucial juncture in wartime planning and the continued development of relations within the Grand Alliance, not least because it came after the Italian armistice - from which the Soviet Union had been excluded - and the first allied conference at Tehran, in November 1943. Although the conference helped to resolve some of the issues that had troubled the alliance, it also made it clear that Stalin had no intention of limiting his political ambitions in Eastern and Central Europe and brought home the weakness of Britain’s position vis-à-vis the other Great Powers. The conference further reinforced the Foreign Office’s concerns about the Moscow’s post-war objectives in the region, concerns that were echoed by sections of the British media. These suspicions were compounded by the breakdown in relations between the Polish government in exile and Moscow by the end of 1943 and there was little the British authorities could do but observe the subsequent creation of the Communist dominated

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144 Beneš, Paměti, pp379-391, see also Mackenzie, Dr Beneš, pp301-314.
148 FO 371 34340 C13709/525/12 Sargent minute, 29 November 1943, FO 371 34339 C10902/525/12 Roberts minute, 21 September 1943 & F. Voigt, 'Integration or Disintegration? ' Nineteenth Century and After, no 799, September 1943, pp97-106.
Polish Committee for National Liberation in October 1944. These problems also undermined the Poles’ involvement in talks with the Czechoslovak government about a possible post-war federation and these came to an inconclusive end. Unbeknown to Beneš and his government, however, the talks in Tehran had also placed Czechoslovakia within the Soviet sphere of military operational/occupational control. This fact only became apparent when the Czechoslovak government in exile requested SOE’s help in re-supplying the Slovak Uprising.

Military developments on the eastern front and the political dynamics within the Grand Alliance were brought into sharp focus on 8 April 1944 when the vanguard of the Red Army reached the eastern frontiers of the former Czechoslovakia. In response the Czechoslovak government in exile concluded a civil affairs agreement with the Soviet Union, on the 24 April, designed to regulate the administration of liberated Czechoslovak territories and manage the transition from military to civilian rule. However, both Britain and the United States refused to sign similar agreements on the grounds that their armed forces were unlikely ever to reach Czechoslovak territory. This was a worrying development for the Czechoslovak exiles as it undermined their policy of maintaining equality between the eastern and west allies and meant that the Soviet Union would play a predominant role in Czechoslovakia’s liberation and political future. Indeed, these concerns were heightened by the serious political difficulties that soon developed in

149 Prazmowska, Britain and Poland, pp191-198.
150 Šťovíček & Valenta (eds), Československo-polská jednání o konfederaci, pp335-339.
152 Erickson The Road to Berlin, p291.
Podkarpatska Rus (Sub Carpathian Ruthenia) and Slovakia and that ultimately forced Beneš to return home via Moscow. Nevertheless the reality was that the Red Army was already on Czechoslovak territory, domestic support for the KSČ was increasing and Beneš’s western allies had made it clear that they could do little to alter this situation. Quite simply, the Czechoslovak government in exile now had little alternative but to rely on Soviet reassurances of continued co-operation and non-interference in her domestic affairs.

Consequently the Czechoslovak government spent most of 1944 preparing for its return to liberated territory and these were plans that neither required nor invited British participation, as much of this work now came under the auspices of the tripartite European Advisory Commission (EAC). This is not to say that the Central Department ceased to be interested in the Czechoslovaks in London, but rather that their involvement and influence had been greatly reduced. The Central Department, however, remained the primary nexus between the British authorities and the Czechoslovak émigrés. Ambassador Nichols continued to meet regularly with Beneš and other members of the government although there was only one meeting between Beneš and Eden, on 27 November, which contrasted sharply to the frequency of their contacts during the previous year.

Beneš celebrated his sixtieth birthday on 28 May 1944 and this occasion merited the dispatch of congratulatory messages from both Eden and Churchill and the

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156 FO 371 50658 U 31113/970 Masaryk to EAC, 24 August 1944, FO 371 50657 U 10213/70 EAC minutes on the seventh meeting of the EAC on 14 February. For developing Czechoslovak plans for the post-war era see FO 371 38945 C1350/1347/12 Nichols to Central Department, 28 January 1944 & FO 371 38931 C3949/239/12 Nichols to Roberts on conversation with Beneš, 23 March 1944.
157 FO 371 38944 C16552/1334/12 Allen minute, 24 November 1944 & FO 371 38946 C16611/1347/12 Eden memorandum on meeting with Beneš, Masaryk and Ripka, 27 November 1944.
publication of a collection of celebratory essays to which the Foreign Office, somewhat hesitantly, contributed.\textsuperscript{158} Financial matters returned to the agenda once more, for the first time since 1940, when both British and Czechoslovak representatives attended the Bretton Woods conference in July 1944 and the government in exile requested another loan and post-war restructuring credits.\textsuperscript{159} By the end of 1944 the Czechoslovak exiles had borrowed a total of £17.5 million from the British authorities.\textsuperscript{160} Plans for the transfer of the Sudeten German populations from Czechoslovakia continued to develop as well, and their evolution was closely monitored by the Foreign Office who had already contributed to this debate with their own inter-departmental committee of enquiry which came out in favour of these plans.\textsuperscript{161} This process culminated with the submission of the first set of Czechoslovak proposals for the implementation of transfers to the EAC in November 1944, although international agreement for these plans would not be finalised until the Potsdam Conference in August 1945.\textsuperscript{162}

The successful allied landings in Normandy on 6 June 1944 and the Soviet summer offensive, Operation Bagration, put Germany on the defensive and encouraged partisans and resistance movements across Europe to prepare for uprisings in support of the approaching allied armies, actions that were meant to be the culmination of SOE's work in occupied Europe. SOE's operations with the resistance in France that summer

\textsuperscript{159} FO 371 38946 C13376/1347/12 Nichols minute, 2 October 1944.
\textsuperscript{160} FO 371 38949 C3241/201/12 Treasury to Foreign Office, 9 March 1944, see also FO 371 38946 C15031/1347/12 Treasury to Foreign Office, 31 October 1944.
\textsuperscript{161} FO 371 38923 C15569/63/12, Nichols to Foreign Office, 10 November 1944 & FO 371 38921C16851/35/12 Allen memorandum, 2 December. See also FO 371 34462 C14581/279 Minutes of 1\textsuperscript{st} meeting of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Transfer of German Populations, 11 December 1943 & C6110/220/18 Final report of the Committee, 12 May 1944
proved to be highly successful, as was its continued support for Tito's forces in Yugoslavia. Yet, the west's inability adequately to support the uprisings in Warsaw and Slovakia, both of which commenced in August 1944, once again underlined Britain's powerlessness to influence events in Central Europe. Although the Czechoslovak government made repeated requests for western support for the insurgents the British military authorities denied all these requests, on the grounds that Slovakia was the Soviet Union's responsibility, and the uprising petered out by the end of the year.

The last few months of Beneš's stay in London during early 1945 continued to be dominated by preparations for the return home. It should also be noted that Beneš and the KSČ had agreed in Moscow in December 1943 that the government in exile would not form the basis of the future government of a liberated Czechoslovakia. A National Front government, with significant Communist representation, would be created in its place. At much the same time the Yalta Conference was convened in the Crimea from 4 to 11 February 1945. Though this meeting of the Grand Alliance was considered a success, not least for its Declaration on Liberated Europe, its conclusions focused mainly on the Polish question and further reinforced the perception that Britain's position within the alliance was becoming marginalised. Moreover, burgeoning British suspicions regarding Soviet motives in Central Europe were not shared by the United States, which

164 FO 371 38943 C14863/1343/12 General Leslie Hollis to Foreign Office, 27 October 1944.
165 FO 371 47120 N 1122/650/12 Nichols to Warner, 1 February 1945.
168 D. Reynolds, 'Churchill the appeaser?' in Dockrill and McKercher (eds), Diplomacy and World Power, pp 218-220.
was primarily concerned with securing Soviet assistance for the war in the Pacific.\textsuperscript{169} More significantly the western allies now viewed the Soviets as the principle arbiter in Czechoslovak affairs, just as they had been during the Slovak Uprising, although Eden and the Foreign Office continued to pay lip service to Beneš’s objective of securing Czechoslovakia’s position ‘between East and West.’

On one level this marked a rather unsatisfactory end to Beneš’s stay in London as he now believed that the British authorities were content to leave Czechoslovakia to the, ‘tender mercies of the Russians.’\textsuperscript{170} However, this situation was somewhat mitigated by Britain’s position on the final formula for the exercise of authority in liberated Czechoslovakia on 20 March 1945.\textsuperscript{171} The wording of the formula had already gone through several drafts and included various revisions in the Czechoslovaks’ favour.\textsuperscript{172} The final statement marked a minor success for Beneš and his government. For the first time during the war they had managed to extract from the British authorities some small measure of agreement that Czechoslovakia might be re-constructed in her pre-Munich form, even though the British authorities continued to insist that Czechoslovakia’s frontiers would only be definitively settled at the anticipated Peace Conference. Yet, by the time it was announced Czechoslovakia’s political and territorial future would no longer be determined by Anglo-Czechoslovak relations or by British statements, but rather by the actions of the Soviet Union and the United States.

\textsuperscript{169} N.A. Graebner, ‘Yalta, Potsdam, and Beyond: The British and American perspectives,’ in Lane & Temperley (eds), \textit{Grand Alliance}, pp226-230.
\textsuperscript{170} FO 371 47085 N640/207/12 Nichols to Warner, 18 January 1945.
\textsuperscript{171} FO 371 47085 N3159/207/12 War Cabinet Office, 22 March 1945.
\textsuperscript{172} FO 371 47085 N2782/207/12 Nichols to Warner, 14 March 1945.
As the day of Beneš’s final departure for Moscow drew near, ambassador Nichols suggested that the King and Queen might like to invite Beneš and his wife for luncheon at Buckingham Palace. With Churchill and Eden’s away in the Crimea, Orme Sargent, now Superintending Under Secretary of the Department, wrote to the deputy Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, two days later to suggest that, ‘HM Government should no doubt also show the President and Madame Beneš and the Czechoslovak Prime Minister and Foreign Minister some civility before they leave...’ The next day he also wrote to Sir Alan Lascelles at the Palace and a luncheon invitation was subsequently sent to Beneš and his wife for the 14 February 1945. This was followed by another lunch on Friday, 16 February 1945, attended by leading members from the British and Czechoslovak governments. These meetings marked the last direct high-level contacts between the two governments during the war as Beneš and many of his colleagues left for Moscow soon afterwards.

The Foreign Office continued to receive information about Beneš’s political activities during his stay in Moscow through its representatives, but his dinner with the British Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr on 25 March was the last personal contact between a British diplomat and the President for over a month and a half. This was the result of the Soviet’s refusal to allow the despatch of the western Diplomatic Corps to join Beneš and his government in eastern Slovakia. This development raised concerns
that the Soviets might attempt to replace Beneš with a Communist controlled government and the Northern Department (the Central Department had been renamed in late 1944) began to consider the political advantages to be gained by encouraging the United States to order its forces to occupy Prague in order to counteract this worrying development.179 Significantly, this decision was made during an important transition in the leadership of the Grand Alliance; President Roosevelt died on 12 April 1945 and was succeeded by Harry S. Truman. This change had the effect of negating the influence of Churchill’s close personal relationship with the former President at a critical juncture and hindered his ability to convince the United States to march on Prague.180

Meanwhile, the Red Army had smashed its way into Berlin by late April 1945 and the city finally fell on 1 May. The war against Germany was all but won, but German resistance continued in the Protectorate and Prague was still an occupied city. On 16 April Cadogan sent the first official British request that the United States give serious consideration to the liberation of Prague to Ambassador J. G. Winant.181 This exchange marked the beginning of a brief, intensive and ultimately unsuccessful British campaign to encourage the United States to order its forces to move on to Prague during the closing weeks of the war.182 In the event the new American administration and General Dwight D. Eisenhower refused to accept what they regarded as Churchill’s politicised rationales for advancing further east and refused to do so.183 It was only on 9 May, after nine days of street fighting by Czechoslovak insurgents and two days after the war in Europe had

179 FO 371 47121 N3797/650/12 Sargent minute, 8 April 1945.
181 FO 371 47121 N3797/650/12 Cadogan to Ambassador Winant, 16 April 1945.
182 FO 371 47086 N4766/207/12 Churchill to Truman, 30 April 1945 & FO 371 47086 N4802/207/12 From Sargent to Eden, in San Francisco, 3 May 1945.
183 FO 371 47086 N5307/207/12 Sargent to Churchill, 6 May 1945.
ended that the Red Army finally entered the Czechoslovak capital and brought the German occupation to an end.  

British diplomatic contacts with the new Czechoslovak government, which had returned to Prague on 10 May, were finally restored when a SOE officer, Harold Perkins, managed to slip into the city and he was briefly appointed chargé d'affaires. This situation lasted until Ambassador Nichols eventually arrived in Prague and took up his post in the British Embassy, which had been vacated by the previous ambassador six years previously. Back in London the head of the Northern Department had a visitor on the 8 May.

The Czechoslovak Ambassador called to-day, on instruction from his government, to convey their congratulations at the outcome of the war, and to express their gratitude for all that H.M. Government had done for them during the years of exile.

With the end of the war and Beneš and his government's return to Prague six years of close and often turbulent Anglo-Czechoslovak relations had finally come to an end.

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185 HS 4/51 files relating to Nuremberg and Chequebook liaison missions & FO 371 47122 N6308/650/12 Foreign Office minute, 13 May 1945.
186 FO 371 47107 N 5219/365/12 Sargent minute, 8 May 1945.
Chapter Two

The Recognition Question

Of all the issues that surround the wartime relations between the British authorities and those Czechoslovak political exiles who had escaped to the west none has been so thoroughly investigated as the question of recognition. This has been the case for very good reasons, for the recognition issue was the central axis around which all Anglo-Czechoslovak relations revolved between 1939 and 1941 and this was a process that eventually culminated in Britain’s recognition of a fully functioning, and accredited, Czechoslovak government in exile in July 1941. The significance of the recognition question rested on two main considerations. First, that because the Czechoslovak State had been truncated as a result of the Munich Agreement in September 1938 and had then been obliterated after the German invasion on 15 March 1939 no such state existed by the outbreak of hostilities on 3 September 1939. This placed the Czechoslovak exiles in a very different position to the governments of those countries that had been invaded after this date, such as Poland, Belgium or Norway, which were officially recognised as victims of German belligerence and as functioning governments in exile upon their arrival in London. The creation of a representative political body in exile that could argue the case for the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia (and the repudiation of the terms of the Munich Agreement) was, therefore, Edvard Beneš’s primary objective from March 1939 onwards. ¹

Second, that Beneš and his colleagues could only achieve this objective if, and when, they were able to enter into an official diplomatic dialogue with Britain and her allies.² These negotiations could not commence, however, until some form of representative political

body had been recognised; thus British political recognition was a vital pre-condition for the fulfilment of Beneš’s political objectives in exile. It should also be noted, however, that the British authorities retained a number of key reservations throughout the recognition process and at no point during the war did they agree to the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia within her pre-1938 frontiers, even though Britain’s adherence to the terms of the Munch Agreement was eventually rescinded.3

As a result of these two considerations the swift completion of the recognition process was more of a priority for Beneš than it was for the British authorities, not least as the Central Department was reluctant to offer anything beyond the most rudimentary acknowledgement of Beneš’s political position in exile. Consequently, the pace and agenda of the recognition question was one that was instigated by, and constantly driven forward by, Beneš and his colleagues and not by the British authorities, who were not inclined to support his long-term political objectives.

The recognition process itself can be separated out into three distinct phases: The first lasted between September 1939 and December 1939 and led to the French and British governments agreeing to the formation of a Czechoslovak National Committee, ostensibly to help form and control the Independent Czechoslovak Division based in France. The second lasted between January 1940 to July 1940 and culminated in the establishment of the Provisional Czechoslovak Government in exile. This level of recognition was granted on the basis of Britain’s increased need for trained military personnel, provided by Czechoslovak soldiers and airmen, after Germany’s successful invasion of France. At this stage Beneš and his government had succeeded in becoming ‘fully authorised representatives in the international sphere,’ although their ‘Provisional’ status continued to differentiate them from some of the other exiled government based in London.4 The final

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3 See FO 371 30834 C6671/326/12 Eden memorandum on Anglo-Czechoslovak relations, 2 July 1941.
phase of the recognition process lasted between the late summer of 1940 up until July 1941 and culminated in full *de jure* recognition of a Czechoslovak government in exile by the British authorities and their allies. The central reason behind Britain's decision to grant this enhanced level of recognition was not a dramatic charge in British policy, but rather the German invasion of the Soviet Union. In fact, on 18 July 1941 Britain and the Soviet Union were in direct competition to see who would be first exchange letters of recognition with the Czechoslovaks, in the event the Soviets beat the British by a matter of hours. This was a development that had a profound effect on Anglo-Czechoslovak relations and one that meant that Beneš was increasingly obliged to turn to Moscow, as opposed to London, for the fulfilment of his post-war political ambitions.

The chronology of these events have been long established and were first detailed by a close colleague of Beneš's, Eduard Táborský, in *The Czechoslovak Cause* published in 1944. It should be noted, however, that his work was produced for propaganda purposes and does not claim to take the British viewpoint into account. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to examine the recognition issue from the British perspective and to examine why the Foreign Office was originally reluctant to grant the Czechoslovak exiles the recognition they requested, and how, in turn, they managed to reserve British policy on this question. In order to achieve this objective it will be necessary to outline the key developments in the recognition process, especially those that occurred before the outbreak of war. This period is of particular interest as it clearly demonstrates that British policy on this question was pragmatic, based on reactions to external events and therefore had a tendency to be incremental and often somewhat confused. This was a situation that

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unintentionally allowed Beneš to utilise these inconsistencies to further his own agenda and undermine the Central Department’s various objections to full recognition.

More importantly this chapter will detail how British policy on this question was repeatedly reversed, or 'short-circuited,' by the actions of the Czechoslovak exiles themselves, who repeatedly sought to influence and direct British policy on this issue. A particularly vivid example of this can been seen in the Prime Minister’s, Winston Churchill’s, note to the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, of 20 April 1941, in which he stated ‘I see no reason why we should not give the Czechs the same recognition as we have given the Poles.' Crucially, this was a statement that directly contradicted the Central Department's reservations on this question, and had been secured by Beneš's own intervention with Churchill during their visit to inspect Czechoslovak soldiers based in northern England.⁶ Thus Churchill’s involvement directly altered prevailing British policy and became a crucial factor in full recognition being granted to the Czechoslovaks later that year.

It is necessary to start, therefore, by focusing on the period before the outbreak of hostilities with Germany. The reason for this is simple; the Foreign Office had begun to formulate policy toward the Czechoslovak question before the outbreak of the war and these attitudes were to result in a profound reluctance to grant political recognition to Beneš and his colleagues. This position was the result of a number of factors that can be divided into four separate categories. The first concerned the international status of the former Czechoslovak State after the German invasion and the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and a separate Slovak State in March 1939. Second,

there was the political status of the former officials and representative organs of that state, including Beneš who had resigned as the Czechoslovak President in October 1938. Third, there were the political actions of those Czechoslovaks in exile before the war began that were designed to foster support for their long-term objectives, and those politicians and public figures in Britain, France and the United States who supported them. Lastly, there were the prevailing international attitudes toward the re-construction of Czechoslovakia with her pre-1938 borders complete with her constituent minorities and the Foreign Office’s attitudes toward these considerations over time.

Many of the issues that were to complicate and lengthen the recognition process were related to these earlier events, and the fact that Britain soon recognised the Protectorate and Slovakia was to have an important ancillary effect on later British policy. Moreover, these policies were also entirely symptomatic of the realistic nature of British attitudes toward the Czechoslovak question at this time, and while perfectly understandable, were to place Britain in a rather disordered position once the war began. In the case of Slovakia, Britain had quickly granted de facto recognition to the state in order that, ‘British business could be transacted and communications maintained with the government.’ In the case of the Protectorate the case for British recognition was also based on pragmatic considerations, as the Foreign Office’s chief legal advisor, Sir Herbert Malkin, noted

[it] would be in my view unwise if the natural indignation which we all feel led us to committing ourselves never to recognise a state of affairs which

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7 FO 371 26394 C5090/1320/12 Foreign Office minute, 19 June 1939 and FO 371 22898 C6535/7/12 Speenight minute, 25 April 1939.
9 FO 371 22898 C7813/7/12 Draft Foreign Office answer to a Parliamentary question on Slovak recognition, 26 May 1939.
exists in fact. Experience shows (Ethiopia is a case in point, and so is Austria) that it is impossible to maintain such an attitude permanently...10

Although British recognition of these successor entities was challenged and debated in the House of Commons in June 1939 these discussions had no effect on policy.11 Therefore, even before the outbreak of hostilities the British authorities had accepted the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia as fact, albeit a regrettable one and this position was influenced by purely realistic rationales, not least Britain’s inability to influence events in Central Europe. In addition, the British authorities had not gone any further than denouncing the German occupation of Bohemia and Moravia and no response beyond this verbal reproach had been seriously considered.12 Crucially, the guarantee of Czechoslovakia’s post-Munich frontiers by the Great Powers was not invoked, a fact that Beneš then used to promote his thesis that the terms of the Munich Agreement had been voided and that the ‘juridical continuity of the Czechoslovak state’ continued to operate.13

These events meant that the political position of those Czechoslovak exiles in the west, Beneš in particular, was complicated by the presence of two alternative governments in Prague and Bratislava that had already been recognised by Britain. This was not a situation, for example, that the Polish government in exile would later have to contend with.14

There were two further examples of how British policy helped to complicate the recognition question before the war. First, there was the somewhat curious position of the

10 FO 371 22897 C35487/12 W. Malkin minutes, 20 March 1939.
12 CAB 21/589 text of Neville Henderson’s message of protest to the German Government, 15 March 1939
is put forward in Táborský, The Czechoslovak Cause, p47, see also Beneš, Paměti, p98.
world-wide network of Czechoslovak legations; second there was Beneš's own position. After the German invasion the foreign legations of the former Czechoslovakia, in London, Paris and Washington, continued to be recognised by their host governments and to represent the interests of their citizens there, even though the state they represented had ceased to exist. The Foreign Office preserved the status of the legation in London and the position of the Chargé d'affairs, Karel Lisicky, as a sign of their disapproval of Germany's actions and to prevent the buildings and any assets falling under German control, but this action was not meant to confer any greater political significance. Yet again Beneš seized upon this action as proof of his theory of Czechoslovakia's juridical continuity, an issue that was further to complicate Anglo-Czechoslovak relations, especially as the Foreign Office consistently refused to accept this controversial concept.

Second, Beneš's own position was complicated by the fact that he had resigned as President of Czechoslovakia in October 1938, something that Beneš later claimed he had been forced to do under duress. Nevertheless, he had resigned before he had travelled to the United States, via Britain, to take up a position as a Professor of Sociology at Chicago University. The Foreign Office could not, therefore, legitimately regard him as an official Czechoslovak representative, unlike Lisicky. However, although he was a ostensibly a private individual, Beneš had travelled to Britain on a diplomatic visa in late 1938, and upon his return to Britain in June the Washington Embassy had also issued diplomatic visas for him and his party. These actions raise the question of why this was done. On the outward journey the rationale was clearly one of safety, Beneš had to travel across hostile airspace and he was a man with many enemies. The necessity for such a visa on the return journey is more difficult to answer, especially as Beneš was specifically requested not to

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15 FO 371 22897 C3842/7/12, Draft Foreign Office answer to Parliamentary question by A. Henderson, 22 March 1939 & Beneš, Paměti, p 104.
18 FO 371 22898 C9737/7/ 12 British Embassy, Washington, to Central Department, 30 June 1939.
involve himself in any political actions on his arrival back in London, warnings he swiftly ignored. Unfortunately, the answer is not to be found in the files, but this behaviour was indicative of the Foreign Office’s confusion over Beneš’s political status at this time.

This confusion was to become more apparent when Beneš and his entourage arrived back in London in July 1939. The Central Department was well aware that Beneš wished to agitate on behalf of Czechoslovak liberation, not least because they had been informed about his successful fundraising and political activities amongst the large Czech and Slovak communities in the United States. Moreover, while there, Beneš had already accepted the role of leader of the world-wide movement for the restoration of Czechoslovak independence and had been generally accepted by the expatriate Czechoslovak community as the leader of this ‘action abroad.’ The Central Department therefore made preparations to try and limit the scope of Beneš’s political activities in Britain. After some internal discussions, and consultations with the Home Office, it was decided to

Inform Mr Lisicky verbally that no objection is seen to Dr Beneš settling in England but that we naturally assume that he will realise the importance of avoiding any activities which might give rise to criticism here or abroad.

Yet, contrary to British expectations Beneš swiftly began to form political links and, rather impertinently, asked the Central Department, which of his activities they might object to. These included a lunch in his honour in a private room at the Savoy Hotel, hosted by

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19 FO 371 22898 C9152/7/12 Roberts minute on reply to K. Lisicky, 25 July 1939.
20 FO 371 22898 C9152/7/12 Lisicky to Sargent, 27 June 1939.
21 See FO 371 22898 C6071/7/12 Sir R. Lindsey Washington to Foreign Office, 20 April 1939. See also FO 371 22898 C6789/7/12 Lindsay, Washington to Foreign Office, 28 April 1939, an extract from memorandum from British Consulate General, Chicago, 20 April 1939 & FO 371 22898 C7587/7/12 Chancery Washington to Central Department on activities of Dr Beneš in United States, 15 May 1939.
22 Beneš, Paměti, pp104-105 & Interview with Beneš in the Chicago Tribune, 19 April 1939.
23 FO 371 22898 C9152/7/12 Roberts memorandum, 25 July 1939.
Winston Churchill, and a series of lectures at Cambridge.\textsuperscript{24} Nor had Beneš had lost any time in acquiring the support of significant British personalities, including Anthony Eden and of course Churchill, who were to later prove to be important assets to the Czechoslovak exiles.\textsuperscript{25} As early as July 1939 John Troutbeck, formally a member of staff at the British Embassy in Prague and now a clerk in the Central Department, had to admit that, even if the Foreign Office had wanted to curb Beneš's political activities, 'There would be an outcry...if we tried to stop him.'\textsuperscript{26} Beneš also brazenly denied rumours in the French press that he had begun to organise a political liberation movement in London, even though this was exactly what he was preparing to do.\textsuperscript{27} 

As a result, even before the war began the Foreign Office was well aware of Beneš's stated political objectives. Nevertheless, it was only in the weeks preceding the declaration of war with Germany that the Central Department finally started to consider Beneš's stated objectives and his possible usefulness to Britain in time of war. On 22 August information was received from the Home Office, to the effect that when war was declared Beneš would proclaim the independence of Czechoslovakia and try to form a Czechoslovak Legion.\textsuperscript{28} In the ensuing discussion it became clear that the Foreign Office as a whole viewed the Czechoslovaks as a potentially useful ally, especially in terms of propaganda value, with Frank Roberts, Troutbeck, Alexander Cadogan and Rex Leeper all in agreement on this matter. A more detailed examination of these discussions, however, reveals a series of concerns that provide some very pertinent reasons for the British not to proffer any recognition to Beneš and his colleagues.

\textsuperscript{24} FO 371 22898 C10944/7/12 Troutbeck minute, 31 July 1939.  
\textsuperscript{25} These also included Sir Archibald Sinclair, later at the Air Ministry, Lord Lloyd and Duff Cooper. Bruce Lockhart, \textit{Comes the Reckoning}, p86.  
\textsuperscript{26} FO 371 22898 C10944/7/12 Troutbeck minute, 31 July 1939.  
\textsuperscript{27} Beneš, \textit{Paměti}, Chapter 4.  
\textsuperscript{28} FO 371 22898 C12826/7/12 Home Office to Foreign Office, 22 August 1939.
Of these, the most extreme example came from Gladwyn Jebb, Cadogan’s private secretary, who stated that,

To my mind the re-emergence of that distressful and indefensible mosaic [Czechoslovakia] would be something to be avoided rather than desired. Surely we had better go much further back and try the reconstruction of the Austrian Empire.\textsuperscript{29}

Although this was not an opinion that was wholly representative of the Foreign Office’s attitude on this question, this quote does shed some light on the Central Department’s reluctance to accept the reconstruction of Czechoslovakia as a foregone conclusion. These were attitudes that also (briefly) influenced British desires to see the creation of large federated political structures in Central Europe as opposed to the re-construction of the former patchwork of nation states.\textsuperscript{30} Some of these attitudes can be traced back to the time of Munich, a feature that Robert Bruce Lockhart described as, ‘a tragic illustration of the dislike that men feel for those they have wronged.’\textsuperscript{31}

The key consideration for the Foreign Office in this question, however, was not Beneš’s ultimate political objectives, but rather what assistance the Czechoslovaks could provide to the British war effort. Discussion of this issue first emerged in a memorandum written by Troutbeck, entitled \textit{Our attitude towards the Czechs and Slovaks in Time of War},\textsuperscript{32} which tried to define what British policy on this question should be. Importantly, Troutbeck echoed Jebb’s reservations about the usefulness of recreating Czechoslovakia.

\textsuperscript{29} FO 371 22898 C12826/7/12 Jebb minutes, 22 August 1939.
\textsuperscript{31} Bruce Lockhart, \textit{Comes the Reckoning}, p60.
\textsuperscript{32} FO 371 22899 C13304/7/12 Troutbeck’s memorandum ‘Our attitude towards the Czechs and Slovaks in Time of War,’ 1 September 1939.
and of having this objective as a stated British war aim. He then went on to list the many problems the British authorities would face if they accepted Beneš’s political objectives. But the greatest stumbling block he identified was the fact that Britain had now advanced a guarantee of Poland’s independence, a guarantee that had repercussions regarding Poland’s borders as they stood in the summer of 1939. These borders now included the long disputed region of Těšín (Cieszyn in Polish, Teschen in German), which had formerly been part of Czechoslovakia. As Troutbeck noted, ‘With Poland as an ally we should be careful to avoid any phraseology in our war aims which could possibly imply that it was our object to make her return them [these industrial areas], whatever view may be taken of the justice of the case.’ As no officially recognised Czechoslovak ally then existed Poland’s claims to the region took precedence over Czechoslovakia’s. Troutbeck also suggested that no commitments, nor comments, should be made to ‘Czechoslovakia’ or ‘independence.’ Although he then went on to acknowledge that Beneš was the bound to be the focus for any organisation in exile, and, as a result the Foreign Office, ‘will have no option but to accept him as their de facto spokesman,’ he also admitted that, ‘On moral grounds we cannot hold ourselves wholly blameless for their [the Czechoslovaks’] current plight...it is therefore clearly in our advantage to encourage them [to resist Germany]...’ In essence, Troutbeck admitted that while there were many reasons for the British authorities to avoid any firm commitments regarding Czechoslovakia, but that some level of recognition would have to be extended to Beneš and his colleagues.

The importance of this memorandum lies in the fact that it broadly encapsulated British policy toward the Czechoslovak exiles for the next eight months. Significantly the head of the Central Department, William Strang, noted that, ‘This is a very useful paper

33 See Watt, How War Came, pp 179-87.
34 FO 371 22899 C13304/7/12 Troutbeck’s memorandum ‘Our attitude towards the Czechs and Slovaks in Time of War,’ 1 September 1939.
with the conclusions of which I agree.\textsuperscript{35} The Foreign Office would now be wary about recognising Beneš and his political objectives, not least because of the effects such a development might have on other countries such as Poland, Slovakia and Hungary.\textsuperscript{36} As a result, although it was understood that some form of political accommodation would have to be reached with Beneš, it would have to be in a form that avoided any reference to the restoration of Czechoslovak independence. These then were the options, as the Foreign Office saw them, and they formed the foundations of British policy with regard to Beneš and his fellow exiles. Clearly then, this was a policy that was diametrically opposed to Beneš’s stated objectives, especially his belief in the juridical continuity of the Czechoslovak Republic.\textsuperscript{37} However, British reluctance to confer anything beyond the most limited recognition was to be repeatedly undermined by the actions of other states, by the actions of the Czechoslovak exiles and the progress of the war itself.

Once Britain declared war on Germany, and as the Central Department had expected, Beneš immediately began to seek political recognition and support for his long-term objectives from the British authorities. Beneš wrote to the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, the same day and explained that, ‘We Czechoslovak citizens consider ourselves as being also in war with German military forces,’ and that they sought ‘the liberation of our fatherland.’\textsuperscript{38} This correspondence immediately brought Troutbeck’s memorandum into sharp relief and Chamberlain’s supportive, but completely non-committal reply closely replicated his advice. Chamberlain replied to Beneš on 9 September stating ‘The sufferings of the Czech Nation are not forgotten. And we look forward...to the release of the Czech Nation from Foreign Domination,’ but significantly

\textsuperscript{35} FO 371 22899 C13304/7/12, Strang minute, 4 September 1939.
\textsuperscript{36} FO 371 22899 C14071/7/12, Sir O. O’Malley to Foreign Office, 17 September 1939 & C16878/7/12 O’Malley to Foreign Office, 9 October 1939.
\textsuperscript{37} E. Beneš, Šest let exilu. A druhé světové války, Prague, 1947, p50. See also FO 371 22899 C15433/7/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum, 28 September 1939.
\textsuperscript{38} FO 371 22899 C13303/7/12 Beneš to Chamberlain, 3 September 1939.
he made no reference to Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{39} Beneš also had two interviews in September with the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, in which he set out his objectives and asked the British authorities for a clear statement on their attitude toward the restoration of a Czechoslovak State, and toward recognising an exiled government led by himself.\textsuperscript{40} These questions were perceived as being important enough for consideration in the Cabinet, but the answers that emerged were vague. To the first Halifax replied that no war aims had yet been decided upon apart from, 'securing by every possible means, of the defeat of Germany.' On the question of recognising Beneš as the leader of the Czechoslovaks in exile Halifax wrote that, 'it was under consideration: his [the Secretary of State's] present feeling was that this request should be granted.'\textsuperscript{41} What was clear from this reply was that the War Cabinet had far more pressing issues to consider, and these answers were solely designed to placate Beneš.\textsuperscript{42} The political status of the Czechoslovaks exiles in London was therefore not a primary consideration; thus Beneš's first request for political recognition by Britain had been met with a generally supportive, but firmly non-committal, response.

One of the central reasons that this policy was soon under review was the appointment of Robert Bruce Lockhart as a political liaison with Beneš and the Czechoslovak exiles. Bruce Lockhart's long friendship with Jan Masaryk and Beneš, combined with his intimate knowledge of Czechoslovakia, the result of his posting to the British embassy in Prague in the early 1920s, made him an ideal nexus between the Czechoslovaks and the Foreign Office.\textsuperscript{43} It was Rex Leeper, head of the Political Intelligence Department (PID), who had originally proposed Bruce Lockhart for this post

\textsuperscript{39} FO 371 22899 C13303/7/12 Chamberlain to Beneš, 9 September 1939.
\textsuperscript{40} FO 371 22899 C14548/7/12 Halifax memorandum on his meeting with Beneš, 19 September 1939.
\textsuperscript{41} FO 371 22899 C14528/7/12 Extracts from War Cabinet Conclusions 21(39), 20 September 1939.
\textsuperscript{42} Prazmowska, \textit{Britain and Poland}, p 33.
Soon after this development Leeper detailed the prevailing British attitude on the Czechoslovak question to Bruce Lockhart: ‘Progress was bound to be slow...because the Czechoslovaks were not in favour [with the British authorities] and were not regarded as very important.’ The significance of Bruce Lockhart’s position lay in the fact that he helped to establish a clear channel of communication between the Czechoslovak exiles and the British authorities. Once Bruce Lockhart had accepted this position he soon began to produce memoranda for the Central Department, based on weekly meetings with Masaryk and Beneš. In these he carefully outlined Beneš’s objectives, the disunity amongst the exiles and the alleged support they had within the governments of the Protectorate and Slovakia. Lastly, and possibly most importantly Bruce Lockhart also stressed the Czechoslovak’s potential contribution to the war effort. Specifically, he emphasised the close links between the Czechoslovak druhy odbor (second department or Deuxième Bureau) and British intelligence and Beneš’s hopes of raising a 25,000-man Czechoslovak legion to fight in France. He concluded that, ‘I believe that of all the smaller nations of Europe they are the most capable of waging a determined and successful underground war against foreign oppression.’ These military considerations soon proved to be another ingredient that undermined the Foreign Office’s original position on recognition.

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44 FO 371 22899 C15006/7/12 Leeper to Cadogan, 13 September 1939.
45 Bruce Lockhart, *Comes the Reckoning*, p59.
46 FO 371 22899 C15901/7/12 Leeper to Foreign Office, 5 October 1939.
47 FO 371 22899 C15006/7/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum on conversations with J. Masaryk, formerly Czechoslovak Ambassador to Britain, 13 September 1939 & C15433/7/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum on conversation with Beneš, 28 September 1939.
49 FO 371 22899 C15006/7/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum on his conversation with Masaryk, 13 September 1939.
In the event the first phase of the recognition process was started by the French Government and not by the British authorities or Beneš. This was because a significant number of Czechoslovak soldiers had escaped from Central Europe and had gathered in France, where the French had agreed to gather them into a ‘national legion,’ which meant that some sort political structure would have to be established to control them. In turn this raised the question of what form of political organisation would have to be created and who would lead it. The Foreign Office was first alerted to these Franco-Czechoslovak negotiations on 28 September when Beneš informed Halifax that talks were underway between a ‘central organisation,’ about which Halifax knew nothing, and the French authorities. These events were then confirmed in a telegram from the British embassy in Paris on the same day. Although the Foreign Office was aware of these negotiations, the Czechoslovak troops in France were not their responsibility and they were content to leave the French authorities to deal with this issue.

Then on 30 September Beneš sent the Foreign Office a memorandum regarding the constitution of what he described as a ‘Czechoslovak Provisional Government,’ with himself as Prime Minister and Dr Štěfan Osuský as Foreign Minister. (Osuský held the same position in Paris as Lisicky did in London and his authority was similarly derived from the Anglo-French decision to continue to recognise Czechoslovak legations after March 1939.) This was a sudden and wholly unexpected development that took the Foreign

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50 FO 371 24287 C1205/2/12 Strang memorandum on War Office liaisons with Czechoslovaks, 22 January 1940 & C3411/2/12 Makins memorandum on Colonel C. Gubbins’s request to extract Czechoslovaks from Hungary, 4 March 1940. See also E. Čejka, Československý odboj na Západě 1939-1945, Prague, 1997, pp94-95, J. Josten, Oh my country, London, 1949, pp22-29, Taborsky, The Czechoslovak Cause, pp 67-69 and the various articles in L.M. White (ed), On All Fronts. Czechoslovaks in World War II, Three Volumes, New York, 1991, 1995 & 2000. This agreement was similar to the one the French authorities had already signed with the Polish government in exile on 9 and 21 of September 1939, see Prazmowska, Britian and Poland, p14.

51 FO 371 22899 C15436/7/12 Halifax memorandum on talk with Beneš, 28 September 1939 & C15437/7/12 Beneš to Sargent, 30 September 1939.

52 FO 371 22899 C15436/7/12 Telegrams from British Embassy in Paris, 28 & 29 September 1939.

Office by complete surprise. Messages were immediately despatched to the British Ambassador in Paris, Sir Eric Phipps, asking him to inquire why the Quai d'Orsay had taken such a drastic step without consulting London. Phipps's reply came three days later; he explained that the French authorities had wanted to establish a Czechoslovak army and had allowed Osuský to sign it on behalf of a non-existent 'Provisional Government' in order to create a 'national' force. Furthermore, he explained that Beneš's announcement of a cabinet had come as an unwelcome shock to the French too. The French ministers Phipps had spoken to, M. Hoppenot and E. Daladier, both disliked Beneš and had no desire to see him take up a leading position in this cabinet. They had hoped that this organ would be composed of non-political technocrats and were embarrassed by the whole episode. Both men were far more enthusiastic about working with Osuský and agreed that no further commitments would be entered into without further consultation with the Foreign Office.

Two other factors threatened to undermine Beneš's attempts to secure his political position. The first concerned the objections of other Central European states to recognition and the second the serious levels of disunity among the Czechoslovak exiles. On 8 October it was announced on the BBC that a 'Czechoslovak Government may shortly be formed in London with Dr Beneš as President.' This elicited an immediate response from the British ambassador in Budapest, Sir Owen O'Malley, who expressed the unease the Hungarian government felt at this development and his own views on Beneš's 'untrustworthiness.' Although O'Malley's objections did not have a significant impact on the Central Department, they were indicative of a widespread dislike for Beneš and the

55 FO 371 22899 C15880/7/12 From British embassy in Paris, Phipps, to Foreign Office, 6 October 1939.
56 FO 371 22899 C16878/7/12 From British embassy in Budapest, O'Malley, to Foreign Office, 9 October 1939.
57 FO 371 22899 C16878/7/12 From British embassy in Budapest, O'Malley, to Foreign Office, 9 October 1939.
many complications that might arise, with both the Hungarians and the Poles, if he was recognised as representing Czechoslovak interests abroad.

These objections, however, were of less importance compared to the divisions within the Czech and Slovak exile community itself. Although Beneš had been accepted as the de facto leader of the ‘action abroad’ by Czechoslovak expatriates in the United States, his leadership was not universally accepted amongst the other Czechoslovak exiles in London. Beneš’s most significant opponents were in fact former members of his government, Dr Milan Hodža, the former Prime Minister and later Osuský as well. Both were Slovaks and agitated against Beneš’s position in exile throughout the war, although it should be stated that neither man was ever considered a serious rival by the Foreign Office.58 But this obvious lack of unity did concern the Central Department. The situation was sufficiently severe in the early months of the war for Bruce Lockhart to bring it to the Central Department’s attention,

my personal opinion [is] that the success of the Czecho-Slovak action depends on a united front and that His Majesty’s Government, however sympathetic they may be to the Czechs and Slovaks, are bound to show a natural caution before recognising any Czech and Slovak organisation unless it fulfils all the conditions of national unity.59

This was an opinion with which Strang agreed.60 Understandably, there was little point in the Foreign Office recognising a political body that was not wholly representative of all the Czechoslovak exiles in Britain, or of the various nationalities that had been contained in the former state. Indeed, much time and effort was spent by the Central Department to

59 FO 371 22899 C17089/G Bruce Lockhart memorandum, 21 October 1939.
60 FO 371 22899 C17089/G Strang minute on talk with Bruce Lockhart, 26 October 1939.
encourage Beneš to incorporate those Sudeten Germans in Britain into his government in exile, events that will be examined in more detail in a later chapter. It is worth mentioning, however, that all the exiled governments in Britain during the war suffered from these internecine conflicts, as did the British War Cabinet. Nevertheless, such public disunity was repeatedly employed by the Foreign Office as a rational for withholding further recognition to the Czechoslovaks. In fact, Hodža’s inclusion in any Czechoslovak government in exile was made an explicit pre-condition of British recognition, something that Bruce Lockhart was only able to secure after months of tortuous negotiations.

Notwithstanding these added complications, it became clear to the Foreign Office as time progressed that Beneš’s pre-emptive attempt to establish a Provisional Government on the basis of the military agreement with the French authorities had failed. The French had realised their error in allowing such a term to be used and had began to talk instead of forming a National Committee to undertake the necessary functions regarding the formation of a Czechoslovak army in France. In the light of these events Roberts reiterated the Central Department’s position on the recognition question, ‘Our policy is that the Czechs should put their house in order, after which they may receive some sort of recognition from HMG...’

However, the Central Department also realised that without some degree of political recognition it would be difficult to expect any sort of military or intelligence cooperation from the Czechoslovaks. In short, the British authorities understood that they

62 Bruce Lockhart, *Comes the Reckoning*, pp72-73.
64 FO 371 22899 C17465/7/12 British embassy Paris to Foreign Office, 29 October 1939.
65 FO 371 22899 C17805/7/12 Roberts minute, 8 November 1939.
66 FO 371 22899 C18016/7/12 Bruce Lockhart minutes, 7 November 1939.
had to make some political concessions to Beneš in order to make sure they were in step with their French allies and so that the Czechoslovaks were sufficiently motivated to continue the fight against Germany (as Troutbeck had noted in his memorandum). Having said that, as talks with the French progressed Beneš made it increasingly clear in his parallel talks with the Foreign Office that he was unhappy with the lack of political representation in the French proposal. Furthermore, he clearly stated that he would prefer to see some reference to the ‘committee being able to carry on the struggle for the liberation of the Czechoslovak Republic.’ As this was beyond what the Foreign Office was willing to consider Cadogan persuaded Beneš that any departure from the text of the French Agreement would best be avoided.

For a second time the pace of these negotiations was again forced by the French government when they exchanged letters with Osuský on the recognition of a Czechoslovak National Committee on 13 and 14 November 1939. This led to renewed discussions within the Foreign Office on the British response to this development and the subsequent decision to proceed with limited recognition was based on two key points. First, that as the French authorities had already signed an agreement with the Czechoslovaks, the British were obliged to do the same ‘in order to avoid any criticism that His Majesty’s Government are being less generous that the French Government towards the Czechoslovak cause.’ Second, that the National Committee would only be authorised to deal with the establishment of a Czechoslovak army in France and was not a government and recognition would not ‘imply any recognition of particular Czech political aspirations.’

67 FO 371 22900 C18441/7/12 Cadogan minute on discussion with Beneš, 13 November 1939.
68 FO 371 22900 C18906/7/12 Confirmation of creation of Czechoslovak National Committee from British Embassy, Paris, 20 November 1939.
69 FO 371 22900 C19983/7/12 War Cabinet Office Confidential Print, 6 December 1939.
70 FO 371 22900 C18519/7/12 Memorandum of conversation between Beneš and Cadogan on National Committee and accompanying minutes, 14 November 1939.
A delay then occurred while the Foreign Office inquired about the Home Office’s, War Office’s, Colonies’ and Dominions’ opinions on this question. A printed memorandum on this issue was then produced for the War Cabinet’s consideration on 6 December. On 11 December the War Cabinet agreed to a similar exchange of letters with the Czechoslovaks, but only on the understanding that the National Committee was not a government. Letters were then duly exchanged between Halifax and Beneš on 20 December 1939. Significantly, in a minute of 30 December Roberts noted that the British government continued to recognise the Czechoslovak legation in London and Lisicky as an, ‘alternative political representative to Beneš and a sign of non-recognition of invasion of Bohemia-Moravia.’ Quite simply the Central Department wanted to keep the widest possible number of options open at this stage and its continued recognition of Lisicky was symptomatic of this desire. Thus, as 1939 drew to a close the British authorities had in fact recognised four bodies as being representative of the Czech and Slovak peoples. First, the Protectorate Government in Prague, second the government of the new Slovak State, third the Czechoslovak legation in London and lastly the Czechoslovak National Committee. Clearly this was a confused state of affairs that could not be expected to last.

Although the Foreign Office had now recognised a National Committee, headed by Beneš, there was no desire to enhance this level of political recognition or to resolve the confusion that surrounded the growing number of bodies that seemingly represented Czechoslovak interests. Nor was the Czechoslovak question regarded as any more of a

71 FO 371 22900 C196667/12 Roberts minute on the recognition of Czechoslovak National Committee, 29 November 1939.
72 FO 371 22900 C202057/12 Foreign Office’s copy of War Cabinet Conclusions, 11 December 1939.
73 FO 371 22900 C2027027/12 Halifax’s letter to Beneš, 20 December 1939. See also reproductions of both letters in Czech in Beneš, Sest let, pp 436 & 437.
74 FO 371 22900 C205827/12 Roberts minute, 30 December 1939.
priority than it had been in 1939 and this situation was unlikely to change unless external events intervened. In the event, of course, this was exactly what occurred. By the beginning of 1940 the international situation had begun to change and Britain slowly found herself increasingly isolated as the ‘Phoney War’ gave way to a renewed German offensive in the west and the invasion, and occupation, of Norway, then the Low Countries and finally France. By late May, Britain was in an entirely different, and far more desperate, position than it had been nine months previously. Now the frontline had been brought up to the Channel coast and Britain needed the support of every fighting ally it could secure, including the Czechoslovaks. More importantly, after the disastrous Norwegian Campaign Chamberlain had been replaced by Churchill and this change in leadership had a significant effect on the continuation of the British war effort, and also on the attitudes toward renewed Czechoslovak requests for increased political recognition. Though it would be inaccurate to suggest that these events resulted in a fundamental reversal in British foreign policy on the Czechoslovak question they did result, when combined with the worsening military situation, in an atmosphere that was marginally more supportive of the Czechoslovaks’ long-term political objectives.

The ensuing discussions between the Foreign Office and the National Committee over the upgrading of their status to a Provisional Government in exile revolved around two key documents. Beneš wrote the first after a meeting with Cadogan on 26 April 1940, a 20-page memorandum that set out his arguments as to why the British authorities should now increase the level of recognition they had granted to the National Committee. Bruce Lockhart produced the second on 20 May and this was a response to Beneš’s argument and set out the advantages and disadvantages in granting further recognition to the

75 See Lukacs, May 1940.
76 FO 371 24288 C6494/2/12 Beneš’s memorandum on provisional recognition, 3 May 1940, see also Dilks (ed), The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, p273.
Czechoslovaks. The subsequent negotiations on this question repeatedly returned to several issues that the Foreign Office felt had to be resolved before further recognition could be granted. These were; the question of unity amongst the exiles, the potential Czechoslovak contribution to the war effort, the status of the successor entities of the former Czechoslovak state and their relations with the exiles in London, and the reaction of other states to the creation of a Provisional government.

In the period immediately before Beneš’s meeting with Cadogan most of the Central Department’s attention was focused on the first of these issues, the continued disunity amongst the Czechoslovak exiles; especially as these relations had barely improved since the beginning of the New Year and Hodža, who had been offered a position in the National Committee, had even attempted to establish a rival émigré organisation in Paris. The seriousness with which the Central Department viewed these developments was amply illustrated by one comment in particular that noted, ‘all this wrangling and backbiting among émigrés whose sole interest lies in collaboration is depressing reading.’

One possible solution, as Roberts noted, was that Beneš could attempt to secure political recognition solely on behalf of the Czechs, to which the Foreign Office would have willingly agreed. But this suggestion completely ignored the fact that Beneš’s ultimate objective was the re-establishment of pre-war Czechoslovakia and there is no evidence to suggest that he ever considered compromising this goal. It was possible that the Central Department failed to comprehend the single-minded determination with which Beneš pursued this objective, but nevertheless it seemed logical to them that Beneš should

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77 FO 371 24288 C6035/2/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum on the Provisional Czechoslovak Government-in-exile, 12 May 1940.
78 FO 371 24287 C2331/2/12 Bruce Lockhart minute, 11 February 1940.
79 FO 371 24287 C2331/2/12 Foreign Office minute, signature illegible, 11 February 1940.
80 FO 371 24288 C6035/2/12 Roberts minute, 20 May 1940.
reach some accommodation with Hodža before increased recognition was granted. Bruce Lockhart even was forced to admit that,

Émigrés are peculiarly prone to political wrangling...It is therefore clear that a thoroughly unsatisfactory situation has been created for which Dr Hodža, Dr Beneš, and the war of inactivity are in varying degrees responsible.81

But, as the 'Phoney War' became real these intrigues abated slightly and it appeared that Hodža and Beneš had been reconciled, however, the Foreign Office's position on provisional status was still dependant on complete unity amongst the exiles.82

As a consequence of this pre-condition Hodža attempted to gain further political advantages for himself during this most sensitive period in negotiations.83 Hodža's machinations led Beneš to complain to Bruce Lockhart that, 'You admit...that I have a big majority [amongst the exiles]. Yet you are trying to force me to accept this insignificant minority of blackmailers.'84 In fact, Beneš's outburst was not entirely baseless. The amount of genuine support that Hodža and Osuský enjoyed amongst the exiles in the west was limited and the only reason that they had been able to contest his leadership was because they both had supporters within the French government, many of who were implacably opposed to Beneš. Indeed, it could be argued that Beneš had caused some of these problems by locating himself in London rather than in Paris, as the distance between the two capitals allowed his opponents to conspire against him. Beneš, however, was often able to negate this effect by mobilising his supporters in the United States. For example,

81 FO 371 24287 C2985/2/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum on meeting with Hodža, 24 February 1940.
82 FO 371 24288 C6035/2/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum on possible reconciliation between Beneš and Hodža, 22 April 1940.
83 Beneš, Paměti, pp180-182.
84 Bruce Lockhart, Comes the Reckoning, p92.
Osuský’s attempts to outmanoeuvre Beneš were seriously curtailed when the Slovak National Alliance of America instructed him in December 1939, in no uncertain terms, to back Beneš. But, while Beneš may have had a point, the Foreign Office retained the upper hand in these negotiations and could insist on any level of cohesiveness that it felt necessary.

Moreover, from the British perspective there were very good reasons for insisting on complete unity among the exiles, based on their experiences with some of the other exiles now gathered in London, especially the Poles. The problems General Władysław Sikorski, the Polish Prime Minister in exile, had to contend with far exceeded those experienced by Beneš. But once France had been defeated Beneš no longer had to contend with these opponents in Paris and in October 1940 Hodža eventually relented and joined the newly established Czechoslovak National Council as Vice-President. This was a representative and legislative body that had already been reorganised in order to include a larger number of Slovaks and to address British concerns over representation. Having said that, Hodža often feigned illness to avoid attending these meetings and continued to intrigue against Beneš until he eventually left Britain for the United States.

Bearing these events in mind Beneš’s meeting with Cadogan in late April 1940 could not have come at a more inopportune time for either party, the Czechoslovak exiles were in disarray and the British War Cabinet had only just decided to evacuate Norway. It was clear that Cadogan’s mind was on other matters when Beneš came to visit. Yet the importance of this encounter lay in the memorandum Beneš subsequently produced, a copy

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85 FO 371 22990 C21042/7/12 Bruce Lockhart minute, 28 December 1939.
87 FO 371 24289 C11204/2/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum, 17 October 1940.
of which the Central Department received on 3 May, in which he clearly detailed the Czechoslovaks' immediate political objectives. Beneš’s argument centred around four basic points; relations with the Poles, the juridical position of the former Czechoslovakia, the impact the recognition of a Provisional Government would have on post-war borders and his own position as leader.\footnote{FO 371 24288 C6494/2/12 Beneš’s memorandum on provisional recognition, 3 May 1940.} Czechoslovak-Polish relations was an issue of some consequence as Beneš had just begun negotiations with the Poles on the creation of a joint federated state after the war, an idea that was supported by the Foreign Office.\footnote{Šťovíček & Valenta (eds), Československo-polští jednání o kooperaci, pp43-44 & Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), Dokumenty z historie československé politiky, Vol. 1, p90.} The memorandum also returned to his argument on the supposed ‘juridical continuity’ of Czechoslovakia, concluding that as the west still recognised her legations and an army in France then Czechoslovakia still \textit{de jure} existed and Beneš’s aspirations to establish a government in exile were legitimate. This was a somewhat dubious legal argument, and one the Foreign Office rejected, but serves as a good illustration of how Beneš utilised the various \textit{ad hoc} decisions Britain had made regarding Czechoslovakia’s successor entities to further his own political agenda.

But the memorandum’s stance was not entirely inflexible and it explicitly noted that any increased level of recognition would not commit the British to any future frontiers in Central Europe. This was a crucial point, as the Foreign Office had already made it clear that they could not commit themselves to any frontiers at this stage of the war, not least because of the complications this might cause with the Poles. This was another example of Beneš sophisticated political tactics, he often tailored his objectives to fit in with the current British position, thus increasing the likelihood of acceptance of
any particular point. It went on to allege that, 'the whole of the Czech people and a majority of the Slovak people stand without exception behind the Czecho-Slovak political émigrés in Britain...behind Dr Beneš, who is fully recognised in his own country as the leader of this national resistance.' The memorandum concluded by arguing that although Czechoslovak nation could survive the German military occupation it could not accept an inferior legal position in comparison with those other Allies in London.

The British response to this approach took two forms; the first was a minute by an unknown author (the signature is completely illegible), three days after the Central Department had received the memorandum and the second was Bruce Lockhart's own, longer, memorandum. This first response was not entirely dismissive of Beneš's arguments, but was not won over by them either. The author rejected the need for equality between the Czechoslovaks and Poles and although he agreed that there were no legal hindrances to further recognition he went on to point out that the complications that remained were of a purely political nature. Not the least was that, although the British and Beneš might agree that recognition would not include any commitments to future frontiers, it is equally true that the recognition of the Provisional Government would be taken by other powers- e.g. Hungary- as implying that we did mean to restore the previous Czecho-Slovak frontiers, and this impression might well have results which did not agree with our strategic and diplomatic objectives.

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93 FO 371 24288 C6494/2/12 Beneš's memorandum on provisional recognition, 3 May 1940.
94 FO 371 24288 C6494/2/12 Foreign Office minute, signature illegible, 6 May 1940.
On the issue of the supposed unity of the 'action abroad' the author concluded, 'A glance through the files recording Mr Lockhart's efforts to bring Dr Beneš and Dr Hodža together is sufficient to refute this assertion.' Furthermore, the theory expressed in the memorandum that such disunity is common amongst émigré groups and that recognition would help solve it was also given short shrift, and the author stated that the Czechoslovaks would have to provide conclusive evidence of unity first.

As was to be expected Bruce Lockhart's response was more sympathetic. His memorandum listed the arguments for and against enhanced recognition. In the 'against' category he noted: Britain's reluctance to take up any commitments in Central Europe, the reaction of other states; the existence of a government in Prague, doubts over the support Beneš enjoyed, and that morale in the Protectorate would be best served by allied victory and not by political gifts. In the 'for' category he noted: that the Slovaks were politically inexperienced, plans for a Habsburg restoration had little support, the Czechoslovaks formed a strategic bulwark in the region, the present government in Prague supported the exiles and that Beneš, like him or not, was the best man on offer. Obviously, Bruce Lockhart's formulations were designed to cast the balance in favour of recognition but he went on to make a more impassioned plea against Britain's pragmatic, and cautious approach to date. He wrote, 'In a war, which we have not even begun to win, excessive caution about the future of Europe is out of place. We should know who are our friends and back them...' He concluded by recommending that the British authorities should recognise the Czechoslovaks as Allies forthwith and invite them to attend meetings of the Supreme War Council.

95 FO 371 24288 C6494/2/12 Foreign Office minute, signature illegible, 6 May 1940.
96 FO 371 24288 C6035/2/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum on the Provincial Government, 12 May 1940.
Three weeks of intense discussions followed these two memoranda and the Foreign Office’s preliminary conclusion was that no further recognition should be offered. Roger Makins, an official in the Central Department, explained,

Dr Benes has no assets and is a very large liability...I'm sure that in this tangle of blackmail and intrigue we ought not to be rushed into a fresh commitment, which we may never be able to implement, to an unsatisfactory individual, unless we are going to obtain some real advantages from doing so.

To which Roberts added, ‘We therefore maintain our present attitude that further consideration of Dr Benes’s request must be preceded by a clear and public demonstration of the unity of Czecho-Slovak action abroad.’ Bruce Lockhart’s explanation for this refusal to grant further recognition was more vitriolic.

Even in my Czechs the F.O. take no interest, I feel that every time I raise some point by Benes I am only boring the Central Department. Strang who is in charge of all this work never has time to see me...he is a poor creature - gutless and second rate...

Although the immediate outcome of these discussions was negative the Foreign Office’s decision did not stand for long, due to the worsening of the military situation on the Continent.

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97 FO 371 24288 C6035/2/12 Makins minute, 4 June 1940 & Roberts minute, 7 June 1940.
As Makins had noted it appeared that the Czechoslovaks had little to offer Britain in return for an increased level of recognition, especially as the Czechoslovak Division and a number of fighter pilots were still in France. But, as the military situation changed these forces were evacuated to Britain in late June 1940 and thereby became a British responsibility and were integrated into the British war effort. Not long after Czechoslovak pilots were fighting alongside the Royal Air Force (RAF) in the Battle of Britain. Parallel to this development, links between the Czechoslovak and British intelligence services had produced numerous results and the quality of intelligence these contacts produced was widely appreciated. At much the same time that Czechoslovak troops were being evacuated from France, Britain established the Special Operations Executive (SOE), designed to encourage resistance and armed uprisings in occupied Europe. It was soon realised by the Central Department that this was an area where the Czechoslovaks might be of some assistance and that this factor alone warranted a possible reversal of policy on the recognition question. After the defeat of France, therefore, the Czechoslovaks went from being a liability to a significant military asset, not only for the defence of Britain, but also in terms of propaganda value in the United States and with an eye to establishing resistance movements on the Continent.

The Central Department also found its decision under attack from what appeared to be an orchestrated propaganda campaign. This took a wide variety of forms; from letters to the Prime Minister to questions asked in the House, letters in The Times and inter-

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100 Čejka, Českoslavenský odboj na Západě, pp241-257.

101 FO 37124287 C2330/2/12 Bruce Lockhart minute, 11 February 1939.

102 FO 371 24289 C7646/2/12 Troutbeck minute, 21 June 1940. Beneš also soon realised the political benefits that these forces might bring, see Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), DOCUMENTY Z HISTORIE ČESKOSLOVÁSKÉ POLITIKY, Vol. 1, p212.

103 FO 371 24288 C6035/2/12 Makins minute, 7 June 1940.
departmental enquires from other ministers. It should be recognised that the Czechoslovaks were particularly adept at mobilising support for their objectives and they produced an impressive range of propaganda materials during the war, but whether this meant that Beneš had instigated this particular flurry of interest is open to speculation.

But while the Department politely noted these approaches it did not change its original decision. When Bruce Lockhart met with Strang on 13 June to inquire about progress on this issue, Strang replied in exasperation, 'Fed up with Beneš; doesn't he realise that the fate of the world-British Empire, [is] being settled in the next forty eight hours?'

Beneš himself visited Strang on the 21 June and, after thanking him for Britain’s help in evacuating Czechoslovak forces from France, he once more broached the question of recognition, reiterating of same arguments that had appeared in his earlier memorandum. He also went on, as Strang explained, to,

say that one of the objections to recognition had been the alleged lack of unity among the Czech and Slovak émigrés. But it was fair to ask whether the Poles or the Belgians or the Norwegians or the Dutch, or even the French were united. It was unfair to judge the Czechs and Slovaks more severely than the others.

On this occasion this time the Central Department’s reaction was markedly different. The military situation had become critical and no one had the slightest idea of how events were

104 FO 371 24288 C7332/2/12 Messages and letters passed on from the Prime Minister’s Private Secretary to the Central Department, July 1940 & FO 371 24288 C6035/2/12 Sir Archibald Sinclair, Secretary of State for Air, to Halifax, 6 June 1940.
106 Young (ed), The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, p62.
107 FO 371 24289 C7646/2/12 Strang memorandum on talk with Beneš, 21 June 1940.
108 FO 371 24289 C7646/2/12 Strang memorandum on talk with Beneš, 21 June 1940.
likely to develop. Three days later Makins penned a crucial minute, one that is worth quoting at length.

I have not hitherto been in favour of recognising Dr Beneš’s provisional government for a number of reasons. Dr Beneš is a somewhat tarnished figure; he has been unable to secure unity in Czecho-Slovak action abroad...But circumstances have now changed. Hungary may be written off...The Czechs have shown up well compared with some of our other allies, and the Czecho-Slovak National committee and army are moving to the United Kingdom. Our own position has changed for the worse and, having less to lose, we can perhaps afford to take on the Czechs...109

More than any other factor it was the potentially catastrophic military situation Britain now faced that was responsible for this change in policy. The Foreign Office retained its previous objections to recognising the Czechoslovak exiles, but a political decision was made that these issues were now secondary to the assistance they might be able to give the war-effort. Thus, on 3 July 1940 the War Cabinet considered, and approved, the recognition of a Czechoslovak Provisional Government in exile, a proposal that went through ‘without a murmur.’110

Pre-empting the usual exchange of letters, Beneš sent Halifax an outline of structure of the proposed Provisional Government and its related organs on 9 July. Beneš was to be President and Mgr Jan Šrámek Prime Minister and he listed all the cabinet members.111 Halifax’s reply, however, on 18 July contained several reservations that were

109 FO 371 24289 C7646/2/12 Makins minutes, 24 June 1940.
110 FO 371 24289 C7646/2/12 Foreign Office’s copy of the War Cabinet Conclusions, 3 July 1940 & Young (ed), The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, p65.
111 V. Žižka (ed.), Bajúfci Československo, 1938-1945, Prague, 1945, pp52-54.
to guarantee the continuation of the recognition process. Halifax noted in this letter that the British government, ‘would not commit themselves to recognise...any particular frontiers in Central Europe,’ that they did not accept his position ‘as regards the continued juridical existence of the Czecho-Slovak Republic,’ and ‘...the question of jurisdiction over Czecho-Slovak armed forces and civilians in this country...’ Roberts also noted that no Minister would be appointed to the Czechoslovaks, nor would one be accepted from them, unlike the other exiled governments, furthermore the legation would continue to keep its present status. As a result, although the Foreign Office accepted the need for an increased level of recognition it maintained its position on many of the issues that had so far delayed this process. Finally, on 21 July Halifax wrote to Beneš to inform him that the British government now recognised a Czechoslovak Provisional Government in exile, a development confirmed by Churchill in the House of Commons on the 23 July. The final nicety was the appointment of an official British Representative to the Provisional Czechoslovak Government. Bruce Lockhart agreed to fill this post and was duly appointed on 12 August 1940.

Although Beneš and his fellow émigrés had now secured the enhanced political status they sought, the reservations contained in Halifax’s reply meant that there was still a gap between Beneš’s stated objectives and what the British authorities had so far agreed to. As a result, instead of marking the end of the recognition process, as the Central Department had hoped, the granting of provisional status merely proved to be the end of the second phase of negotiations. The Provisional Czechoslovak Government would continue to press for further recognition until they were satisfied that they had extracted as

112 FO 371 24289 C7646/2/12 Halifax to Beneš, 18 July 1940.
113 FO 371 24289 C8267/2/12 Roberts minute, 31 July 1940.
115 FO 371 24289 C8267/2/12 Makins minute on Bruce Lockhart’s appointment, 12 August 1940.
much political capital from the British government as possible, principally to ensure that their position was entirely analogous to the other exiled governments in London.\textsuperscript{116}

It took just under twelve months for the British authorities to recognise a fully accredited Czechoslovak Government in exile on 16 July 1941; this was not, however, because it was felt that this was warranted. The British authorities still retained their previous reservations on full recognition, not least with regard to Beneš’s ultimate objective of recreating Czechoslovakia after the war. Moreover, these reservations were shared by many officials in the upper echelons of the Foreign Office, in the Cabinet and by certain Dominion states, South Africa in particular. From the British perspective these reservations were entirely legitimate, especially as any acknowledgement of Czechoslovakia’s frontiers would have immediately embroiled the Foreign Office in a fierce debate with the Polish Government in exile and quite possibility with a number of other interested parties, not least the Sudeten German émigrés in London, led by Wenzel Jaksch.\textsuperscript{117} These complexities made the Central Department understandably reluctant to re-open the recognition question yet again and even less willing to grant full status, even after Churchill and Eden had given the idea their blessing. As a result, when Beneš began to press for a revision of the ‘provisional’ status of his government the Foreign Office procrastinated. In order to compensate for these delaying tactics, which the Czechoslovak émigrés found increasingly difficult to comprehend, Beneš and his colleagues reverted to techniques designed to circumvent these obstructions and to present the Foreign Office with a \textit{fait accompli}.

Beneš felt impelled to seek further recognition because there remained a number of issues that he wanted resolved. Although the spectre of the Munich Agreement had

\textsuperscript{\textit{116}} Táborský, \textit{The Czechoslovak Cause}, pp89-90.
haunted Anglo-Czechoslovak relations ever since its enactment, Beneš and his government had so far avoided any reference to this episode and continued to do so until 1942 when they pressed for its revocation.\textsuperscript{118} In part this was because Beneš wanted fully to secure his international position before he turned his attention to this issue.\textsuperscript{119} When the references to Munich did arise, Churchill referred to the Munich Agreement as having been ‘destroyed’ by Hitler on its second anniversary, Osuský attempted to stir up trouble, but Beneš, presumably mindful of his ‘provisional’ status, refused to be drawn into a debate.\textsuperscript{120} Nevertheless, the legacy of the Munich Agreement continued to hover in the background of the recognition process, especially as the Foreign Office was now intent on encouraging Beneš to include the Sudeten German émigrés in his government, which he later did. Interestingly, when Beneš offered seats to Communist politicians, theoretically in line with the Central Department’s call for unity amongst the exiles, the Department objected.\textsuperscript{121} Unity amongst the exiles was, therefore, only acceptable within the terms set by the Central Department.

Moreover, the Soviet Union’s recognition of a Czechoslovak government in exile, signed some four hours before Britain’s, marked the beginning of a growing rift between the Foreign Office and Beneš’s government. This was because Soviet recognition came without the same reservations the British had insisted upon, which had been made easier by the fact that the Soviet Union was not a party to the Munich Agreement. Instead, Moscow had agreed to the re-construction of Czechoslovakia within her pre-1938 frontiers, accepted Beneš’s conception of the juridical continuity of that state, Beneš’s leadership in exile, and agreed to establish a Czechoslovak army on Soviet soil.\textsuperscript{122} Moscow’s willing

\textsuperscript{118} FO 371 24292 C10410/10210/12 Bruce Lockhart minute, 24 September 1940.
\textsuperscript{119} Beneš, \textit{Paměti}, p294.
\textsuperscript{120} FO 371 24289 C11069/2/12 various minutes, 14 October to 11 November 1940.
\textsuperscript{121} FO 371 26394 C11151/1320/12 Foreign Office minute, 6 October 1941.
\textsuperscript{122} For the text of the agreement see Žižka, \textit{Bojovníci Československo}, p88 and for documents related to these negotiations see J. Němeček, H. Nováčková, I. Štovišák & M. Tejchman (eds), \textit{Československo-sovětské vztahy v diplomatických jednáních}, Vol. 1, Prague, 1998, pp199-216.
acceptance of Beneš's political objectives, therefore, contrasted sharply with the Foreign Office's continued reluctance to withdraw its previous reservations. As a consequence, Beneš and his government soon realised that the Soviet Union's entry into the war, and the increased levels of support now emanating from the United States had fundamentally altered the balance of power between themselves and the British authorities. From this point onwards, Beneš and his colleagues increasingly looked to Washington and Moscow for support for their post-war objectives, the very support that London seemed unwilling, or more likely, unable to give. On a number of occasions Beneš proceeded to bypass the British entirely and secured agreements with the other two Great Powers first, thus placing the Foreign Office in a position where it had little choice but to accept the resulting agreements.

There is one final point that needs to be highlighted regarding this final phase of the recognition process and that was the increasingly acrimonious nature of these negotiations, due to the Central Department's failure to clearly explain to the exiles the reasons for these long delays. After all Churchill had agreed to extend full recognition to Beneš in April 1941, yet the necessary arrangements were not finalised until the middle of July, and only then in order to keep pace with Moscow. These delays were to prove increasingly frustrating to Beneš, his fellow exiles and, more importantly, the Czech population in the Protectorate. While these delays were unavoidable from the Central Department's perspective, not least the because of the objections of South Africa's premiere, General Jan Smuts, it does seem that they failed to give a coherent explanation to the Czechoslovaks for these delays. As a consequence Beneš and his government increasingly came to believe that these delays were solely due to the Foreign Office's disinclination to grant full recognition. This was a development that, in conjunction with those influences listed

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above, led to an increase in tensions and a decrease in co-operation between the two parties.

However, this final phase of the recognition process did not begin immediately after the second phase had been completed, even though it was clear that Beneš would have preferred it to have done so. In fact, it was Bruce Lockhart who persuaded him to delay re-opening these talks, as he was aware of the negative impression this might have made while the Battle of Britain was still raging.124 Instead, Beneš and his government spent the latter half of 1940 consolidating their civil and military administration in exile. A Czechoslovak National Council was created, instituted by Presidential decree and designed to function as an advisory body to the state administration, and, in addition, on 25 October 1940 both an Anglo-Czechoslovak Armed Forces Agreement and a Financial Agreement were signed.125 These were treaties that integrated Czechoslovak soldiers and pilots into the British war effort and helped to secure the Provisional Government’s economic position. These developments meant that this brief respite proved extremely valuable for Beneš, especially as Eden replaced Halifax as Foreign Secretary in December 1940. Eden was, in theory at least, more sympathetic to the Czechoslovak cause than the previous incumbent. This pause also allowed Beneš to move out of London and to a more salubrious and safer surroundings of a country house at Aston Abbots, in Buckinghamshire.

Although the Provisional Czechoslovak Government had been recognised by other governments in exile, and certain Dominion governments, excluding Canada, the continued provisionality of its status meant that Beneš was not willing to delay reopening

124 Bruce Lockhart, Comies the Reckoning, p99.
negotiations for long.\textsuperscript{126} However, the Foreign Office was entirely satisfied with the level of political recognition it had given the Czechoslovaks and was reluctant to consider any enhancement of this current position. As a result, by the beginning of 1941, the recognition process had stalled. Once again it was up the course of events that broke this impasse and, on this occasion, the decisive factors proved to be three lunches and a rousing chorus of the British national anthem.

The process began with two lunches in February 1941, the first between Beneš and Eden on 10 February 1940 and the second with Churchill on 26 February. During both the Beneš was able to put his case for further recognition and received a sympathetic response from both men, a clear example of Ministerial short-circuiting of the Central Department’s advice.\textsuperscript{127} In addition, and as has already been mentioned, Churchill paid a visit to inspect Czechoslovak troops based at Leamington Spa and to have lunch on 18 April 1941. While he was there, and in Bruce Lockhart’s absence, Beneš handed Churchill a memorandum entitled the \textit{Political and Judicial Relationship of the Czechoslovak Republic to Great Britain} that requested full recognition of his government.\textsuperscript{128} The visit ended with the soldiers singing ‘Rule, Britannia’ (organised by Masaryk), which seemed to have the desired effect.\textsuperscript{129} As a result the Prime Minister sent a personal minute to Eden two days later that stated, ‘I see no reason why we can not give the Czechs the same recognition as we have given the Poles, and encourage the Americans to follow our example. In neither case should we be committed to territorial frontiers.’ To this Eden added, ‘I shall be glad of

\textsuperscript{126} FO 371 24298 C9653/2/12 Bruce Lockhart to Halifax, 5 September 1940, FO 371 24290 C11819/2/12 Bruce Lockhart minute, 31 October 1940 & FO 371 34346 & Young (ed), \textit{The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart}, p 106 & 119.
\textsuperscript{127} Young (ed), \textit{The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart}, p113.
\textsuperscript{128} FO 371 26394 C4078/1320/12 Beneš’s memorandum, 18 April 1941, entitled ‘Political and Judicial Relationship of the Czechoslovak Republic to Great Britain.’
\textsuperscript{129} Young (ed), \textit{The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart}, p115.
draft observations. My views on this question are similar to the Prime Minister's.'\textsuperscript{130} With these events the third, and final, phase of the recognition process had begun.

Beneš's memorandum argued for full recognition based on the fact that the Czech population in the Protectorate did not understand the term 'Provisional' and because many saw themselves as being allies of the 'second category.' For some, or so Beneš argued, this was a blatant continuation of Britain's Munich style policies. Bruce Lockhart replied to Beneš's memorandum in a despatch to Eden on 20 April,

> The insistent demand for full recognition comes, and always has come, from the home Czechs, who, as the Chiefs of Staff admit, supply us with perhaps our most valuable military intelligence...They do not understand the word 'provisional.' They suspect it and see in it not only a slur but also the last remnant of the Munich policy...

He added that,

> In the case of the home Czechs the most practical form of immediate support is full recognition. We have promised to restore their liberties. This is a post-war promise. To ignore the war implications of that promise is to risk depriving ourselves of valuable military advantages.\textsuperscript{131}

The logic of Bruce Lockhart's argument was sound, in early 1941 Britain still needed all the military assistance it could muster and the recognition of Beneš and his colleagues as

\textsuperscript{130} FO 371 26394 C4078/1320/12 Prime Minster's Personal minute, M.456/1, 20 April 1941, Churchill to Eden on Dr Beneš's recognition memorandum, 23 April 1941, and Eden's minute.

\textsuperscript{131} FO 371 26394 C4078/1320/12 Bruce Lockhart to Eden, 20 April 1941.
fully fledged allies might well bring military advantages. Roberts's response, after his own talks with Bruce Lockhart, set out the Central Department's continued reservations. These were that a separate government remained in Prague, that the Foreign Office did not accept the legal continuity of Czechoslovakia, did not want to commit itself to any borders in Central Europe and that it had reservations over giving Czechoslovaks legislative authority over the émigré Sudeten Germans in Britain. Lastly, that neither the Dominions nor the United States seemed eager to offer further recognition.132

In the ensuing discussions Strang and Makins both accepted that Eden and Churchill had explicitly requested full recognition should be extended to Beneš, but noted the relevance of these reservations. The department then sought the advice of Sir William Malkin, the Foreign Office's legal advisor who commented on the department's reluctance to proceed and, as Strang noted,

Sir W. Malkin's minute reinforces the misgivings expressed by the Department at the step which we now propose to take. On grounds of law and fact, the right degree of recognition to afford Dr Benes and his government is the recognition which we have already accorded, namely that of a provisional government...To recognise him in that capacity [fully] is a matter not so much of law or fact as of faith.133

The legal position was therefore made clear, as was the concept that any further recognition had to be regarded as a political rather than a legal proposition. Although Eden retained his own qualifications about committing Britain to re-establish Czechoslovakia, given his and Churchill's prior acceptance of greater recognition it appeared that full

132 FO 371 26394 C4078/1320/12 Roberts minute on his talk with Bruce Lockhart, 20 April 1941.
133 FO 371 26394 C4078/1320/12 Strang minute, 25 April 1941.
recognition would be proffered on political grounds, regardless of the Central Department’s concerns.\textsuperscript{134}

It was to be another three months, however, before this occurred. There were three main reasons for this extended delay. First, that as usual Czechoslovak issues came a long way down Britain’s list of priorities, especially as the war had taken yet another turn for the worse at the beginning of 1941. Second, there were delays caused by the actual machinery of British foreign policy decision-making. Lastly, there were the reservations the Central Department maintained over the Czechoslovaks’ position in international law. A meeting had been scheduled to discuss further recognition on 7 May 1941, but it was ‘indefinitely postponed’ at the last moment and was not convened until 21 May.\textsuperscript{135} The reasons for this delay were the result of a combination of factors, as Roberts informed Bruce Lockhart.

Eden had put off the meeting on recognition [of the Czechoslovak Government] which had been fixed for today because it was ‘not urgent’. Very disappointing. Frank, who said he was not an admirer of the Secretary of State, told me Eden could not stand up to criticism and after a dose of it (e.g. his bad handling by the Commons on Tuesday) always drew back from anything which might burn his fingers. Sargent, whom I saw afterwards, told me the same thing and doubted if we could get much out of him at this moment.\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{134} FO 371 26394 C4078/1320/12 Eden minute, 25 April 1941.
\textsuperscript{135} FO 371 26394 C5339/1320/12 Roberts minute, 7 May 1941.
\textsuperscript{136} Young (ed), \textit{The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart}, p97.
When this meeting was finally called it was concluded that there was no real case for granting any further recognition, but that such a move might be politically expedient.137

As a result of this decision a letter was sent to Beneš on 26 May to enquire about the possible effects that such a decision might have on the Hácha Government in Prague, with whom Beneš was in contact and on the Anglo-Czechoslovak war effort.138 Beneš's reply of 28 May clearly reiterated that the two bodies, the government in the Protectorate and the exiles, were in close contact, and that full recognition would be a great advantage to all concerned.139 Once again, at this stage in the proceedings it appeared as if Beneš had fulfilled all his obligations and that recognition would be forthcoming. However, although Roberts's subsequent minute clearly stated that Beneš had now answered the Foreign Office's queries and that they were at last ready to offer full recognition one problem remained: the attitude of the Dominions.140

The reluctance of Australia, Canada and South Africa to agree to this development, had an important effect on Anglo-Czechoslovak relations for the simple reason that these delays were regarded by the Czechoslovaks as little more than a smoke screen for further British procrastination.141 Although there is little evidence to confirm their opinion the Foreign Office did fail to explain the need to consult the Dominions on this question. The reluctant attitude of these governments towards the Czechoslovak exiles was not a new development and had first emerged the previous year, General Smuts had previously announced on 8 July 1940 that, 'I frankly dislike Beneš's persistence. He has already occasioned too much trouble.'142 The reason for his reluctance, and Canada's and Australia's, were much the same as the Foreign Office's; the collective memory of far-

137 FO 371 26394 C5553/1320/12 Makins minute, 21 May 1941.
138 FO 371 26394 C5553/1320/12 Eden to Beneš, 26 May 1941.
139 FO 371 26394 C5980/1320/12 Beneš's reply to Eden, 28 May 1941.
140 FO 371 26394 C5980/1320/12 Roberts minute, 4 June 1941.
141 See FO 371 26394 C6475/1320/12 & C6501/1320/12 Central Department minutes on attitudes of Dominion governments, 11 & 14 June 1941.
142 FO 371 24289 C9653/2/12 Bruce Lockhart to Halifax, 5 September 1940 & FO 371 26394 C4078/1320/12 Roberts minute, 20 April 1941.
reaching commitments made in Central Europe during the last war. When Eden attempted explained the situation to Masaryk on 12 June it was clear that he had some trouble accepting this explanation.

Harold Nicolson provided the most likely reason for this difficulty in his book _Diplomacy_.

This glorious experiment [The British Commonwealth of Nations] is not, as yet, fully understood by foreign diplomatists. They imagine that members of the British Commonwealth are bound by some secret compact to support each other in all international negotiations...This assumption is incorrect. There is nothing which need prevent a Dominion Government from taking a wholly independent line in foreign policy.

It is open to debate whether the Czechoslovaks in London understood this relationship; nevertheless the resulting delay was sufficient for Beneš to complain about Eden’s methods.

The Foreign Office certainly took these objections seriously enough to attempt to resolve this issue. Eventually, on 20 June 1941 Strang offered a compromise solution. He suggested that the British authorities would cease to mention the term ‘Provisional’ in reference to the Czechoslovak government in exile, but would not offer full recognition. Instead, the exiles would be viewed as having the same rights as all the other exiled governments and be given an accredited minister, but would not be placed on the

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143 FO 371 26394 C5994/1320/12 Telegram to the Foreign Office from the Government of Australia, 4 June 1941.
144 FO 371 26394 C6475/1320/12 Eden minute, 12 June 1941.
146 Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), _Dokumenty z historie československé politiky_, Vol. 1, p228.
diplomatic list.147 These proposals were then forwarded to the Dominions to gauge their reactions and both the South African and Australian authorities reluctantly agreed to this concession.148 However, although these delays were well founded from the British perspective they caused trouble for Beneš in both the Czechoslovak National Council and among the population in the Protectorate.149 Bruce Lockhart noted that Beneš and Masaryk were increasingly annoyed by these postponements,

Both were dejected...by the long delay in the granting of full recognition...Dr Beneš could not understand what the difficulties were. Jan wanted to know if the Czechoslovak aviators who had died fighting for Britain were to be regarded as provisionally dead.150

For a final time this impasse was broken by events outside the control of the Central Department, when, on 22 June 1941, Axis forces invaded the Soviet Union. The Soviets had maintained retained close, and largely amicable, contacts with Beneš and these relations soon bore fruit.151 On 24 June Bruce Lockhart reported to Eden that the Soviet military attaché in London had approached the head of Czechoslovak military intelligence regarding possible co-operation and in doing so had offered full recognition to Beneš's government.152 Bruce Lockhart submitted a fuller analysis of this situation to the Central Department two days later.

147 FO 371 26394 C7206/1320/12 Strang minute, 20 June 1941.
148 FO 371 26394 C7977/1320/12 Foreign Office memorandum on the situation to the Dominion governments, 2 July 1941.
149 FO 371 26394 C7992/1320/12 Bruce Lockhart to Eden, 26 June 1941.
150 Young (ed), The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, p119.
152 FO 371 26394 C7992/1320/12 Bruce Lockhart to Eden, 26 June 1941.
President Beneš informed me that he was perturbed by the possibility of Russia's recognising the Czechoslovak Government in London before Britain and the United States had accorded their full recognition. This may be the President's method of exerting additional pressure on us, but I do not exclude the possibility of the Soviet authorities taking this step. Indeed, it is just the kind of action that might be expected of them. Nor do I think that President Beneš's apprehension is purely tactical...the effect of Russian recognition on the home Czechs and on the Slovaks might be dangerously exhilarating.\textsuperscript{153}

The Foreign Office was presented, as it had been in late 1939, with the possibility of a foreign government offering a greater level of recognition to the Czechoslovaks than they had done. This would have placed the British authorities in a delicate position, and as Makins noted, might also 'greatly encourage Russophile tendencies in Czechoslovakia and may well weaken Dr Benes's own position.'\textsuperscript{154} The Foreign Office was now faced with the possibly that their hesitancy over the recognition question might undermine Beneš's position, increase Soviet influence in Central Europe and have a negative impact on relations with their newest ally.

These considerations were heightened by the fact that recognition terms offered to Beneš by the Soviet Ambassador, I. M. Maisky, contained none of the reservations that the British had maintained for nearly three years. The Soviets offered to recognise Beneš's conception of the juridical continuity of the Czechoslovak state, made the physical restoration of the Republic one of their war aims, and granted the full recognition of Beneš

\textsuperscript{153} FO 371 26410 C7140/7140/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum to Central Department, 26 June 1941.

\textsuperscript{154} FO 371 26410 C7680/7140/12 Makins minute, 9 July 1941.
as the official president of Czechoslovakia with full diplomatic relations. Once more it was an impassioned letter from Bruce Lockhart to Eden on 7 July that forced the pace of the Foreign Office's decision making.

The real reason for the President's [Benes's] loss of his usual patience is the situation created by the entry of Russia into the war...I believe the time has now come when we should consider at least the possibility of Russia being able to check the German advance. If this should happen, the effects might be far reaching...A turning point in the war would be reached, and the chief credit would go to Russia. The check to Germany would in fact, be recognised by all Europe as a Russian victory, and the effect on the peoples of Europe, but especially on the Czech people might be very serious in its dimensions... 

Although Bruce Lockhart's suggestion that the Soviets might soon be able to recover from the German onslaught placed him in a tiny minority at this stage in the war, his warning over Soviet influence in the region was to prove prescient. The effect of this warning was swift and Eden sent for Bruce Lockhart the next day, when, according to his diaries, the Foreign Secretary immediately overturned the Central Department's previous policy and demanded that Benes and his government now be recognised fully. Once again, the Central Department's advice had been 'short-circuited' by direct ministerial intervention and the influence of external events. On 14 July Roberts noted that, 'No doubt Dr Benes is

156 FO 371 26388 C751 1/216/12 Bruce Lockhart to Eden, 7 July 1941.
157 Young (ed), The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, p119.
making the most of the Soviet issue, but it does represent a real danger to the Czechs (USSR have offered full recognition but it is to be announced).\footnote{158} Makins and Strang initialled his minutes without comment.

That same day the War Cabinet considered this issue and concluded, ‘Hitherto we had recognised the Czecho-Slovak Government as a Provisional Government. Now that Russia has given full recognition, the Foreign Secretary thought that we ought to do the same...’\footnote{159} After he had signed a treaty with the Soviet Union Masaryk had an audience with Eden and exchanged letters on recognition.\footnote{160} As a result the British authorities now accepted the Czechoslovaks as being politically equal to all the other allies and appointed an ambassador, Philip Nichols.\footnote{161} Certain reservations were maintained, however, and Eden’s letter noted that Britain did not accept the juridical continuity of the Czechoslovak Republic or agree to support any particular frontiers in Central Europe.\footnote{162} Although this meant that Beneš had not yet managed to secure British agreement for all his political objectives, in time the Foreign Office would have to compromise on these principles too.

The issue of the Munich Agreement still to be tackled, however, and the Czechoslovaks were not able to secure a public denunciation from the Foreign Office until the following summer. The next day Lord Halifax, now the British ambassador in Washington, received a message from the Czechoslovak National Council for America thanking the British government for its recognition of Beneš.\footnote{163} This was a fitting end to this process, which had begun in the United States three years previously. For all the delays and the Central Department’s well founded reservations over full recognition Beneš and his government had succeeded in achieving their aims on this question.

\footnote{158}{FO 371 26388 C7511/216/12 Roberts minute, 14 July 1941.}
\footnote{159}{FO 371 26394 C7992/1320/12 Foreign Office’s copy of the War Cabinet Conclusions, 15 July 1941.}
\footnote{160}{See FO 371 7140 Text of the Soviet-Czechoslovak treaty & Beneš, Šest let, pp459-460.}
\footnote{161}{HC Deb., 5th Series, Vol. 373, Col. 861, 23 July 1941.}
\footnote{162}{FO 371 26394 C7992/1320/12 Letter from Eden to Beneš, 18 July 1941.}
\footnote{163}{FO 371 26394 C8813/1320/12 Halifax to Foreign Office, 19 July 1941.}
The importance of the recognition question in Anglo-Czechoslovak relations lies in the fact that it illustrated the way in which the Czechoslovak exiles were able to direct British policy on issues that they felt were politically vital. The reason why Beneš was able to do this was relative simple; the Foreign Office, and the British government more generally, had few constructive policies regarding Central Europe at the start of the war. In fact, the reservations that the British authorities maintained throughout the recognition process were entirely negative. They referred solely to issues the British authorities did not wish to support, and were designed to avoid any sort of long-term commitments or entanglements in the region. While this approach was reasonable given the manner in which Czechoslovakia had been dissolved by March 1939 and the ad hoc nature of British recognition of its successor entities this did mean that the British position was rather confused. By contrast Beneš and his colleagues had a very clear view of their political objectives and pursued them tenaciously in the face of British objections. The most crucial of these was the creation of a government in exile that could lobby the Great Powers to re-establish Czechoslovakia within her pre-1938 frontiers. Moreover, due to the absence of clearly defined policies, Beneš and his government were able to use the course of events, from 1939 to 1941, to pressurise the Foreign Office to acquiesce in their demands.

This is not to suggest that the recognition of a Czechoslovak government in exile went against British interests, it did not. Rather, that the incremental nature of British foreign policy formation, and the lack of any clearly defined policies with regard to Czechoslovakia, allowed Beneš to exploit these inconsistencies and ultimately to secure his objectives. This was a process that was aided by the Czechoslovaks' skilful use of propaganda, their British supporters and the frequent 'short circuiting' of the Central Department's advice. Lastly, and most importantly, Anglo-Czechoslovak negotiations on the recognition question were often protracted and tense and the Soviet Union's swift and full recognition of a Czechoslovak government in exile and marked the beginning of the
end of the British authorities’ ability to limit and control the political activities of Beneš and his ministers.
Chapter Three

Anglo-Czechoslovak military relations, 1939 to 1945.

The primary focus of most secondary sources concerned with Anglo-Czechoslovak relations in exile during the Second World War has been the political interaction between the two parties.¹ In these works the military aspects of the Czechoslovak 'action abroad' and its contacts with the British authorities often tends to be subservient to the overriding concern with the course of diplomatic negotiations and international agreements. As a result, the influence of military factors and the effect that the course of the war itself had in shaping these developments has often been under represented. Although military histories of these relations also exist they tend to do the reverse and focus more on the traditional military concerns of who fought where and when, consigning the political aspects of relations to a secondary position.² This is not to say that collectively these texts ignore the interplay of political and military factors, and some do manage to fuse the two, but rather that over all they often fail adequately to express just how close the connection between the war and political relations actually was.³ This was a fact that Lord Strang (formally head of the Central Department) later highlighted in his essay 'War and Foreign Policy,' in which he stated that the formation of British policy in this period was subservient to wider strategic influences, and when


there was a conflict between political and military considerations, military considerations usually prevailed.4 Quite simply, British policy toward the Czechoslovak exiles during this period was, to a greater or lesser extent, affected by the military conduct of the war and this aspect of relations needs to be examined in its own right.

Nowhere was this interaction more clearly illustrated than in the long-drawn out process of British recognition of a fully accredited Czechoslovak government in exile. The British decision to recognise a Czechoslovak National Committee in December 1939 was a direct result of the need to establish some form of political body to direct the Czech and Slovak soldiers and airmen gathered in France, as well as a desire to keep in step with the French Government over this question.5 The subsequent recognition of a Provisional Czechoslovak Government in Exile in July 1940 was granted because France had been defeated, elements of the Czechoslovak armed forces had been evacuated across the Channel and Britain now needed all the military assistance that she could secure.6 The final phase of recognition, in July 1941, was once again motivated by military considerations, this time by the German invasion of the Soviet Union and Moscow’s swift and full recognition of Edvard Beneš and the Provisional Government in Exile. At every step of this process, therefore, it can be shown that military considerations had a direct bearing on British policy towards the Czechoslovak political exiles.

Such influences returned to the fore during the negotiations over the proposed British denunciation of the Munich Agreement in 1942. This time the decisive factor in the Foreign Office’s grudging acceptance of Beneš’s demands on this question proved to

5 FO 371 22900 C202702/7/12, Halifax to Beneš, 20 December 1939.
6 FO 371 24289 C7646/2/12 Strang Memorandum on talk with Beneš, 21 June 1940.
be the brutal Nazi retaliation against Lidice after the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich. Significantly, this was an attack that had been undertaken in collaboration with and with the direct assistance of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), a British organisation designed to foster ‘sabotage and subversion’ and to organise national revolts in occupied Europe and one that actually played a far greater role in influencing both British and Czechoslovak foreign policy during the war than has previously been recognised. It should be noted, however, that SOE’s objectives were not to cause arbitrary havoc in behind the German lines or to ‘set Europe ablaze.’ Its primary functions were to establish, organise and arm resistance movements in order to carry out specific acts of sabotage and to ready these groups to launch ‘national revolts’ at the end of the war in support of the advancing allied armies. In the case of Czechoslovakia and Poland this was something SOE conspicuously failed to do.7

In fact, there were three distinct elements within the context of military relations that will be examined in this chapter; the course of the war against Germany, the role of regular armed forces and finally the role of subversive and resistance organisations in Occupied Europe. First, there was the course of the war itself, the defeats and victories, the addition of new allies and after 1941 the troublesome complications of coalition warfare; the effects these events had has already been detailed. The second was the influence of the regular armed forces; in the Czechoslovaks’ case those soldiers and airmen who had escaped from the Protectorate and had gathered in Poland, France, the Balkans, and later in Britain.8 To these were later added two Czechoslovak divisions in

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the Soviet Union, established in February 1942, though these units were not of direct
concern to the Foreign Office.9 After 1940, however, the political rewards these regular
forces produced was greatly reduced. Principally, this was because only a small number
of soldiers and airmen actually managed to reach Britain, which meant that they were
never really more than a symbolic force, especially in comparison to the larger numbers
of French and Polish soldiers based in Britain.10 Consequently, after 1940 the
organisation with the greatest effect on Anglo-Czechoslovak military relations was SOE.
In addition, the difference in British and Czechoslovak attitudes towards the interaction
of political and military considerations must be examined, not least Beneš’s preference
for Intelligence gathering as opposed to sabotage. Lastly, the liberation of Prague in May
1945 and British attempts to encourage the United States to reach the Czechoslovak
capital before the Red Army provides a dramatic example of the interaction of these two
important factors in Anglo-Czechoslovak relations.

The British authorities had long been actively involved in assisting Czechoslovaks
to join the army in France. These actions unwittingly assisted Beneš in achieving his
political objectives by swelling the army’s ranks and by helping to cement relations
between the Czechoslovak and British intelligence organisations, although this was not
recognised at the time and the central objective was to bolster the west’s defences against
German attack. British Military Intelligence had actually been helping evacuate
armament engineers and equipment from the Protectorate and the Balkans as far back as

9 J. Němeček, H. Nováčková, I. Šťovíček & M. Tejchman (eds), Československo-sovětské vztahy v
10 By comparison the Poles had some 20,000 soldiers, 4000 sailors and 14,400 pilots fighting along side
British and allied forces in a number of theatres. R. Kedward, ‘France,’ & K. Sword, ‘Poland,’ both in
702-703. See also F. Moravec, Master of Spies, London, 1975, p200 & A. Pražmowska, Britain and
March 1939, and a small Czechoslovak military training camp for volunteers had been established at Birchington on Sea by September. During early 1940 Military Intelligence, Research (MI(R)), one of the forerunners of SOE, was in contact with the Czechoslovak military authorities in France and had begun to help them transport men from Britain and further afield to join them. These were important contacts, as MI(R)’s Colonel Colin Gubbins would later become a central figure in SOE. Recruitment for these Czechoslovak units later became more official, although without the compulsory element that existed in France, and the Foreign Office, War Office, Home Office and the Czech Refugee Trust Fund all worked together to organise and fund the dispatch of Czechoslovak nationals to France. These activities were not too successful, however, as less than 10% of the available Czechoslovak manpower in Britain was actually called up and because of the Central Department’s suspicions that, ‘Dr Beneš’s real objective was clearly to improve the position of the Czecho-Slovak National Committee.’ This was a perfect illustration of just how close the relationship between military capacity and political potential was seen to be by the Foreign Office.

11 HS 4/15 Major A. Hesketh-Pritchard memorandum on relations with František Sigmund of the Zbrojovka Arms factory in Brno, December 1940; FO 371 22900 C18276/7/12 František Slaby to Foreign Office, 7 November 1939 & HS 4/30 Memorandum by Colonel J. Holland, Section D, on training of Czechoslovak soldiers in Britain, 10 September 1939.
12 FO 371 24287 C1205/2/12 Strang memorandum on War Office liaisons through Gubbins with Czechoslovaks and assistance for soldiers who had escaped to Hungary, 22 January 1940 & C3411/2/12 Makins memorandum on Gubbins’s request to extract several Czechoslovaks from Hungary, 4 March 1940.
14 FO 371 24365 C6284/1419/12 Memorandum of the arrangements between the Czech Military Delegation and the Czech Refugee Trust Fund, 30 March 1940 & minutes of a variety of Interdepartmental meeting on this question 26 January to 7 March 1940.
15 FO 371 24365 C3626/1419/12 Minutes of interdepartmental meeting between Foreign Office, Czech Refugee Trust Fund, War Office and Home Office, 7 March 1940.
With the fall of France some of these Czechoslovak troops were evacuated to Britain on 22 June 1940 from Sète and the Minister of War, Anthony Eden, took a personal interest in their safety. Whereas up until this point the British authorities had always dealt with the Czechoslovak military units through the French, now they were their own responsibility and some form of political agreement would have to be reached. On 25 October 1940 a British-Czechoslovak Armed Forces agreement was signed between Jan Masaryk and Lord Halifax. This agreement had been facilitated by the Allied Forces Act, designed to allow for the establishment of six foreign armies on British soil and which was rushed through Parliament on 21 August 1940. Under its terms Czechoslovak forces were placed under British command, the Brigade was to be reconstituted and the costs, in line with earlier financial agreements, were to be covered by Britain. It is revealing that the British went to quite some lengths to keep these agreements a secret between the signatories, for political reasons. They were not considered to be State treaties that would have necessitated ratification by Parliament with accompanying public scrutiny. In the case of the Czechoslovaks and Poles this was a particular necessity as the British authorities maintained reservations over the post-war

16 FO 371 26420 C4340/14/62 The Secretary of State for War, A Eden Message to Polish and Czech troops printed in The Times 15 July 1940, Beneš, Paměti, p.152, Bruce Lockhart, Comes the Reckoning, p 92 & Z. Kordina, 'The 1940 Evacuation of the Czechoslovak Armed Forces from France,' in White, On All Fronts, Vol. 1, pp63-81. The 1st Czechoslovak Division had had nearly 11,500 men in France at the end of May 1940, less than half reached Britain. This was largely because the majority were Slovaks who resided in France and were unwilling to leave.


19 FO 371 24292 C13060/8893/12 Text of financial agreement between the British Government and the Provisional Czechoslovak Government in Exile, signed by Sir Kingsley Wood and Dr Eduard Outrata on 25 October 1940.
frontiers of both countries, reservations that were not so apparent in relations with their French, Belgian and Norwegian allies.20

Although this Armed Forces agreement allowed for the reconstruction of a Czechoslovak army in Britain this force suffered from many problems. Trouble had started in France where, according to Beneš’s memoirs, the manner of its recruitment led to difficulties in command and significant tensions between officers and the large numbers of Slovaks and Sudeten Germans in the ranks who were now technically citizens of different states.21 These difficulties were heightened by the fact that recruitment in France was compulsory, a procedure that was considered, but never introduced in Britain. Accusations of anti-Semitism, ‘undemocratic tendencies,’ extreme left and right wing leanings and a high proportion of officers and intellectuals in the ranks haunted the army in France and, as a result, no more than half of the soldiers were willing to come to Britain.22 On arrival the situation was so tense that 480 soldiers, who were accused of having Communist sympathies, were immediately interned at the request of the Czechoslovak military authorities.23 It should be recognised, however, that given the numerous difficulties in escaping from Nazi occupied Central Europe to the west, the fact that any Czechoslovak troops had managed to reach Britain was, in itself, quite impressive.

Virtually unknown is the collaboration between the British and Soviet authorities in 1940 and 1941 who were actively engaged in transferring Czechoslovak soldiers from

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23 FO 371 24368 C1125/1419/62 R.D. Coleridge minutes on conditions in Czechoslovak army camp, 21 August 1940, see also Strang minute, 16 September & Čejka, *Československý odboj na Západě*, pp 275-276.
the Soviet Union, where many had remained since the fall of Poland, to British military control in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{24} In February 1941 Sir Stafford Cripps, British Ambassador to Moscow, reported to the Foreign Office that ‘Arrangements for departure of Czech Legion are now complete. Soviet authorities are being helpful but insist on secrecy of movement. Any publicity abroad may prejudice further success of scheme.’\textsuperscript{25} Though no record of the development of these plans remains in the files, the British government met the full cost of transferring these men from Moscow to Odessa, under the terms of the Anglo-Czechoslovak military agreement of 1940. Payments were made directly to Gosbank in Moscow and were personally authorised by the Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{26} This episode demonstrates two key points; firstly, that the Czechoslovaks enjoyed relatively good relations with the Soviets in early 1941 and that secondly that the British authorities were party to these contacts. These relations also contrasted sharply with Polish experiences in the Soviet Union, where many of the officers and men overrun by the Red Army in 1939 in the eastern districts of Poland had either been murdered at Katyn or imprisoned.\textsuperscript{27}

As for the fighting abilities of this force Bruce Lockhart later commented, after a visit of inspection in January 1941, that,

\begin{quote}
The brigade contained a considerable percentage of bespectacled intellectuals on whose frame the modern British battle-dress, worn now by
\end{quote}

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24} FO 371 26378 & FO 371 26379, both 1941.
\item \textsuperscript{25} FO 371 26377 C1516/32/12 From Cripps, Moscow, to Foreign Office, 17 February 1941.
\item \textsuperscript{26} See FO 371 26377 C1768/32/12 & C2180/32/12. There is a reference to these troops in Russia amongst R W Seton Watson’s published papers. J. Rychlik, T. D. Marzik & M. Bielik (eds), \textit{R.W. Seton Watson and his relations with the Czechs and Slovaks, Documents 1906-1951}, Vol. 1, Prague & Martin, 1995, pp592-593.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Prazmowska, \textit{Britain and Poland}, pp94-95.
\end{itemize}
so many and becoming so few, hung clumsily...Among them were some splendid types of Slav manhood.\textsuperscript{28}

But this rather dismissive opinion was not one shared by SOE. The men it trained for operations in the Protectorate mainly came from the Brigade in Leamington Spa and their conclusions were that, ‘The Czechs were found to be among the best of all SOE trainees and turned out equally good parachute jumpers. Their keenness, discipline, intelligence and courage were everywhere given high praise.'\textsuperscript{29} Nevertheless, the relatively small numbers of soldiers and airmen that had reached Britain meant that these forces would be soon worn down when serving in the front line, especially as they had no reserves with which to replenish the ranks.

As a result, and as was the case with Belgian forces in Britain, their military usefulness was limited. Nichols summarised these aspects in a memorandum of December 1942 that again highlighted the delicate interplay of political and military considerations,

\ldots the Independent Brigade can never hold up their heads in Prague unless they have been in actual combat with the Germans.\ldots The dilemma is plain the Brigade must go into action but it must not be decimated\ldots the future employment of the Czechoslovak Brigade\ldots must be regarded largely from

\textsuperscript{28} FO 371 26376 C\textsuperscript{11}32/6/12 Bruce Lockhart to Eden, 31 January 1941.
the political as opposed to the purely military angle: that the method of its employment is in fact a political rather than a military question. What is required, of course is that the Brigade should go into action, should play its part, but should not be called upon to make heavy sacrifices.30

This was a succinct and pertinent analysis of the Brigade’s position within the Allied war effort. The Foreign Office understood the difficulties and their attitude towards these troops changed during the course of the war, from viewing them as being a real contribution to the war effort in 1940 to seeing them as a largely symbolic political force by 1942.

Although many Czechoslovak pilots fought in the Battle of Britain and later bombed Germany, while soldiers served with distinction in France in 1940, Tobruk in 1942 and at Dunkirk in 1944, their overall contribution to the war effort was relatively small; not least when compared to the activities of the Czechoslovak brigades on the eastern front that would actually be involved in the liberation of Czechoslovak territory.31

Although the Czechoslovak authorities made frequent requests in 1944 and 1945 for these forces to be transferred to the front line in Central Europe, they never were and

30 FO 371 30855 C1243/12431/12 Nichols to Roberts, 8 December 1942.
returned to Prague only after its liberation. Nevertheless, the existence of these units played a crucial, if largely symbolic, role in demonstrating to the British authorities during 1939 and 1940 that the Czechoslovaks in exile were fully committed to the allied war effort.

The role-played by SOE in Anglo-Czechoslovak military contacts was perhaps the most important of the three. The significance of this relationship lay in the fact that SOE’s involvement brought together two of the most significant military assets that Beneš and the Czechoslovaks in exile could call upon; Colonel František Moravec and his intelligence organisation, the druhý odbor (Second Department or Deuxième Bureau), and the resistance networks in the Protectorate. Britain’s Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) had long-standing contacts with Moravec and they had brought him and some of his colleagues to London from Prague on the very morning of the German invasion in March 1939. The intelligence capabilities Moravec possessed were greatly valued by the British authorities, and later by the Soviet Union, and provided Beneš with much political kudos and leverage at the outbreak of hostilities. These assets actually proved far more politically valuable to Beneš than the small number of soldiers and airmen based in France and Britain. Moreover, as control of SOE came under the auspices of the Foreign

32 FO 371 38944 C16468/1343/12 Sinclair Air Ministry, to Eden, 23 November 1944, regarding request from Masaryk that Czechoslovak squadrons be allowed to be sent to liberated Czechoslovakia and FO 371 47139 N 3640/1904/12 Nichols to Eden, 3 April 1945.
35 In early 1940 the SIS made a loan of £50,000 to Moravec, a donation that was indicative of the high regard they held him in. He then placed part of these funds Beneš’s disposal. See L. Otáhalová & M. Červinková (eds), Dokumenty z historie československé politiky, Vol. 1, Prague, 1966, p85.
Office this meant that the Central Department knew of its involvement in Czechoslovak affairs and monitored its activities.

At the beginning of the war the SIS found itself totally reliant upon both the Czechoslovak and Polish Intelligence services, a reliance that was then transposed into a certain amount of political capital. Captain Peter Wilkinson, later head of SOE’s Czech section, referred to Moravec’s organisation as the ‘doyen’ of allied intelligence services up until the summer of 1941.\textsuperscript{36} This position was secured by the information that emanated from Moravec’s agent ‘A-54,’ (The \textit{Abwehr} officer, Paul Thümmel) and later from Colonel Heliodor Plka in Moscow, and these sources gave the exiles access to the secretive core of the British government. Exactly how great a political advantage was generated by Moravec’s actions during this period is difficult to calculate, however, the Foreign Office was sufficiently concerned to comment on these contacts in January 1940.\textsuperscript{37} Robert Bruce Lockhart stressed the contribution that the Czechoslovak intelligence service was already making in his first memorandum to the Foreign Office in September 1939.

Masaryk said that the Czech organisation in London was already rendering important services to this country through its military espionage organisation. Almost the whole of the Czech \textit{Deuxième Bureau} was now...

\textsuperscript{36} P. Wilkinson’s talk given to Special Forces Club on the ‘Anthropoid’ mission, 1982, in his private papers held at the Imperial War Museum (These had not been catalogued at the time of writing).
in London...He is anxious to obtain some assurances that his country will be restored in the event of a Franco-British victory...He promised to obtain for me the exact information regarding the number of German troops in the country.

Lockhart added, 'I believe that of all the smaller nations if Europe they are the most capable of waging a determined and successful underground war against foreign oppression,' an opinion that he was later able to support with a steady flow of detailed intelligence reports from the Protectorate.\(^{38}\) One thing is certain, and that is that Moravec's department was a significant addition to the portfolio of assets that Beneš could call upon in exile. Crucially this meant that the British authorities were predisposed to maintaining Moravec's, and thus, Beneš's support and this meant proffering political incentives in order to secure their continued co-operation. Thus in this case military and political considerations were inexorably linked and it is clear that Beneš was aware of the potential political benefits in this relationship, especially given his previous experiences during the First World War.

Given the high regard with which the SIS held Moravec and the Czechoslovak resistance organisations they were subsequently of great interest to SOE when it was created in the summer of 1940.\(^{39}\) The principal aim of this organisation was not merely

\(^{38}\) FO 371 228899 C15006/7/12 Rex Leeper to Cadogan, 13 September 1938, which included Bruce Lockhart's memorandum & FO 371 24292 C10002/10002/12 Bruce Lockhart's Intelligence Summary from sources in the Protectorate, 16 September 1940.

\(^{39}\) See HS 4/30 & 4/31.
arbitrary sabotage and mayhem in occupied Europe, but the creation of secure, well-organised and equipped national resistance organisations capable of instigating ‘general risings’ and revolts during the final stages of the war. Moravec’s relations with SOE, however, were not altogether satisfactory, mainly because of the conflict between the exiled government’s political objectives and SOE’s purely military concerns. After a successful start in 1941 relations faltered after SOE mounted a joint operation with Moravec to assassinate the leading Nazi in the Protectorate, Heydrich.

Two Czechoslovak agents trained by SOE, Josef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš, whose operation was code-named Anthropoid, were delivered to the Protectorate by SOE in late 1941 and after spending several months undercover ambushed Heydrich on his way to work on 27 May 1942 (He later died from septicaemia caused by shrapnel from a grenade thrown by Kubiš. The consequences of this act were as devastating for the resistance in the Protectorate as they were politically fruitful for the exiles in London, but after this event the intimacy of contacts between Moravec and SOE deteriorated markedly. This was an important development, because being able to demonstrate control over an active resistance movement at home, was an important consideration for all the exiled governments in London. These were obligations that SOE believed the Czechoslovak exiles in London seemed increasingly unable, and possibly unwilling, to fulfil, even in the face of persistent calls from the Soviet Union (after 1941) for more sabotage in the Protectorate.

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40 As per the Chiefs of Staff’s directive to SOE of 25 November 1940, COS (40)27(0), cited in HS 7/8 History of Special Duties Operations in Europe, p11.
In addition, SOE’s relations with Beneš and Moravec were repeatedly hindered by conflicts between British and Czechoslovak political objectives, the political situation in the Protectorate and, somewhat ironically, by a lack of available Czechoslovak manpower in Britain. By the summer of 1944 it was apparent to SOE that the Czechoslovak military authorities were unwilling to send more men from the Brigade in Leamington Spa to be trained as SOE agents (referred to as patriots) and undertake sabotage work, even though SOE had set up a specialist training school for them.44 This was because General Sergej Ingr, the Czechoslovak Minister of Defence, believed that any reduction in the Brigade’s numbers would have prevented them from participating in Allied operations on the Continent.45 The Czechoslovak authorities felt that facing the German army in battle was more important than dismantling of the Brigade to provide SOE with more agents. In fact, the relations became so bad that by June 1943 SOE stopped trusting the intelligence materials Moravec passed to them and the SIS.46 This information had once been highly sought after, but by 1943 it was increasingly regarded as politically motivated fabrications.47 This was a distinct possibility, because Beneš admitted to Jaromír Smutný, head of the President’s Office, as early as 8 March 1941 that he felt it acceptable to falsify intelligence material passed on to the British if the political rewards warranted it.48 While such behaviour proved to be counter productive it does

45 HS 4/4 SOE memorandum, 18 May 1944.
46 HS 4/4 from CSO(T) (Sir Campbell Stuart’s propaganda department under the Foreign Office’s control) aide memoire to Gubbins 11 June 1943.
47 HS 4/5 minutes on letter from Ambassador Nichols to Harrison at the Central Department, forwarded to SOE on 9 July 1943.
48 Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), Dokumeny z historie československé politiky, Vol. 1, pp187-188.
reveal that Beneš regarded intelligence material as yet another asset to be utilised for political advantage.

By early 1944 SOE’s Czech section was contemplating severing its contacts with the Czechoslovaks principally because of what they saw as Beneš’s constant interference and Moravec’s unwillingness to undertake sabotage operations at the expense of intelligence related activities, attitudes that SOE believed hindered active resistance. SOE’s subsequent failure to supply the uprisings in Slovakia in September 1944 and in Prague in May 1945, which after all was its raison d’être, did little to improve the situation. Nevertheless, SOE’s relations with the Czechoslovaks had an effect on the exiles’ political standing, and conversely, SOE’s failure to provide adequate supplies for the revolts on Czechoslovak territory compelled Beneš and his government to rely ever more heavily on the Soviet Union for military support in the closing stages of the war, which undermined Beneš’s policy of maintaining an equidistant position between the western and eastern allies. Indeed, this situation was the primary reason why the British authorities tried to encourage the United States to liberate Prague before of the Soviet Union in May 1945.

It is also necessary to comment upon the differences between the British and Czechoslovak attitudes towards military action and resistance during the war, especially as there were a number of important discrepancies between their respective positions. The British approach was relatively straightforward, particularly under Winston

49 HS 4/4 Gubbins memorandum on the state of resistance in Bohemia and Moravia, 10 March 1944.
Churchill’s leadership; the war would have to be waged, with all available means, until the final German defeat. Although post-war planning was a constant consideration for the British government, the many complex questions surrounding post-war reconstruction, settlements and nation building would be left in abeyance until the anticipated victors’ peace conference.\footnote{D. Dilks (ed), \textit{The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan}, London, 1971, pp518-520 & Strang, ‘War and Foreign Policy 1939-45,’ in Dilks (ed), \textit{Retreat From Power}, pp68-69.} In many ways this was a sensible position to take, and it was one that was entirely commensurate with Britain’s own position at the start of the war and later within the Grand Alliance, as well as stemming from a desire to avoid what were seen as the ‘mistakes’ of 1919 – that is agreeing to grandiose post-war plans that later caused further conflict in Europe.\footnote{An opinion that has recently been challenged, see M. Macmillan, \textit{Peacemakers, The Paris Conference of 1919 and its Attempts to End War}, London, 2001.}

The British authorities, therefore, were primarily concerned with what the exiled governments gathered in London could do to assist the war effort as opposed to the varied political objectives they espoused. After all, the defeat of Nazi Germany had to precede the implementation of any post-war policies. Moreover, the objectives of the various exiled governments were often mutually exclusive, especially in the case of the Poles and the Czechoslovaks, and might bind the British government to commitments it would not be able to implement at a later date. It was these considerations that underpinned the various reservations the British authorities maintained over their recognition of the Czechoslovak government in exile. It was the Czechoslovaks’ ability to aid the prosecution of the war, therefore, which translated into British political support for Beneš and the exiles.\footnote{FO 371 24287 C2455/2/12 Roberts minute, 8 March 1940.} This was something that the exiles were well aware of and
Bruce Lockhart highlighted this when he quoted the Slovak politician, Milan Hodža, who had remarked, ‘We realise there can be no victory for us unless we shed our blood copiously.’ For the British authorities this meant access to Moravec’s intelligence organisation, the contribution made by the regular armed forces and, after 1940, the activities of the resistance in the Protectorate and the preparations for a ‘National Uprising.’ These last two aspects came under the auspices of SOE and as the regular Czechoslovak forces in Britain were largely a symbolic entity after July 1940 when resistance and sabotage work in the Protectorate became an increasingly important indicator of the exiled government’s contribution to the war effort.

One caveat needs to be added to this analysis, however, and that is that the existence of well regarded intelligence organisations, viable resistance movements and regular army units abroad did not automatically result in exiled governments’ securing the political objectives they desired, either from Britain or the other Great Powers. Both the French and the Poles had far larger military and resistance organisations at their disposal than the Czechoslovaks, yet these assets did not immediately translate into support for their respective political agendas. Military and intelligence assets, therefore, were only of use to an exiled government if they could be combined with skilful diplomacy in order to extract the greatest amount of political benefit.

For the Czechoslovak émigrés the relationship between the political and the military was far more complex. Benes and his government had a number of political

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31 FO 371 228899 C16118/7/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum, 21 September 1939.
problems with which they had to contend, and these took priority over purely military activities and in turn affected the attitude of the exiles and their collaborators in the Protectorate towards military considerations. This is not to say that they were unwilling to fight, but rather that Beneš always had his own political objectives uppermost in his mind. This was a point that he made plain to Bruce Lockhart in September 1939, who then reported these comments to the Foreign Office.

Dr Beneš lays great stress on the importance of Czech divisions taking their place in the front line with French and British troops. This the Czechs regard as the most practical step towards recognition by France and Britain of Czechoslovakia's right to independence.55

Thus Beneš was always primarily interested in the political advantages to be had from those armed forces in Britain and Moravec's intelligence work and was correspondingly concerned by the inherent political dangers of unregulated sabotage activities at home. He also understood that the liberation of Czechoslovakia could only be achieved in collaboration with the Allied armies, ultimately the Red Army, and not by the efforts of the exiles alone.

It should be recognised that Beneš was already well acquainted with the delicate interaction between political and the military consideration during wartime. This was, in fact, the second time he had been involved in organising the liberation of Czechoslovakia from abroad. Thus his experiences during the First World War provided a template for

55 FO 371 22899 C161187/12, Bruce Lockhart memorandum, 21 September 1939.
his activities in the Second.\textsuperscript{56} Indeed, Beneš made this link explicit in his memoirs where he recounted that his plans for just such an undertaking began prior to his departure from Prague in 1938, when he gathered his closest advisors together and told them that,

\ldots we must again begin an all-round struggle as in 1914. We will have to prepare the organisation of resistance at home, establish permanent contact with anti-Nazi Europe and organise an army at home and outside our frontiers...A numerically strong political and military emigration will be needed and it must leave the country in time.\textsuperscript{57}

This was duly achieved through the exodus of soldiers and airmen from the Protectorate, largely organised by Beneš's supporters, Moravec's extraction to London and the establishment of radio links to the resistance groups left behind.

For Beneš these assets were tools to further his political agenda and foremost amongst them was the intelligence gathered by Moravec.\textsuperscript{58} Beneš knew exactly how to utilise these assets to the greatest political effect and that is what he did from March 1939 onwards, although the British authorities were also aware of this potential source of leverage and did what they could to limit its effects. SOE was also aware of Beneš's previous experiences during the First World War and belatedly understood the limiting

influence of political issues on Moravec’s ability to encourage sabotage. As Wilkinson noted in November 1942,

The Czechs on the other hand, by skilful propaganda have managed to build up a very considerable reputation for underground action. This has little historical basis... a study of Beneš's history of the Maffia during the last war show that this revolution too was essentially political rather than military and its leaders were professors and publicists rather than officers or desperadoes.59

This analysis not only illustrated the frustration SOE felt in its dealing with the Czechoslovaks, but also accurately summarizes Beneš's attitude to the relationship between military and political considerations.

This was particular important for Beneš as he had to consider a variety of sensitive issues while in exile, and balance his objective of re-establishing Czechoslovakia within her pre-1938 frontiers and annulling the terms of the Munich Agreement with the fact that these events had profoundly disillusioned the Czechoslovak population and damaged his own reputation.60 When unrest and strikes broke out in the Protectorate on 28 October and 17 November 1939 these acts of defiance led to the death of a young student, Jan Opletal, a tightening of the German regime and the arrest of many

59 P. Wilkinson, Notes on SOE’s relations with Revolutionary Movements in Europe, 2 November 1942, In Wilkinson’s private papers held at the Imperial War Museum.
60 Beneš, Panětí, p294.
people involved in the resistance movements. Collectively these factors made the effective encouragement of sabotage in the Protectorate all the more difficult in the years to come. Beneš and his government also had to contend with the many political divisions that existed among themselves and the population at home. These relations were further complicated by the presence of a 'Quisling' government in Prague, under Emil Hácha, by the existence of a variety resistance groups whose members allegiances spanned the political spectrum, and, after the Soviet Union's entrance into the war in 1941, by the increasingly popularity of KSČ. If Czechoslovakia was to be restored under Beneš's leadership after the war then great care would have to be taken not to allow any one of these groups to secure an undue advantage over the others.

In addition to these concerns there was the issue of the tense relations between the Czechs and the pro-Axis Slovak State, and the separatist tendencies of the other constituent peoples of the former State. These tensions became especially acute during the liberation of Czechoslovak territory by the Red Army in 1944 and 1945, when Slovak desires for autonomy returned to the fore. Finally, Beneš and his colleagues could see for themselves the problems associated with resistance movements experienced by other exiled governments in London, principally the Poles, the Greeks and the Yugoslavs.

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62 The leading resistance organisation was Ústřední výbor odboje domácího, ÚVOD (Central Committee of the Home Resistance), which was itself a joint body of various resistance organisations, it liaised directly with Beneš and the Czechoslovak military authorities in Britain. See Luža, 'The Czech resistance movement,' & A. Josko, 'The Slovak Resistance Movement,' both in Mamatey & Luža (eds), A History of the Czechoslovak Republic, pp 343-361 & pp 362-384.
63 See Foot, SOE, pp 264-278, 334-341 & 341-346.
Quite simply, for Beneš resistance in the Protectorate was something of a double-edged sword. Although it was necessary to demonstrate his control over the resistance movements at home, not least in order to avoid the impression of wholesale collaboration with the Germans; the unregulated encouragement of separatist or Communist resistance movements by SOE could produce unwelcome political repercussions.64

It was these considerations that resulted in Beneš and his government expending most of their energies during the war on intelligence gathering activities and preparations for a 'national uprising,' as opposed to sabotage in the Protectorate, not least because the former resulted in far greater political rewards than the latter.65 As a later briefing paper for Gubbins outlined in early 1944, 'SOE’s experience is that the traditional type of Intelligence Department does not produce the right mentality and methods for subversive success.'66 In fact, Moravec later explained that the government in exile never regarded SOE’s sabotage work as a primary consideration. He argued that the government in exile and the resistance in the Protectorate, 'attached little importance to organised sabotage and partisan warfare,' and that, 'They maintained that the Western Allies were, in fact, not interested in this type of resistance because it represented only a negligible contribution to the allied war effort.'67 This is a questionable conclusion, but one that sheds much light on the increasingly difficult relationship between SOE and Moravec after the summer of 1942.

64 Wilkinson & Bright Astley, Gubbins and SOE, pp83.
65 HS 7/277 SOE's War Diary for Poland and Czechoslovakia, Perkins to Brigadier Mockler Ferryman, 20 November 1943, p138.
66 HS 4/4 SOE Briefing paper for Gubbins, 5 January 1944.
The most explicit example of the close relationship between military and political considerations occurred during the final weeks of the war when the British authorities attempted to encourage General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force (SCAEF), to order American ground forces to liberate Prague. During this period Anglo-Czechoslovak relations became subsidiary to the prevailing dynamics of coalition warfare and although the Foreign Office and the Prime Minister were keen to secure a western military presence in Prague, and thus a political presence too, they ultimately failed to convince the United States of this need. The difference between the British and American perceptions of this situation was first raised by V.F.W. Cavendish-Bentinck, Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), in a memorandum on this question on 13 April 1945.

It may be politically desirable the Americans should get to Prague first, but I am informed by the Director of Military operations that it is militarily highly improbable. Our overriding objectives are (a) to establish a firm link up with the Russians, and (b) to prevent crystallisation of resistance in the redoubt area.  

This minute raised some important considerations as in the event Eisenhower would refuse to move on Prague because he regarded it as a political objective and not as a military one.

68 FO 371 47121 N3797/650/12 V.F.W. Cavendish-Bentinck, Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) to Foreign Office, 13 April 1945.
This is an important point as it was a commonly held assumption amongst senior military commanders in the United States army, including Eisenhower that military and political objectives should be kept strictly separate.\(^69\) Nor did Eisenhower have explicit instructions from Washington to pursue political goals in Central Europe.\(^70\) Moreover, Britain’s ability to influence Eisenhower’s tactics was hindered by the increasingly strained nature of Anglo-American military relations, which had been becoming increasingly fractious; not least over the disagreements regarding zones of occupation and the capture of Berlin that dominated Anglo-American relations during late March and early April 1945.\(^71\) In the wake of Churchill’s failure to convince the United States to capture Berlin there was little reason to believe that they would now be willing to occupy Prague solely at his request.

Eisenhower’s own thinking on this matter was also influenced by three other factors in addition to his disinclination to pursue purely political objectives. First, that he was still preoccupied by the possibility of German resistance crystallising in a mythical ‘National Redoubt,’ even though no such redoubt was being planned. But the influence of the redoubt question on Eisenhower’s thinking in late April and early May cannot be overemphasised. It dominated his strategic planning and was largely responsible for his decisions not to advance on either Berlin or Prague.\(^72\) Indeed, the RAF and USAAF bombed the Škoda works in Plzeň on the night of 17 to 18 April and again on 25 April to


prevent its output helping to stiffen resistance in the Redoubt area.73 This was something that the RAF had been previously been unable to do and an action that later gave rise to Soviet suspicions that this had only been done in order to deny these resources to them, a charge the RAF forcefully denied.74

Second, that Eisenhower had also been very careful during the Third Army’s advance across Germany to liase closely with his Soviet opposite number, General Alexei I. Antonov, and to delineate clear demarcation lines between the two forces, in order to avoid any possible complications arising from their eventual contact. Between 21 to 24 April they had agreed upon clear boundaries that left the Third Army on the Moldau (Vltava in Czech) and Elbe Rivers and Prague to the Soviets.75 Finally, Eisenhower had to consider that the war in the Pacific continued and that this was a significant priority in Washington. The sooner his men were finished fighting in Europe the sooner they could be moved to the Far East to end the war there.76 Taken together, and combined with Eisenhower’s disinclination to pursue political goals, it was these factors that dissuaded him from taking Churchill’s advice.

Nevertheless, the idea that the United States should be encouraged to liberate Prague was accepted as a reasonable policy by the Foreign Office and Churchill took a personal interest in these matters, intervening on several occasions.77 It is also important to note that British support for this objective at the eleventh hour belatedly seemed to parallel Beneš’s own policy of locating Czechoslovakia between east and west. Yet

73 FO 371 47097 N 4788/233/12 Godfrey Lias to J. W. Wheeler-Bennett and Allen, 26 April 1945.
74 FO 371 47097 N 7907/233/12 Nichols, Prague, to Foreign Office, 10 June 1945.
76 Pogue, The Supreme Command, p468.
77 FO 371 47121 N3797/650/12 Prime Minister’s personal minute, 14 April 1945.
Britain's desire to attempt to limit the extent of the Red Army's occupation and domination of Central Europe was never an idea that would be shared by the new President, H.S. Truman, the State Department or Eisenhower.\(^78\)

On 18 April 1945 United States forces had crossed onto Czechoslovak territory and the British government, Churchill in particular returned to the question of who would liberate Prague. Cadogan had sent the first official British request that the United States give serious consideration to the liberation of Prague to Ambassador J.G. Winant back on 16 April 1945.

Mr Eden feels that the advantage to be gained is considerable and would be glad to know whether your government shares his view. Mr Eden is aware that there may be operational difficulties...He was anxious, however, that I should put these views to you as representing his own estimate of the political aspect of the matter...\(^79\)

On 22 April Sargent wrote to Churchill to explain that no answer had been received from Winant, and that as the, 'political issues at stake are so important,' another attempt should be made to gauge Washington's position and secure their support.\(^80\) Churchill replied, 'I entirely agree with your minute...Will you draft accordingly for Mr Eden and for Chiefs of Staff [COS].'\(^81\)

\(^{78}\) Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, pp468-469.

\(^{79}\) FO 371 47121 N3797/650/12 Cadogan to Ambassador J.G. Winant, 16 April 1945.

\(^{80}\) FO 371 47121 N4548/650/12 Sargent to Churchill, 22 April 1945.

\(^{81}\) FO 371 47121 N4548/650/12 Churchill to Sargent, 22 April 1945.
Churchill discussed this question directly with Eisenhower on 24 April. This was a further indication of the seriousness with which this question was viewed in London; indeed the officials in the Northern Department were largely sidelined on this issue in favour of deliberations at the highest levels of government. In fact, Czechoslovak issues had not received such high-level attention since Eden’s dispute with Beneš over his treaty with Stalin in 1943. But regardless of the Prime Minister’s personal intervention Eisenhower made it plain that he felt Prague was in the Soviet zone and he had no intention of moving forward to liberate it. Churchill then requested that the COS consider the military aspects of this question and suggest a suitable line to take with the Chiefs of Staff in the United States.82 Cadogan followed this approach up with a letter to General Sir Hastings Ismay in which he refuted the suggestion that Czechoslovakia had been decisively allotted to the Soviet zone, accepted the tactical constrains on Eisenhower, but stressed the political advantages that the Foreign Office felt were to be had.83

The COS duly considered these requests on 26 April 1945, but concluded that ‘a thrust into Czechoslovakia would...detract from the weight of his [SCAEF] main thrust,’ and that Eisenhower was still concerned by the prospect of the creation of a ‘National Redoubt’ in Austria.84 At the same time they added that they felt that Eisenhower might have over-estimated German strength in the Protectorate and they accepted that there were political advantages to be gained. A draft telegram to Washington was produced and a copy forwarded to the Foreign Office, which requested that the SCAEF’s attention be drawn, ‘to the political significance of Prague...’ though it added, ‘We do not of course

83 FO 371 47121 N4548/650/12 Cadogan to Ismay, 26 April 1945.
84 CAB 80/94 COS 110th meeting, 26 April 1945.
suggest that such operations should be allowed to delay the final German collapse.\textsuperscript{85} The resulting reply from the Chiefs of Staff in the United States stressed that any final decision was up to the SCAEF and that for military reasons they, ‘did not favour issuing a directive to General Eisenhower’ along these lines.\textsuperscript{86}

But both Churchill and the Foreign Office viewed this question as being too important for the final decision to be left solely to the military commanders on the ground. In San Francisco Eden approached the Secretary of State, Edward R. Stettinius, and brought the issue to his attention. Stettinius agreed with Eden and sent his own messages in support of the plan to liberate Prague to Truman and Admiral William D. Leahy, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.\textsuperscript{87} This unofficial approach was then followed up, on Sergeant’s advice, by a note from Churchill to Truman on 30 April (originally drafted by Sargent). In which he re-iterated the British position and urged the President to agree to the advance on Prague. As such it is worth quoting from at length.

There can be little doubt that the liberation of Prague and as much as possible of the territory of western Czechoslovakia by your forces might make the whole difference to the post-war situation in Czechoslovakia, and might well influence that in nearby countries. On the other hand, if the western allies play no significant part in Czechoslovakian liberation, that

\textsuperscript{85} FO 371 47086 N4703/207/12 From General Sir Leslie Hollis, Offices of the War Cabinet to Sargent, 26 April 1945.  
\textsuperscript{86} FO 371 47086 N4802/207/12 From Sargent to Eden, 3 May 1945, regarding reply from Joint Chiefs of Staff in the United States.  
\textsuperscript{87} FO 371 47086 N4802/207/12 From Eden, in San Francisco, to Foreign Office, 30 April 1945.
country will go the way of Yugoslavia. Of course, such a move by Eisenhower must not interfere with his main operations against the Germans, but I think the highly pertinent political consideration mentioned above, should be brought to his attention...I hope this will have your approval.88

This was a message that unequivocally stated British policy, highlighted the political importance Churchill attached to this question, and urged Truman, in no uncertain terms, to order such a move. Yet even this direct appeal did not have the required effect as the President decided that such political considerations should not be allowed to interfere with Eisenhower's military tactics. Eisenhower had even told General George C. Marshall, General of the Army, the previous day that, 'I shall not attempt any move I deem militarily unwise merely to gain a political prize [Prague] unless I receive specific orders from the Combined Chiefs of Staff.'89 Therefore, Truman's reply to Churchill on the 1 May seemingly brought to an end any possibility that the United States would agree to liberate Prague.90 Sargent passed on this conclusion to Eden on 3 May 1945.91

Although the British government's attempts to encourage Eisenhower to advance on Prague seemed to have ended in failure by the beginning of May 1945, subsequent events briefly conspired to re-kindle this possibility. The outbreak of national uprisings

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88 FO 371 47086 N4766/207/12 Sargent to Churchill, 29 April 1945, including draft of telegram for Truman & Churchill to Truman, 30 April 1945.
89 Pogue, The Supreme Command, p468.
91 FO 371 47086 N4802/207/12 From Sargent to Eden, in San Francisco, 3 May 1945.
against the Germans led to renewed calls from London that the Third Army advance further eastward. Even though British attempts to persuade Eisenhower had so far achieved very little the Foreign Office decisively reiterated its position in a message to SHAEF’s forward headquarters on 2 May 1945.

Present aim of His Majesty’s Government is to strengthen Dr Benes’ hand against Communists and Russians and against any separatist tendencies. We would like to see Government for whole of Czechoslovakia established in Prague as soon as possible. His Majesty’s Government have urged on United States Government and American Chiefs of Staff the great political advantage of General Eisenhower’s forces penetrating as far as possible into Czechoslovakia and liberating Prague if possible.92

However, these additional missives failed to modify Eisenhower’s previous position.

Given the developing situation in Prague, and the launching of national uprisings in advance of the Red Army and the possibility that it might delay the final defeat of Germany, Eisenhower again approached his Soviet opposite number on 4 May. He requested that Patton’s Third Army be allowed to advance from its previously agreed position along a line running between the cities of Karlsbad, Pilsen and Budovice (sic) on towards the left bank of the Vltava. The answer was polite, but firm, and was passed on to the Foreign Office two days later.93 On its receipt Sargent informed Churchill that, ‘1

92 FO 371 47086 N4701/207/12 Foreign Office to SHAEF forward HQ, 2 May 1945.
am afraid this means that General Eisenhower has pledged himself not to go to Prague."\textsuperscript{94} While Eisenhower had now decided to investigate the possibility of moving his forces further eastward his request had been made on the very same day that the Red Army had finally decided to launch its final offensive of the war, on Prague itself.\textsuperscript{95} There may well have been an opportunity for United States forces to reach Prague in April, but by 4 May 1945 this possibility no longer existed. For all the British government's appeals the opportunity for western forces to liberate Prague first had been lost.

The west's failure to reach Prague in May 1945 had a commensurate effect on the opinions of some of the Czechoslovak population, many of whom regarded this failure as another example of the west's lack of interest in the region. Upon his arrival in western Bohemia in May 1945 an SOE officer, Harold Perkins, noted,

\begin{quote}
In Plzeň we heard the first rumours of the Prague disappointment at non delivery of arms from the West ...There is not the slightest sign in Prague that any other country has fought this war than Russia - and that hurts when one considers the support we gave to the Beneš Gov...I feel very strongly on this matter, but my temperature is lessened by the knowledge that it is not a true reflection of the real Czech majority but rather forced on them from the east who are losing no time in taking advantage of the situation granted to them by the liberation of the capital by the victorious, glorious ect ect Red Army -what a rabble...\textsuperscript{96}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{94} FO 371 47086 NS307/207/12 Sargent to Churchill, 6 May 1945.
\textsuperscript{95} Konev, \textit{Year of Victory}, pp193-238.
\textsuperscript{96} HS 4/7 Perkins to Gubbins, 16 May 1945.
This quotation clearly demonstrated that by the end of the war Britain's contribution to the actual liberation of Czechoslovakia had been, at best, slight and this fact was now being utilised by the Soviet Union and the KSČ to the fullest political effect.

Although the British authorities had tried their utmost to encourage Eisenhower to reach Prague because of his different attitude towards the interaction of military and political considerations he had refused to do so on purely military grounds. These were events that forced the Czechoslovak government in exile to rely far more heavily on military support from the Soviet Union than they would have liked and this reliance ultimately had an effect on the political orientation of the Czechoslovak State after the war. Therefore, while Beneš and the other Czechoslovak exiles in Britain had been able to extract a significant amount of political capital from the military assets they controlled, it is questionable whether these successes were outweighed by the negative impact of the west's failure to reach Prague. Nevertheless, the interplay between military and political considerations had been a crucial component in Anglo-Czechoslovak relations throughout the Second World War.
Chapter Four

Anglo-Czechoslovak-Soviet Relations 1939 to 1945.

The German invasion of the Soviet Union, on 22 June 1941, proved to have lasting consequences for Anglo-Czechoslovak relations; not only did the Soviet Union’s entrance into the war necessitate a fundamental reappraisal of British policy towards Moscow and Stalin’s regime, but the addition of this new ally also had an effect on all the various exiled governments gathered in London, not least on the Czechoslovaks and the Poles.\(^1\) This was especially true with regard to the debates amongst the ‘Big Three’ over military strategy and the reconstruction of Europe after the war, exchanges that would ultimately have an effect on the liberation of Prague in May 1945.\(^2\) It also needs to be recognised that this was an alliance forged out of mutual need and had not sprung from a desire for co-operation, and consequently mutual suspicion was an integral part of these relations from the outset. Although Britain was an ally of the Soviet Union, and had no illusions regarding that country’s contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany, the historical differences between Britain’s and Czechoslovakia’s relations with the Soviet Union prior to 1941 began to have an increasing effect on their own bilateral contacts.\(^3\)

As a result Anglo-Czechoslovak relations, which had often experienced difficulties since the war began, became increasingly tense as the Czechoslovak exiles were forced to

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\(^3\) See G. Lias, *Beneš of Czechoslovakia*, London, 1940, Chapter 5, G Warner, *‘From Ally to Enemy: Britain’s relations with the Soviet Union 1945-1948,*’ in M. Dockrill and B. McKercher (eds), *Diplomacy*
become more finely attuned to the new realities of Soviet influence in Central Europe than the British. This development necessitated a reassessment of the exiled government's international position and from late 1941 onwards this was reflected in Edvard Beneš's conception of Czechoslovakia's role as a 'bridge' between east and west. The Foreign Office, however, increasingly came to view Beneš's willingness to negotiate and compromise with Moscow as evidence of his political naivety and pro-Soviet sympathies. Furthermore these were policies that the Foreign Office came to regard as being detrimental to both British and Polish interests.

It would be inaccurate, however, to suggest that British attitudes towards the Soviet Union were homogenous, or overwhelmingly hostile, but, in much the same way that the Munich Agreement had polarised attitudes within Britain's foreign policy-making elite, so contrasting attitudes towards the Soviet Union also came to influence British policy. When the military situation in Europe looked bleak, as it continued to do until late 1943, the British authorities cautiously welcomed the support of an additional ally and made full use of the Czechoslovaks' long standing political, military and intelligence contacts with Moscow. As the fortunes of war began to turn, however, and plans for the post-war organisation of Europe began to be a growing source of disharmony, opinions within the Foreign Office gradually altered. Anglo-Czechoslovak relations were particularly sensitive to these changing dynamics, and as relations

4 See H. Ripka, 'A New Central Europe' Central European Observer, 30 May 1941.
deteriorated, so the Czechoslovak exiles found themselves increasingly at odds with their British hosts on issues related to the Soviet Union.

This is to not suggest that British decision-making became unduly biased because of the Czechoslovaks contacts with Moscow, in fact British policy continued to be formed in the same dispassionate, pragmatic and reactive manner it had been before. Rather, from June 1941 onwards every issue upon which the British authorities had had to make a decision regarding the Czechoslovak question was intimately connected to both countries relations with the Soviet Union. Indeed, it was indicative of these tensions that after spending six years of exile in London Beneš and his government eventually returned to liberated Czechoslovak territory via Moscow and not from the British Isles.

There were three main phases in the development of these tripartite relations. The first covered the period immediately prior to the German invasion of the Soviet Union up until early 1943. It was marked by relatively friendly, if cautious, relations between the British, Czechoslovaks and Soviets. An Anglo-Soviet treaty of mutual assistance was signed in May 1942 and the Czechoslovak government in exile worked closely with Moscow on intelligence and military matters. Some problems existed already, especially regarding Moscow's demands over frontiers and their opposition to the planned Czechoslovak-Polish federation, but these had yet to develop into insurmountable difficulties. The second phase lasted from early 1943 up to the beginning of the Slovak National Uprising (SNP) in late August 1944. This phase was marked by a growing hostility between the Soviets and the Polish government that culminated in the total cessation of all contacts between the two parties. In addition, Beneš's desire to sign a treaty with the Soviet Union became a major source of antagonism between the
government in exile and the Foreign Office. Although Beneš eventually signed the treaty in December 1943 he did so against the Central Department’s explicit advice.

The final phase of relations was dominated by the Red Army’s advance through eastern and central Europe and its liberation of an increasing swathe of Czechoslovak territory. During this period, from the start of the SNP until the eventual liberation of Prague, the Foreign Office’s ability to influence the exiled government’s policies declined dramatically. Although some efforts were made to rectify this situation, for the Czechoslovak government the physical presence of Soviet troops on Czechoslovak soil far out-weighed the vague political re-assurances that emanated from London. In addition, the Great Power conferences convened in Teheran and Yalta had not as yet directly addressed issues related to Czechoslovakia, nor had the British authorities revised their previous reservations over the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia within her pre-1938 frontiers. It was these reasons, as opposed to any ideological rationale, that impelled Beneš to travel to Moscow in March 1945 and from there on to Prague, by which time agreements had been made to incorporate the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ) into the government.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore to examine what effect the Soviet Union’s entrance into the war had on Anglo-Czechoslovak relations and whether the Foreign Office’s policies adversely affected Beneš’s proposed course of balance between the eastern and western allies. As the greater part of Czechoslovak-Soviet relations were strictly bilateral they were of little direct concern to the Central Department, unless they happened to affect the Poles. The Foreign Office also paid little attention to the activities
of the KSČ until late in the war, as their actions were similarly regarded as an internal Czechoslovak matter. As a result, this chapter will focus on those events outlined above.

The most important difference between British and Czechoslovak relations with the Soviet Union was the length and warmth of their previous contacts. For the British, as Churchill declared on 1 October 1939, the Soviet Union was ‘a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma’ and relations since the October revolution of 1917 had fluctuated from outright hostility to being ‘frigid but unproductive’ by the winter of 1939. Moreover, there existed a broad range of opinions in Whitehall and beyond regarding the nature of Stalin’s regime and the advisability of co-operation. This spectrum of opinions was eventually made subservient to the need to co-operate militarily with Moscow, but as the end of the war approached traditional suspicions of Moscow’s intentions in Europe returned to the fore. Yet the defining feature of the Foreign Office’s approach toward the Soviet Union was one of pragmatic ambivalence, a stance that was only made possible by Great Britain’s physical separation from the rest of the continent.

For Beneš and his fellow Czechoslovak émigrés relations with Moscow were very different, both politically and geographically. As Hubert Ripka argued in his 1944 book *East and West*, written to defend the exiled government’s policies towards the Soviet Union, Czechs and Russians had long historical associations and a common interest to

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halt the German Drang nach Osten. Even though Czechoslovak soldiers had fought the Bolshevik regime during the Russian civil war Beneš had later cultivated close relations with the Soviet Union during the 1920s and 1930s as part of his foreign policy. These approaches culminated in the signing of a Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty of mutual assistance in May 1935, which instigated limited military co-operation. Lastly, and far more controversially, Moscow had assured Prague during the Munich crisis of its willingness to stand by its treaty obligations should Germany attack. Whether this was ever a realistic probability is highly debatable, but the offer certainly seems to have influenced Beneš's view of the Soviet Union. This meant that the Czechoslovaks had had a totally different set of experiences, and expectations of Moscow than the British did. The Czechoslovak government in exile was, therefore, more willing to enter into bilateral relations with Moscow than were the Poles, for example. This does not necessarily mean that this behaviour could be directly equated with a predilection for Communism, but was rather based upon Beneš's own conception of the European balance of power and

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his ‘scientific’ implementation of diplomacy. Consequently he came to view an alliance with the Soviet Union as necessary to preserve Czechoslovakia’s security and, given the Red Army’s presence on Czechoslovak territory, he had little alternative but to reach some form of accommodation with Moscow regardless of British reservations.

Although tripartite Anglo-Czechoslovak-Soviet relations did not begin in earnest until June 1941 there is evidence that all three parties were in contact well before this date. According to both Beneš’s and František Moravec’s memoirs and recently published documents those Czechoslovak émigrés in the west maintained contacts with the Soviet authorities throughout 1939, often through the Soviet ambassador in London, Ivan M. Maisky. In addition, the Czechoslovak legation in Moscow had remained open after March 1939 (as had those in London and Paris) complete with its ambassador, Zdeněk Fierlinger, although it was eventually forced to close on 14 December 1939. These contacts were intensified in October 1940 when Heliodor Píka, formally the Czechoslovak army’s technical expert to the Zbrojovka arms factory, arrived in Istanbul from Romania where he established contacts with Soviet Intelligence agencies. Soon after his arrival, in December 1940, Beneš personally approved plans for limited cooperation with the Soviets and Píka was chosen to go to Moscow as a liaison officer in

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April 1941.15 This was a full four months before Colonel George Hill arrived in Moscow as head of an Special Operations Executive (SOE) liaison team, code named ‘SAM.’16

These early intelligence contacts were of particular importance because, as Beneš and Moravec had already demonstrated through their activities in London, these assets could be translated into political capital. Communications between Moravec’s druhý odbor (Second Department or Deuxième Bureau) and his Soviet opposite number in London, Ivan A. Chichaev, provided Moscow with access to his highly regarded intelligence networks and in turn the Soviets urged Moravec to undertake sabotage activities in the Protectorate.17 Britain’s Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and the Foreign Office were equally interested in Pika’s reports from Moscow.18 It is less well known, however, that the British and Soviet authorities were also actively engaged in transferring Czechoslovak soldiers from the Soviet Union, where many had remained since the fall of Poland, to British military control in the Middle East.19 The Czechoslovaks, therefore, had direct contacts with the Soviet authorities at a time when Britain had few and Anglo-Soviet relations left much to be desired.

Indeed, these contacts soon proved their worth when the German invasion of the Soviet Union began. This was because the first official Soviet approach to the

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16 C. Andrew, ‘Anglo-American-Soviet Intelligence Relations,’ in Lane & Temperley (eds), The Rise and Fall of the Grand Alliance, p121-122.
Czechoslovak provisional government in London, relayed to the Central Department by Robert Bruce Lockhart, had explicitly linked political recognition to ‘an exchange of military information.’ As the Foreign Office was then deliberating whether to extend the degree of recognition it had so far granted to Beneš’s government the Soviet offer forced the pace of decision making and both governments recognised a fully accredited Czechoslovak government in exile on 18 July 1941. From this point onwards the British, Czechoslovak and Soviet governments were involved in a delicate, and closely intertwined, tripartite relationship.

The British authorities had now to reappraise own their attitude towards Moscow and on 12 July 1941 a limited Anglo-Soviet agreement was signed that committed both parties to assist each other during the war, however, this was not a formal alliance. This was because many leading British political figures were still understandably suspicious of Soviet intentions and the general consensus of opinion was that the Soviet Union would soon be defeated and that the United States was a more reliable ally. As a result the British authorities were reluctant to enter into a closer relationship with Moscow or unilaterally acknowledge Stalin’s expansive political and territorial demands. Yet the Foreign Office still put a significant amount of effort into trying to reconcile the Poles and the Soviets (who were still technically at war with each other) and they signed a similar joint agreement on 30 July.

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These restrictions were still in evidence when Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, travelled to Moscow in December 1941 for direct negotiations with the Soviet authorities with a severely limited mandate from the War Cabinet. While Eden was there Stalin continually pressed him for a guarantee of the Soviet Union’s western frontiers as they had stood in June. Eden refused, in line with Britain’s earlier reservations over Czechoslovakia and Poland’s frontiers, but failed to secure Stalin’s agreement for the proposed Czechoslovak-Polish federation. Although Eden’s reluctance was entirely consistent with British policy, these frontier questions later became an intractable problem for the Great Powers and their allies. In addition, just before these talks commenced the United States had also entered the war and Churchill travelled to Washington to hold discussions there too. It was these events that laid the foundations of the Grand Alliance that was to fundamentally alter the prevailing dynamics of Anglo-Czechoslovak relations.

The Czechoslovak government in exile also needed to reassess its relations with Moscow in June 1941: At first Beneš had assured the Foreign Office that he would prefer to see Germany and the Soviet Union exhaust each other, a position that Robert Bruce Lockhart noted was ‘very similar to our own.’ In September, Jan Masaryk again reassured Frank Roberts that he did not adhere to any ‘Pan-Slav’ ideologies and that the ‘Czechoslovak government looked mainly to the west...’ Yet, at the same time, detailed bilateral negotiations were underway to establish a Czechoslovak army on Soviet territory.

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24 Harvey (ed), The War Diaries of Oliver Harvey, pp 68-69.
26 Kennedy-Pipe, Stalin’s Cold War, pp22-23 &27-29.
27 FO 371 26394 C7992/1320/12 Bruce Lockhart to Eden, 26 June 1941.
28 FO 371 26410 C11872/7140/12 Roberts minute, 11 September 1941.
In addition, Beneš had written to Stalin on 6 August 1941 to express his admiration for the Red Army’s struggle against Germany and his hopes for good relations between the two countries based on the treaty of 1935. Clearly then, while the outcome of the fighting on the eastern front was still uncertain Beneš was keen to keep his options open. In November, however, Beneš made a keynote speech in Aberdeen that more clearly expressed his ideas on the Soviet Union’s future role in Europe,

> If Soviet Russia were again to be excluded from the organisation of Europe the new collaboration of organised political units in Europe would lose their equilibrium...This continual disturbance of equilibrium and the exposure of Soviet Russia to isolation was one of the reasons of the second European war. And if the error were repeated it would probably lead to a third and still more disastrous European and world war.

Beneš’s speech immediately set alarm bells ringing in the Central Department. Not only had he ventured into the, as yet, uncharted waters of post-war planning, but he had also made references to frontiers in Europe, which was a sensitive issue given that Poland’s, Czechoslovakia’s and the Soviet Union’s territorial claims were incompatible. In response the department noted that Beneš was ‘talking far too much’ now that his government had been fully recognised and that the Foreign Secretary should warn him to stay away from such issues.

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30 FO 371 26388 C13398/216/12 Text of Beneš’s speech in Aberdeen, 10 November 1941.
31 FO 371 26388 C13398/216/12 Roberts and Strang minutes, 12 November 1941.
Eden duly sent for Beneš on the 13 November and as he later reported to the new ambassador to the Czechoslovaks, Philip Nichols, Beneš explained that the Soviets were concerned that Britain might try to seek a separate peace with Germany at their expense. Revealingly Eden asked Beneš to reassure Moscow on this point, the first of several occasions when the Foreign Office used Beneš’s contacts with Moscow to try and smooth the course of coalition warfare. Beneš also complained that the allies currently lacked any coherent policies on the future of Europe, a point with which Eden agreed.32 The importance of this argument lay in the fact that while Beneš had his own clearly defined long term political objectives the Foreign Office had few, beyond rather vague plans for a variety of European federations after the war. This position was a direct result of the Foreign Office’s traditional methods of policy formation and, as the outcome of the war was still so uncertain, it appeared to them unwise to commit themselves to policies that might have to be reversed.33 While this attitude was sensible from the Foreign Office’s perspective, the Central European view was very different and as the war progressed and Soviet defeats became victories these divergent attitudes became ever more apparent. Beneš’s comments were noted, but no action resulted from this encounter.

During the first five months of 1942 relations within the Grand Alliance remained unsettled, a consequence of the mutual suspicions that existed between the three Great Powers and the increasingly fractious debates over the opening of a ‘Second Front.’34 Nevertheless, given the Soviet Union’s predominant role in the war against Nazi Germany and the British government’s desire to quell Soviet fears of a possible Anglo-

32 FO 371 26388 C12636/216/12 Eden to Nichols, 13 November 1941.
33 FO 371 26388 C12636/216/12 Roberts minute, 13 November 1941.
34 Kitchen, *British Policy towards the Soviet Union*, pp118-121.
German rapprochement, plans for a bilateral treaty of alliance were drawn up. Thus the British authorities found themselves trying to steer a difficult course between the Soviet Union’s territorial and political demands and the reluctance of the United States to be drawn into any bilateral agreements at this time. In spite of these difficulties it was clearly understood in London that any agreement with Moscow would also have to address the question of the Soviet Union’s western frontiers. Moreover, the Foreign Office was increasingly concerned about the Soviet Union's future intentions in Eastern Europe and preferred to sign a treaty, even in the face of objections from the United States, rather than be faced with a decisive Soviet occupation of the region.

Beneš and the Czechoslovak government in exile were well informed about the preparations for this treaty, as they had been about Eden’s talks in Moscow, and they saw it as an opportunity to re-open discussions on several unresolved issues. On 1 May, in a letter to Makins, Nichols outlined Beneš’s belief that any Anglo-Soviet agreement would raise, ‘the question of the future of Poland and his own country,’ specifically the question of frontiers. In the event, however, Anglo-Soviet negotiations over the treaty that commenced with Soviet Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav M. Molotov’s, arrival in Britain on 20 May and ended on 26 May, managed to avoid any explicit reference to frontiers. Instead, the final treaty committed the two powers to a 20-year mutual assistance pact and an agreement not to enter into any unilateral negotiations with Germany, but no

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38 FO 371 30834 C4669/326/12 Nichols to Makins, 1 May 1942, and accompanying minutes by Makins, A. R. Dew and Strang.
decisive agreement on the opening of the ‘Second Front’ was reached.39 Crucially the treaty also included a clause that prohibited either state from signing treaties with any smaller powers, referred to as ‘a self-denying ordinance.’ In the event both parties, and even the United States, were satisfied with the final agreement, and although the avoidance of any conclusions on post-war frontiers was considered a success, in retrospect this was more of a Pyrrhic victory than was realised at the time, as it meant that discussion of this issue had merely been postponed. Ultimately these questions were resolved by the Red Army’s de facto presence in Eastern Europe rather than by international agreement.

The conclusion of this treaty did have a significant number of effects on subsequent Anglo-Czechoslovak-Soviet relations. First, Beneš regarded the conclusion of this alliance as further support for his policy of balance between the eastern and western powers. As he later noted,

The signature of the Anglo-Soviet treaty of May 26th, 1942, on co-operation...held out the promise that at that time there really was an intention and determination to secure friendly and allied co-operation between the two systems for at least twenty years after the conclusion of the peace...I believe that peaceful co-operation between the two systems is

possible and that it is right and necessary...and that they should tolerate one another loyally after the war.\textsuperscript{40}

Second, Beneš believed that the treaty would prove to be a catalyst for a break-through in the negotiations with the Foreign Office on the denunciation of the Munich Agreement. This was because, as he recounted in his memoirs, when Eden visited him on 4 June to inform him of the contents of the treaty he also agreed to 'annul' Britain's adherence to the Munich Agreement.\textsuperscript{41} (Although the violent German reaction after the assassination of Heydrich also played a significant role in the Foreign Office's decision to officially repudiate its position on Munich.)

The final consequence of the Anglo-Soviet treaty was Beneš's decision to try and extend the terms of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Agreement of 18 July 1941 into a full alliance, just as the British authorities had done. Some historians have long regarded this decision as evidence of Beneš's pro-Communist leanings, however, the reasons behind this decision need to be examined in order fully to comprehend his perception of the international situation in 1943 and his subsequent determination to continue along this path in the face of the Foreign Office's strenuous objections.\textsuperscript{42}

By the beginning of 1943 the Grand Alliance's position had changed significantly; the course of the war had been altered and the seemingly unending series of German victories since 1939 had been reserved. Moreover, after a promising start


\textsuperscript{41} Beneš, \textit{Paměti}, p303-304.

Czechoslovak-Polish relations had deteriorated and negotiations on federations had stalled. Yet at the same time the Foreign Office continued to refuse to make any commitments in regards to frontiers in Central Europe. While this policy had not changed over the previous four years it was now increasingly apparent to Beneš, and the Foreign Office, that the Red Army was far more likely to reach the territory of the former-Czechoslovakia before any British or American forces would. If this scenario proved to be accurate then Moscow would be in a position to exert a powerful influence over the region, regardless of whether or not Beneš had signed any agreements with them. From Beneš's perspective it was better to sign something, however untrustworthy the co-signatory, than be faced with a Soviet occupation and no agreement. It was no coincidence that the British decision to sign a treaty with the Soviet Union the previous May was based upon very similar considerations. This was an unenviable position, but this was the context within which Beneš had to work.

Furthermore, Beneš had also to contend with an increasingly popular and well-organised Czechoslovak Communist party based in Moscow, which in theory at least represented an alternative to his own administration. But while Beneš may be accused of underestimating the ideological aspects of relations with the Soviet Union, his overriding preoccupation was Czechoslovakia’s security after the war and he had long maintained the best way to achieve this was through close collaboration with Moscow.

43 See FO 371 34334 C2304/206/12 Bruce Lockhart’s memorandum to Sargent, 15 February 1943 & J. Erickson The Road to Berlin, London, 1999, chapters one to three.
44 Beneš, Paměti, p357.
At the same time he was fully aware of the inherent dangers of such contacts and sought assurances from the outset that the Soviets would respect Czechoslovakia’s sovereignty and would not interfere in her internal affairs. This was a dangerous game of diplomacy with high stakes, but as the experiences of the Polish Government in exile would prove, failure to enter into a constructive dialogue with Moscow could prove more disastrous still. While Beneš’s reasoning was essentially pragmatic it was not a policy that found much favour in the Central Department.

The Foreign Office had long been aware of Beneš’s attitude toward the Soviet Union, and as has been outlined, took full advantage of his contacts when it benefited them. The Foreign Office was, however, reluctant to allow ‘minor allies’ to negotiate treaties as and when they saw fit as it was felt that such activities would soon escalate into a race between the lesser allies to bind themselves to their favoured Great Power. This scenario would not only have undermined the fragile edifice of the Grand Alliance, but would have opened the Foreign Office to a variety of unwanted political demands from the various exiled governments in London. The accepted wisdom in Whitehall was that the Great Powers would negotiate a post-war political framework between themselves prior to the establishment of more localised relations with smaller powers; an understanding shared by both Washington and Moscow. While the equality of all partners in the coalition against the Axis powers was voiced in theory, in practice, the ‘Big Three’ made all the important decisions between themselves during the war. The ‘smaller allies’ were expected to accept this situation without complaint, in return for the Great Powers’

48 FO 371 34334 C2304/206/12 Bruce Lockhart’s memorandum, 15 February 1943.
efforts to liberate their occupied homelands, in a manner not dissimilar to the Congress of Vienna of 1814 to 1815.\textsuperscript{49} Indeed, this was why the ‘self-denying ordinance’ clause had been inserted in to the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of 1942; though no ‘smaller power’ (except the Yugoslavs) had actually been informed of this clause, which was entirely in keeping with the British authorities’ policy of secrecy regarding its own bi-lateral agreements.\textsuperscript{50} Beneš, however, was not inclined to accept such instructions given his own experience as a statesman, and thus the stage was set for a battle of wills between the Foreign Office and the government in exile over the proposed treaty with the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{51}

Beneš had already travelled to Washington in early 1943 for talks with President Franklin D. Roosevelt and although the Central Department found the visit unobjectionable, they were concerned by indications that Washington was also interested in using Beneš’s contacts with Moscow to help improve their own relations with the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{52} Even more worrying, from the British perspective, was the possibility that Beneš had appeared willing to mediate with the Soviets over the Baltic States and Poland at Roosevelt’s request.\textsuperscript{53} Upon his return Beneš told Eden on 16 June that he intended to sign a treaty with the Soviet Union, depending on the situation he found when he arrived in Moscow. It was at this point that Eden mentioned to Beneš the hitherto ‘secret’ clause in the Anglo-Soviet Treaty regarding the ‘self-denying ordinance.’\textsuperscript{54} Eden then warned Beneš that if he signed the treaty this would indicate, ‘that Czechoslovakia


\textsuperscript{50} FO 371 34338 CS228/525/12 Roberts to Nichols, 31 May 1943.


\textsuperscript{52} FO 371 34343 CS476/791/12 Robert’s minutes, 20 May 1943.\textsuperscript{53} FO 371 34352 C7084/6009/12 Eden to Nichols on conversation with Beneš, 16 June 1942.\textsuperscript{54} FO 371 34338 C7363/525/12 Eden to Nichols, 17 June 1943.
had definitely joined the Russian camp..." In response, Beneš revealed he had already discussed the possibility of a treaty with Roosevelt and that the President had agreed to the suitability of such a move. This was a point later refuted by the State Department when Sumner Wells noted that Beneš was liable, 'to interpret casual remarks as tacit understandings.'

Beneš’s remarks were regarded by the Foreign Office as the first official notification they had been given about the proposed treaty, even though Nichols had been forewarned. Indeed, it was this prior warning that had been the impetus behind Eden’s decision to meet Beneš for lunch that day. As had occurred the previous year over the formula for Britain’s repudiation of the Munich Agreement this meeting proved to be the beginning of a protracted and increasingly acrimonious exchange of views between the Czechoslovak government in exile and the Foreign Office. Although a mutually acceptable solution to this situation was eventually reached, in the wake of the Foreign Ministers’ Conference in Moscow in October, the disputes that raged over this issue throughout the second half of 1943 marked the lowest ebb in Anglo-Czechoslovak relations during the war.

The Foreign Office’s immediate concern was that any such treaty would not only contravene the terms of the ‘self-denying ordinance,’ but that it would also have a disastrous effect on the Poles and might well cause complications with the other allies.

55 FO 371 34338 C7363/525/12 Eden to Nichols, 17 June 1943.
56 FO 371 34352 C8031/6009/12 Allen minute, 15 July 1943, and FO 371 C8317/525/12 Halifax to Foreign Office, 29 June 1943 & 2 July 1943.
57 FO 371 34338 C6407/525/12 Nichols to Roberts, 3 June 1943.
58 FO 371 34338 C6407/525/12 Roberts minute, 9 June 1943, initialled by Sargent, 9 June 1943, Cadogan, 10 June 1943 and Eden, 12 June 1943.
60 FO 371 34338 C6407/525/12 Roberts minute, 9 June 1943, Sargent, 9 June 1943, Cadogan, 10 June 1943 and Eden, 12 June 1943.
This was a pertinent point as by then Polish-Soviet relations had entered a particularly difficult phase.\textsuperscript{61} Furthermore, the Foreign Office’s legal advisors swiftly rejected the argument put forward by Beneš that this would not be a new treaty but merely an extension of the Soviet-Czechoslovak treaty of 1935.\textsuperscript{62} This was consistent with the Foreign Office’s refusal to accept the concept of the juridical continuity of the pre-war Czechoslovak Republic. Eden was so worried by this proposed treaty that he immediately approached the War Cabinet to gain their approval for issuing a formal warning to Beneš. The Cabinet concurred and added that it would, however, agree to a tripartite treaty between the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Poland.\textsuperscript{63}

Eden met Beneš again on 30 June, an unprecedented recurrence of such high-level contacts and indicative of how seriously the Foreign Secretary viewed the situation, and informed him of the Cabinet’s decision. Eden also showed Beneš a copy of an aide memoire regarding the ‘self-denying ordinance’ prepared after his discussions with Molotov on 9 June 1942. He added that given the ‘present state of Polish-Russian relations’ the proposed Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty would ‘not be a helpful contribution,’\textsuperscript{64} once more underlining the Foreign Office’s primary consideration in this matter - the Poles. Although Beneš accepted Eden’s explanation of his reasons for objecting to the treaty, he stressed its importance and the need to guarantee Czechoslovakia against future threats to its integrity while binding the Soviets and the KSČ to his government. Beneš then pressed Eden to admit that he only objected to the  

\textsuperscript{61} Prażmowska, \textit{Britain and Poland}, pp 166-182.  
\textsuperscript{62} FO 371 34338 C7155/525/12 W.E. Beckett minute, Second Legal Advisor, 24 June 1943.  
\textsuperscript{63} CAB 65/34, War Cabinet Conclusions, 89 (43), 28 June 1943 & FO 371 34338 C7492/525/12 Foreign Office’s copy of the War Cabinet’s conclusions, 28 June 1943.  
\textsuperscript{64} FO 371 34338 C7493/525/12 Eden to Nichols, 30 June 1943.
timing of the treaty and not to the principle of a bi-lateral agreement. They both agreed that the Soviet authorities would have to be approached over this question, but Beneš made it clear that he intended to sign the treaty as soon as possible.65

Beneš had been in regular contact with Soviet representatives over the possibility of concluding a treaty as early as December 1942 and at no point had the Soviet authorities raised the issue of the agreed ‘ordinance’ with Britain.66 On the same day Beneš also met the Soviet ambassador to the allied exiled governments in London, Alexander Y. Bogomolov, to confirm the Soviet position on the treaty. Bogomolov had told him that Moscow knew of no ‘ordinance’ that prevented them from signing agreements with other states and that if the British objected then Beneš’s visit and the treaty would both have to be delayed.67 Soviet representatives in London had also made it clear to the Foreign Office that they did not recognise the ‘self-denying ordinance’ and that any British objections to the treaty, especially those based solely on the detrimental effects it might have on the Poles, would further harm Allied relations.68 While relations within the Grand Alliance had momentarily improved with the abolition of the Comintern on 8 June, they had faltered again over the handling of Italian surrender, the continued absence of a ‘Second Front’ and Stalin’s subsequent withdrawal of Maisky and Maxim M. Litvinov from their respective posts.69 In addition, it should be noted that Soviet negotiations with the French National Committee of Liberation, in May and June 1943,

68 FO 371 34339 C9512/525/12 Nichols to Harrison, 5 August 1943 & FO 371 34338 C7700/525/12 Eden to Clark Kerr, 2 July 1943.
69 Bruce Lockhart, Comes the Reckoning, pp-256-257 & Kennedy-Pipe, Stalin’s Cold War, pp37-39 & Ross, The Foreign Office and the Kremlin, pp130-133.
over the question of recognition had resulted in further disagreements between Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin. All in all the summer of 1943 was a difficult time for the Grand Alliance and for the Foreign Office the Czechoslovaks’ insistence on signing a treaty with the Soviet Union could not have come at a more inopportune moment.

The Foreign Office had no intention of merely accepting Moscow’s explanation that they had misunderstood the terms of the agreement and of allowing the treaty to proceed. A meeting was hurriedly convened to consider this issue on 5 July. Its conclusions were stark. Alexander Cadogan noted in his diary,

We can’t stop it. Russians now say we have no self-denying ordinance, and they seem prepared to sign. Decided thing to do was appeal once more to Russians not to do so. If they insist, we must at least urge that the treaty must not be directed in any way against Poland and, if possible, should provide for Polish accession.

The British position was not a strong one and the Foreign Office was well aware of this, but it was not about to allow a ‘minor ally’ to disrupt the delicate balance of power within the wartime coalition purely in the pursuit of its own national interests. Once again the War Cabinet supported this decision, the first and last time Czechoslovak issues would be so regularly considered at such a senior level. Given that all the interested parties had accepted the inevitability of the treaty by early July, albeit with reservations over the

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71 FO 371 34338 C7700/525/12 Harrison minutes on proposed meeting, 5 July 1943, and subsequent minutes by Strang, 5 July 1943, Sargent, 6 July 1943 and Cadogan, 6 July 1943.
timing, it seemed as if the matter had been resolved. This was not least because Beneš had long proposed that Poland be allowed to accede to the treaty, if she so wished, in order to circumvent Soviet suspicions about federations. But this issue was not resolved quite so easily and these disagreements became far more public before the situation was finally resolved.

On 7 July Beneš cancelled his trip to Moscow after further discussions with Bogomolov, who had told him that ‘Soviet Circles’ were unwilling to proceed in the face of British objections. As a result the situation worsened, not least because all the parties now re-interpreted this decision in the light of their own perceptions, further adding to the confusion and antagonism that surrounded the issue. Bogomolov blamed the Czechoslovaks for causing all these problems and creating conflict with the Soviet Union due to their desire to avoid friction with the British. The pro-Soviet Czechoslovak ambassador in Moscow, Fierlinger, repeated this opinion in conversation with the British ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr. On 19 July Masaryk told Nichols that Beneš was unhappy at the way in which both London and Washington had handled the situation. Four days after that Ripka reported to Nichols that he was also unhappy at Britain’s behaviour, to which Eden responded, ‘I don’t see that M. Ripka has much ground for his indignation. It was the Russians who cried off the visit while we were in discussions with them.’ Whatever the real reasons behind the postponement of Beneš’s journey it

72 Dilks (ed), The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, p540.
73 FO 371 34338 C7810/525/12 Foreign Office’s copy of the War Cabinet’s conclusions, 5 July 1943.
77 FO 371 34338 C7922/525/12 Clark-Kerr to Foreign Office, 9 July 1943.
78 FO 371 34339 C8317/525/12 Nichols to Strang, 19 July 1943.
79 FO 371 34339 C8752/525/12 Nichols to Foreign Office, 24 July 1943, & Eden minute 6 August 1943.
was the way in which each interested party perceived the causes that proved to be decisive. Beneš in particular had become increasingly frustrated by the whole affair and took the Foreign Office’s position as a personal affront.\textsuperscript{80} At the same time discussion of this matter had begun to spill out of diplomatic circles and references to it appeared in the press and subsequently, and even more worryingly for the Foreign Office, in the House of Commons.

The widening of these discussions had actually begun with the usually compliant Czechoslovak State Council, an organ that had become increasingly vocal in its opinions. In response to these delays and following a report on the situation by Ripka, the Council issued a resolution on 22 July that urged the conclusion of the treaty as soon as possible.\textsuperscript{81} This development was followed in August by articles in \textit{The Daily Worker} and \textit{Pravda} that blamed the delays on ‘opposition in British circles,’ comments that resulted in a stern letter of disapproval being sent to Moscow by the Foreign Office.\textsuperscript{82} Though neither of these developments proved to be disastrous, they did portend that the whole dispute was about to enter an even more acrimonious phase.

On 1 September Eden informed Masaryk that as a result of recent Anglo-American negotiations in Quebec he felt that a solution to the treaty issue had been found, especially as the treaty was not as explicitly anti-Polish as he had originally feared.\textsuperscript{83} Bruce Lockhart then told Beneš that there were now no British objections to his travelling to Moscow.\textsuperscript{84} Subsequently, Beneš announced he would leave for the Soviet

\textsuperscript{80} Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), \textit{Dokumenty z historie československé politiky}, Vol. 1, p361.
\textsuperscript{82} FO 371 34339 C8752/525 Telegram to Moscow embassy sanctioned by Eden, 15 August 1943.
\textsuperscript{84} Němeček, et al (eds), \textit{Československo-sovětské vztahy}, Vol. 2, p57-58. No record of either conversation is to be found in the Foreign Office files.
capital in mid-September, a reasonable enough conclusion given the information he had so recently received. Once again a mutually acceptable resolution to this impasse looked possible. Unbeknown to either Eden or Beneš, however, Churchill had been in personal communication with both Roosevelt and Stalin regarding the arrangements for the first meeting of the heads of the three Great Powers and they had agreed that a conference of Foreign Ministers should be convened in Moscow first. On 13 September Eden met Maisky and they jointly agreed that Beneš’s visit (and the treaty) should be delayed until after the Moscow conference, when Britain and the Soviet Union would have the opportunity to discuss the whole question of the ‘self-denying ordinance’ Maisky agreed, although the Foreign Office decided not to inform Beneš of this decision quite yet.

As a result, less than a week after Eden had informed the Czechoslovak government that he had no objection to the visit, he told them that it would have to be delayed until after the Foreign Ministers’ conference. On the face of it this was a clear reversal of the Foreign Office’s position.

By mid-September the Foreign Office’s usual patience in their dealings with the Czechoslovaks had begun to wear thin, so much so that Eden, who had been usually sympathetically disposed towards the Czechoslovaks, noted on 16 September,

Beneš is behaving like a petty intriguer and shows no signs of statesmanship. If Dept. cares to prepare a brief I will speak from it to M. Masaryk. We did not stop M. Beneš going to Moscow. The Russians

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85 Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), Dokumenty z historie československé politiky, Vol. 1, p365.
86 FO 371 34339 C10733/525/12 Warner minute & Nichols to Sargent, 14 September 1943.
87 Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), Dokumenty z historie československé politiky, Vol. 1, p365.
stopped him. He should be grateful to us from saving him from the position of an ignominious Muscovite vassal.88

This quote not only dramatically illustrates the strength of feeling generated in the Foreign Office by these discussions, but also Eden’s belief that it had been the Soviets, not the British, who were ultimately responsible for the delay. Perhaps most importantly, Eden’s minute gives an indication of his, if not the entire Department’s, underlying belief that the conclusion of this treaty would place Beneš and his government very firmly within the Soviet camp. The Central Department did indeed prepare a brief and the next day Eden duly informed Masaryk about the British government’s decision, stressing that it had been reached due to Churchill’s insistence that the treaty be delayed.89 No mention was made of Beneš’s behaviour or the Foreign Secretary’s views on the political advisability of such a treaty.

Although Beneš agreed to delay his visit once more, at least until after the Foreign Ministers’ conference, this additional postponement exposed some troubling divisions within his government in exile.90 As has already been detailed, Beneš’s style of leadership was highly centralised and authoritarian, but even so, since his arrival in Britain in the summer of 1938 he had had to contend with a number of challenges to his authority. Though none of these had actually developed into a serious threat to his position the increasing number of Red Army victories during 1943 had resulted in the formation of a pro-Soviet lobby amongst some of the exiles in London, which was compounded by the incorporation of several Communist representatives in the State

88 FO 371 34339 C10733/525/12 Eden minute, 16 September 1943.
Council. Many émigré politicians were increasingly unhappy at the delays over the signing of the treaty (foremost amongst these was Ripka) and, rightly or wrongly, attributed many of these problems to British procrastination. These underlying tensions surfaced dramatically in response to what was regarded by the Foreign Office as an innocuous question in the House of Commons.

On 22 September W. Brown had tabled a question related to Beneš’s planned trip to Moscow and asked what the Foreign Secretary had done to assist him. In response to this written question Eden revealed the existence of the ‘self-denying ordinance’ and stated that as soon as he had informed Beneš of these facts the President had himself delayed the visit. Two days later an infuriated Czechoslovak State Council passed another resolution, once again instigated by Ripka, that roundly criticised Eden’s comments and that urged that the treaty should be concluded regardless of British objections. Full responsibility for all the delays was placed on the British. Although Beneš had been informed of this proposed resolution and had urged caution he did not veto its publication. Moreover, the text of this communique was forwarded to both the State Department and the Soviet government and was leaked to the British press.

The Foreign Office was furious, as was Beneš who informed Nichols, in no uncertain terms, of his unhappiness with Eden’s statement. Beneš fumed at these delays and as Nichols recounted, ‘...his vanity is a little hurt at the turn of events have taken over the visit; in addition he is genuinely distressed at his inability to get on with his

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91 FO 371 34340 C12214/525/12 Roberts’s minute 13 October 1943.
94 Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), Dokumenty z historie československé politiky, Vol. 1, p388.
95 FO 371 34340 C11407/525/12 Nichols to Eden, 1 October 1943, including text of the Czechoslovak memorandum.
policy and plans for the future security of his State.96 These were complaints he repeated to Bruce Lockhart, who also criticised the Foreign Office’s procrastination.97 Though the Central Department admitted that the Czechoslovaks had not been consulted over the wording of the statement in the House, Roberts added,

In view of the fact that our parliamentary statement was extremely moderate and took full account of Czech susceptibilities, there seems little need for the Czechs to have rushed into print again in a way which was described by the Times as a sharp rejoinder to the Secretary of State’s statement. The Czechs have embarrassed us quite enough in recent weeks...98

This was yet more evidence of how exasperated the Central Department had become, and how earnestly they believed that all the delays had originated with the Soviets. Eden visited Masaryk once more on 7 October and informed him of the Foreign Office’s and the Cabinet’s disapproval of the Czechoslovak government’s actions.99 In his defence, Masaryk highlighted the difficulties he was experiencing with certain colleagues within the government.100 Soon after letters were despatched to the British ambassadors in

96 FO 371 34340 C11675/525/12 Nichols to Roberts on conversation with Beneš, 29 September 1943, addendum to C11400/525/12.
97 Bruce Lockhart, Comes the Reckoning, pp269-270.
98 FO 371 34338 C11407/525/12 Roberts minute, 5 October 1943.
99 FO 371 34338 C8338/525/12 Nichols to Roberts, 3 June 1943.
100 FO 371 34340 C11655/525/12 Eden’s memorandum on talks with Masaryk, 7 October 1943.
Washington and Moscow, by both Churchill and the Foreign Office, that outlined the British government’s position on this issue in order that the respective ambassadors be able to ‘clear the air’ prior to the forthcoming conference in Moscow.\footnote{168}

Though the dispute rumbled on for several more weeks, the very public nature of the argument over the statement in the Commons seemed to have tempered both sides’ desire to continue on in this manner.\footnote{169} Moreover, Eden left for Moscow in the middle of October and any resolution of this matter would now emerge from the discussions there and not from the continued altercations in London. In the event the conference proved to be far more successful than any of the allies had thought possible.\footnote{170} Eden raised the issue of the ‘self-denying ordinance’ with Molotov and by 24 October he had seen a draft of the treaty and was confident that it was not detrimental to the Poles. He then decided that the treaty should not be opposed and that the ‘self-denying ordinance’ clause should be dropped.\footnote{171}

Although the Prime Minister at first agreed to Eden’s suggestion, the Central Department – concerned by Eden’s habit of revising foreign policy while abroad – mounted a stern defence of the War Cabinet’s previous conclusions of 29 September.\footnote{172} These had stated that any such treaty would be counter-productive for both the British government and the Polish government in exile and that if the Secretary of State

\footnote{168} FO 371 34340 C11655/525/12 Letters from Churchill and the Foreign Office to Halifax and Clark Kerr, respectively sent on 16 & 17 October 1943.
\footnote{169} FO 371 34340 C12409/525/12 Nichols to Eden, 18 October 1943, and Nichols to Roberts, 19 October 1943.
\footnote{171} FO 371 34340 C12466/525/12 & C12467/525/12 Eden to Foreign Office via Clark Kerr in Moscow, both 24 October 1943.
\footnote{172} FO 371 34340 C12467/525/12 Churchill’s minute to Cadogan, 25 October 1943.
capitulated over this issue it would make it increasingly difficult to ‘manage’ Beneš in future and would further weaken Masaryk’s pro-western position.\footnote{FO 371 34340 C12505/525/12 Memorandum by Roberts and Cadogan to Churchill, 15 October 1943.} Churchill authorised the Department to send Eden a message to this effect the very next day, which was copied to the various Dominion governments.\footnote{FO 371 34340 C12505/525/12 Churchill’s minute, 26 October 1943 and telegrams to the governments of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, 27 October 1943.} This missive had little impact, however, and on 26 October the Soviet embassy in London officially extended an invitation to Beneš to come to Moscow to sign the treaty. Soon after Ripka officially requested that the British provide the necessary transportation for the journey. Upon his return Eden confirmed to Nichols that the Foreign Office no longer had any objections to the treaty and that the ‘self-denying ordinance’ had indeed been dropped.\footnote{FO 371 34340 C13087/525/12 Nichols to Roberts on conversation with Benes, 28 October 1943 & C13005/525/12 Eden to Nichols, 15 November 1943.}

Beneš duly expressed his approval of this development to Nichols and apologised for his government’s handling of the whole issue, adding that he intended to do what he could for the Poles when he was in Moscow. In response Roberts noted that,

> It is satisfactory that having won their point, the Czechs appear to be in a modest and not vainglorious mood. I understand that Dr Ripka recently told members of the Czech Foreign Service that the position of the Poles was extremely difficult and that they should all show adequate comprehension of this fact.\footnote{FO 371 34340 C13087/525/12 Nichols to Roberts on conversation with Beneš, 4 November 1943 & Roberts minute, 8 November 1943.}
The Foreign Office had not forgotten the seriousness of the dispute, however, and Nichols made it plain to Ripka in early December that,

...his government would be well advised not to make too much propaganda over their treaty with Russia...if they were in fact to ‘play up’ the signature it would not be well received in governmental circles here...there was a slight wound which would take a little time to heal...110

Beneš finally got his treaty when, on 12 December 1943, Molotov and Fierlinger signed a Treaty of Friendship, Mutual Assistance and Post-war Co-operation between the Czechoslovak Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in Moscow, with Beneš and Stalin in attendance.111

Although the Czechoslovak government in exile had achieved its goal of regularising its relations with the Soviet Union, this had been achieved at some cost to Anglo-Czechoslovak relations. From the British perspective the months of wrangling and negotiations indicated a worrying increase in the Czechoslovak government’s pro-Soviet tendencies. Although Beneš and others continued to stress their belief in the necessity of pursuing a foreign policy ‘between East and West’ the treaty did seem to place them closer to Moscow than to London or Washington.112 Furthermore, the manner in which Beneš had pursued his objective had raised awkward questions about the British

110 FO 371 34341 C14339/525/12 Nichols to Harrison on conversation with Ripka, 4 December 1943.
111 See Beneš, Paměti, pp379-391, see also Mackenzie, Dr Beneš, pp301-314 for Beneš’s own interpretation of how and why the Treaty came to be signed.
112 FO 371 34341 C15065/525/12 Nichols to Eden, 22 December 1943, on Ripka’s speech to Czechoslovak State Council after the signing of treaty. Also FO 371 38920 C268/35/12 Washington Embassy to Central Department, on reactions in the United States to Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty, 15 December 1943. See also Němeček, et al (eds), Československo-sovětské vztahy, Vol. 2, pp231-232.
government's ability to control the behaviour of the exiled governments in London. As a result the Foreign Office was inclined to leave Beneš to his fate, not least as its attention was now focused on other issues and on preserving their own international position.

The results of the treaty were not all negative, however. Beneš's visit had shown that agreements between the minor allies and the Soviet Union were possible and although the Foreign Office had no first-hand information regarding what Beneš and Stalin had discussed, the President's own reports were encouraging. Beneš's visit also seemed to offer the opportunity to improve Soviet-Polish relations, a possibility accepted by both Churchill and Eden during their talks with Beneš in Algeria in January 1944. Tentative proposals were also aired for an Anglo-Czechoslovak treaty upon similar lines to the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty designed to reinforce Masaryk's position, who was now regarded as Britain's 'best friend' within the government in exile. But these plans were never pursued.

From the Czechoslovak perspective the treaty with the Soviet Union was an unavoidable necessity. The government in exile had already observed at first hand the fate of the Polish government in exile and of King Peter of Yugoslavia and had no desire to find itself in the same predicament. Moreover, it was apparent that the Red Army would soon reach Czechoslovak territory and some form of agreement was deemed

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113 See FO 371 34341 C14759/525/12 & C14842/525/12 Balfour telegram to Central Department, 15 December 1943, FO 371 34341 C14861/525/12 Balfour memorandum on talks with Beneš for War Cabinet Distribution, 18 December 1943 & FO 371 38920 C2068/35/12 Balfour memorandum on Beneš visit to Moscow, 12 January 1944.
115 FO 371 34341 C15065/525/12 Roberts minute, 4 January 1944 & C15309/525/12 Halifax to Foreign Office, 29 December 1943.
preferable to none at all.\textsuperscript{117} Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the Soviet Union was still the only Great Power that had so far supported Beneš's political objectives in full: the re-creation of Czechoslovakia within her pre-1938 frontiers, the 'juridical continuity' of the Republic, the state's future security and the transfer of the Sudeten German minority.\textsuperscript{118}

Beneš himself was clear, given the allies' agreements on continued post-war cooperation and what he regarded as the new and less suspicious attitudes in Moscow, forging closer links with the Soviet authorities was now unavoidable.\textsuperscript{119} Beneš also made it clear in his memoirs that he regarded the treaty as a success.

In reply to all questions I repeated emphatically that I accepted at its face value what the Soviet Union was promising us and that in my experience I had hitherto had no reason at all to mistrust its word...[addendum in footnote] Was I mistaken in either my opinion or my expectation or was I not? Only the future can answer. Come what may, I was to the fullest possible extent sincere and honest in my belief.\textsuperscript{120}


\textsuperscript{119} Benef, *Paměti*, p379.

Though this statement might appear in retrospect to be overly naïve, it does seem accurately to reflect Beneš’s views on the matter, especially since his entire foreign policy was based upon this belief.\textsuperscript{121} While many officials in the Central Department, Roberts in particular, viewed such unqualified faith in the Soviet Union’s goodwill with much scepticism there was little they could offer in the way of alternative support (either military or political).\textsuperscript{122} Indeed, the uprisings in Slovakia and Prague dramatically illustrated the very real limitations of the west’s ability to assist Czechoslovakia during the final months of the war. In this light, Beneš’s policy, for all its inherent complications, does appear to have been the only course of action he could have pursued.\textsuperscript{123}

Moreover the treaty was signed just in time, as on 8 April 1944 the first units of the Red Army crossed the eastern frontiers of the former Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{124} On the 24 April, the Czechoslovak government in exile concluded a civil affairs agreement with the Soviet Union, in order to regulate the administration in these newly liberated territories.\textsuperscript{125} Soon after, in early May, Beneš and Ripka approached the Foreign Office (through Nichols) to request that Britain sign a similar agreement, analogous to those that had already been signed by the United States and Britain with Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway. After considering the issue the Foreign Office decided that while there were political advantages to be gained from doing so, these were outweighed

\begin{footnotes}
\item[121] FO 371 38975 C11241/11241/12 Nichols to Central Department, 24 August 1944. Text of Beneš speech to the Czechoslovak Armoured Brigade Group, 21 August 1944.
\item[122] FO 371 34341 C15065/525/12 Roberts to Nichols, 25 January 1944.
\item[124] Erickson, \textit{The Road to Berlin}, p291.
\end{footnotes}
by the disadvantages of such a move; especially since it was felt that the United States would be unlikely to agree and because the Polish government in exile was likely to request a similar agreement, which would have to be refused outright. It was decided that a supportive parliamentary question should be tabled instead, not least, as the British authorities had not made any public statements that referred to the Czechoslovak government since August 1942. Nichols informed Beneš on 27 May that no agreement would be signed, as it was thought highly unlikely that any British or American troops would reach the area, adding that Eden would say something in the Commons.\textsuperscript{126} However, events in France that summer delayed any announcement and the idea was quietly shelved in early July. This exchange was to be entirely symptomatic of the final phase of Anglo-Czechoslovak-Soviet relations during the war. Although the Foreign Office had declared its support for Beneš’s position between east and west these good intentions rarely translated into concrete policies.\textsuperscript{127} Quite simply the British authorities were more concerned by events closer to home and the Czechoslovak question languished at the bottom of the Foreign Office’s list of priorities.

The realities and difficulties of the Soviet liberation and occupation of Czechoslovakia and the Foreign Office’s decreasing ability to offer assistance to Beneš and his government soon became apparent over the question of Podkarpatská Rus (Subcarpathian Ruthenia) in the eastern part of the former Czechoslovakia. The Foreign Office had long been aware of possible difficulties over this region as reports had reached them as far back as March 1943 that indicated that Beneš was having problems with the

\textsuperscript{126} FO 371 38921 C7676/63/12 Foreign Office minute, 19 May 1944 & Nichols to Roberts, 27 May 1944.
\textsuperscript{127} FO 371 38921 C7676/63/12 Roberts memorandum on Anglo-Czechoslovak Relations, 29 May 1944 & Roberts minute, 7 July 1944.
only Ruthenian representative in London, Dr Paul Cibere. These problems had 
escalated during the second half of 1944 and it had become increasingly apparent to the 
Foreign Office that certain sections of the Ruthenian population had begun to demand 
that the region be incorporated into the Soviet Ukraine. Although this was a matter 
solely of concern to the Czechoslovak government in exile and the Soviet Union it was 
one that the Central Department was aware of and enquired about, especially since they 
had heard rumours that Beneš had told his old friend Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the 
United States Minister in London, that he was quite prepared to let the region pass into 
Soviet hands.

Conversely, the Czechoslovak government in exile was sufficiently concerned 
about the inherent problems in dealing with these newly liberated territories to send a 
governmental delegate, František Němec, to deal with the various National Committees 
that were being spontaneously formed in these areas. A delegation of 22 people, 
including General Rudolf Viesf, had left for the liberated territories and the embryonic 
Slovak Uprising in late August. Unlike Viesf’s, however, Němec’s relations with the 
Slovak National Council were cool from the outset and he soon began to experience 
troubles when he arrived in Ruthenia in late October 1944; by December relations had 
become so tense that he was ordered back to Moscow.

128 FO 371 34329 C2878/96/12 Roberts minute, 19 March 1943.
129 FO 371 38920 C17863/35/12 Balfour Moscow to Foreign Office, 23 December 1944.
130 FO 371 38920 C16851/35/12 Allen memorandum on conversation between Professor A. Toynbee 
(FORD) and Hamilton Fish Armstrong, 2 December 1944, & C17201/35/12 Nichols to Allen, 7 December 
1944 C17201/35/12 Nichols to Allen, 7 December 1944.
131 FO 371 40671 N48/48/12 Nichols to Roberts, 29 December 1944. See also P. Drtina, Československo 
132 FO 371 38945 C1217/1347/12 From Nichols to Roberts, 24 August 1944.
133 FO 371 38930 C16976/224/12 Nichols to Eden, 5 December 1944, FO 371 28930 C17903/35/12 
Nichols to Roberts, 20 December 1944 & F. Němec & V. Moudrý, The Soviet Seizure of Subcarpathian 
While the Foreign Office had tried to keep abreast of these developments, there is little evidence that they knew just how serious the difficulties had become or the full extent of the discussions between the exiles in London and the Soviet authorities over this issue. Yet crucially these discussions hinged upon a Soviet request that the Czechoslovak government recognise the Lublin Committee (which they did in January 1945), claims over the disputed Těšín region and the very real possibility that the problems in Ruthenia might be replicated in Slovakia. These issues did concern the Foreign Office and directly related to the increasingly precarious position of the Polish government in exile. The explicit linkage of the resolution of the Ruthenian issue to the Lublin Committee caused the Foreign Office to urge the Czechoslovaks to ‘go slow’ on this sensitive issue for as long as possible. At worst these separatist tendencies, and tensions between the various Czechoslovak political organisations in London, Moscow and in the liberated territories could have made it impossible for Beneš to reconstruct Czechoslovakia at the end of the war. They could even, as had already happened in Yugoslavia and Greece, have escalated into civil war.

As a result of these developments Ripka informed Nichols, on 29 December, that Beneš had decided to leave London for Moscow. In turn, Nichols informed the British authorities that the Soviet authorities had urged Beneš to return to the liberated territories as soon as possible in order to resolve any further difficulties before they arose. He concluded by stating that the Czechoslovak government in exile was determined to administer all of Czechoslovak territory, within the pre-Munich frontiers, during the

137 FO 371 47077 N49/28/12 Nichols to Foreign Office, 29 December 1944.
period between the cessation of hostilities and the proposed peace settlement, but Nichols thought it likely that the Czechoslovaks would hand Ruthenia over to the Soviets if necessary. In fact, this was a fairly accurate assessment of the position as Beneš later wrote to Stalin along these lines on 29 January 1945 and the region was incorporated into the Soviet Union by mutual agreement on 29 June 1945.\footnote{Němeček, et al (eds), \textit{Československo-sovětské vztahy}, Vol. 2, pp482-484. See also Various authors, \textit{Československé dějiny v datech}, Prague, 1987, p459 & F. Čapka, \textit{Dějiny zemi koruny České v datech}, Prague, 1999, p718.}

Even though Eden and others officials in the Foreign Office continued to insist that Britain was still committed to supporting the Czechoslovak government, the actual levels of support they were able to offer during 1944 undermined these reassurances. It seemed that whenever the Czechoslovak government requested something specific, whether it be re-supplying the Slovak uprising or openly declaring support for the transfer of the Sudeten Germans, these requests were denied. Although there is no evidence that these British failures were in any way deliberate Beneš’s policies required both the western and eastern allies to proffer an equal amount of support in order to operate successfully. While the Foreign Office had no wish to see Czechoslovakia fall under the Soviet’s influence, as looked likely with Poland, there was little that they felt could be done to prevent this happening without causing unwanted complications with the United States and the Soviet Union. This crucial discrepancy between British and Czechoslovak policies had one significant consequence; it forced Beneš to form ever-closer links with the Soviet Union.

While this was definitely not in Britain’s interest, it should be recognised that it was a partial consequence of the Foreign Office’s disinclination to deal equitably with
Benes and his government after December 1943. Nor had this development been lost on Beneš, as he admitted to Nichols just weeks before his departure for Moscow.

[Beneš] made the interesting observation, which he asked me to regard as most confidential, that long ago he had come to the conclusion that he must rely on himself and not the Western Allies, for, he said, in the last resort, these Allies would have; if the necessity arose, to abandon him, i.e. to the tender mercies of the Russians, though he did not say so.\textsuperscript{139}

It could be argued, therefore, that the Czechoslovak government in exile was a victim of its own success in regularising its relations with Moscow as this had the effect of identifying the government in exile, at least in eyes of certain Foreign Office officials, too closely with the Soviet Union.

During the first few months of 1945 Beneš prepared for his journey to Moscow, where he arrived on 17 March 1945. His departure not only marked a definitive break in nearly six years of close Anglo-Czechoslovak relations, but ushered in a period of sporadic and often unsatisfactory contacts between the Foreign Office and those Czechoslovak representatives in the liberated territories. This situation lasted for several weeks, culminating in an almost complete cessation of all communications in April 1945, as a result of the Soviet decision not to allow the western diplomatic corps to join Beneš's entourage in the eastern Slovakian town of Košice.

\textsuperscript{139} FO 371 47085 N640/207/12 Nichols to Warner, 18 January 1945, on conversation with Beneš and Masaryk.
Even after Beneš had left London for the last time the Foreign Office continued to receive information about his political activities through its representatives in the Soviet Union, Clark Kerr and Roberts.\textsuperscript{140} The embassy sent a final memorandum to London on Beneš's talks with the Soviet authorities and with the KSČ on 31 March 1945.\textsuperscript{141} The Foreign Office took a particular interest in the political configuration of the new 'National Front' government and its policies, especially the various KSČ members who had been given seats in the Cabinet and Fierlinger's appointment as Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{142} Orme Sargent's reaction to these announcements was unambiguous; 'It looks to me like a capitulation to the Communists whatever Dr Beneš may say...'\textsuperscript{143} It seemed to some in the Foreign Office that their earlier uneasiness over Beneš's closeness to Moscow had been all too justified. These anxieties were reinforced by the Soviet Union's subsequent refusal to allow the despatch of the western diplomatic corps to Slovakia, via Romania. In an attempt to try and expedite a solution to this problem Eden personally approached the Soviet Ambassador in London, Feodor T. Gousev and expressed his irritation and displeasure at this development.\textsuperscript{144} Gousev explained that the Soviet High Command had now revised its position because of a lack of suitable accommodation and because of continuing military operations in the region. As a result the anticipated departure of the British diplomatic mission was postponed indefinitely.\textsuperscript{145}

\textsuperscript{140} FO 371 47085 N3308/207/12 Clark Kerr, Moscow, to Foreign Office, 26 March 1945 on his meeting with Beneš.
\textsuperscript{141} FO 371 47085 N3477/207/12 Telegram from Moscow Embassy to Foreign Office, 31 March 1945.
\textsuperscript{143} FO 371 47085 N3477/207/12 Sargent minute, 2 April 1945.
\textsuperscript{144} FO 371 47149 N 3411/3411/12 Eden to Clark Kerr, 28 March 1945.
\textsuperscript{145} FO 371 47149 N3454/3411/12 Nichols to Warner, 29 March 1945.
The real reasons behind this Soviet decision are difficult to ascertain, Košice was indeed a small provincial town and the proposed diplomatic missions consisted of more than 200 people; Czechoslovak, British, American, French, Belgian and Dutch representatives. It was entirely possible, therefore, that this was more personnel than could be accommodated, especially since the transition to civilian administration was not yet complete. On the other hand this development aroused Anglo-American suspicions and fostered the perception that this was really a Soviet ploy to isolate and influence the Czechoslovak leadership. The inherent difficulties in reaching any definitive conclusion over this issue were outlined by an official in the Northern Department on 31 March.

It is difficult to decide how for the Soviet Government's actions are dictated by the purely practical considerations which they allege as pretexts, and how far they may have more sinister motives in mind. Conditions in Eastern Slovakia are certainly at the best of times extremely primitive...On the other hand the episode does not leave a good impression and it will certainly be difficult to persuade public and parliamentary opinion that the Russians are not deliberately trying to place a ring-fence round Czechoslovakia in the same manner as they have so far succeeded in doing in Poland.

146 FO 371 47149 N3454/3411/12 Nichols to Warner, 29 March 1945 & N 3411/3411/12 Sargent minute, 2 April 1945.
147 Erickson The Road to Berlin, pp515-517 & 548-549.
148 FO 371 47121 N3797/650/12 Foreign Office telegram to Moscow and for War Cabinet distribution, 13 April 1945.
The problems in delineating Soviet motives were heightened by the usual lack of transparency in Soviet decision making and the lack of radio communications with the Czechoslovak government in Slovakia. Given the dearth of sufficient information, and in the light of Soviet actions in Poland, Bulgaria and Romania, both Britain and the United States had to guess at Soviet motives and began to suspect the worst. These concerns led to a temporary reversal of Britain’s increasingly ambiguous attitude towards Czechoslovakia since December 1943 and a belated and largely ineffectual attempt to exert some measure of western influence in the region.

Initially, Sargent, Cadogan and Eden decided to take a ‘wait and see’ approach over the despatch of the diplomatic corps, which was by now the standard British response to any new development in Czechoslovak affairs. This was based upon the expectation that the Czechoslovak government itself would use its own contacts with the Soviets to find a solution. But this position was soon revised as a result of another telegram from Moscow. According to Clark Kerr the United States embassy had been given instructions by the State Department to insist that its mission be allowed to proceed immediately to Slovakia. This information sparked a flurry of activity within the Foreign Office and illustrated that both Britain and the United States were now sufficiently concerned by this issue to consider taking joint action to resolve it. This was not least because they both feared that Czechoslovakia might soon suffer the same fate as

149 FO 371 47149 N 34111/3411/12 Allen minute, 31 March 1945.
150 Kitchen, British Policy towards the Soviet Union, pp252-256.
151 FO 371 47149 N 34111/3411/12 Sargent minute, 2 April 1945, Cadogan minutes, 4 April 1945 and Eden minutes, 8 April 1945.
In the event little was achieved and Nichols only managed to reach Prague on 13 May 1945, several days after the end of the war.153

Roberts highlighted these concerns in a memorandum from Moscow on the state of Czechoslovak-Soviet relations on 16 April 1945. It contained references to Masaryk’s and Edward Táborský’s fears that the Soviets might still reject Beneš’s leadership and dismember Czechoslovakia.154 Consequently, by the middle of April, the British authorities had become convinced that the only solution to Czechoslovakia’s current situation (and the lack of contacts with its government) was for western forces to push as deeply into the country as possible and ideally to liberate Prague itself.155 As Churchill himself noted, if the United States liberated the capital then the question of the Soviets’ refusal to allow the diplomatic missions to proceed would then be solved. This was an important consideration as nobody in the west had yet managed to contact Beneš.156 These concerns were further heightened when Eden and Cadogan met a depressed and worried Masaryk at the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco at the end of April.157

The idea that the United States should be encouraged to liberate Prague was soon accepted by the Foreign Office and Churchill took a personal interest in these matters, intervening on several occasions.158 But this plan also failed, largely as a result of

152 FO 371 47121 N3797/650/12 Clark Kerr to Foreign Office, 8 April 1945, & Foreign Office telegram to Moscow and for War Cabinet distribution, 13 April 1945.
153 FO 371 47122 N6308/650/12 Foreign Office minute, 13 May 1945.
154 FO 371 47076 N4886/27/12 Roberts memorandum, Moscow to Northern Department, 16 April 1945.
155 This suggestion was first raised by Sargent on 8 April 1945 and was soon taken up by Churchill. See FO 371 47121 N3797/650/12 Sargent minute, 8 April 1945.
156 FO 371 47121 N4171/650/12 Churchill minute, 16 April 1945, & Clark Kerr to Foreign Office, 16 April 1945.
157 FO 371 47086 N4766/207/12 from Eden, San Francisco, to Prime Minister, 18 April 1945 & Dilks (ed), The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, pp734-735.
158 FO 371 47121 N3797/650/12 Prime Minister’s personal minute, 14 April 1945 & FO 371 47086 N4701/207/12 Foreign Office to SHAEF forward HQ, 2 May 1945.
General Dwight D. Eisenhower's disinclination to pursue political objectives in Central Europe and it was the Red Army that finally liberated Prague on 9 May. It is important to recognise that although British support for this objective seemed to parallel Beneš's own policy of locating Czechoslovakia between east and west, Churchill's interest in this matter was not solely designed to liberate Prague for its own sake. Rather he was now more concerned with limiting Soviet domination in Central Europe and Prague was the last place where this could still be achieved. As Soviet power and influence in Europe grew and the threat from Nazi Germany subsided so Churchill had become increasingly concerned about Stalin's intentions in Europe and had begun to revert to his traditional position of hostility toward the Soviet regime.¹⁵⁹

It was the Prime Minister's own developing suspicions of Soviet ambitions that now shaped British policy and culminated in his 'Iron Curtain' telegram to President Harry S. Truman on 12 May 1945, later repeated and expanded in his speech in Fulton, Missouri in 1946.¹⁶⁰ As Churchill later commented on this period,

The whole relationship of Russia with the Western Allies was in flux.
Every question about the future was unsettled between us. The agreements and understandings of Yalta...had already been brushed aside by the triumphant Kremlin. New perils, perhaps as terrible as those we had surmounted, loomed and glared upon the torn and harassed world.¹⁶¹

It was in this context that the decision to try and occupy Prague was made, but this sudden interest in the fate of Czechoslovakia was too little and came too late.

The unity of the Grand Alliance, which Beneš viewed as a necessary precondition for the success of his foreign policy, was already being tested to the limit by May 1945 and soon faltered. Moreover, British policy on the liberation of Prague was diametrically opposed to the Soviet Union’s security concerns in the region, and was one that would increase, rather than reduce, tensions between the eastern and western allies. Therefore the unsuccessful British decision to urge Eisenhower on to Prague has to be viewed in the light of worsening Anglo-American relations with Moscow, rather than as a fundamental reappraisal of the prevailing course of British policy toward Czechoslovakia.

The history of Anglo-Czechoslovak-Soviet relations from 1941 to 1945 would seem to indicate that the Soviet Union’s entry into the war did indeed have an ancillary, and detrimental, effect on bilateral relations between Britain and the Czechoslovak government in exile. It was the Soviet Union’s offer of full recognition of Beneš’s government, and his political agenda, in July 1941 that encouraged the Foreign Office to follow suit albeit with reservations and against the Central Department’s advice. After this development, there was a lingering suspicion amongst many British officials that the Czechoslovak government’s friendly relations with Moscow had only been achieved at the Polish government’s expense and had ultimately destroyed plans for post-war federation. It was these concerns that repeatedly influenced British decision-making on

this question and which were the principle reasons behind the Foreign Office’s reluctance to allow Beneš to conclude a treaty with the Soviet Union in 1943. The long drawn out and acrimonious negations that followed further reduced the warmth of Anglo-Czechoslovak relations (which had never been particularly close) and resulted in a marked decline in bilateral contacts from 1944 onwards. From the Czechoslovak perspective Britain’s reserved position on a number of critical issues meant they were impelled to look elsewhere to secure their objectives and Moscow proved to be far more accommodating. By the time the Red Army had begun to liberate and occupy the territory of the former Czechoslovakia Britain was increasingly unable to provide the kind of political and military support Beneš earnestly desired to counterbalance Soviet influences. Moreover, the developing situation in Ruthenia and Slovakia meant that Beneš had little choice by early 1945 but to return home via Moscow. Once he had left London what little influence the Foreign Office had over the direction of his policies dissipated, and were further curtailed by the inability of the western diplomatic corps to join him in Košice. Admittedly, the last minute efforts made by Churchill and senior officials in the Foreign Office to encourage the United States to liberate Prague indicated a continued concern for Czechoslovakia’s position, but these were hindered by the complexities of coalition warfare and came far too late. Consequently, Britain’s ambiguous policies towards Moscow and the tensions within the Grand Alliance meant that Beneš’s ambition to forge a foreign policy between east and west was at best an unlikely proposition.
Chapter Five

Anglo-Czechoslovak-Polish relations 1939-1945

The Czechoslovak political exiles based in Britain during the Second World War were not the only foreign representatives reliant upon Britain’s political and military support, even though they were one of the first groups to seek refuge in the British Isles from the turmoil of continental Europe. By the end of 1940 they had been joined by exiles from Belgium, France, Norway and Poland and other European nations now occupied by Nazi Germany.\(^1\) This exiled community of politicians, soldiers, airmen, sailors and refugees contained representatives from all points on the political spectrum. They had brought with them many of their own political and national disputes and sought to influence the British foreign policy forming elite in order to try and secure British endorsement of their respective political agendas.\(^2\) This influx of Europeans presented the British authorities with a unique set of difficulties as they were obliged to navigate a difficult path between these objectives, their own national interests, and, after 1941, the interests of the Soviet Union and the United States.\(^3\) The constraints of coalition warfare meant that British decision making was often limited by the need to refer questions of policy, not least those related to the post-war settlements, to the other members of the Grand Alliance. As a result the treatment these exiles received, both during and after the war, varied a great deal.

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For some, such as the Belgians, Norwegians and Poles, British political recognition was swift, while for others, such as the fighting French led by General Charles de Gaulle and the Czechoslovaks, this process was a more convoluted affair beset with delays and reservations. This is not to suggest, however, that British recognition of the legitimacy of these governments also sanctioned their political agendas, it did not, and from 1940 onwards the British authorities declined to commit themselves to the restoration of any frontiers in Europe until the war had been won. While this policy had little effect on the future frontiers of Norway or Belgium it had completely different implications for Poland and Czechoslovakia. This was especially problematic as the Czechoslovaks wanted to restore their frontiers as they stood before September 1938, the Poles wanted to restore their frontiers as of August 1939 and from December 1941 onwards the Soviet authorities demanded international acceptance of their borders as they had existed in May 1941. Quite clearly, these objectives were mutually exclusive and the Czechoslovaks and Poles were soon at odds over the question of the disputed territory of Těšín (Cieszyn in Polish, Teschen in German).

Although both governments spent much time between 1940 and 1943 preparing to enter into a joint federation after the war, these British sponsored proposals were fatally undermined by their increasingly divergent attitudes towards the Soviet Union. Beneš and his colleagues also had to deal with the fact that the British authorities consistently viewed their interests as subservient to those of Poland. Yet, for all these difficulties it

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4 FO 371 24289 C11069/2/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum, 14 October 1940.
was the Czechoslovak exiles who managed to return home, with much of that state's territory intact, and remain in power- albeit with concessions to the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ); While the Poles fell foul of the power dynamics within the Grand Alliance. As a result Poland's frontiers were heavily revised, with the west's tacit agreement at the Yalta Conference in February 1945 and the exiles in London were excluded from power in favour of the 'Lublin Committee.' The purpose of this chapter is therefore to examine how Anglo-Czechoslovak relations were influenced by British policy towards the joint Czechoslovak-Polish federation project and to consider what effect the Soviet Union's entrance into the war subsequently had upon these relations.

These tripartite relations did not suddenly spring into existence in September 1939, however, they had already been shaped by earlier contacts and three key influences need to be considered. The first was the largely acrimonious nature of Czechoslovak-Polish relations during the inter-war period, especially over the disputed region of Tesín. Second, the differences in British decision making toward these Central Europe states prior to the outbreak of war, especially with regard to the German invasion of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939 and the subsequent Anglo-French guarantee of Poland's independence (though not her frontiers). Finally, the way in which the British foreign policy-forming elite regarded the stability of inter-war Central Europe, as crafted at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, and how this perception resulted in support for the federalisation of Central Europe. These factors would have a significant effect on how

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8 See FO 371 24289 C10776/2/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum on talks with Beneš on federations, 7 October 1940 & FO 371 26376 C528/6/12 Sir H. Kennard letter on federations, 15 January 1941.
the two exiled governments interacted with each other and how, in turn, the British authorities perceived their relative importance and dealt with them.

Czechoslovak-Polish relations immediately prior to the Paris Peace Conference and during the inter-war period were at best equivocal and at worst openly hostile. Disputes over borders and the direction and style of their foreign policies - as regards the League of Nations, Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia’s occupation of Těšín in 1920 and Poland’s re-occupation of the region in October 1938 - had soured relations between the two countries. Furthermore, the actions of the Polish government after the Munich Agreement and the invasion of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 had done little to improve relations. The Polish authorities had soon recognised the Slovak State and, on 1 July 1939, sequestrated the property of the Czechoslovak legation in Warsaw, even though the legations in Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States had remained open as a sign of these governments’ disapproval of Germany’s actions. Even so Beneš contacted the former Czechoslovak ambassador in Poland, Juraj Slávik, on 2 August, in an attempt to try and re-open communications with the Polish authorities. In his message Beneš explained that the ‘action abroad’ was dedicated to the liberation of Czechoslovakia, was not hostile to Poland, did not want to revive the complex frontier question and requested that Poland allow the Czechs and Slovaks to decide their future relationship on their own. But this attempt to restore relations had little effect and the Polish government maintained its reserved position towards Beneš and his colleagues in London and Paris. This was because many Poles, General Władysław Sikorski in

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particular, took a critical view of Beneš and preferred to deal with other Czechoslovak exiles who they felt had less tarnished reputations, such as the former Prime Minister Milan Hodža.¹¹ This was largely the result of the acrimonious nature of Czechoslovak-Polish relations during the preceding two decades. Senior Polish officials continued with this policy following the establishment of a Polish government in exile in France. They did not recognise the Czechoslovak National Committee, formed in late 1939, and only appointed a Chargé d’Affairs to the Provisional Government in exile on 27 November 1940. This level of recognition was again belatedly followed on 24 October 1941 by the appointment of an official envoy to the government in exile, Adam Tarnowski, three months after British recognition had been granted.¹²

These tensions were exacerbated by Sikorski’s disinclination to compromise over frontiers, a position dictated by the internal dynamics of his own government and the views of the population at home.¹³ Beneš too was determined to restore Czechoslovakia’s frontiers as they had stood before September 1938, including Těšín, and this issue became increasingly intractable.¹⁴ These problems were heightened by the Foreign Office’s refusal to consider urging Poland to return the region in 1939 and their later disinclination to commit themselves to any frontiers in Europe, whether they be Polish or Czechoslovak.¹⁵ While this was a sensible position for the British authorities to take, it was one that did little to help foster conciliation between the two parties. Nevertheless,

¹¹ FO 371 26410 C11872/7140/12 Roberts minute on talks with Masaryk, 11 September 1941
¹² Šťoviček & Valenta (eds), Československo-polská jednání o konfederaci, p37.
¹⁴ FO 371 20828 C11381/151/12 Nichols to Strang, 17 November 1942.
¹⁵ FO 371 22899 C13304/7/12, Troutbeck’s memorandum ‘Our Attitude towards the Czechs and Slovaks in Time of War,’ 1 September 1939 & House of Commons Debates, 5th Series, Vol. 365, Col. 40, 5 September 1940 & Vol. 373, Col.1379, 30 July 1941.
Beneš made repeated attempts to try and resolve this impasse; during talks in 1941 he suggested that Těšín should become the capital of any future federation, although the Poles did not accept this proposal.\textsuperscript{16} He tried again during a dinner with Sikorski and Edward Raczyński, the Polish foreign minister, on 23 November 1942. During this meeting Beneš suggested that in order to settle this issue both he and Sikorski should stand in Trafalgar Square and publicly admit that mistakes had been made in the past and that they now wanted to work together, but this dramatic proposal also failed to expedite a solution.\textsuperscript{17} In fact, this question was never adequately resolved during the war and it was a measure of its intractability that the Czechoslovak and Polish governments were still locked in disagreement over the region in 1946, when the Soviet Union had to intervene to prevent further conflict.\textsuperscript{18}

Another issue that caused complications for both parties was the Polish government’s financial and political support for a number of Czechoslovak émigrés opposed to Beneš’s leadership.\textsuperscript{19} This support had begun when the Polish authorities had encouraged the formation of a Czechoslovak legion in Poland against Beneš’s strict instructions, led by General Lev Prchala.\textsuperscript{20} Prchala’s activities preceded the formation of an anti-Beneš lobby among some of the Czechoslovak exiles in London that later crystallised around Hodža, the Czecho-Slovak National Council and the Czech National Union.\textsuperscript{21} Indeed, when Slávík passed Beneš’s message to the Polish government in

\textsuperscript{16} FO 371 26376 C6578/6/12 Bruce Lockhart résumé of conversions between Beneš and Sikorski on 5 June, 16 June 1941.

\textsuperscript{17} FO 371 30828 C12165/151/12 Nichols to Roberts, 3 December 1942.


\textsuperscript{19} FO 371 24288 C6035/2/12 Roberts minute, 24 April 1940.

\textsuperscript{20} Šťovíček & Valenta (eds), \textit{Československo-polská jednání o konfederaci}, pp27-28.

\textsuperscript{21} FO 371 38929 C7324/224/12 Memorandum from G. Lias, 29 May 1944.
August 1939 he had described himself as the 'only political representative of our action in Poland,' a thinly veiled reference to this situation.\(^{22}\) These tensions persisted after Prchala reached London and culminated in a successful libel action in the British courts against Beneš’s nephew, Bohuš, over a critical article he had written in the weekly journal the *Czechoslovak*. By way of a response Hubert Ripka, State Minister of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, sent a strongly worded memorandum to the Foreign Office that accused Prchala of having misappropriated Czechoslovak State funds in Poland in 1939.\(^{23}\) But the Central Department tried to play down these rivalries as far as possible. These organisations and individuals were opposed to Beneš for a variety of reasons, political, national and historical (some rejected the idea of re-establishing Czechoslovakia), but all were primarily concerned by what they regarded as the exiled government’s increasingly pro-Soviet policies after 1941. As a result they found a natural ally in the Polish government in exile. Although it is necessary to recognise that while the activities of these émigrés consumed a disproportionate amount of attention, neither the Foreign Office nor Beneš ever regarded them as a genuine threat to his leadership.

The British authorities were well aware of these activities and an investigation by the British security service (MI5) in August 1940 noted the close co-operation between these disaffected groups and the Poles.\(^{24}\) A later investigation by MI5 and the Special Branch in 1944 revealed that another of Beneš’s opponents, Petr Pridavok, had been receiving direct financial support from the Polish government in exile and had contacted

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\(^{22}\) Šťovíček & Valenta (eds), *Československo-polská jednání a konfederaci*, pp28-30.
\(^{23}\) FO 371 34335 CI4500/206/12 Nichols to Roberts, 9 December 1943.
\(^{24}\) FO 371 24292 C8774/8067/12 D.G. White, MI5, letter to Central Department, 10 August 1940 see also E. Beneš, *Paměti. Od Mníchova k nové válce a k novému vítězství*, Prague, 1947, pp181-182.
representatives of the Slovak government (at that time an enemy state) in the Vatican.25 The Central Department, however, decided that any prosecution under defence regulations would be counter-productive.26 Although these groups never presented a realistic threat, the financial and political support they received from the Poles further exacerbated relations between the two governments.27

Although Beneš and Sikorski met several times during the war their relationship was never entirely free of suspicion, which made planning a federation problematic. The Foreign Office was well acquainted with these difficulties and repeatedly sought to facilitate co-operation between the two allies by instigating communications through the British representatives to each government. These were Robert Bruce Lockhart and Philip Nichols on behalf of the Czechoslovaks and Sir Howard Kennard, Frank Savery and later Sir Owen O’Malley on behalf of the Poles. Though these attempts were occasionally fruitful any decisive reconciliation was always highly unlikely. The reason for this was first highlighted in August 1940, at an early stage in bi-lateral talks, by the British military liaison officer to the Poles Brigadier Charles Bridge who reported to the Central Department that,

General Sikorski appeared to be sympathetically disposed towards the Czechs. He said, however, that they had often misunderstood the Polish point of view. He thinks that Mr Beneš was wrong to exclude Mr Hodža

25 FO 371 38929 C4833/224/12 M15 to E.D. Allen, 11 April 1944 & FO 371 38930 C10923/224/12 M15 to Allen at Central Department, 16 September 1944, on activities of Petr Príšavok, including copy of Special Branch Report of 31 August 1944.
26 FO 371 38930 C11099/224/12 Roberts minute, 2 September 1944.
from his Cabinet and expressed the opinion that if the Czechs remained strictly outside the Russian orbit, they and the Poles could work harmoniously together for the reconstruction of Europe.28

This quote is particularly revealing because it illustrated that as early as 1940 Sikorski was already concerned by Czechoslovakia’s close links to the Soviet Union. (He was well aware of the Czechoslovak-Soviet mutual assistance treaty of May 1935, an agreement that had been signed after Poland’s treaty with Nazi Germany in January 1934.) This was a concern that, for all the Foreign Offices’ attempts to encourage a genuine rapprochement between the two parties resulted in a fundamental breakdown in relations by the end of 1943.29

While there were clear political benefits for Beneš and his government in cooperating with the Poles between 1939 and 1941, the Soviet Union’s entrance into the war changed this position. As the war progressed Beneš and his colleagues were faced by a stark choice; they could maintain relations with the Polish government in exile and support their increasingly anti-Soviet position, or conversely, attempt to establish friendly and productive relations with Moscow. The two positions were incompatible and although Beneš tried to steer a middle course between them by allowing for Polish accession to the Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty of December 1943 such agreements were deemed unacceptable by the Polish exiles after the revelations of the Katyn massacre and

28 FO 371 24292 C8920/8531/12 Brigadier Charles Bridge to Frank Savery, 20 August 1940.
29 FO 371 24292 C9969/8531/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum on talks between Beneš and Sikorski, 12 September 1940.
Sikorski’s death. As a result, Beneš and his government’s policy of regularising relations with Stalin’s regime created further enmity amongst the Poles and effectively curtailed any hope of successful co-operation while in exile.

An equally important influence on Czechoslovak-Polish relations in exile was the attitude taken by the British authorities toward each country. A casual examination of British foreign policy prior to the outbreak of the war would seem to suggest that there were clear differences. When Germany invaded Czechoslovakia on 15 March 1939 the British response was limited, yet when Poland was invaded five months later, Britain declared war. However, such a simplistic analysis does not explain the far more ambiguous reasons behind the Anglo-French guarantee of Poland’s independence on 31 March 1939 that was eventually finalised on 25 August. In fact, the British authorities were no more willing to preserve Poland’s territorial integrity than they had been to preserve Czechoslovakia’s, especially since many British officials regarded both countries as artificial creations of the Paris Peace Conference that contained unwieldy ethnic populations with genuine grievances. The guarantee was actually offered because of the course of events in Europe after March 1939 and the need to make a more coherent stance against German aggression. Therefore Britain did not go to war because of a greater sense of obligation towards Poland than Czechoslovakia, but rather in order to

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send an unequivocal message to Berlin and, when this was ignored, the British authorities found themselves committed to respond.

Yet the fact that Poland had, unlike Czechoslovakia, actively resisted the German invasion had several important consequences. First, that a number of well placed British military officials, including Colin Gubbins, Peter Wilkinson and Harold Perkins, were in Poland as part of General Sir Adrian de Wiart’s military mission and formed close links with the Polish military and intelligence organisations which were later evacuated to Britain. These contacts proved important because all three men would be leading members of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in which the Poles held a prominent position. When these contacts were combined with the Poles’ well-regarded intelligence service and their large and effective resistance organisations they often received preferential access to SOE’s limited resources in comparison to the Czechoslovaks, differences that were graphically illustrated during the uprisings in Warsaw and Slovakia in the late summer of 1944. Quite simply, far more of SOE’s time and energy was spent dealing with the ‘over-riding claims of the Poles’ than with the Czechoslovaks.

A second consequence was the fact that a large number of Polish soldiers, airmen and politicians had managed to escape to the west, at first based in France and then in Britain. The sheer number of Polish military personnel involved and their willingness to fight, some 20,000 soldiers, 4000 sailors and 14,400 pilots in all, meant that careful

consideration had to be given to Polish matters by the Foreign Office and War Cabinet.\textsuperscript{37} Certain officials also felt that Britain had a moral obligation towards the Poles and this notion informed British decision-making.\textsuperscript{38} It was symptomatic of the British position that no such debt was felt to be owed to the Czechoslovaks (although it was to the Sudeten German exiles in London) and many British officials shared Polish reservations over Beneš’s increasingly friendly contacts with Moscow.\textsuperscript{39} This did not mean, however, that the Poles received preferential treatment from the British authorities or received additional support for their political objectives.

As these questions were also part of the Central Department’s remit this meant that its officials spent far more time dealing with Polish issues than with Czechoslovak ones.\textsuperscript{40} Indeed, the proportion of the department’s time spent on Polish issues further increased after June 1941 as they attempted to engineer a reconciliation between the Poles and the Soviets. Yet for all their efforts these attempts proved futile due to a combination of Polish intransigence, a lack of any coherent British policies toward Central Europe, and Moscow’s increasing influence (and intransigence) after 1943.\textsuperscript{41} Moreover, as Polish-Soviet relations continued to deteriorate, so British concerns over Poland’s future began to have an effect on policy towards Beneš and his government. This was most apparent during the dispute over Beneš’s decision to sign a treaty with the

\textsuperscript{38} FO 371 30828 C10670/151/12 Roberts minute, 17 October 1941.
\textsuperscript{39} FO 371 30835 C6867/326/12 Roberts to Nichols, 17 July 1942, HO 294/39 on origins of British Committee for Refugees from Czecho-Slovakia, October 1938 to June 1939 & HO 294/44 establishment of Czech Refugee Trust Fund, June 1939.
\textsuperscript{40} Roberts, \textit{Dealing with Dictators}, pp 55-56.
Soviet Union in the summer of 1943, when the Foreign Office’s objections were based on the repercussions they felt such a development would have on the Poles. When taken together these influences meant that Polish issues were consistently seen as a greater priority by the Foreign Office. While this position largely reflected the Poles’ greater contribution to the war effort, it also had a commensurate effect on British policy towards Beneš and his government, especially in relation to the Soviets.

Yet it was in reference to the negotiations over the proposed formation of a Czechoslovak-Polish federation after the war that British attitudes had the greatest effect on these bi-lateral relations. This was not least because British support for federations in central and south-eastern Europe proved to be the only coherent long-term policy that emerged from the Foreign Office during the first three years of the war. Moreover, it was a policy that ultimately failed and that was then superseded by plans for large-scale transfers of populations. Nevertheless, the Foreign Office’s support for federations stemmed from one basic perception; that the patchwork of nation states created in 1919 was inherently unstable and some alternative from of international system was needed to increase security in the region. As Bruce Lockhart noted on 7 October 1940,

Taken at its lowest valuation, Polish-Czechoslovak federation would seem to be a desirable end, for it provides the only practical means at present available to us of filling the dangerous vacuum created by the collapse of

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42 FO 371 34338 C6407/525/12 Roberts minute, 9 June 1943, Sargent, 9 June 1943, Cadogan, 10 June 1943 and Eden, 12 June 1943.
the small states of Central Europe. If it can be achieved, it will set an admirable example to the Balkan States.44

This was a view that was shared by many in the Foreign Office and the Cabinet and resulted in swift and wholehearted British support for these plans when they were first announced in late 1940.

However, it should be recognised that the idea of federalising parts of Europe was not a new one. The Poles in particular looked back to the Medieval Polish-Lithuanian federation as a viable model for the future organisation of Europe and Józef Pilsudski had already attempted to revive these ideas in 1918.45 Indeed, throughout negotiations on this question it was the Poles who took the lead in driving the talks forward and were consistently more enthusiastic about this project than were the Czechoslovaks, who preferred a less comprehensive form of co-operation namely the creation of a confederation. In addition, federalised reforms had long been proposed within the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires and both Beneš and Tomáš G. Masaryk had briefly flirted with these solutions before the First World War.46 Furthermore, the British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 had unsuccessfully argued for the federalisation of Central Europe at this time.47 Many other people outside government circles also saw federalism as a viable solution to Europe’s troubles; a Federal Union

44 FO 371 24289 C10776/2/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum, 7 October 1940.
movement had been established in London in 1938 and the British Labour Party’s war aims, announced on 8 November 1939, proclaimed that ‘Europe must federate or perish.’ Even Beneš had expressed approval for these ideas in his lectures in Chicago during early 1939. These pronouncements were complimented by a number of popular books on this subject such as W.B. Curry’s *The Case for Federal Union*, a collection of essays edited by M. Channing-Pearce and Hodža’s well known *Federation in Central Europe*. In fact, Hodža became a leading proponent of federal reforms, although his contribution to this issue was always commensurately lower than that of the Poles. But perhaps the most startling example of the wide scale prevalence of such opinions was the last minute proposals for a union of Britain and France announced on 16 June 1940, even though this plan only enjoyed limited support within the War Cabinet.

Taken together these factors meant that the Foreign Office was predisposed to support such an option, not least because it appeared to be a reasonable policy, avoided any specific territorial commitments to either Poland or Czechoslovakia, and promoted dialogue between the two governments. On 8 March 1940 Gladwyn Jebb, Private Secretary to the Permanent Under-Secretaries of State, noted,

To my own mind, the federal ideas of Dr Hodža, and his proposed economic unions with Austria and Poland, are at least as worthy of

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investigation as the plans of Dr Beneš to restore the Czechoslovak state in all its original untenability.\footnote{FO 371 24287 C2455/2/12 Jebb minute, 8 March 1940.}

More importantly the Central department also felt that such talks might help to improve Polish relations with the Soviet Union, as a result of Beneš and his government’s long standing contacts with Moscow.\footnote{FO 371 24292 C1327/8531/12 Roberts minute, 16 December 1940.} Although the Foreign Office would never be directly involved in these bilateral negotiations they consistently supported and promoted these plans. Indeed, the Foreign Office became so enthusiastic about the potential of post-war federations that they brokered a similar agreement between the exiled Greek and Yugoslav governments in London, which was signed in the Foreign Office on 15 January 1942.\footnote{FO 371 30827 C897/151/12 Roberts minute, 22 January 1942.}

Preliminary discussions between Beneš and Sikorski had actually begun in Paris in October 1939 and the two leaders met again in London on 18 and 19 November when they agreed on a framework for mutual co-operation while in exile.\footnote{FO 371 22900 C18919/7/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum on Czechoslovak-Polish relations, 20 November 1939 & Šťovíček & Valenta (eds), Československo-polští jednání o konfederaci, p 33-34.} However, the Czechoslovaks’ inferior political position (the Poles were already a fully recognised government in exile) meant that Beneš was reluctant to enter into further talks until a greater level of parity had been achieved.\footnote{Šťovíček & Valenta (eds), Československo-polští jednání o konfederaci, p37.} Beneš wanted to secure further support for his political objectives and increase the level of recognition the ‘action abroad’ had so far received. These two aspects were of course closely linked, because higher levels of recognition would increase Beneš’s ability to pursue his political goals. In addition, he
had no intention of entering into such talks until he had been able to ascertain Anglo-French attitudes toward this question, especially as his political position still depended on their tacit support. In talks with his colleague Hubert Ripka on 12 February 1940 Beneš noted,

I favour a certain type of federalisation. For tactical reasons let us not say what we want and whom we would like to have as our federalisation partner. Let us wait till the French and English tell us what they want and how far they are ready to go...It would be a certain kind of *Staatenbund*, not *Bundesstaat* [confederation not federation].

Quite simply, Beneš had no intention of entering into negotiations with the Poles from a subservient political position or of jeopardising his long-term political objectives and until he knew that the relevant authorities in London and Paris were amenable to such a plan. Beneš reiterated this approach at a speech at the Royal Institute of International Affairs on 8 March 1940 when he publicly acknowledged that plans for a federation were now under consideration, although talks did not begin in earnest until a Czechoslovak provisional government in exile had been recognised in June.

Given this situation it is important to note that the concept of a Polish-Czechoslovak federation that emerged during this period contained the seeds of its own failure. This was because, from the outset, the Polish exiles visualised a federal union that

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56 Cited in Štoviček & Valenta (eds), *Československo-polská jednání o konfederaci*, p39 fn.
57 FO 371 30828 C10671/151/12 Roberts minute, 25 January 1943.
was explicitly designed to be a *cordon sanitaire* against both German and Soviet expansionism.\(^{59}\) While Beneš accepted this concept in 1940, and given his inferior political position he had little choice, it was one that would need to be radically reconsidered once the Soviet Union entered the war.\(^{60}\) Nevertheless, a series of Czechoslovak-Polish meetings ensued in late August and September to discuss arrangements and the question of relations with the Soviet Union was broached, but no definitive agreement was reached.\(^{61}\) These discussions culminated in a joint declaration announced on 11 November 1940, drafted in French (the lingua franca for these talks) and published in English. It declared that the two countries would enter into a political and economic bloc, with two parliaments, two central banks and eventually one currency. In addition, foreign policy and military affairs would be jointly co-ordinated.\(^{62}\) A permanent Czechoslovak-Polish Committee of co-operation had already been established and convened for the first time in January 1941.\(^{63}\)

The Central Department welcomed these proposals and promised to give them 'maximum publicity,' which was duly provided when Winston Churchill approved of these developments in the House of Commons on 26 November 1940.\(^{64}\) The department's officials noted, however, that the Poles seemed far keener to construct a federation than the Czechoslovaks and that the question of relations with the Soviet


\(^{60}\) FO 371 24289 C10776/2/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum, 7 October 1940.

\(^{61}\) FO 371 24292 C9401/8531/12 Bruce Lockhart to Halifax, 30 August 1940 & C9969/8531/12 Bruce Lockhart to Halifax, 12 September 1940.


\(^{63}\) FO 371 24292 C1120/8531/12 Bruce Lockhart to Halifax, 16 October 1940.

\(^{64}\) FO 371 24289 C 10776/2/12 minutes by Roberts, Makins, Strang and Cadogan 14 to 18 October 1940, FO 371 24292 C11838/8531/12 Roberts minute, 6 November 1940 & HC Deb., 5th Series, Vol. 367, Col. 73, 26 November 1940.
Union had yet to be resolved. It appeared by the end of 1940, therefore, that these federative plans had got off to a successful start and might prove to be a useful model for the re-organisation of other parts of Europe after the war. These negotiations continued during the first six months of 1941, with the Foreign Office's continued support. A variety of joint Czechoslovak-Polish committees and sub-committees were formed, which respectively dealt with juridical, political, economic and military issues, and apart from some understandable disputes over frontiers these negotiations progressed relatively smoothly.

At the beginning of 1941 Bruce Lockhart submitted a lengthy memorandum in which he urged the Foreign Office to make federations a 'definite British war aim' and asked that the 'whole support of our diplomatic effort [be] given resolutely to its achievement.' This was an eminently sensible proposition given the lack of coherent British policies on the region, but the inter-departmental minutes that followed showed that there were some serious difficulties to be surmounted. G. Warr, an official in the Northern Department, expressed concern over the 'Russian problem' and warned that it might hinder collaboration between the two exiled governments. Yet in response Roberts insisted that,

...the idea of Polish-Czechoslovak co-operation is clearly an excellent one, both as regards the prosecution of the war, and as regards the

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65 FO 371 24292 C13276/8531/12 Roberts minute, 16 December 1940 & FO 371 26376 C5549/6/12 F. Savery memorandum on talks with August Zaleski, the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, 28 May 1941.
66 FO 371 26388 C2249/216/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum, 4 March 1941 & Štěoviček & Valenta (eds), Československo-polská jednání o konfederaci, pp75-115.
67 FO 371 26376 C6/6/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum, 1 January 1941.
68 FO 371 26376 C6/6/12 G. Warr, 9 January 1941.
constitution of a possible bulwark against further imperialist designs from both Germany and the USSR in post-war Europe.\(^6^9\)

While this approach might have desirable in early 1941, and was a view later shared by the United States, it was not an idea that the Soviets were able to accept.\(^7^0\) Consequently, the failure to secure Soviet acceptance for these ideas meant that these plans were sacrificed on the altar of allied unity, although it was to be the Czechoslovaks and not the Poles, Soviets or the British who were later blamed for this failure.\(^7^1\)

Another note of caution was voiced by Sir H. Kennard, the British Ambassador to the Polish Government in Exile, who warned that previous attempts to impose systems on Europe, as with the settlements of 1919, had proved less than successful and that federations might not fare any better. He also raised the question of Poland’s eastern borders with the Soviet Union, adding that ‘in the eyes of the Poles the influence of Moscow has always been dangerously strong in Prague.’\(^7^2\) Beneš too was beginning to be concerned by Sikorski’s attitude towards Moscow and these suspicions intensified after his talks with the Polish leader during a visit to view Czechoslovak troops in Leamington Spa on 26 January 1941.\(^7^3\)

These increasingly divergent attitudes towards Stalin’s regime became an even greater problem after the German invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, an event that had three immediate consequences for these federative plans. The first was that the

\(^6^9\) FO 371 26376 C6/6/12 Roberts minute, 10 January 1941.
\(^7^0\) FO 371 30828C10670/151/12 Roberts minute, 17 October 1942.
\(^7^2\) FO 371 26376 C6/6/12 Sir H. Kennard to Central Department, 15 January 1941.
British, Polish and Czechoslovak authorities all had to reassess and re-negotiate their relations with Moscow in the light of Soviet accession to allied status. In fact, given Britain’s military position in the summer of 1941 there was little option but to regularise relations in order to co-ordinate the war against Germany and this was something that all three parties clearly understood. This was soon achieved through an Anglo-Soviet agreement signed on 12 July and a Polish-Soviet agreement, brokered by the British authorities, signed on 30 July.\(^74\) However, the inherent difficulties in finalising the latter agreement did result in a definite cooling in Anglo-Polish relations.\(^75\) The Czechoslovaks also regularised their relations with the Soviets when the government in exile was recognised by both Britain and the Soviet Union on 18 July; this was in addition to the re-opening of the Czechoslovak embassy in Moscow and the commencement of bi-lateral talks on military issues.\(^76\) Second, all three parties had now to reconsider the plans for federations that had been so far drawn up and assess how Moscow would react to them.

As Orme Sargent, the Deputy Under Secretary of State, concluded on 21 June,

> The unpalatable truth is that unless the Poles and the Czechs can gain the good will of the Russians, there is very little chance of there being a confederation at all for it is the Russians who will be in the position to torpedo it.\(^77\)

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\(^{77}\) FO 371 30827 C6364/151/12 Sargent minute, 21 June 1942.
This warning proved to be especially prescient in the light of later events. Finally, that the Czechoslovak-Polish bi-lateral talks that had been underway since late 1940 were suspended and did not recommence for several months.

From this point onwards, therefore, the key to the future success or failure of these federative plans lay with the Soviets and the Czechoslovaks soon broached this issue in their talks with them that summer. Although the Soviet authorities were clearly suspicious of the Poles’ motives the Soviet Ambassador, Ivan M. Maisky, raised no objections during his talks with Beneš on 8 July 1941. Nor did the information reaching the Foreign Office suggest that there were any Soviet objections to these plans, at least according to reports from Bruce Lockhart, who noted that the Czechoslovak Ambassador in Moscow, Zdeněk Fierlinger, had spoken to Andrei Y. Vyshinsky about this question. Consequently, as no fundamental problems had been encountered, negotiations recommenced in November after Jan Masaryk announced a joint Czechoslovak-Polish declaration at the Inter-Allied Conference on 24 September. But the two governments’ respective positions had now fundamentally changed. Quite simply, given their the political recognition they had now secured the Czechoslovak exiles had less to gain from entering into a federation than they had in 1940 and the original enthusiasm and momentum behind these plans had been lost.

In addition, the resumption of talks proved to be little more than a brief hiatus before relations between all the interested parties deteriorated once more. These problems

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79 FO 371 26376 C10191/6/12 Bruce Lockhart to Strang, 7 September 1941.
80 FO 371 26376 C12580/6/12 Sir C. Dormer to Eden, 12 November 1941, & C1267/5/12 P. Nichols to Central Department, 12 November 1941 & Šťovíček & Valenta (eds), Československo-polská jednání o konfederaci, pp127-128.
first emerged during Anthony Eden’s visit to Moscow in December 1941; while the Foreign Secretary managed to avoid agreeing to Stalin’s demands on frontiers and war aims he failed to secure Soviet approval for federations.\textsuperscript{81} This proved to be a serious omission because as Moscow’s relations with the Polish government in exile became more strained the Soviets started to view these federative plans as little more than a novel variation on the inter-war \textit{cordon sanitaire} and became more hostile towards them.\textsuperscript{82}

Czechoslovak-Polish talks continued during the first five months of 1942, the various bi-lateral committees began to meet again, a further joint declaration on cooperation was announced on 23 January and was followed soon after by a congratulatory message to both governments from Eden.\textsuperscript{83} This was another indication that the Foreign Office was still firmly committed to supporting federations and it was soon followed by a similar agreement between the Greek and Yugoslavian government in exile, signed on 15 January.\textsuperscript{84} But further problems surfaced on 19 January when Sikorski announced to Eden that he now wanted to include Lithuania in any future federation, that Poland should be re-constructed within her pre-war borders and that he wanted Poland’s Jewish population to be removed to Palestine.\textsuperscript{85} This meeting proved to be the beginning of a determined campaign by the Polish government in exile to disrupt allied relations with


\textsuperscript{82} FO 371 30828C10670/151/12 Bruce Lockhart to Sargent, 12 October 1942 & Ripka’s minutes of his conversation with A. Y. Bogomolov, 27 July 1942 in Šťovíček & Valenta (eds), \textit{Československo-polská jednání o konfederaci}, p238-242.

\textsuperscript{83} F 371 30827 C1286/151/12 Eden to the Czechoslovak and Polish Ministers for Foreign Affairs, 4 February 1942.


\textsuperscript{85} FO 371 31077 C794/19/55, Eden memorandum on talk with Sikorski, 19 January 1942.
the Soviet Union and one that had important repercussions for their relations with both the British and the Czechoslovak governments.86

Moreover by February 1942 Soviet representatives in London had begun to make it very clear to the Czechoslovak exiles that as no agreement had been reached over Poland's eastern frontiers during Sikorski's recent visit to Moscow, they now viewed the federations with open suspicion. This resulted in what Alexander Y. Bogomolov, the Soviet Minister in London, called a 'friendly warning' to Beneš about the inadvisability of entering into any form of anti-Soviet bloc with the Poles, especially one designed to undermine Soviet plans for the Baltic states.87 This placed both the Foreign Office and the Czechoslovak government in exile in a difficult position, not least as Britain was preparing to sign a treaty with Moscow and Beneš's stated policy was to work closely with the Soviet authorities both during and after the war. It also marked the start of an increasingly bitter propaganda campaign by both the Czechoslovaks and the Poles to foster international support for their respective agendas and by the summer of 1942 bilateral relations had deteriorated even further.88

One of the reasons for this shift in the Polish position was the fact that many Poles, and certain British officials, had begun to view the Czechoslovak government in exile as being far too close to the Soviet authorities. In fact, from May 1942 onwards the Polish and Czechoslovak exiles were now in direct competition over who could secure the greatest level of support for their political objectives. For the Poles this meant closer ties to the United States and for the Czechoslovaks it meant closer ties with the Soviets,

88 FO 371 30827 C6731/151/12 Nichols to Makins, 3 July 1942 & FO 371 34334 C206/206/12 Foreign Office minute, 1 January 1943.
clearly this was a situation that would make their bilateral contacts all the more difficult. Sikorski had already visited the United States in early 1942, and would travel there again in December, in order to try to secure Washington’s support against Soviet territorial ambitions and to finalise a bi-lateral treaty. He failed on both counts.\textsuperscript{89} Furthermore, the unwillingness of both the Soviet Union and the United States definitively to support post-war federations, and the Czechoslovaks’ refusal to continue without such assurances, meant that these plans looked increasingly unlikely to succeed.\textsuperscript{90}

In a speech to the Czechoslovak National Council on 18 May that was later relayed to the Central Department by the new British ambassador to the Czechoslovak government, Philip Nichols, Ripka clearly spelt out the Czechoslovak position with regard to the Soviet Union and Poland. He made it clear that the Poles had to establish friendly relations with the Soviet Union before plans for a federation could proceed.\textsuperscript{91} This statement reinforced the suspicions of some Foreign Office officials that the Czechoslovaks were allying themselves too closely to Moscow to the detriment of the Poles. An early indication of this viewpoint can be found in Nichols’s ‘Most Confidential’ memorandum to William Strang, of 28 May that summarised the proceedings of a luncheon party attended by Beneš, Ripka, Sikorski and Raczyński. During lunch the Poles had referred to the Czechoslovaks’ apparent preference for ‘their other friends,’ that is the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{92} In response to this document Roger Makins, then head of the Central Department, noted on 7 June that,

\textsuperscript{89} Pražmowska, \textit{Britain and Poland}, pp122-124 & 164-165.
\textsuperscript{90} Ross, \textit{The Foreign Office and the Kremlin}, pp112-115.
\textsuperscript{91} FO 371 30827 C6731/151/12 Nichols to Makins, 3 July 1942.
\textsuperscript{92} FO 371 30827 C5534/151/12 Nichols to Strang, 28 May 1942, see also Beneš, \textit{Paměti}, p362.
The full recognition accorded to Dr Beneš (which rather went to his head) combined with the entry of Russia into the War effected a marked change in his position. The Russians made overtures to the Czechs, gave them assurances and flattered them, with the result that Dr Beneš has for some months past been casting sheep's eyes towards Moscow and has allowed Polish-Czechoslovak relations to deteriorate...Although, as we know, the Poles are intolerably difficult to deal with, I am quite satisfied that the main fault in this matter lies with the Czechs...93

Although this was not an opinion shared by all in the department it became the prevailing view on the situation.

The federation project was left in abeyance during the first nine months of 1942 as the Foreign Office's attention was primarily focused on relations within the newly established Grand Alliance, preparations for a treaty with the Soviet Union and the war itself. As a result the Anglo-Soviet treaty, signed on 26 May, did not include any explicit reference or agreement over these federative plans.94 Once more the opportunity to reach a conclusive understanding with Moscow over this issue had been sacrificed in order to limit disagreements between the two signatories. While this was a wholly realistic position for the British authorities to take, it was one that had a negative effect on the only coherent policy the Foreign Office had with regard to central Europe. The Czechoslovak government also had other matters to contend with, not least because on

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93 FO 371 30827 C5534/151/12 Makins minute, 7 June 1942.
the day after the treaty was signed the Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, Reinhard Heydrich, was attacked by two Czechoslovak parachutists in Prague, trained and transported to the area by SOE. The savage Nazi retribution that followed Heydrich’s death brought Czechoslovakia’s plight to the forefront of the world’s attention and consequently allowed Beneš to secure one of his most cherished objectives – an official British denunciation of the terms of the Munich Agreement- on 5 August.\(^{95}\) As a result little consideration was given to the federation question by either the British or Czechoslovak authorities until the early autumn.

On 25 September the Polish government passed a copy of a draft treaty to Masaryk that proposed that both governments officially accept the creation of a federation, with the proviso that such an arrangement would be agreed to by the home populations after the war.\(^{96}\) As none of the Great Powers, and certainly not the Soviets, had officially agreed to accept such a proposal this development placed the Czechoslovak exiles in a difficult position and worsened their relations with the Poles. Ripka subsequently informed Nichols that he felt that this was a Polish ploy to force his government to commit themselves to this treaty in advance of any agreement with Moscow. He then added, ‘We do not intend to allow ourselves to be made the dupe of the Poles any more than we are prepared to be played with by the Russians.’\(^{97}\) Indeed, five days later Raczyński wrote to Eden to ask him to encourage Beneš to sign the treaty immediately regardless of the Soviet position.\(^{98}\) He had perhaps been encouraged to do so by Eden’s keynote speech at Leamington Spa, on 29 September, that had once more re-

\(^{95}\) FO 371 30835 C7210/326/12 Eden to Masaryk, 5 August 1942.
\(^{96}\) Šťovišek & Valenta (eds), Československo-polská jednání o konfederaci, pp262-263.
\(^{97}\) FO 371 30828 C9428/151/12 Nichols to Strang, 28 September 1942.
\(^{98}\) FO 371 30828 C9661/151/12 Raczyński to Eden, 1 October 1942.
iterated Britain’s support for federations in central and south-eastern Europe. But given that any federal proposals in the region were totally dependant on Soviet support, and Eden and the rest of the Foreign Office clearly understood this, little could be done without Moscow’s explicit approval, and the Poles were told as much by the Central Department.

This exchange happened to occur at a time when Anglo-Soviet relations had become increasingly strained over the western allies’ failure to open a decisive ‘Second Front’ in Europe. Concerned by the wider implications of these tensions, Bruce Lockhart addressed this topic in a long memorandum to the Foreign Office on 12 October. This paper not only provided a solution to the current Czechoslovak-Polish impasse, albeit accidentally, but also coincidentally, proved to mark the end of these federative schemes. While Bruce Lockhart was primarily concerned with Soviet suspicions of British intentions, he also addressed Soviet suspicions of the Poles and federations. He bluntly stated that any suggestion that British support for federations actually meant the creation of a new anti-Soviet cordon sanitaire would irreparably harm relations with Moscow and that explicit Soviet approval had to be sought to avoid this impression. He also placed much of the blame for the failure to reach an agreement on the Poles, and concluded by suggesting that they be informed by ‘indirect means’ that the Foreign Office believed that any tripartite reconciliation was now impossible.

The Foreign Office’s response to Bruce Lockhart’s paper had the effect of realigning British policy on federations. First, it was noted that there were ‘influential

100 FO 371 30828 C9428/151/12 Strang to Nichols, 11 October 1942.
elements’ in both Britain and the United States that did want these federations to be directed against the Soviet Union and that the Poles had been encouraged by these tendencies. Second, it was noted that the main source of Soviet annoyance seemed to stem from the British refusal to force the Poles to accept the Curzon Line and this was not something that the Foreign Office was currently willing to do. Third, the opinions expressed back in May, which placed the blame for the failure of the talks solely with the Czechoslovaks, had been revised. Strang took a pragmatic view and noted on 22 October that, ‘The Poles must not try to hassle the Czechs, or take umbrage at their relations with the Soviet Union. The Czechs must not give the Poles the impression that they side with the Russians against the Poles.’ Finally, when Eden met Beneš on 2 November to discuss this issue and the president suggested that the best solution would be for a more straightforward Czechoslovak-Polish treaty of alliance designed to allay Soviet concerns the Foreign Secretary accepted this idea without hesitation.\(^{101}\)

Eden sent a letter to Masaryk on 19 November approving of this course of action while reiterating that he remained in favour of federations and was willing to help facilitate them in any way possible.\(^{102}\) Consequently, plans were drawn up by the Czechoslovak exiles for just such a treaty, these were then were relayed to and discussed with the Poles on 20 and 23 November 1942, and a preparatory draft was completed by the end of the year. While both the Poles and Foreign Office accepted these proposals, the Soviet authorities still maintained their reserved position towards what they regarded

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\(^{102}\) FO 371 30828 C10612/151/12 Eden memorandum on talks with Beneš, 2 November 1942, & Eden to Masaryk, 19 November 1942.
as 'Polish hostility.' It was these objections that ultimately proved fatal for even this limited bi-lateral treaty, especially when Polish-Soviet relations continued to worsen during 1943 and culminated in a complete cessation of all contacts by the end of April. Anglo-Czechoslovak relations were also be placed under immense strain by Beneš's decision to sign a formal treaty with the Soviet Union in the summer of 1943. The Foreign Office strenuously objected to this idea as soon as it was informed of this plan, principally because of the negative effects that it would have on the Poles.

In fact, the Foreign Office had received worrying indications of a decisive break down in Czechoslovak-Polish relations by the start of the new year. On 1 January 1943 the British censor intercepted and stopped a dispatch from the London correspondent of the *New York Times* that claimed that the Czechoslovak government had sabotaged the federation project on Moscow's orders, and it was believed that the Poles had planted the story. The Czechoslovak government was also becoming frustrated by the situation and Roberts noted that the 'Czechs were fed up with their awkward position between the Poles and the Russians.' Sikorski was in Washington at this time and after his interview with Lord Halifax, a Central Department official, E. D. Allen, noted,

We have recently heard from a most secret source, purporting to represent the views of the Soviet Embassy in Washington, that General Sikorski is known to be very dissatisfied with the Czechs owing to what is described

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104 FO 371 34338 C7493/525/12 Eden to Nichols, 30 June 1943
105 FO 371 34434 C206/206/12 Foreign Office minute, 1 January 1943.
106 FO 371 30828 C10671/151/12 Roberts minute, 25 January 1943.
as their withdrawal from the Polish-Czech Confederation. The General describes Dr Beneš’s new proposal for a 20 years pact as a step backwards and has been saying that the British Foreign Office favour it.  

Yet in spite of these rumours when Eden met Beneš again on the 29 January he urged him to continue with negotiations and assured him that he would ask the British Ambassador in Moscow, Sir A. Clark Kerr, to discuss the matter as soon as possible.  

Clark Kerr duly met with the Soviet Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav M. Molotov, on the 25 February and was told that his position on the question of federations was ‘reserved.’ Consequently the Central Department made the fateful decision in early March to ‘keep the present confederation schemes on ice’ and to wait until Polish-Soviet relations had improved.  

Of course the Central Department had no way of knowing that such an improvement would never materialise. The revelations regarding the mass graves of Polish officers at Katyn that emerged on 12 April, the subsequent cessation of diplomatic relations between the Poles and the Soviets, on 25 April, and Sikorski’s death on 4 July (his successor was Stanislaw Mikołajczyk) meant that these plans were never revived. These events also had a disastrous effect on Anglo-Polish co-operation, which had been heavily dependant on Sikorski’s own personal relations with Churchill and never

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107 FO 371 34434 C928/206/12 Allen minute, 20 January 1943.  
109 FO 371 34434 C2895/206/12 Roberts to Nichols, 19 March 1943.  
110 FO 371 34434 C2895/206/12 Draft letter Roberts to Clark Kerr, 9 March 1943, and minutes by Sargent, 10 March 1943.  
recovered after his death. What hope there was of reviving bi-lateral negotiations was undermined by the actions of the usually pliant Czechoslovak State Council. On 19 May 1943 it issued a strongly worded resolution that attacked the Polish interpretation of events at Katyn as ‘anti-Soviet propaganda’. It also denounced the Polish government’s failure to renounce the annexation of Czechoslovak territory carried out after Munich (that is Těšín) and its continued support for anti-Beneš’s elements in Britain; as a result all talks between the two governments were halted. Any possibility that they might recommence ended with the conclusion of a Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty in December 1943, to which the Poles were invited to accede. Although sporadic contacts continued, the political gulf that now divided the Polish and Czechoslovak governments in London proved too broad to be bridged, even though the Foreign Office continued to try.

Apportioning blame for the failure of this federative project and the British policy that supported it is difficult; certainly all those who were involved - the Czechoslovaks, Poles, British and the Soviets - must all share some of the responsibility. It should also be noted that while the Poles had adopted a hostile approach in their dealings with the Soviet Union, for understandable reasons, and the Czechoslovaks had pursued a more conciliatory attitude for their own reasons, ultimately both policies conflicted with the Great Powers’ perceptions of their wider strategic interests. For the Poles this meant conflict with the Soviet Union, the occupation of their state and the forcible imposition of the Communist ‘Lublin Committee.’ For the Czechoslovaks their attempts to establish workable and friendly relations with Moscow resulted in their being

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112 Prażmowska, Britain and Poland, p180 & 184-185.
113 Šťovíček & Valenta, (eds), Československo-polské jednání o konfederaci, pp335-339.
114 Dilks (ed), The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, pp676-677.
viewed by elements within the Foreign Office as an 'ignominious Muscovite vassal.' Even Masaryk later admitted to Roberts that the Czechoslovak exiles were being increasingly regarded in some quarters as 'Stalin’s messenger boys.' Little consideration was given to the fact that Benes’s position was largely influenced by an understandable desire to avoid the same mistakes the Poles had made, especially after the Red Army crossed Czechoslovakia’s eastern frontiers in 1944. In the final analysis, and given the historical relations between the Czechoslovaks and the Poles and the deep tradition of mutual hostility that existed between the Poles and the Soviets these federative plans were probably overly optimistic from the outset. If nothing else these failures reinforced the belief of many in the Foreign Office that attempts to undertake long-term post-war plans, while the future remained uncertain and without the full support of all the Great Powers, were doomed to failure. Quite simply British foreign policy objectives in Central Europe, which had always been limited and secondary to national interests, had now become further subservient to wider strategic considerations.

115 FO 371 34339 C10733/525/12 Eden minute, 16 September 1943,
116 FO 371 34338 C2361/525/12 Roberts minute, 6 March 1943.
Chapter Six

Anglo-Czechoslovak-Sudeten German relations, 1939-1945.

As with so many other aspects of the Czechoslovak’s ‘six years in exile’ in London during the Second World War the historiography of the Sudeten German question during this period has been seriously distorted and mythologised by the political imperatives of the Cold War.¹ As a result, various competing and contradictory accounts have emerged that often reflect little but the pre-conceptions and partisan viewpoints of their respective authors.² These debates still continue and have sharply polarised opinions while hindering the formation of any balanced and objective conclusions over this issue.³ Consequently the Sudeten German question remains a sensitive and controversial problem in Europe even today. More important in this context, it was an issue in which the British government and Foreign Office played an important role between 1939 and 1945.

¹ As defined by C. Buffet, & B. Heuser (eds), Haunted by History. Myths in International Relations, London, 1998, p ix.
Although the actual transfer of the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia (and the resulting debates) are outside the scope of this thesis, relations between the Foreign Office and the exiled Sudeten German representatives in London during the war, principally with the Social Democrat leader, Wenzel Jaksch, are not. Nor is British involvement in the development of, and ultimate support for, plans for the post-war transfer of the Sudeten Germans, and this chapter will focus on these two key aspects of these relations. Significantly, an examination of both of these issues reveals a fundamental reversal in British policy towards the Sudeten German émigrés in Britain during the war and the early acceptance of transfers as a viable solution to the complex relations between nation states and their constituent ethnic minorities in Central Europe.

Moreover, differing attitudes within the Foreign Office and the British government as a whole towards the Sudeten German question also had a wider effect on Anglo-Czechoslovak relations. This was because a small, but significant, group within the Central Department maintained close links with some of these anti-Fascist democratic Sudeten Germans and sought to encourage the Czechoslovak authorities to incorporate these exiles into their political organs abroad. This was not only in order to attempt to create a unified political body in exile that was representative of all the constituent peoples of the former Czechoslovak Republic; but also because they felt that Britain had a moral and a financial obligation toward these German refugees, and because it was felt that they might provide a convenient political counter-weight to a government led by

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4 The word transfer was the term used in Article XIII of the Potsdam Declaration of August 1945 to describe the post-war removal of the Sudeten German populations from Czechoslovakia. For clarity this thesis will confine itself to the use of the term transfer, as opposed to expulsion or ethnic cleaning. See Protocol of the Proceedings of the Berlin Conference, 2 August 1945, London, 1947, p13.
Benes. There were other officials in the Foreign Office who were less sympathetically disposed towards these Sudeten Germans exiles and therefore less inclined to offer them this level of support. While this group had less of an impact on British policy toward the Sudeten Germans during the first three years of the conflict, these positions were actually reversed after 1942.

As a result, throughout the long drawn out process of granting official recognition to Beneš and his government the British authorities consistently refused to grant them any jurisdiction over the Sudeten Germans in Britain, at least until these had been offered adequate representation in the Czechoslovak State Council. Not surprisingly, this was an issue that proved to be a source of tension between the two parties, principally because many Czechoslovaks felt that the Sudeten Germans had received preferential treatment in Britain, especially in relation to the monies distributed by the Czech Refugee Trust Fund. Yet even while the British maintained reservations on this question, and some officials within the Central Department openly supported certain Sudeten German exiles, plans were also being considered within the Foreign Office for the large scale transfer of this minority from Czechoslovakia after the war. It is also worth noting that that the

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5 FO 371 30835 C6867/326/12 Roberts to Nichols, 17 July 1942, HO 294/39 on origins of British Committee for Refugees from Czecho-Slovakia, October 1938 to June 1939 & HO 294/44 establishment of Czech Refugee Trust Fund, June 1939.
6 Most notably Sir Robert Vansittart, see FO 371 30834 C6447/326/12 Vansittart to Eden, 10 May & 4 June 1942. Also Robert Bruce Lockhart, see FO 371 30834 C6447/326/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum on Jaksch to Eden, 14 June 1942.
7 On this issue see FO 371 24289 C7646/2/12 Strang memorandum on talks with Beneš, 21 June 1940, C8466/2/12 Makins minute, 1 August 1940 and C8159/2/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum, 4 August 1940. FO 371 24291 C8917/534/12 Bruce Lockhart minute on discussions between Beneš and Jaksch, 17 October 1940. See also FO 371 26392 C13260/639/12 Nichols letter to Central Department, 28 November 1941.
8 FO 371 24364 C3626/1419/62, Foreign Office memorandum on Inter-Departmental meeting on Czech Refugee Trust Fund, 7 March 1940 & HO 294/50 British Committee Executive and General Committee Minutes, 27 July 1939.
legacy of the Munich Agreement was closely tied into these tripartite relations, especially for Beneš, and its revocation was one of his central objectives in exile.⁹

These seemingly contradictory positions were entirely representative of the Foreign Office’s often ambiguous stance on the Sudeten German question during the war. This was a result of the differing views on this issue held by different groups within Whitehall, contradictions that were only finally resolved in early 1945, by which time the British authorities had finally withdrawn their assistance for Jaksch and had openly declared their support for the ‘principle of transfers.’¹⁰ This was a solution that Jaksch and his colleagues had consistently rejected ever since Beneš had first officially proposed it in May 1941.¹¹ Beneš and the newly established Czechoslovak government finally secured international agreement for the transfer of the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia during the Potsdam Conference in August 1945 and the transfers themselves were duly undertaken, under international supervision, between 1945 and 1947.¹²

Anglo-Czechoslovak-Sudeten German relations during the ‘six years in exile’ can be divided up into several distinct phases. The first lasted between early 1939 and late 1941 and was marked by open British support for Jaksch (albeit with some dissent) and close contacts between Beneš and the Sudeten German Social Democratic Party, which included the offer of several seats for their representatives on the recently established

¹⁰ FO 371 30834 C6671/326/12 Eden memorandum to War Cabinet on Anglo-Czechoslovak relations, 2 July 1942 & C6671/326/12 Nichols to Beneš, 7 July 1942.
¹¹ Contained in Beneš’s lecture at the Alliance Française, Manchester on 17 May 1941 as reported in the Central Europe Observer, 30 May 1941.
Czechoslovak State Council. The second phase was largely confined to 1942 and 1943. During this period British support for Jaksch ebbed and was decisively curtailed by Britain’s repudiation of the Munich Agreement in August 1942. Negotiations between Beneš and Jaksch were also suspended at this time, as a result of Reinhard Heydrich’s assassination and the destruction of Lidice, after which the offer of seats on the Council was suspended (and effectively rescinded), apparently at the insistence, and with the agreement, of the resistance movements in the Protectorate. Instead, other Sudeten German representatives in London, most notably members of the Communist party, who were more supportive of the transfer scheme, were given seats on the Council.13 Jaksch and his colleagues were thus effectively marginalised by Beneš during this period, as were their supporters in the Foreign Office.

The final phase of these relations lasted between 1944 and the end of the war. By the beginning of 1944 Jaksch’s support within the Foreign Office dissipated even further as by this stage Britain and the other Great Powers had all agreed to the ‘principle of transfers.’ These developments effectively ended any possibility of autonomy for the Sudeten Germans in a re-constructed Czechoslovak state, which was Jaksch’s preferred option. Even so, from the late summer of 1944 onwards Jaksch’s opposition to the transfer issue did elicit support from several British MPs, but his contacts with the Foreign Office effectively ended when Frank Roberts was posted to Moscow in January 1945.14 Therefore between 1939 and 1945 British policy on the Sudeten German question can be shown to have undergone a dramatic reversal. This change in policy

14 Jaksch, Europe’s Road to Potsdam, p398.
culminated in British support for the wholesale transfer of the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia after the war had ended.

The history of Anglo-Czechoslovak-Sudeten German relations during this period began before the war had started, and developed in such a way as to give many Czechoslovak exiles, Beneš in particular, the impression that the British authorities were more sympathetically disposed toward the Sudeten German émigrés than toward ethnic Slav ones. This view was one that can now be shown to have some basis in fact and was focused on two main issues, the Czech Refugee Trust Fund and Britain’s refusal to allow Czechoslovak political émigrés to exercise any jurisdiction over Sudeten German refugees on British soil. In the wake of the Munich Agreement significant numbers of former Czechoslovak citizens, of both Slav and German origin, began to leave the region in order to escape the Nazi regime.\(^{15}\) Perhaps not surprisingly these Sudeten German refugees received little support from the government of the Second Republic, which was more concerned with the significant numbers of Slav refugees from the same region. As a result, and largely by default, their welfare became a British responsibility. This was a development that was to give rise to some unforeseen consequences.

It is important to note that Britain had begun to assist these Sudeten German refugees to emigrate from Czechoslovakia soon after the signing of the Munich Agreement in September 1938. This situation was a result of a growing sense of unease that arose in British public opinion (and in some corners of Whitehall) over the way in which Czechoslovakia had been treated, even though many people had been genuinely

relived that war with Germany had been avoided at Czechoslovakia’s expense. These sentiments helped lay the foundations for the gradual rejection of appeasement policies after March 1939, the identification of the ‘Guilty Men’ of Munich and a corresponding sympathy for the plight of Czechs and Slovaks. Perhaps as a further consequence of this reaction to Munich a desire to assist the post-Munich state developed; firstly as a private venture, then later, as part of the financial remuneration package paid to the Second Republic as compensation for the economic dislocation and hardship caused by the Munich settlement. Part of which was explicitly designed to deal with the refugee problem. After the German invasion in March 1939, and due to a dramatic increase in the numbers of refugees from the region arriving in Britain these monies were then transferred to the newly established Czech Refugee Trust Fund, this meant that the British authorities had a clear financial responsibility, in addition to the moral responsibility some officials felt was owed, towards these German refugees in Britain.

The central reason why the Fund became such a consistent source of conflict in Anglo-Czechoslovak relations was because Beneš and his colleagues believed that the Fund was principally assisting Sudeten Germans, including Jaksch, and not Czechs and Slovaks, and because the British refused to allow Beneš or his government to have any say in the management of the Fund itself. They believed that the Fund was biased in favour of Sudeten German refugees and neglected ethnic Slavs, who in turn had to rely

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18 HO 294/44 various documents on the establishment of the Czech Refugee Trust Fund, October 1938 to October 1939.
20 See FO 371 30834 C6590/326/12 Roberts minutes, 2 July 1942.
21 FO 371 29193 W2044/112/48 transcript of speech by František Němec, 14 February 1941.
on the support of the Czechoslovak legation in London, headed by Karel Lisicky.²² In fact, there is some evidence to support this assertion.

According to Foreign Office estimates in 1940 no more than 20 per cent of the former Czechoslovak citizens in Britain were in fact ethnic Slavs. The majority consisted of Sudeten Germans, Austrian and German refugees and Jews out of a total population of approximately 10,000.²³ Such demographic evidence further reinforced the Central Department’s opinion that these people required protection from their fellow Czechoslovak exiles, who might discriminate against them. Moreover, the Fund’s predecessor, the charitable British Committee for Refugees from Czecho-Slovakia, had been explicitly created to mainly assist Sudeten German, Reich German and Austrian refugees.²⁴ Indeed, this situation was replicated in the exiled Czechoslovak community in Stockholm, where Sudeten Germans also outnumbered ethnic Slavs.²⁵ Indeed, both Robert Bruce Lockhart and Edward Táborský noted in their diaries that Sudeten German claimants seemed to dominate the Fund.²⁶ Therefore, even before the war had begun the British authorities had unintentionally placed themselves in a position where they were actively supporting Sudeten German refugees in Britain, in preference to other refugees from the former Czechoslovakia.

²² FO 371 22897 C3381/7/12 & C3548/7/12 internal Central Department minutes on continued recognition of Czecho-Slovak Legations, 16 – 18 March 1939.
²³ M. Cornwall, ‘The Rise and Fall of a ‘Special Relationship’?: Britain and Czechoslovakia, 1930-48,’ in B. Brivati & H. Jones (eds), Themes in Contemporary British History. ‘What difference did the War make?’ Leicester, 1993, pp139-140.
²⁴ HO 294/38 various documents on the operations of the British Committee for Refugees from Czecho-Slovakia, late 1938 and early 1939.
²⁵ FO 371 38988 C17067/17067/12 Press Reading Bureau, Stockholm, to Central Department 25 November 1944. Detailed five-page memorandum about disputes within Czechoslovak colony in Sweden since the beginning of the war.
This position was to become even more pronounced during the summer of 1939, by which time both Beneš and Jaksch had settled in London and had begun their political work in exile, a situation that forced the Central Department to reconsider its position towards these two figures. While the Central Department was keen to limit Beneš’s political activities from the outset they were less sure of how to deal with Jaksch. An early assessment of his objectives, passed on by the Home Office’s Aliens Department, noted that he had been, ‘a prominent member of the Czech Social Democratic party,’ and now worked to secure aid for Socialist refugees from the Sudetenlands.\(^{27}\) Although the Foreign Office had no illusions regarding the actual level of support Jaksch had enjoyed in Czechoslovakia, what made Jaksch such an attractive proposition for the Central Department were his policies on the future of the Sudetenlands.\(^{28}\) Whereas Beneš made no secret of his desire to ultimately re-establish Czechoslovakia within her pre-1938 borders Jaksch was an adherent of the so-called ‘Fourth Plan,’ under which the Sudetenlands were to be granted autonomy. He also argued that after the war the Sudeten Germans should be given the opportunity to decide whether they wanted to remain as part of Germany or rejoin any future Czechoslovak state.\(^{29}\) Consequently in the summer of 1939 Jaksch’s ideas were far closer to the prevailing attitudes within the Central Department on the Czechoslovak question than were Beneš’s, especially since there was

\(^{27}\) FO 371 22904 C042/51552/12 E.N. Cooper, Home Office to R. Makins, 1 June 1939.

\(^{28}\) FO 371 26392 C918/639/12 Foreign Office minute on Sudeten German Czechoslovak negotiations, 25 January 1941.

little support in Whitehall for restoring Czechoslovakia to her pre-Munich form.\textsuperscript{30} This was a position that later evolved into a clear policy by the British government not to commit itself to any territorial frontiers in Central Europe during the war.\textsuperscript{31}

Therefore from early 1939 onwards Foreign Office officials regarded Jaksch as a legitimate political representative of the thousands of Sudeten German refugees in Britain and someone whose views on the future of Central Europe largely paralleled their own. In addition, officials from the Foreign Office, Home Office and the British military had already been in close touch with Jaksch before March 1939.\textsuperscript{32} Jaksch and the Sudeten Germans thus enjoyed a privileged position in comparison to many other Czechoslovak émigrés in London and he was able to lobby the Central Department on questions related to their status in exile.\textsuperscript{33} Thus the stage was set for a contest of wills between Beneš and Jaksch as to which of the two would be able to exert the greatest influence over British policy and reap the resulting political rewards.

British attitudes on this issue were deeply influenced by the widespread perception that Czechoslovakia had been an inherently unstable and artificial creation and that the Sudeten Germans had legitimate grievances concerning their treatment at the hands of the Czechoslovaks.\textsuperscript{34} The prevalence of such opinions was reiterated in John Troutbeck’s memorandum of 1 September 1939 that outlined possible British attitudes


\textsuperscript{31} See FO 371 24288 C6035/2/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum on possible recognition of a Czechoslovak Provisional Government, 12 May 1940, and accompanying minutes. See also FO 371 26394 C7992/1320/12 Eden to Beneš, 18 July 1940 & FO 371 26389 C235/235/12 Roberts minutes on British attitude toward the Vienna Award of 1938, 10 January 1941.


\textsuperscript{33} Glees, \textit{Exile politics}, pp46-47.

towards the Czechs and Slovaks during the war. This document was widely distributed within the department and summarised British policy on the Czechoslovak question at the outset of hostilities.\textsuperscript{35} Although the memorandum was mainly concerned with the question of political recognition, in it Troutbeck noted that,

It is likely that we shall be pressed both by Dr Beneš and a certain section of British opinion to proclaim the restoration of Czechoslovakia’s independence as one of our war aims. There are however numerous objections to this course...Dr Beneš for his part would mean pre-Munich Czechoslovakia, as he is \textit{par excellence} the exponent of the theory that the ancient Kingdom of Bohemia is indivisible. But for us to proclaim the restoration of Czechoslovakia as a war aim, would imply that it was our object to bring the Sudeten Germans back under the Czech yoke, if necessary by force...\textsuperscript{36}

Admittedly, Troutbeck also argued the case for recognition and concluded that Beneš was probably the best person to secure the support of Czechs and Slovaks during the war, but his use of the phrase ‘Czech yoke’ is telling.

Consequently, with the outbreak of the war the Central Department regarded Jaksch as a possible counter-weight to Beneš’s unpalatable political objectives and, as a result, Jaksch received official encouragement and support. This was not least as the

\textsuperscript{35} William Strang, the head of the Central Department, noted that, ‘This is a very useful paper with the conclusions of which I agree.’ FO 371 22899 C13304/7/12 Strang minute, 4 September 1939.

\textsuperscript{36} FO 371 22899 C13304/7/12 Troutbeck Memorandum ‘Our attitude towards the Czechs and Slovaks in Time of War,’ 1 September 1939.
Foreign Office retained an interest in maintaining links with anti-Fascist German groups in order to glean information about the situation in Germany and to be prepared for the possible early defeat of Nazism.\textsuperscript{37} Roger Makins made such attitudes plain in January 1940 when he noted, ‘We are anxious for political reasons to give discreet encouragement to Jaksch and his organisation; they may in due course become of some importance to us.’\textsuperscript{38} In addition, when the Home Office approached the Foreign Office to suggest suitable members for a committee to vet Czechoslovak émigrés in Britain, Troutbeck immediately suggested both Lisický and Jaksch. Troutbeck’s reply also revealed that the Foreign Office was fully aware of the tensions between the various Czechoslovak refugees now in London: ‘There is certain to be a good deal of ill feeling among all these émigrés from Czecho-Slovakia, based both on personal and political antagonism.’\textsuperscript{39} During the first few months of the war, therefore, the Central Department regarded Beneš and Jaksch as having equal legitimacy to represent former Czechoslovak citizens abroad and dealt with them accordingly. Although, the Central Department realised that Beneš’s political experience out-weighted Jaksch’s its officials preferred to see the development of a united front among all the various Czechoslovak exiles in London and it was this objective that they now encouraged.\textsuperscript{40}

Beneš and Jaksch had already had several meetings to discuss their activities abroad, both prior to and immediately after Britain’s declaration of war on Germany. They had first met on 3 August 1939 with a further meeting on 3 September. Although their recollections of events differed somewhat, they agreed that both sides were willing

\textsuperscript{37} Glees, \textit{Exile politics}, p45.
\textsuperscript{38} FO 371 24291 C534/534/12 Makins to Captain M. Jeffes, Passport Control, 12 January 1940.
\textsuperscript{39} FO 371 22901 C13149/28/12 Troutbeck’s reply to Home Office, 8 September 1939.
\textsuperscript{40} FO 371 22899 C17089/G Strang minutes on his talk with Bruce Lockhart, 26 October 1939.
to enter into constructive talks over the future organisation of Czechoslovakia and on wartime co-operation. However, their accounts disagreed over whether any plans for transfers had yet been formulated. If they had, which is highly questionable, Beneš certainly did not tell Jaksch. Nevertheless, it seemed as if the two leaders would be able to work together in exile even though their ultimate objectives were mutually exclusive.

At this stage in relations both Beneš and Jaksch had reason to explore possible grounds for co-operation, especially as neither had yet been officially recognised as representing any sort of political movement. It should also be noted that Beneš’s political position was particularly weak in the autumn of 1939, not least as he had to deal with rivalries between himself and other Czechoslovak politicians in London and Paris. Therefore he was in no position to reject Jaksch’s approaches. Nor was Jaksch in a strong enough position to proceed independently, especially as it was Beneš who had a virtual monopoly on contacts with the Czechoslovak military and intelligence assets in exile. Unity of action was therefore the pre-eminent consideration for both Beneš and Jaksch at this early stage of the war and was clearly in their mutual interest. This was made clear by the newly appointed British liaison officer to the Czechoslovaks, Bruce Lockhart, in his first report to the Central Department of 5 October 1939. He stated, ‘It is the intention of the Provisional Government [sic] to settle by its own efforts all the outstanding differences between Czechs and Slovaks and Sudeten Germans and to establish a united front before openly declaring its war aims.’

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41 Beneš, Panětí, pp 317-319 & Jaksch, Europe’s Road to Potsdam, pp356-357.
42 FO 371 22899 C16118/7/12 Bruce Lockhart minute on internal divisions amongst the Czechoslovak exiles, 21 September 1938.
44 FO 371 C15901/7/12 Bruce Lockhart report on Czech and Slovak exiles, 5 October 1939.
between Beneš and Jaksch would not last, regardless of British hopes to the contrary.\(^{45}\)

The establishment of a Czechoslovak National Committee by December 1939 and further developments during 1940 would see Beneš’s and Jaksch’s political objectives begin to diverge, not least as a result of actions taken by the Foreign Office itself.

The creation of the Czechoslovak National Committee had ostensibly been agreed to by the French and British governments simply in order to provide a measure of political control over the Czechoslovak soldiers and airmen who had gathered in France.\(^{46}\) Furthermore, the Central Department accepted that recognition of the National Committee was designed to forestall any recognition of a Czechoslovak government in exile.\(^{47}\) Although this development had the effect of enhancing Beneš’s political position while Jaksch remained a private citizen, the form this first phase of recognition took had intentionally been kept to the bare minimum by the authorities in Paris and London. Moreover, the Committee, as constituted in late 1939, itself did not contain any Sudeten German representatives, only Czechs and Slovaks.\(^{48}\) Yet, the grudging nature of British recognition of Beneš and his colleagues contrasted sharply with their far more supportive attitude towards Jaksch.

These differences were further highlighted during the first few months of 1940. During this period the Central Department seriously considered the possibility of recognising his Sudeten German Office on an equal footing with Beneš’s National Committee. On 4 January 1940 Jaksch had requested that three of his colleagues in


\(^{46}\) FO 371 22900 C18323/7/12, Sargent minute, 11 November 1939 & E. Třeborský, *The Czechoslovak Cause in International Law*, London, 1944, pp70-84.

\(^{47}\) FO 371 22900 C19501/7/12 Roberts minute, 4 December 1939.

Stockholm be allowed to travel to Britain and visas were soon granted.\textsuperscript{49} In the same week Jaksch asked that 175 Sudeten Germans be allowed to join the British army instead of the Czechoslovak force gathering in France and this too was accepted without demur.\textsuperscript{50} This was a significant development as the National Committee had earlier announced a general mobilisation of all Czechoslovak exiles ‘living outside their country’ on 17 November 1939 and under the terms of a decree issued by the French government failure to comply meant imprisonment.\textsuperscript{51} But the British authorities refused to allow Sudeten Germans to be included in this call up and in line with Jaksch’s earlier request to allow them to join the British army.\textsuperscript{52}

The reason for this attitude was not solely due to the Foreign Office’s preference for Jaksch, but also because it was felt that any enhancement of the Committee’s powers compulsorily to recruit Czechoslovaks (especially Sudeten Germans) in Britain would be used by Beneš to bolster his own political position.\textsuperscript{53} Although no formal announcement of this policy was ever made the Central Department’s position on this question was supported by the information they had received on the dismal conditions of the Czechoslovak army in France.\textsuperscript{54} The consequence of this policy was that once again it appeared that the British authorities were treating the Sudeten Germans more sympathetically than other citizens from the former Czechoslovakia.

\textsuperscript{49} FO 371 24291 C534/534/12 R. J. Stopford, Ministry of Economic Warfare to Makins, 9 January 1940.
\textsuperscript{50} FO 371 24291 C702/534/12 Jaksch to Makins, 11 January 1940.
\textsuperscript{51} FO 371 24365 C6284/1419/12 Czechoslovak memorandum on general mobilisation of Czechoslovak émigrés, Beneš to Cadogan, 26 April 1940.
\textsuperscript{52} FO 371 24287 C2683/2/12 Roberts minute, 21 February 1940.
\textsuperscript{53} FO 371 24365 C6284/1419/12 Roberts minute on Czechoslovak recruitment in Britain, 5 May 1940 & FO 371 24365 C1419/1419/62 Foreign Office memorandum on Interdepartmental meeting, 26 January 1940 & C326/1419/62 Foreign Office memorandum on Interdepartmental meeting, 7 March 1940.
\textsuperscript{54} FO 371 24368 C11125/1419/12 War Cabinet Allied Forces (Official) Sub-Committee, R.D. Coleridge minutes on conditions in Czechoslovak Army in France, 21 August 1940 & FO 371 24365 C6284/1419/12 Sir Henry Bunbury, Czech Refugee Trust Fund to Home Office, 15 July 1940.
Despite this, the British authorities also assisted a number of Czech and Slovak soldiers and engineers from around the world to reach the western front.\textsuperscript{55} In addition, the Trust Fund had agreed to pay the transportation costs for those Czechoslovaks who wished to travel from Britain to France in order to join the army there.\textsuperscript{56} But it was the fact that the British continued to treat the Sudeten Germans as a separate entity that infuriated the members of the National Committee. They regarded the Sudeten Germans as a constituent part of the former Czechoslovakia and insisted they should come under their jurisdiction. The Foreign Office's attitude towards Jaksch was regarded as nothing less than a direct result of the continued influence of Munich over British policy, not least as the agreement still stood on British statute books and because Beneš was determined to have it annulled.\textsuperscript{57}

It should be noted, however, that this was an incorrect interpretation of British policy, even before the changes in government of May 1940.\textsuperscript{58} This was chiefly because the Czechoslovak question actually received very little attention in early 1940 and, according to Bruce Lockhart's diaries, was not regarded as a priority.\textsuperscript{59} Admittedly policy towards Jaksch was a result of British obligations inherited after Munich and because, unlike Beneš, he did not insist on the reconstruction of Czechoslovakia within her pre-1938 frontiers. In retrospect British support for Jaksch can be shown to have reached its zenith in early February 1940 when he asked the Central Department to extend the same

\textsuperscript{55} FO 371 24287 C1205/2/12 Strang minute on the evacuation of Czechoslovak soldiers from Hungary, 22 January 1940.
\textsuperscript{56} FO 371 24365 C6284/1419/12 Minutes of Interdepartmental meeting at the Home Office, including representatives of the Czechoslovak Refugee Trust Fund and the Czechoslovak Legation in London, 15 March 1940.
\textsuperscript{57} Beneš, Paněti, p298 & Bruce Lockhart, Comes the Reckoning, p187.
\textsuperscript{59} Young (ed), The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, p58.
level of recognition to his Sudeten German Office as had been granted to the National Committee.60 Although the Central Department had some reservations over the advisability of this course of action these were not deemed sufficiently important to refuse the request.61 This was a clear indication of the weight that the Foreign Office still attached to allowing Jaksch to act independently of Beneš. In the event, however, Jaksch himself withdrew this request and confined himself to remaining in frequent contact with the Central Department over its policy towards Czechoslovakia.62 But if nothing else Jaksch’s request further underlined the fact that elements within the Foreign Office regarded him as having an equal right to political representation in exile.

The issue of unity was continually raised during talks over extending the political status of the Czechoslovak exiles to that of a Provisional Government, discussions that were only finally concluded on 21 July. Although the pace of progress on this issue was slow the changes in the British government in May 1940 did exert a limited influence, not least because Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden were more sympathetically disposed towards Beneš than the previous administration.63 But a greater influence was exerted by the fact Britain now needed all the military assistance it could get, 64 and it was soon recognised that Beneš was far better placed to provide this and it was this consideration that played the decisive role in the War Cabinet’s decision to grant this heightened level of recognition.65

60 FO 371 24291 C1823/534/12 Jaksch to Makins, 1 February 1940.
61 FO 371 24291 C1823/534/12 Makins to Jaksch, 29 February 1940.
62 FO 371 24291 C4607/534/12 Jaksch to Makins, 26 March 1940.
63 Bruce Lockhart, Comes the Reckoning, pp120-121.
65 Young (ed), The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, pp64-65.
Nevertheless, when provisional status was finally granted on 21 July 1940, after an exchange of letters between Beneš and Halifax, the Central Department maintained its reservations over Beneš’s and his government’s jurisdiction over the Sudeten Germans in Britain. The unique level of autonomy that Jaksch and his colleagues had so far enjoyed was thus continued. Makins made this point clear on 1 August when he noted,

I’m not at all satisfied about the position as regards the Czecho-Slovak and Sudeten minorities in this country now that a Provisional Czecho-Slovak government has been recognised... I believe that the majority of Sudetens in this country are not Beneš’s men and that Dr Beneš will put the greatest possible amount of pressure on them. We must do our utmost to avoid giving facilities to Dr Beneš to persecute individuals who do not accept his leadership.66

This was clear evidence that the change in government did not have a commensurate effect on the Central Department’s attitude on this question. Makins’s use of the hyphenated ‘Czecho-Slovakia’ was also indicative of his own disinclination to see an unhyphenated state reconstructed. Indeed, in response to complaints from Jaksch Makins returned to this question on 29 August. He noted that Beneš had still not offered Jaksch seats on the State Council, adding, ‘perhaps Dr Beneš will proceed rather more vigorously when he learns...that we do not regard the Sudeten Germans as coming in any way under his jurisdiction until he has made progress with Sudeten democratic leader in

66 FO 371 24289 C8466/2/12 Makins minute, 1 August 1940.
this country. Although Beneš resented these demands, principally because he felt all the allied governments in London suffered from a certain amount of disunity (especially the Poles) he had little choice but to accede to them. Jaksch had also been made aware of the Foreign Office’s position. Consequently by October 1940 Beneš had offered both Milan Hodža and Jaksch places on the Czechoslovak State Council. It seemed therefore, that by the end of 1940 the Central Department had succeeded in securing a prominent position for the Sudeten German exiles in Britain within the Czechoslovak ‘action abroad.’

In fact, Jaksch would never take his seat in the Council and by the beginning of 1941 Beneš had begun to develop plans for the post-war transfer of a sizeable proportion of the German minority from any reconstructed Czechoslovak state; plans that he and his government began to disseminate across the media and to the Foreign Office. By the end of 1942 all contacts between Beneš and Jaksch ended and the latter’s support within the Foreign Office had been seriously eroded. Just how was such a dramatic reversal of British policy possible? In part it was the result of two documents produced in early 1940, the first by Jaksch and the second by the Foreign Office’s own research department, based at Balliol College, Oxford.

In March 1940 the Executive Committee of the Sudeten German Social Democratic Party produced a policy statement, the so-called ‘Loughton Declaration,’ that was entirely indicative of the strong political position they enjoyed at this time. It called

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67 FO 371 24291 C8917/534/12 Makins minute, 29 August 1940.
68 FO 371 24289 C7646/2/12 Strang memorandum on talk with Beneš, 21 June 1940 & Beneš, Paměti, p180.
69 Jaksch, Europe’s Road to Potsdam, p361.
70 FO 371 24289 C11204/2/12 Bruce Lockhart to Central Department, 17 October 1940.
for any future Czechoslovak State to be organised along federal lines and for the Sudeten Germans to be granted ‘regional autonomy with their own provincial government.’\textsuperscript{71}

When combined with Jaksch’s insistence that the Sudeten Germans should still be allowed to decide whether they remain part of greater Germany, comments that he repeated in later speeches, it was apparent that such policies would have been hard to reconcile with Beneš’s plans for Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{72} Even if the ever-pragmatic Beneš had agreed to such drastic concessions (which is debatable) it is highly unlikely that his fellow exiles or the population in the Protectorate would have followed suit. Indeed it was largely as a result of pressure from these quarters that Beneš finally severed all ties with Jaksch at the end of 1942.\textsuperscript{73}

Furthermore, Jaksch’s intransigence on these issues may well have been re-enforced by his belief that he had the wholehearted support of the Foreign Office and that British reservations over the re-construction of Czechoslovakia meant that there was an opportunity to re-negotiate the Sudeten Germans’ position within it.\textsuperscript{74} But his faith in British assistance proved to be misplaced, especially because of the growing anti-German feelings amongst the British public as the war progressed, which led after June 1940 to the widespread internment of foreigners in Britain.\textsuperscript{75} Jaksch’s abrasive style also caused problems within his own party and a splinter group led by Josef Zinner eventually broke away on 18 October 1940. It was these opponents who would later provide Beneš with

\textsuperscript{71} Jaksch, \textit{Europe’s Road to Potsdam}, p359.
\textsuperscript{73} FO 371 24289 C8159/2/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum, 7 August 1940 & Luža, \textit{The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans}, pp188-222.
\textsuperscript{74} Jaksch, \textit{Europe’s Road to Potsdam}, pp360-361.
\textsuperscript{75} See & FO 371 24292 C7993/7993/12 Letter from Miss B. Hesford to R.A. Butler, 24 June 1940. See also Gieles, \textit{Exile Politics}, pp62 & 120 & Taylor, \textit{English History 1914-1945}, pp491-492.
more pliant Sudeten Germans to include in the State Council. In effect Jaksch’s policies in 1940 and his reliance on support from the Foreign Office meant that any negotiated settlement with Beneš and the Provisional Government would become increasingly unlikely, especially when Beneš’s political fortunes began to eclipse those of Jaksch.

The second key document from this period emerged from a number of meetings and seminars Beneš attended in early 1940. It was from these sessions that the first clear proposals for the post-war transfer of the Sudeten German minority would emerge, ironically produced by the Foreign Office’s own research department. The concept of population transfers was not a new one; Greco-Bulgarian and Greco-Turkish exchanges of populations had been carried out under the auspices of the League of Nations in the 1920s. Beneš was aware of these events and there is some evidence to suggest that he had considered transfers as far back as September 1938. The Nazi regime had also made use of population transfers, not only of ethnic Germans; plans had been drawn up for the expulsion of all the Czechs from the Protectorate. It is open to speculation, however, as to why Beneš should have begun to consider this question in early 1940. It may have been a result of the inactivity of the ‘Phoney War’ period when people had the time to ponder the contours of a future Europe, plans for post-war federations were also

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popular at this time.\textsuperscript{81} But it is more likely that developments within the Protectorate itself were the cause.

The antagonism generated by the Nazi regime in Bohemia and Moravia soon translated into widespread support, amongst many Czechs, for the transfer of the German population after the war. These were sentiments shared by those soldiers and airmen who had escaped to France and then on to Britain. They also predominated amongst the various resistance groups within the Protectorate and these views were soon transmitted to the exiles in London.\textsuperscript{82} At this stage there is no evidence that the Foreign Office had even considered the possibility of post-war transfers or were aware of the sympathy for this option in the Protectorate and given their continued support for Jaksch they seemed an unlikely proposition.

It was in a speech to the Royal Society on 22 January 1940 that Beneš first raised the possibility of transfers as a solution to Czechoslovakia’s minority problems.\textsuperscript{83} He returned to this issue during a conference at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in Oxford on 8 March, where he stated the necessity of undertaking some limited internal and external transfers of Sudeten Germans combined with border rectifications. This would create more compact Sudeten German areas in western and northern Bohemia who might then be granted their own ‘local government.’ These suggestions were well received by his British audience, possibly to Beneš’s surprise.\textsuperscript{84} This was a significant

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{83} Taborsky, ‘Politics in Exile,’ in Mamatey & Lužn (eds), \textit{A History of the Czechoslovak Republic}, pp334-335.
\item \textsuperscript{84} Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), \textit{Dokumenty z historie československé politiky}, Vol. 1, pp83-84.
\end{itemize}
development, as this question now became the subject of a research memorandum produced by the Foreign Press and Research Bureau (FPRB), an organisation staffed by members of Royal Institute of Foreign affairs, including Professor Arnold Toynbee, and funded by the Foreign Office.85

Written by John David Mabbott and entitled The Transfer of Minorities, it was completed in late May 1940.86 Crucially Mabbott’s memorandum not only suggested that transfers were indeed possible, based on evidence from previous exchanges of populations between Greece and Turkey and supported by Hitler’s own opinions on the subject, but concluded that it was probably the best solution to Czechoslovakia’s ethnic minority problems. (He also examined the feasibility of undertaking transfers in other European countries such as Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania, the Soviet Union and Italy87). He went on to set out a clear framework in which transfers might occur, including an assessment of the social and financial costs of such an operation. Lastly, and most importantly, he concluded that such a large-scale transfer would have to be undertaken with international consent and co-operation.88 A meeting was convened to consider Mabbott’s paper on 24 May 1940; it included Toynbee and Robert W. Seton Watson among others, and concluded that,

While there was general agreement that views for and against transfer must be given due consideration, it was held that it was not the business of

86 SEW 13/1/1 Seton Watson Archives, SSEES, London, on 29 May 1940. See also Brandes, Der weg zur Vertriebung 1938-45, p20 & J. Rychlík, ‘Memorandum Britského královského institutu mezinárodních vztahů o transferu národnostních menšin z roku 1940,’ Český říjnař, 91, 1993, pp612-630.
87 SEW 13/1/1 Seton Watson Archives, SSEES, J.D. Mabbott, ‘The Transfer of Minorities,’ pp10-25.
88 SEW 13/1/1 Seton Watson Archives, SSEES, J.D. Mabbott, ‘The Transfer of Minorities,’ pp1-3 & 12-14.
Mr. Mabbott and his advisers to suggest policy. Their object should be to get an agreed memorandum if possible...an account of varying views on the principle of transfer, but not a recommendation to adopt any one of them.89

Mabbott's memorandum did not constitute an outline of British policy at this stage, but it was the first clearly defined and coherent attempt to examine just how feasible such post-war transfers of ethnic Germans from Central Europe might be.

There is no evidence to indicate who might have commissioned this paper, but its importance lies in the fact that it was the first of a number of such memoranda on transfers written by Mabbott, later versions of which were forwarded to the Foreign Office and were widely distributed.90 Eventually an Inter-Departmental Committee on the Transfer of German populations, chaired by Troutbeck, was formed to consider this question further in December 1943.91 The significance of Mabbott's memorandum was further heightened by the fact that Seton Watson handed a copy of this paper to Beneš (even though it was clearly marked secret) and several distinct similarities between it and Beneš's later plans can be identified. However, a direct correlation between these two documents has yet to be proven beyond a reasonable doubt; but it seems reasonable to suggest that Beneš used Mabbott's paper as a guide on how to construct a credible policy on transfers that would have been acceptable to the British authorities.

89 SEW 13/1/1 R.W. Seton Watson Archives, SSEES, notes on meeting held to consider J.D. Mabbott's paper, 24 May 1940, p 5.
91 FO 371 34462 C14581/279 Minutes of 1st meeting of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Transfer of German Populations, 11 December 1943 & C6110/220/18 Final report of the Committee, 12 May 1944.
It should be made clear, however, that the subsequent evolution of a policy on transfers was driven by the exiles themselves and not by the Foreign Office. Nor was it developed by Beneš in isolation, but was refined by other politicians in exile such as Dr Ladislav Feierabend, General Sergej Ingr, Jaromír Nečas and Hubert Ripka. Moreover these plans enjoyed wide cross party support amongst the exiles in both London and Moscow and, even more importantly, the population and resistance movements in the Protectorate. This was a significant factor as Beneš's legitimacy in exile was largely dependent on their support. If his policies diverged too radically from those opinions expressed in the Protectorate, he risked losing their political support on his return home, and Beneš was far too experienced a politician to take such a risk. Thus the plans for transfers were developed with close reference to these influences. Bruce Lockhart and later Ambassador Philip Nichols kept the British authorities informed of these developing ideas, but the plans themselves were developed within the exiled government itself and the Foreign Office had then to react to each new development.

There is no evidence to suggest that the Central Department was aware of these emerging plans until October 1940 when Beneš told Bruce Lockhart that he had decided that, for any post-war federal arrangements to succeed, the renewed Czechoslovak state would have to be as ethnically 'homogenous as possible.' Beneš suggested that this might be achieved through a combination of internal and external transfers of the Sudeten German minority along with some limited border modifications. Yet this relatively

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93 FO 371 24289 C10776/2/12 Robert Bruce Lockhart memorandum on discussion with Beneš regarding Czechoslovak-Polish co-operation and post-war planning, 7 October 1940.
restrained policy of limited transfers combined with territorial readjustments, which Bruce Lockhart duly reported to the Foreign Office, was not the only solution under consideration. On 30 November 1940 in a conversation with Latham, of the Foreign Office’s Political Intelligence Department, Beneš went further and indicated that he wanted to remove up to two thirds of the Sudeten German population, through deportations and frontier modifications.94 Whichever statement represented the most accurate summation of Beneš’s and his government’s views one thing was clear by late 1940; plans for a significant transfer of the ethnic German population were now firmly on the agenda.

Given the Department’s continuing support for Jaksch they might have been expected to reject such a scheme out of hand. But at this stage of the war Czechoslovak-Polish negotiations on a possible federal state continued, plans the Foreign Office overtly encouraged, and both countries had large German minorities that would have to be ‘dealt with’ in one way or another. It is open to speculation whether Beneš introduced the concept of transfers within the context of current talks with the Poles in order to secure British agreement on the former because of their support for the latter. It is certainly a possibility. What was interesting about the Central Department’s immediate response to these proposals was that, on the whole, they regarded them as being plausible and worthy of further consideration.

Roberts noted that it was difficult to know at this stage in the war what would be possible later. As a result he concluded that, ‘The whole problem bristles with difficulties and the solution will depend upon the extent to which Germany is defeated...’ Makins

94 FO 371 24290 C13051/2/12 Latham to Foreign Office, 2 December 1940, regarding conversation with Beneš on 30 November 1940.
rejected the proposals as 'exaggerated,' but agreed with Roberts that it would be difficult to reach any definitive conclusions at this time. Strang, however, was more forthcoming, 'M. Beneš’s ideas [on transfers] have a good deal to commend them...there will be no peace for the new Czech state unless the German minority are swept right out of it...’ Cadogan also initialled the paper, although without comment. These responses might at first seem curious, but they were essentially a result of the Foreign Office’s realisation that at this stage in the war, when Europe’s future was still so uncertain, it would be sensible to keep the largest number of policy options open. Crucially though, the concept of transfers was not dismissed.

The development of these preparatory plans further illustrated just how deeply Beneš’s political tactics influenced the formation of British policy on the Sudeten German question. Although Beneš’s thoughts had not yet crystallised into firm policy proposals, his utterances to Bruce Lockhart can be viewed as a means of communicating his thoughts, unofficially, to the Foreign Office in order for him to assess their reactions. This was a technique he would use again when trying to ascertain Eden’s views on transfers in January 1942. Given the radical implications of these suggestions, the international situation at that time and the Provisional Government’s political position Beneš’s cautious approach was understandable. As Beneš had previously demonstrated, he was quite capable of pursuing two quite separate objectives and of modifying his aims and policies in correlation to his perception of the relative strength of his political position, negotiating techniques were to earn him a reputation as an awkward customer

95 FO 371 24289 C10776/2/12 Roberts minute, 14 October 1940, Makins minute, 14 October 1940 & Strang minute, 17 October 1940.
96 Taborsky, 'Politics in Exile,' in Mamatey & Luža (eds), A History of the Czechoslovak Republic, p335.
within the Central Department. Nevertheless by the end of 1940 Beneš had succeeded in raising the question of transfers with the British and had thus begun to undermine Jaksch's preferred option of autonomy for the Sudetenlands. Having said that, the British government still refused to discuss any post-war frontiers in Central Europe, still refused to allow the Provisional Czechoslovak government to exert any jurisdiction over the Sudeten Germans in Britain and had not, as yet, officially renounced the Munich Agreement.

Throughout the first six months of the following year Beneš and his government continued to advance their plans for transfers and to promote them in the wider public sphere. A series of internal memoranda, speeches and published articles set out their tentative plans for internal and external transfers, border modifications and the retention of a much-reduced Sudeten German population. As had been previously stated these developments were purely an internal Czechoslovak matter and although the Central Department was kept informed they made no official statements on them, nor, at this stage were they asked to. By contrast Jaksch made his opposition to these emerging

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97 See FO 371 30835 July to September 1942 & See FO 371 34338-34340, March to December 1943. Discussions over Beneš's desire to conclude a treaty with the Soviet Union placed an immense strain on Anglo-Czechoslovak relations.

98 See Beneš's proposals to the State Council entitled 'Memorandum Pertaining to our Peace Aims,' 1 February 1941, in J. Rychnlík, T. D. Marzik, M. Bielik (eds), R.W. Seton Watson and his relations with the Czechs and Slovaks, Documents 1906-1951, Vol 1, Martin, 1995, pp601-15, Beneš's lectures at the Alliance Française, Manchester on 17 May 1941 as reported in the Central Europe Observer, 30 May 1941, and at Oxford University on 23 May 1941 cited in Taborsky, 'Politics in Exile,' in Mamatey & Luža (eds), A History of the Czechoslovak Republic, p335 fn., Ripka's article 'A New Central Europe' in Central European Observer on 30 May 1941 & E. Beneš, 'The New Order in Europe,' The Nineteenth Century and After, CXXX (September 1941), pp150-155.

99 FO 371 26388 C5999/216/12 Ripka's article 'A New Central Europe' Central European Observer, 30 May 1941, was sent to the department by Bruce Lockhart on 3 June 1941 and which explicitly referred to 'the principle of transfers of populations.' See also FO 371 26388 C14276/216/12 Nichols's memorandum on conversation with Beneš on the transfer of the Sudeten Germans, 23 December 1941.
plans plain to the Central Department in January 1941, but his actions could not compete with the Czechoslovak government’s far more successful propaganda campaign.\(^{100}\)

The Central Department also maintained their insistence that Jaksch should be incorporated into the State Council, even though this had now become politically impossible for the Czechoslovak exiles in London. Beneš had previously reneged on his promise to offer Jaksch seats on the State Council on 11 December 1940, citing pressure from within his own government, but limited contacts between the two men continued. However, Beneš and Jaksch’s respective political positions had altered once more by the summer of 1941. Whereas the Foreign Office had previously regarded the two men as equally worthy of representation in 1939 and 1940, by the time of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, it was realised that Beneš controlled more assets of value to the British war effort than did Jaksch. Consequently, it gradually became apparent that British requests that Jaksch be included in the State Council would remain unfulfilled.

It was these considerations that began slowly to undermine Jaksch’s standing with the Foreign Office. The situation was further complicated by a growing disinclination amongst the Czechoslovak exiles in Britain and the population in the Protectorate to enter into any sort of political co-operation with the Sudeten Germans, regardless of British wishes to the contrary. Thus, the more secure Beneš’s political position became the less inclined, or able, he was to give way to these requests. The Central Department, however, persevered with its previous policy of supporting Jaksch long after he could have possibly been regarded as an asset.\(^{101}\)

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\(^{100}\) FO 371 26392 C918/639/12 Jaksch to Central Department, 25 January 1941.

\(^{101}\) FO 371 26392 C13260/639/12 Nichols letter to Central Department on negotiations between Beneš and Jaksch, 28 November 1941, and Roberts & Makins’s minutes on 3 and 10 December respectively.
These diverging attitudes were reinforced by four important events in 1941. The first was a keynote speech by Konrad Henlein (the leader of the Fascist Sudeten Germans) in the Protectorate on 4 March 1941, in which he celebrated the destruction of Czechoslovakia at Munich and admitted that this had been his ultimate objective in 1938, a confession that fatally damaged the cause of autonomy for the Sudetenlands, as Jaksch himself later admitted. As a result, when Beneš asked the resistance in the Protectorate whether they would accept Sudeten German participation in the ‘action abroad’ they responded that it would be unacceptable. Beneš shared this conclusion with Jaksch on 22 September. The second was the appointment of Reinhard Heydrich as Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia on 27 September 1941. His declaration of a state of emergency and the wave of arrests and executions that followed his arrival hardened the resolve of the resistance and the population that post-war transfers were the only solution to the Sudeten German question. Consequently, even if Beneš had wanted to co-operate with Jaksch, this was increasingly unlikely in the face of this mounting hostility from his own colleagues in exile and the resistance at home. Ultimately, this pressure would mean that any co-operation with Jaksch would become politically impossible, especially after Heydrich’s death in June 1942 and the resulting German retribution. But even these events did not stop the Foreign Office from continuing to insist that Jaksch should be allowed to join the State Council.

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102 Jaksch, Europe’s Road to Potsdam, pp363-364.
104 Beneš, Paměti, p321 & Jaksch, Europe’s Road to Potsdam, pp364-365.
106 See for example FO 371 30835 C11650/326/12 Roberts minute on Czechoslovak-Sudeten German relations, 24 November 1942.
Third, that the delicate balance that seemed to have been achieved between the three parties by the summer of 1941 was disturbed by the announcement of the ‘Atlantic Charter’ in August. This was the first attempt by Britain and the United States to provide a framework of war-aims, something that the British authorities had so far been at pains to avoid.\textsuperscript{107} Indeed, Czechoslovak and Polish reactions to the Charter underlined the advisability of this British policy.\textsuperscript{108} The Charter seemed to provide an opportunity for Jaksch to try and further secure his, and the Sudeten German’s position in the face of developing plans for transfers. He felt that Article 2 of the Charter protected the Sudeten Germans against forcible transfers, although he accepted that internal transfers might be necessary to create more ethnically homogenous Sudeten German areas in the post-war Republic.\textsuperscript{109} Jan Masaryk voiced his concerns regarding the Charter to Roberts on 27 August, stating that ‘Many Czechs had, however, been seriously perturbed and a message had come in from Prague asking whether the Declaration foreshadowed new ‘Henlein plebiscites.’\textsuperscript{110} These comments further illustrated the unease with which the home population regarded the Sudeten Germans’ international position. Thus when the Czechoslovaks came to accede to the terms of the Charter on the 29 August 1941 they maintained their own reservations about the Sudeten Germans’ rights to ‘self-determination’ at the expense of an independent Czechoslovak state, a point Beneš

\textsuperscript{110} FO 371 26423 C9647/12/62 Roberts minutes on talks with Masaryk regarding the Atlantic Charter, 27 August 1941.
reiterated in a letter to Jaksch on 1 December 1942. He had no intention of allowing the Charter’s fine words to be used by Jaksch as a means of political leverage, and, in the event they were not.

Jaksch’s relations with both the Foreign Office and the Czechoslovak government in exile were further affected by the Soviet Union’s entrance into the war in June 1941, the fourth and final important event of that year, principally because it heralded another enhancement of Beneš’s and his government’s political position. In fact, Jaksch’s own position might have become totally untenable had it not been for the Foreign Office’s continued sponsorship of him. Taken collectively these events subtly shifted the political balance in favour of Beneš’s and his government’s plan for transfers and away from Jaksch’s preferred option of autonomy for the Sudetenlands. Moreover, Beneš had re-opened negations with the Foreign Office on the subject of full *de jure* recognition in April 1941.

Even so, the British authorities retained their reservations over frontiers, juridical continuity and the Czechoslovak government’s jurisdiction over the Sudeten Germans. Conversely these were the very points that Beneš most wanted to be revised and the very ones that ‘protected’ Jaksch and his colleagues. So even when the Foreign Office agreed fully to recognise the Czechoslovak government in exile they continued to treat the Sudeten German refugees in Britain as a separate case, much to Beneš’s annoyance.

The way with which this issue was dealt led to a highly duplicitous situation, in which

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112 FO 371 26394, C7992/1320/12, Letter granting full recognition to a Czechoslovak Government in exile from Eden to Masaryk, 18 July 1941.

these reservations would be kept secret from the public in Britain and the Protectorate during and even after the war. The problem concerned the final paragraph of Eden’s letter of recognition, which read,

...pending a outcome of the discussions which I understand have been proceeding for some time past between our Government and certain Sudeten leaders in London, His Majesty’s Government feel themselves obliged to reserve the position as regards the exercise of jurisdiction in British territory over certain categories of former Czechoslovak nationals.

Of course, this passage referred to Jaksch and his nomination to the State Council, and was consistent with Britain’s position on this issue. Although Beneš had little choice but to accede to these terms he protested at the inclusion of this passage. According to Bruce Lockhart’s memoirs when presented with Eden’s letter Beneš replied, ‘There is a mistake in the last paragraph,’ to which Bruce Lockhart added, ‘There was, but it was soon altered.’

Thus the final signing of the Anglo-Czechoslovak agreement was delayed until the 30 July and, although this reservation stood, during a lunch time meeting at Claridges Eden agreed that this passage would not appear in public. This was a concession that

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115 Bruce Lockhart, Comes the Reckoning, p120.
116 Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), Dokumenty z historie československé politiky, Vol. 1, pp255-256. See also Beneš, Šest let exilu, p459-456, Táborský, The Czechoslovak Cause in International Law, p95, Žižka (ed), Bojující Československo, pp89-90. All of which carry the edited version of Eden’s letter. See also FO 371 30834 C2945/326/12 Foreign Office memorandum on Czechoslovak-Sudeten German relations, 23 March 1942.
Beneš readily accepted and he noted that ‘It shows that even with the English it pays never to give in.’117 The passage was not included in the published version of Eden’s letter nor were its terms promoted and even the Czechoslovak State Council was not informed of its existence. Jaksch, however, was. Nevertheless, this episode clearly illustrated the complex and confused position that the Foreign Office had managed to find itself in over the Sudeten German question by the summer of 1941.

Although this series of events had undermined Jaksch’s position by late 1941, certain members of the Central Department, principally Makins and Roberts, continued to offer him assistance and support. This is clear evidence of the increasingly divergent attitudes that existed within the Foreign Office over the Sudeten German question. Two cases in particular illustrate this point. The first concerned the Central Department’s assistance in transporting some of Jaksch’s colleagues from Sweden to Britain and the second his access to the British Broadcasting Corporation’s (BBC) radio broadcasts to occupied Europe.

In November 1941 the Secretary General of the Sudeten German Social Democratic Party, Ernest Paul, was flown in from Stockholm to attend a conference in Britain using an air service operated by the Special Operations Executive (SOE). According to Jaksch’s memoirs this was achieved with the explicit help and support of the Foreign Office.118 It is now clear that SOE was in contact with Jaksch, had conscripted a number of Sudeten German recruits for special training and had used his

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117 Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), Dokumenty z historie československé politiky, Vol. 1, p255.
118 HS 4/13 Colin Gubbins to Sir Frank Nelson, memorandum on SOE air service to Stockholm and Jaksch, 23 February 1942 & Jaksch, Europe’s Road to Potsdam, p364.
contacts in Sweden to establish a courier route to Germany and the Sudetenland. In early 1942, however, Roberts passed on a request to SOE that Paul be transported back to Stockholm. This episode is of particular interest because Peter Wilkinson, head of SOE's Czech section, queried this application. In a meeting with Roberts on 20 January Wilkinson was told that the Foreign Office had agreed to Paul's return and that he should be allowed to undertake the return journey in order to 'save the FO losing face.' He then went further and explained that in the event of the sudden collapse of the Third Reich these Sudeten German refugees were regarded as being politically useful and that it was official Foreign Office policy to support the Sudeten German Social Democrats in exile. This explanation seemed to go much further than officially stated policy and appeared to view the Sudetenlands and their inhabitants as clearly distinct from the rest of Czechoslovakia.

As SOE had recently undertaken a series of operations to the Protectorate together with Czechoslovak military intelligence Wilkinson was 'appalled' that Roberts expected him to keep quiet about this arrangement. This was something he would have been unable to do, since the Czechoslovaks knew about the air service and would have regarded any assistance for Jaksch as, 'a breach of faith.' This was a serious consideration for SOE at this time as relations with the Czechoslovaks had just begun, briefly, to be operationally fruitful. The files do not reveal whether Paul ever made it

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119 HS 4/13 SOE's German section memorandum on contacts with Jaksch and other Sudeten Germans, 22 December 1941, see also Wilkinson, *Foreign Fields*, p58.
120 HS 4/13 Colin Gubbins to Sir Frank Nelson, memorandum on SOE air services to Stockholm, 23 February 1942.
121 HS 4/13 Colin Gubbins to Sir Frank Nelson, memorandum on SOE air services to Stockholm, 23 February 1942.
122 See HS 4/18, 19, 22, 24, 35, 36, 39, 50 & 58, also MacDonald, *The Killing of Heydrich*, pp138-140.
123 HS 4/13 Colin Gubbins to Sir Frank Nelson, memorandum on SOE air service to Stockholm, 23 February 1942.
back to Sweden, but Roberts’s comments would seem to lend some credence to Beneš’s complaints that the British continued to support Jaksch behind his back, accusations the Central Department tried to play down.\textsuperscript{124}

The second example concerned Jaksch’s access to broadcast time on the BBC and provides an excellent illustration of how Beneš used his British contacts to subvert Jaksch’s support within the Central Department. In September 1941 Makins had noted that Jaksch was pleased with his fortnightly broadcasts on the BBC’s German service, which had begun back in July.\textsuperscript{125} This situation meant Jaksch was not under the control of the BBC’s Czechoslovak service, which broadcast daily to the Protectorate and was operated by some of Beneš’s closest supporters.\textsuperscript{126} Thus Jaksch had once more been treated equally, yet separately, from the other Czechoslovaks exiles in London and the Provisional Government had no control over his broadcasts, a serious omission given the centrality of propaganda to the Czechoslovak ‘action abroad.’\textsuperscript{127} On 16 January 1942 Jaksch complained to Roberts that Beneš and Ripka wanted him moved across to the Czechoslovak service for just this reason.\textsuperscript{128} Three days later Beneš also brought up the same issue with Nichols, who informed him that the British government was unlikely to agree to such a move as it might be regarded as having an impact on the Sudeten Germans’ place within any future Czechoslovak state.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{124} FO 371 30835 C9161/326/12 Nichols to Roberts, 21 September 1942.
\textsuperscript{125} FO 371 26392 C10002/639/12 Makins minute, 4 September 1941. See also C9386/326/12 Roberts minute on talks with Jaksch, 29 September 1942.
\textsuperscript{126} See P. Drtina, Československo můj osud, Prague, 1991, pp535-560. One of the most popular speakers on this service was Jan Masaryk, for the texts of his broadcasts between 1939-1945 see J. Masaryk, Speaking to my Country, London, 1944 & Bruce Lockhart, Comes the Reckoning, p 112. See also M. Dobbs, Madeleine Albright. A Twentieth Century Odyssey, New York, 1999, pp83-89. Albright’s father, Josef Korbel, worked with Drtina in the BBC’s Czechoslovak section.
\textsuperscript{128} FO 371 30834 C326/326/12 Roberts minute on talks with Jaksch about his broadcasts, 16 January 1942.
\textsuperscript{129} FO 371 30834 C1101/326/12 Nichols to Eden on talks with Beneš, 19 January 1942.
defended the status quo. Thus the stage was set for a test of authority between Beneš and Jaksch, to see who could exert the greatest influence on the Foreign Office (and thus the BBC). It was a contest that Beneš would ultimately win and in doing so help consign Jaksch to political obscurity.

This struggle unfolded at the same time that Beneš was negotiating with the Foreign Office over the denunciation of the Munich Agreement (see below), so the concept that Jaksch’s position with the BBC reflected Britain’s policy on the Sudetenlands was particularly troubling for him. He returned to this charge with Nichols on 9 February, but again Roberts and Makins rejected his proposal. Nevertheless, Jaksch’s airtime was reduced in early March, which he suspected had been done at Beneš’s behest. Although another Central Department official, P.F Hancock, queried this reduction in airtime, Roberts noted that it was probably best to do nothing in order to avoid the impression that the Foreign Office was overtly supporting Jaksch. This was an indication that he was aware of the sensitivity of this issue. It was at this point that Bruce Lockhart, who had now been promoted to Director-General of the Political Warfare Executive (PWE), entered the fray, in support of Beneš. On the 10 April he wrote to the department in an official capacity.

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130 FO 371 30834 Cl1101/326/12 Roberts minute, 20 January 1942.
131 FO 371 30834 C1645/326/12 Nichols to Makins, 9 February 1942, Roberts minute, 15 February 1942, & Makins to Nichols, 23 February 1942.
132 FO 371 30834 C2408/326/12 Jaksch to Makins, 2 March 1942.
133 FO 371 30834 C2408/326/12 Hancock minutes, 9 March 1942 & Roberts minutes, 14 March 1942.
134 Bruce Lockhart had also been promoted to Deputy Under Secretary of States for Foreign Affairs in March 1942 and thus outranked Makins and Roberts. See Young (ed), The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, pp19-28 & Bruce Lockhart, Comes the Reckoning, pp125-130.
There remains the important question: how Herr Jaksch came to be scheduled in the German programme...This was done without my being consulted. No records are apparently available. Mr Kirkpatrick says the initiative was taken by Mr Crossman who said that his section was looking for ‘personality speakers’ and that the Foreign Office liked Herr Jaksch.\footnote{FO 371 30834 C2408/326/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum, 10 April 1942, Richard Crossman was the head of the BBC’s European programme.}

He concluded that Jaksch’s propaganda value was questionable and that ideally he should be taken off the air forthwith. In response Roberts mounted a stout defence of Jaksch. ‘We happen to have an outstanding Sudeten leader here and it would to my mind be most short-sighted not to make some use of him. He certainly cannot be used very effectively if he appears as a mere creature of the Czechs in their programmes.’\footnote{FO 371 30834 C2408/326/12 Roberts minute, 11 April 1942.} Here the matter may have rested, and Jaksch might have remained on the BBC, had it not been for the intervention of Lord Vansittart, formally the Foreign Office’s Chief Diplomatic Advisor who had retired in April 1941.

Vansittart sent two letters to Eden on this subject on 10 May and 16 June respectively.\footnote{FO 371 30834 C6447/326/12 Vansittart to Eden, 10 May 1942 & 16 June 1942.} At first Vansittart’s intervention might seem curious, especially given his earlier support for Henlein, but the reasons was relatively simple: Vansittart had a well known dislike for all things German and the Czechoslovak Ambassador to the Court of St James, Count Maximilián von Lobkowicz, and his wife lived in his house.\footnote{FO 371 30834 C6447/326/12 Roberts minute, 16 June 1942.} In his original letter Vansittart did not conceal his views on the matter; ‘I think it monstrous that
he should be able to broadcast at all, and doubly monstrous that he be allowed to broadcast as a German and not as a Czech.\textsuperscript{139} Upon reading this Eden noted the next day that, ‘this is great nonsense…’ and chose not to reply.\textsuperscript{140}

But Vansittart persisted and sent another letter a month later to complain about the lack of a response and to reiterate his position in more detail: ‘Herr Jaksch is a Czech subject. The Czech Government regard him both as hostile and Pangerman - the two terms are indeed, synonymous…’ he then turned to the crux of this whole issue.

Moreover, the Foreign Office no doubt realises that the matter has a far wider implication than this. By continuing to let Herr Jaksch take part in the German transmissions, the Foreign Office is tending to create some suspicion that we have not made up our minds to the inevitable, which is the return of Czechoslovakia’s natural frontiers. The value of Herr Jaksch is certainly not such to compensate for that suspicion.\textsuperscript{141}

Thus Vansittart was largely replicating the Czechoslovaks’ own attitude towards British support for Jaksch, in effect that it represented a continuation of Munich policies and a disinclination to reincorporate the Sudetenlands into Czechoslovakia. This was essentially the Central Department’s position especially during the delicate negotiations over the denunciation of Munich. Bruce Lockhart re-entered the debate soon after with a

\textsuperscript{139} FO 371 30834 C6447/326/12 Vansittart to Eden, 10 May 1942.
\textsuperscript{140} FO 371 30834 C6447/326/12 Eden minute, 11 May 1942.
\textsuperscript{141} FO 371 30834 C6447/326/12 Vansittart to Eden, 4 June 1942.
detailed memorandum to Eden on why Jaksch’s broadcasts should be discontinued.\(^{142}\) Roberts and Makins again attempted to defend their previous position on Jaksch, but to no avail, they were quite simply out-gunned by Bruce-Lockhart and Vansittart and by the possibility of a more public campaign on this issue.\(^{143}\) Both Sargent and Cadogan were unable to reach any firm conclusions and on 22 June Oliver Harvey announced that Eden had decided to stop Jaksch’s broadcasts; Eden told Beneš of his decision over lunch on the 25 June.\(^{144}\) In December 1942 Jaksch attempted to re-open the issue with a request that he be allowed back on the radio. Although Roberts once again supported his request it was refused.\(^{145}\) Beneš had thus succeeded in out-maneuvering both Jaksch and his supporters in the Central Department and had further isolated him.

In addition to the events described above 1942 proved to be a decisive watershed in Anglo-Czechoslovak-Sudeten German relations for three reasons. First, because it was the year in which two Czechoslovak agents attacked and fatally wounded Heydrich in Prague.\(^{146}\) This led to widespread Nazi reprisals, most notably the destruction of the village of Lidice, which galvanized international in support for Czechoslovakia’s struggle against the German occupation.\(^{147}\) After these events Czechoslovak-Sudeten German cooperation in exile became even more unlikely, as did the two communities’ continued

\(^{142}\) FO 371 30834 C6447/326/12 Bruce Lockhart memorandum on Jaksch’s broadcasts on the BBC’s German service, 14 June 1942.
\(^{143}\) FO 371 30834 C6447/326/12 Roberts minute, 16 June 1942.
\(^{144}\) FO 371 30834 C6447/326/12 Sargent minute, 18 June 1942, Cadogan minute, 19 June 1942, Harvey minute, 22 June 1942 & Nichols to Makins, 30 June 1942.
\(^{145}\) FO 371 30834 C12506/326/12 Jaksch to Roberts, 12 December 1942 & Roberts to Jaksch, 14 January 1943.
coexistence after the war, a point that Beneš made clear to Eden on 7 July 1942. Even Jaksch had to concede that after Lidice the probability of the Sudetenlands being granted any form of autonomous status had been irreparably damaged. More importantly, these events in the Protectorate meant that, after June 1942, the British authorities became far more willing to concede points to Beneš over which they had previously maintained reservations. Quite simply Jaksch’s usefulness had begun to wane.

Second, largely as a result of the reprisals caused by Heydrich’s assassination, Eden finally announced on 5 August 1942 Britain’s denunciation of the terms and consequences of the Munich Agreement. Beneš had first raised the question of an official British repudiation of Munich in a conversation with Eden on 21 January 1942, and again with Nichols on 26 January, but for more than seven months the subsequent bilateral negotiations progressed inconclusively. Both sides produced a series of draft formulae on this subject, but could not agree on the final wording. Beneš insisted that Britain had to annul Munich in order to avoid the possibility of too great a reliance on the Soviet Union, the only country that had so far agreed to reconstruct Czechoslovakia in her pre-Munich form and to support transfers. Moscow had consistently been far more supportive of Beneš’s political objective than had the British, but the Foreign Office took a different view. Its officials argued that because of the events of September 1938 they could not automatically regard the Sudeten Germans as Czechoslovak citizens, and any

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148 FO 371 30835 C6834/326/12 Eden to Nichols on conversation with Beneš, 7 July 1942.
149 Jaksch, Europe’s Road to Potsdam, p371.
150 FO 371 30835 C7210/326/12 Eden to Masaryk, 5 August 1942.
151 FO 371 30834 C845/326/12 Nichols memorandum on meeting with Beneš and his request for a repudiation of Munich, 26 January 1942 & FO 30835 C5508/326/12 Foreign Office minute on ‘Discussions with the Czechoslovaks regarding the effect of the Munich Agreement and the future of Czechoslovakia, January to April 1942,’ 29 May 1942.
152 See for example FO 371 30834 C4047/326/12 draft formula by Sir Herbert Malkin, the Foreign Office’s Chief Legal Advisor, and Nichols of April 1942.
admission of Czechoslovak jurisdiction over these people might be regarded as a territorial commitment to include the Sudetenlands in a future Czechoslovak State. In addition, British obligations to the Refugee Trust Fund and under the Czechoslovak Financial Claims Act meant that a straightforward annulment of Munich would be imprudent. Beneš himself was increasingly frustrated at this ‘insurmountable opposition’ from within the Foreign Office, and, as a result stalemate ensued by the end of April 1942. It was only after the attack on Heydrich that talks recommenced in June.153

By then Nichols and several members of the Central Department had recognised that the Nazi reprisals in the Protectorate, and the world-wide revulsion they had caused, had made Britain’s previous position on the issue increasingly untenable.154 Once more, as had happened on so many other occasions, British policy was altered by the course of events and not by a fundamental change in the Foreign Office’s position. Eden made the linkage between Heydrich’s death and the denunciation of Munich explicit in a memorandum to the War Cabinet on 2 July 1942.155 This he repeated on the floor of the House on 5 August.156 The War Cabinet acceded to this proposal on 6 July, but added that the British authorities would only drop their reservations over Czechoslovak jurisdiction over the Sudeten Germans once they had entered the State Council.157 Although both Beneš and Ripka objected strenuously to the re-emergence of this clause, which further delayed the final exchange of letters, the Foreign Office refused to concede

153 Beneš, Paměti, pp296-302.
154 FO 371 30834 C5797/326/12 Nichols to Makins, 9 June 1942. See also minutes by P. Hancock and Roberts, 11 June 1942.
155 FO 371 30834 C667/326/12, Eden’s War Cabinet Memorandum, 2 July 1942, on the denunciation of the Munich Agreement.
157 FO 371 30835 C6788/326/12 War Cabinet conclusions, 6 July 1942.
the point. Nevertheless this was a crucial development as this meant that Britain no longer stood by the agreement’s separation of the Sudetenlands from the rump of Czechoslovakia, a concept that Jaksch had thus far been able to use to his advantage. It also marked a significant victory for Beneš, as the overturning of the Munich Agreement had been one of his most cherished objectives in exile.

Beneš also managed to surmount the jurisdiction problem, not by granting Jaksch his seat, although talks on this issue would continue for the rest of the year, but by allowing other Sudeten German representatives to join the State Council. Many of who were opponents of Jaksch and supported transfers. The Central Department was unimpressed by these new additions to the Council. As Roberts noted in response to a letter from these ‘pro-Benes’ Sudeten Germans on 18 September 1942, ‘This would be more impressive if these Czech puppets represented something.’ By contrast Jaksch launched a campaign against Britain’s repudiation of Munich and dispatched letters of protest to the governments of Britain, Canada and the United States. Although sympathetic, the Central Department had finally conceded by September that the Czechoslovaks were likely to reoccupy their former frontiers when the war was won and that there was little the British authorities could now do to foster an agreement between

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158 FO 371 30835 C6834/326/12 Eden to Nichols on conversation with Beneš, 7 July 1942 & C7361/326/12 Nichols to Roberts on talks with Ripka, 24 July 1942.
160 FO 371 30835 C11650/326/12 Roberts minute on talk with Jaksch, 24 November 1942.
161 FO 371 30835 C9048/326/12 letter from Sudeten German representatives in Czechoslovak State Council (G. Beuer, J. Zinner & A. Peres) to Eden, 15 August 1942, congratulating Britain for repudiating the Munich Agreement. See also FO 371 30835 C9352/326/12 Roberts minute on comments of the Communist Sudeten German, Karl Kreibich, in State Council, 13 October 1942.
162 FO 371 30835 C9448/326/12, Roberts minute, 18 September 1942.
163 FO 371 30835 C7809/326/12, Roberts minute on talks with Jaksch, 7 August 1942 & FO 371 30835 C8119/326/12 Jaksch to Eden, 19 August 1942.
Jaksch and Beneš.¹⁶⁴ The two men met several more times during the closing months of 1942, but after their final encounter on the 1 December all co-operation and dialogue between them finally ceased.¹⁶⁵

Inexorably linked to the repudiation of Munich was the question of transfers, the third and final development in 1942, and here too Beneš set the agenda and managed to extract significant concessions from the Foreign Office. It was during this year that Beneš officially presented his plans for post-war transfers to the British government for the first time and, more importantly, received their verbal acceptance of the ‘principle of transfers.’¹⁶⁶ As with the negotiations over the denunciation of the Munich Agreement, progress on this question was incremental and gradual. At the start of the new year Beneš had an article published in the prestigious American Journal *Foreign Affairs* entitled ‘The Organization of Postwar Europe.’ In this he argued that, ‘It will be necessary after this war to carry out a transfer of populations on a very much larger scale than after the last war.’¹⁶⁷ This was a definitive statement of his position on this question and brought the concept of transfers to the attention of much a wider audience. Nichols forwarded a copy to the Central Department, who noted with satisfaction that Beneš appeared to still be in favour of post-war federations.¹⁶⁸ Beneš then brought up transfers directly with Eden during a meeting on 21 January, when he unofficially detailed his proposals. He outlined plans to cede some Czechoslovak territory to Germany in order to rid the state of 6 to

¹⁶⁴ FO 371 30835 C8119/326/12 Roberts minute, 1 September 1942 & Jaksch, *Europe’s Road to Potsdam*, pp372-373.
¹⁶⁶ FO 371 30835 C6867/326/12 Nichols to Beneš, 7 July 1942.
¹⁶⁸ FO 371 30825 C2456/138/12 Nichols to Foreign Office, 3 March 1942, & Roberts minute, 15 March 1942.
700,000 Sudeten Germans, transfer another 1,300,000 and leave approximately one million within Czechoslovakia.\(^{169}\) Although Eden did not officially accept these plans, and Beneš did not officially present a position paper to the Foreign Office, these talks did have one significant outcome; the Foreign Office requested that the FRPS prepare a memorandum on the advisability and feasibility of transfers.

This was duly delivered by Toynbee on 12 February 1942 and proved to be an updated version of Mabbot's 1940 memorandum, written by the same author.\(^{170}\) Crucially the memorandum did not confine itself to the Sudeten Germans, but also considered transfers from Poland, Yugoslavia and Italy and within the context of continuing talks on post-war federations.\(^{171}\) These were plans that the British authorities were keen to encourage, because it placed these proposed transfers within a wider European context, meaning that ethnic Germans would have to be transferred from a number of European countries. Had this process been confined solely to Czechoslovakia the Foreign Office's response may well have been different. Thus the Central Department's reaction to Mabbot's updated memorandum was positive and it was widely circulated within the Foreign Office and beyond.\(^{172}\) Mabbot's paper firmly placed transfers on the British agenda and helped pave the way for the British acceptance of the principle of transfers, as did, incidentally, Molotov's acceptance of Beneš's proposal for transfers on 9 June 1942.

\(^{169}\) FO 371 30834 C856/326/12 Eden to Nichols, 21 January 1942.
\(^{170}\) FO 371 30930 C2167/241/18 Toynbee to Foreign Office, 12 February 1942.
\(^{171}\) See FO 371 30828 C10671/151/12 Roberts memorandum entitled 'Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation. Developments between November 11, 1940 – November 2, 1942,' 4 November 1942.
\(^{172}\) FO 371 30930 C2167/241/18 Harrison minute, 2 March 1942, Roberts minute, 2 March 1942 & Gladwyn Jebb to Toynbee, 10 August 1942.
Indeed, the memorandum’s importance was underlined by the fact that even though no official agreement on transfers had yet been made Eden broached the subject in paragraphs seven and eight of his memorandum to the War Cabinet on the denunciation of Munich. Not only did he outline Beneš’s proposals from January, but also borrowed heavily from Mabbott’s work on the subject and highlighted the fact that other counties in Central and South-eastern Europe would most likely wish to do the same. He concluded,

A population transfer on this scale would be a formidable undertaking. It will probably be impossible to avoid some measures of this kind in post-war Europe...it is only too likely that the Czech and Polish populations will forcibly expel the German minorities from their midst [anyway]. The question is whether we should now commit ourselves to the principle of such transfers...

The War Cabinet concurred. On 11 July Makins noted, ‘I am very doubtful whether we ought at this stage to put anything in writing on the subject of transfers of population...I think a verbal communication to him [Beneš] and, at the next convenient moment, to Herr Jaksch should suffice.’ Nichols was duly informed of this by Roberts on 17 July and passed the message on to Beneš that the British authorities were ‘prepared to accept the application of the principle of transfers of populations.’

173 FO 371 30834 C667/326/12, Eden’s War Cabinet Memorandum, 2 July 1942, on the denunciation of the Munich Agreement, p2.
174 FO 371 30835 C6867/326/12, Makins minute, 11 July 1942 & Roberts to Nichols, 17 July 1942.
1942 both Britain and the Soviet Union had tentatively agreed that a proportion of Czechoslovakia's Sudeten German minority would be transferred after the war had been won. The overriding reason for the acceptance of this principle was not a desire to give Beneš satisfaction over this issue, or a complete reversal of the Department's previous support for Jaksch, but rather the realisation that many ethnic Germans would be forced out of Central and Eastern Europe after the war come what may.

Although this agreement was still provisional the Foreign Office was, surprisingly, actually prepared to go even further on this issue. When Beneš brought up with Nichols the possibility of transferring Sudeten Germans on the basis of their 'war guilt,' as opposed to collective responsibility, the Foreign Office objected. As Cadogan noted,

I am rather doubtful about this principle of ejecting the "guilty"...because I fear that it might lead to the limitation of our right to make considerable transfers of population. We may want (and the Americans may propose) to use this remedy on a fairly large scale...

Eden agreed. Thus the principle of transfers had not only been accepted, but was proposed as a solution to be used on a far larger scale than Beneš may ever have imagined.

As had previously been the case the further development of the transfer plans was largely an internal Czechoslovak matter, about which the Foreign Office was kept informed, but had little direct influence over its progression.\(^{177}\) Nor was there a need for intervention, given that the British authorities had made it plain that no transfers could be undertaken until after the war, and even then, only with the agreement of all three main allies.\(^{178}\) They had no intention of giving their unilateral support to such a proposal. These evolving plans and Beneš’s trips to Washington and Moscow, where he secured both President Roosevelt’s and Stalin’s agreement for transfers have been well documented and researched and there is little need to reiterate them here.\(^{179}\) Suffice it to say that by the beginning of 1944 the Czechoslovak government in exile had received the agreement of the Great Powers, Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union for the ‘principle of transfers.’

It was only with the establishment of the European Advisory Commission (EAC) in late 1943, a body designed to deliberate a range of post-war problems, that the Foreign Office was obliged to consider these proposals once more.\(^{180}\) Although an Inter-Departmental Committee on the transfer of German populations had been established in December 1943 to consider British policy on this question it was increasingly apparent

that the final decision on transfers could not be made by the Foreign Office alone.\textsuperscript{181} Rather, such drastic upheavals of populations would be have to be agreed to and managed by the three the Great Powers and the consultative bodies they had created. This was a factor that the Inter-Departmental Committee considered in May when it accepted that the Soviet Union’s influence in the areas effected by transfers would be paramount and that,

If British influence was to be effective in controlling or modifying the policy of transfer, British troops should be sent to the areas concerned...Planning for the future is based upon the assumption that there will be no spheres of influence in Europe. Therefore the three Great Powers should participate on equal terms...\textsuperscript{182}

On 20 July the Ministerial Armistice and Post-war Committee, chaired by Clement Attlee, also considered this issue. It concluded that any organised transfers would have to be delayed for at least a year after the end of the hostilities, would take some five years to complete and ‘the amount of human suffering involved would be very great.’\textsuperscript{183} But as the end of the war approached it became increasingly obvious that British involvement in any transfers from Czechoslovakia would be extremely limited. In the event no British forces entered liberated Czechoslovakia, and the distribution of the occupation zones in

\textsuperscript{181} FO 371 34462 C14581/279 Minutes of 1\textsuperscript{st} meeting of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Transfer of German Populations, 11 December 1943.


\textsuperscript{183} Woodward, \textit{British Foreign Policy in the Second World War}, Vol. 5, pp210-212.
Germany meant that very few of the transferred Germans would come under British administration. Ultimately, it was the United States and the Allied Control Commission that would have to take the largest share of responsibility for managing the transfers and the re-settlement of those transferred, facts that had a commensurate effect on the amount of time and consideration that these issues were given by the Foreign Office in the closing stages of the war.184

It was only when the Czechoslovak government delivered their final memorandum on transfers to the EAC on 24 August 1944, and sent a copy to the Foreign Office on 28 November, that British deliberations on this matter were synchronised with the exiled government's proposals for the last time.185 Another of Mabbott's papers followed it in early December.186 The Czechoslovak memorandum, written by their own research department under the supervision of Beneš and Ripka, contained slightly higher figures for those to be transferred than before. The number of 'loyal' Sudeten Germans to be retained was reduced from one million to 800,000 and it was proposed that 150,000 Lustian Sorbs might be exchanged for Germans.187 The British response, as might have been expected given the constraints of coalition post-war planning, was inconclusive and non-committal. When Eden replied to Nichols on 15 January 1945 he wrote,

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184 FO 371 38945 C12895/1347/12 Nichols to Eden, 12 September 1944, on draft Czechoslovak memorandum 'The Problem of the German Minority in Czechoslovakia,' Troutbeck minute, 14 September 1944, Harrison minute, 22 September 1944.
185 FO 371 50658 U 3111/3/970 Masaryk to EAC, 14 August 1945 & FO 371 38946 C16563/1347/12 Nichols to Foreign Office, 28 November 1944, including Czechoslovak memorandum on 'The Problem of the German Minority in Czechoslovakia' previously passed to the EAC.
186 FO 371 39012 C17689/184/62 J.W. Mabbott to Central Department, 14 December 1944.
187 The Sorbs were a Slavic minority living in eastern Germany, this exchange never occurred.
In the circumstances it is impossible for His Majesty's Government to comment in detail...and ...do not feel able to offer any observations until they have discussed these question with their principle allies...For the time being, therefore, His Majesty's Government must reserve their attitude in regard to the Czechoslovak government's proposals.188

Combined with the EAC's subsequent refusal to enshrine transfers in Germany's surrender terms, this was an unsatisfactory conclusion to the issue for Beneš, although a sensible one for the Foreign Office.189 This was especially so as Beneš had hoped to have been able to return home with full allied acceptance for transfers, but in the event he had to satisfy himself with yet another 'provisional' agreement, a position that was wholly consistent with his relations with the British authorities since 1939.190

It was, however, a minor compensation that the Foreign Office sent several notes during the closing weeks of the war to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, to urge him not to allow United States forces in western Bohemia to fraternise with the local Sudeten German population.191 This was an issue first raised by Ripka on 20 April and later repeated by the Czechoslovak liaison team with Eisenhower's headquarters. Although no definitive conclusions on transfers had been reached, and the Foreign Office repeated its previous reservations over the timing of transfers, it was made quite clear that, 'The German regime in the Sudetenland, as well as other areas of Czechoslovakia, is an alien

188 FO 371 38946 C16563/1347/12 Departmental minutes, 3 to 12 December 1945 & Eden to Nichols, 15 January 1945.
189 FO 371 50657 U1021/3/70 Minutes of 7th EAC meeting, 14 February 1945, with Czechoslovak representatives.
190 FO 371 47085 N1702/207/12 Nichols to Northern Department on talks with Beneš, 13 February 1945.
191 FO 371 47086 N4702/207/12 V.F.W. Cavendish-Bentinck, Joint Intelligence Committee, to Foreign Office 21 April 1945.
one to be uprooted and destroyed. Transfers were now regarded as a foregone conclusion in London. All that remained to be settled, in effect, was the actual timing of the commencement of the transfer process and that was agreed upon at the Potsdam Conference in the late summer of 1945. The transfers themselves started early the following year.

If Beneš’s hopes for a definitive British statement in support of transfers were to be frustrated by the end of the war he had still managed to extract most of the concessions on this issue for which he had hoped. Jaksch’s position on the other hand went from bad to worse. Jaksch continued to meet with Roberts for the rest of the war, but as the Czechoslovak governments proposals on transfers became more widely accepted so their relations with Jaksch became ever more acrimonious. An increasingly bitter war of words was played out between Jaksch and his Czechoslovak opponents, particularly Ripka. This ultimately developed into a fierce propaganda campaign against transfers in the Britain and the United States in 1944 and 1945. But although vocal these objections had little actual effect on British policy and could not prevent Beneš’s successes in advancing plans for transfers.

192 FO 371 47086 N4465/4440/12 Nichols to Eden, 20 April 1945, N4701/207/12 from SHAEF forward HQ to Sargent, 27 April 1945 & N4701/207/12 Foreign Office to SHAEF forward HQ, 2 May 1945. See also FO 371 47154 N5360/4440/12 War Office to Gatehouse, 12 May 1945, copy of SHAEF directive on liberated areas of Czechoslovakia to commanding General 12th Army Group.

193 See FO 371 34330 C4729/96/12 extract from Evening Standard article ‘Sudetens split with Benesh,’ 22 April 1943 & C17124/96/12 Nichols to Roberts on Ripka’s complaints about Jaksch’s activities, 6 October 1943. See also FO 371 38945 C13142/1347/12 copy of Ripka’s reply to Jaksch’s statement of his policies 1 August 1944 & 30 August 1944.

By 1944 Jaksch’s position with the Foreign Office had become even weaker in the face of international acceptance of the ‘principle of transfers’ and the realisation that the re-incorporation of the Sudetenlands into Czechoslovakia was, even with Britain’s continued reservations over frontiers, ever more certain. When he tried to secure a meeting with Eden in August 1944 after he had established the Democratic Sudeten Committee, as a counter-weight to the pro-Beneš Anti-Fascist Committee of Democratic Germans of Czechoslovakia, it was refused by the Central Department. Only Roberts expressed his support and opposed the description of Jaksch as pursuing polices in the ‘Henlein tradition.’ But by now he was a lone voice in the Department, where once he had expressed the majority opinion. Even Roberts’s continued intervention on Jaksch’s behalf ended when he was transferred from the Central Department to take up a position as Minister in Moscow in late 1944.

Thus Jaksch’s relations with the Central Department, which had once challenged Beneš’s position in exile, ended rather pathetically. On 1 February 1945 Jaksch wrote to Roberts yet again to ask for his assistance in gaining airtime on the BBC, so that he might encourage his fellow Sudeten Germans in the Protectorate to rise up against the Nazis before the end of the war. Unfortunately for Jaksch, Roberts never received his letter and, in his absence, the Northern Department decided that the best course of action was to ‘keep out of Sudeten affairs as much as possible.’ The Department’s reply to Jaksch

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193 See FO 371 C12537/1347/12 Nichols to Harrison on Czechoslovak proposals for EAC and resulting minutes, 7 September to 15 October 1943.
194 FO 371 38921 Cl 10531/63/12 Jaksch to Eden, 18 August 1944, Gatehouse minute, 1 September 1944.
195 FO 371 38923 C9608/63/12 Roberts minute, 2 September 1944.
197 FO 371 47083 N1801/133/12 Jaksch to Roberts, 1 February 1945.
200 FO 371 47083 N1801/133/12 Gatehouse minute, 24 February 1945.
was candid; Roberts had left for Moscow and Jaksch’s request was refused. The last vestiges of British support for Jaksch had ended. On 20 April Ripka officially requested through Nichols that the British authorities not permit Jaksch to travel to Czechoslovakia. The accompanying minutes plainly stated the various difficulties involved. In the event Jaksch never returned to Czechoslovakia and settled in West Germany, where he became active in Sudeten German émigré politics. He died in a car crash on 27 November 1966.

British attempts to support Jaksch, and to encourage his inclusion in the Czechoslovak government in exile, had failed completely by the end of the war. Beneš had managed to circumvent the actual intent of the Foreign Office’s instructions, while appearing to have implemented them. As a result of this failure, the inconclusive results of Czechoslovak-Polish federation talks and external events in 1942, large-scale transfers of populations began to be increasingly viewed by the Foreign Office as a viable solution to Central Europe’s seemingly intractable minority problems. These were views supported by a number of memoranda on this question produced by the Foreign Office’s own research department. More importantly, the evolution of the transfer option was one that was entirely driven forward by Beneš and his government in exile. Whereas the British government had been willing to appease Germany over the Sudeten Germans in 1938 so as to avoid war, by 1945 they had completed a dramatic volte-face on this

201 FO 371 47083 N1801/133/12 Allen reply to Jaksch, 4 March 1945.
202 FO 371 47154 N4465/4440/12 Nichols to Eden, 10 April 1945 & Ward minute, 2 May 1945.
question and this was a direct result of Beneš's political machinations in exile, which had been diametrically opposed to the Central Department's prevailing opinions on this issue.
Chapter Seven

The Special Operations Executive’s relations with the Czechoslovak exiles in Britain, 1940 to 1945

By the time that the Special Operations Executive (SOE) was formed in the summer of 1940 a provisional Czechoslovak government in exile had been established in London and those Czechoslovak soldiers and airmen who had escaped from France had been integrated into the British war effort. From this point onwards, however, the contribution of these regular forces to the war effort and the political advantages they conferred on the Czechoslovak ‘action abroad’ was gradually reduced due to their relative inactivity. Conversely, Czechoslovak military intelligence, the druhý odbor (Second Department or Deuxième Bureau) headed by Colonel František Moravec, had been co-operating with the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) for more than a year and had established secure radio and courier links to the German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. As a result Beneš and his government had access to a highly regarded intelligence network that provided them with significant political benefits and they were not reliant on this new and unproven organisation. Nor was there any pressing need to change this situation given the financial assistance Moravec received from the SIS and the operational autonomy his organisation enjoyed at this stage in the war.

3 Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), Dokumenty z historie československé politiky, p85.
Quite simply, from the Czechoslovak perspective intelligence gathering took priority over the sabotage activities SOE wished to encourage and this divergence of policy resulted in increasingly tense relations between the two organisations. Their failure to co-ordinate strategy, and SOE’s inability to provide the resistance organisations in the Protectorate and Slovakia with a regular air service and the supplies it had promised, resulted in some unforeseen and damaging political consequences. As the SOE’s archives have now been opened the interaction between Moravec’s druhy odbor and SOE can be examined in detail for the first time and this chapter will focus on how Czechoslovak relations with SOE affected and influenced their wider relations with the British authorities. This interaction can be most clearly demonstrated with reference to three particular events, the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich in May 1942, the Slovak national uprising (SNP) in the early autumn of 1944 and the Prague uprising of May 1945.

Although SOE managed to send a total of 75 Czechoslovak agents and some 59 tons of supplies to the Protectorate and Slovakia during the war its relationship with the Czechoslovak exiles in London never lived up to original expectations.\(^4\) This was mainly the result of the dynamics between competing political and military considerations. While the British authorities were often forced to allow military considerations to take precedence over political ones, Beneš and his government took the opposing view and regarded military considerations as subservient to wider political objectives, not least the

\(^4\) HS 7/9 History of the Special Duties Operations in Europe (Airforce), 1939-1945, Parts II & III, Appendix H8, pp217 & Appendix I.1 pp241. A full list of all the missions sent to the Protectorate by SOE between 1941 to 1945 can be found in HS 7/108 Keary et al, SOE Country History, Czechoslovakia.
reconstruction of a Czechoslovak state after the war. In part this position stemmed from that fact that Beneš clearly understood that the military assets at his disposal were insufficient to end the German occupation of Czechoslovakia and its liberation would only be secured with the assistance of the Great Powers, whose forces would do the majority of the actual fighting. The resulting tensions over how best to harass the German occupiers of the former Czechoslovakia meant that relations between Beneš, Moravec and SOE were often troubled. These problems increased as the Soviet Union recovered from its early defeats in 1941 and began to push German forces back across Eastern Europe. From early 1944 onwards the British military authorities viewed the territory of the former Czechoslovakia as being part of the Red Army’s sphere of operational control and revised their previous policy of supporting resistance activities and uprisings in this region. These developments undermined Beneš’s policy of maintaining a balance between the eastern and western allies and forced his government to form ever-closer relations with Moscow in order to compensate for this change in policy.

The inherent problems in relations between the Czechoslovak exiles and SOE rested on two key issues. The first was that SOE believed, with some justification, that Moravec and Beneš were disinclined to undertake sabotage operations lest they interfere with their intelligence gathering activities. Second, the Czechoslovak exiles were persistently disappointed with SOE’s ability to deliver men and supplies to occupied Europe and did not regard acts of sabotage as an important contribution to the war effort.

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3 P. Wilkinson, Notes on SOE’s relations with Revolutionary Movements in Europe, 2 November 1942. In Wilkinson’s private papers held at the Imperial War Museum.
6 HS 7/108 Draft essay by Josef Korbel on the Czechoslovak resistance movements during the Second World War, November 1962, p33, based upon Korbel’s interview with Moravce conducted on 11 September 1962.
In effect, what Moravec and Beneš wanted from SOE was the one thing that the organisation was unable to provide - regular flights to deliver men, bombs and supplies to the Protectorate. Although this was not SOE’s fault it did have a significant effect on bilateral relations. Many of SOE’s early missions to Central Europe were repeatedly delayed by a lack of long-range aircraft in SOE’s Special Duties Squadron, the distances involved and by weather conditions. The first insertion of an SOE trained Czechoslovak agent into the Protectorate, code-named Benjamin, took place on the night of 16/17 April 1941, just two months after the first drops into Poland, but only after months of delays. He also landed wildly off target. These were delays that Colin Gubbins noted, ‘put back our stock very badly with the Czechs who will merely consider it as another instance of our insincerity.’ A later mission, code-named Bioscope, was eventually dropped after a delay of over six-months, and even the agents despatched to assassinate Reinhard Heydrich had to wait several weeks for an available flight.

Similar problems surrounded Beneš’s requests to the Foreign Office, Air Ministry and SOE that the Royal Air Force (RAF) bomb the Protectorate’s numerous armaments factories. Although several attempts were made they were all unsuccessful. Further requests were later made for allied bombers to support the Slovak uprising in 1944, but these were refused on the grounds that it was an unwarranted diversion of the bomber

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7 Foot, SOE, pp32-33 & 130-131.
8 Details of this operation can be found in HS 4/19. See also the references to this operation in C. Gubbins’s desk diary in the Imperial War Museum, on 3, 10 March & 16 April 1941.
9 HS 4/1 Gubbins to Sir Frank Nelson, 17 February 1942.
force. The primary reason for these difficulties was once again geographical, but SOE’s inability to procure the bombing cover the insurgents so desperately needed further undermined Beneš’s and Moravec’s willingness to undertake the sort of sabotage missions SOE desired.

Such disappointments were even more observable in SOE’s failure to deliver the large amounts of arms and supplies required to equip the ‘secret army’ in the Protectorate, in anticipation of a ‘national uprising’ to be launched at the appropriate moment. Moravec had asked that significant amounts of arms and munitions be despatched to the Protectorate where they would be stockpiled by the resistance. These plans for ‘revolutions’ in occupied Europe had originally been proposed by the British Chiefs of Staff (COS) in the summer of 1940. The SIS, with the help of the Czechoslovak and Polish intelligence services, had already investigated this proposal and concluded that both countries were more than ready to undertake such ‘national revolutions.’ But, given the RAF’s disinclination to divert aircraft to this task, the distances involved and competing demands from other resistance movements SOE was also unable to fulfil this objective. Indeed, the British Joint Planning Staff (JPS) had realised as early as May 1942 that,

12 WO 216/2384 G-3 Records of SHEAF operations, September 1944 to May 1945, General Ingr to Colonel William Dunn, American Military Attaché to the Allied Forces, 1 September 1944 & subsequent reply from Brigadier General A.S. Nevins, 14 September 1944.
13 HS 8/237 Head of Section report, November to December 1941, P. Wilkinson, 25 November 1941.
14 HS 4/15 Moravec to Gubbins, 30 April 1941, HS 8/272 SOE memorandum A study of requirements for the organisation of insurrection in German occupied territories, p13 & Appendix B, 21 May 1941, SOE estimated that to would need 150 aircraft to supply the ‘secret army’ in the Protectorate.
15 FO 371 24289 C7646/2/12 Troutbeck minute, 21 June 1940.
Action as regards Poland and Czechoslovakia must be limited to the support of sabotage groups alone, as the physical problem of transporting materials for a secret army was beyond any solution without an unwarrantable diversion of the bomber effort.\(^{17}\)

Moreover, by June 1942 SOE had begun to suspect that Czechoslovakia’s ‘secret army’s’ purpose was ultimately political, and that it would use these arms to try to secure Czechoslovakia’s frontiers by force at the end of the war.\(^{18}\) This was something that would have been diametrically opposed to the prevailing British policy on frontiers in post-war Europe. SOE later began to doubt whether this ‘secret army’ in fact existed, especially since Beneš claimed to be able to mobilise 200,000 men at short notice.\(^{19}\)

Yet serious questions remain about whether SOE kept the Czechoslovaks and the Poles fully informed of the improbability of their being able to deliver such supplies, especially since such an admission would have seriously undermined SOE’s credibility with both governments. Throughout the war many senior Polish and Czechoslovak military leaders continued to rely on the timely despatch of such supplies, views that were possibly encouraged by elements within SOE itself.\(^{20}\) This was clearly illustrated by that fact that even as late as July 1943, over a year after the JPS’s report, SOE promised to send enough weaponry to the Protectorate to equip 50,000 men, a promise that was logistically impossible.\(^{21}\) In fact, the situation became so bad that in October 1943 the

\(^{18}\) HS 4/5 internal SOE minutes, 12 June 1942.
\(^{19}\) FO 371 26394 C4078/1320/12 Bruce Lockhart to Eden, 20 April 1941.
\(^{21}\) HS 7/277 SOE’s War Diary for Poland and Czechoslovakia, p90.
Poles, frustrated by SOE’s continued inability to supply their ‘secret army,’ threatened to cease all their resistance activities unless the situation improved.\textsuperscript{22} It did not, and although SOE was more successful in delivering arms to the resistance in Yugoslavia (some 16,500 tons between 1943 and 1945, compared to 59 tons to Czechoslovakia), it would never be able to fulfil these promises.\textsuperscript{23} So even if Beneš and Moravec were reluctant to imperil their intelligence work for the sake of sabotage when they did ask for assistance from SOE such help was seldom forthcoming. Therefore Beneš and his government had reasonable grounds to be suspicious of SOE’s abilities and consequently maintained their own policies regarding the equitable balance between political considerations and military operations in the Protectorate.\textsuperscript{24}

Of all the operations that SOE was involved in the assassination of Heydrich in 1941, undertaken by two Czechoslovak ‘patriots’ Josef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš, was undoubtedly the most successful. It was also a dramatic example of how military action could result in significant political repercussions and why the Foreign Office viewed SOE’s activities with some apprehension.\textsuperscript{25} This was because Heydrich’s death, and the retaliation that followed, resulted in a veritable flurry of political consequences that SOE had not anticipated and the Central Department had then to deal with. This was not least because the international standing of Beneš’s government was greatly enhanced by this dramatic example of resistance in occupied Europe. As Moravec later remarked,

\textsuperscript{22} HS 8/897 Lord Selborne’s (Minister in Charge of SOE) to Churchill, 21 October 1943, see also E.D.R Harrison, ‘The British Special Operations Executive and Poland,’ \textit{The Historical Journal}, 43, 4, (2000), pp1081-1082.

\textsuperscript{23} HS 7/9 History of the Special Duties Operations in Europe (Airforce), 1939-1945, Parts II & III, Appendix I.1 pxxiv. The British COS authorised a minimum of ten flights per month to the Protectorate in January 1945, but even this number was never achieved, p240.

\textsuperscript{24} HS 7/108 Keary et al, SOE Country History: Czechoslovakia, p10.

\textsuperscript{25} Dilks (ed), \textit{The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan}, pp435-436.
'Czechoslovakia received world-wide attention and in the delicate matter of our contribution to the war effort we jumped from last place to first.'\textsuperscript{26} The reasons why Heydrich was targeted are complex but several distinct features can be identified; foremost amongst these was Heydrich's sustained and successful attacks on the resistance groups in the Protectorate and their intelligence gathering capabilities, the issue of the Protectorate's industrial output, its constitutional relationship to the Reich and developments in Anglo-Czechoslovak-Soviet relations.\textsuperscript{27}

As has already been detailed, one of the cornerstones of Anglo-Czechoslovak relations was the long standing relationship between Moravec and the SIS and one of Heydrich's first acts on his arrival in the Protectorate was to undermine the effectiveness of these resistance organisations. These activities were particularly ruthless and rapidly began to degrade the ability of the resistance movements to collect intelligence materials and transmit them back to London.\textsuperscript{28} On 4 December 1941 Bruce Lockhart reported to the Foreign Office that, 'Dr Beneš has not be able to communicate with his secret centre in Prague...the result of the arrests and reign of terror instituted by Heydrich at the end of September.'\textsuperscript{29} In addition, Heydrich's constitutional proposals for the closer incorporation of the Protectorate into the Reich and the continuing negotiations over the proposed Anglo-Soviet treaty in London in May 1942 also influenced the decision to

\textsuperscript{26} F. Moravec, \textit{Master of Spies}, London, 1975, p222.
\textsuperscript{27} See CAB 102/641, Cabinet Office Historical Section, W.J.M. Mackenzie, History of the Special Operations Executive, Vol III & HS 7 / 108 Keary et al, SOE Country History: Czechoslovakia. There is also a lot of interesting material contained in the archives of the Imperial War Museum, especially in Peter Wilkinson's private papers, Colin Gubbins's desk diaries from 1941 to 1945 and in the Museum's Special Operations Executive's sound archive, oral history recordings.
\textsuperscript{29} FO 371 26418 C13638/10893/12 Bruce Lockhart to Eden, 4 December 1941.
undertake this dangerous operation.³⁰ Heydrich’s actions struck a blow against the most important asset the Czechoslovak exiles in London had at their disposal. Some form of response, or reprisal, by Moravec and Beneš was therefore to be expected and SOE seized the opportunity to support such an act.³¹

It should be reiterated that the Protectorate was one of the key industrial centres of the Third Reich and much of the resistance’s work was designed to limit the massive amounts of arms produced there. Indeed, Beneš had made several unsuccessful attempts, to encourage the RAF to bomb these industrial targets.³² These failures were compounded by the Soviet Union’s persistent demands that the flow of arms from the Protectorate be stemmed by increased sabotage regardless of the cost to the local population, instructions that were relayed to Moravec by the Soviet Union’s military intelligence liaison officer in London, I. A. Chichaev.³³ The German authorities were also concerned with arms production in the Protectorate and, in part, this was why Heydrich had been sent to Prague to replace the ageing Freiherr Konstanin von Neurath. Once he was there Heydrich’s objectives were clear; to liquidate the resistance, to secure the unstinting support of the population for the Reich’s war effort and to increase industrial production in order to secure supplies for the Eastern Front.³⁴ These were objectives that

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³¹ A suggestion confirmed by Peter Wilkinson in his notes for a talk given to Special Forces Club on the ‘Anthropoid’ mission, 1982. Wilkinson’s private papers at the Imperial War Museum.
³² See FO 371 24292 C10821/1082/12 from Bruce Lockhart to Lord Halifax, 9 October 1940, FO 371 26408 CS286/5286/12 Bruce Lockhart to Eden, 16 May 1941, & HS 4/I Lord Selborn’s letter to Secretary of State for Air, 13 April 1942, which requested the bombing of industrial targets in the Protectorate.
he largely managed to achieve. It was no accident, therefore, that the two assassins, were actually diverted from their original objective, at no small risk to their primary mission, to assist with the bombing of the Škoda works in Plzeň in April 1942. These raids, code-named Cannonbury I & II, had little effect, but demonstrated the supreme importance that Beneš attached to damaging these industrial facilities. 

The final factor that contributed to the assassination of Heydrich was SOE’s own position within the hierarchy of British armed services. Although SOE was an independent organisation, it was a new and junior service and its right to exist as a separate entity was repeatedly challenged. These debates were compounded by SOE’s unorthodox, and to some underhand, agenda and the dichotomy between these objectives and wider British foreign policy. As a result its survival was only secured through the personal intervention of the Prime Minister on several occasions. Therefore, given SOE’s precarious position in late 1941 and the need to prove its worth, both to the British military authorities and the Czechoslovaks, SOE readily agreed to help target Heydrich. Although assassination was never a consistent feature of SOE’s work it seems apparent that for an extremely small group of British and Czechoslovak officials the operation was regarded as being of sufficient value to be allowed to proceed; though, crucially, neither side allowed their involvement to become known during the war. Peter Wilkinson, then

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37 See HS 4 / 35 for details on Cannonbury I, 26 April 1942, and Cannonbury II, 4 May 1942.
39 Wilkinson & Bright Astley, Gubbins & SOE., pp140-141.
40 Note on Czech Resistance 1939 to 1943, Wilkinson, October 1979. In Wilkinson’s private papers at the Imperial War Museum.
head of SOE’s Czech section, later made it clear that not only was the operation completely planned and controlled by the Czechoslovaks, but that SOE never revealed its involvement to the SIS or the Foreign Office. A mere handful of SOE officers, no more than twelve, knew about the proposed mission and few people, apart from Churchill, were informed of SOE’s role. There were good reasons for such secrecy, not least because SOE’s involvement been advertised it was unlikely the assassination would have been sanctioned. The Foreign Office would have most certainly balked at the idea, as any announcement that SOE had embarked on a policy of assassination would have brought many unwelcome political repercussions. As Frank Roberts later noted, ‘However much we may welcome Heydrich’s fate it is not, I imagine, the policy of H.M. Government to go out of their way to glorify political assassinations.’ In the event, SOE was more than happy for Moravec and Beneš to claim that the resistance in the Protectorate had carried out the assassination by itself, even though SOE’s role was later used (within strictly delineated parameters) as an example of its effectiveness.

Exactly who ordered the assassination on the Czechoslovak side is more difficult to ascertain. Moravec stated in his biography that the decision was made in collaboration with Beneš, yet evidence in the SOE files undermines this interpretation. In fact, these records suggest that the Czechoslovak military authorities had already considered pursuing a policy of selective assassinations as early as October 1939. Plans for the assassination of key quisling officials, code-named Iron, were made in the autumn of

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41 HS 4 / 39 Most secret message regarding Anthropoid, Wilkinson to Gubbins, 22 June 1942. It was only after the end of war in 1945 that the truth about the attack began to appear in the press see The Daily Telegraph, 2 June 1945, by Seaghan Mayes.
42 HS 8/250 SOE Headquarters’ reports to the Prime Minister, March to June 1942, p7.
43 FO 371 30848 C5922/5404/12, Roberts minutes, 10 June 1942.
44 Moravec, Master of Spies, p213.
45 HS 4 / 31 Meeting between Gubbins and Colonel Josef Kalla, 10 October 1939.
1942, re-examined by Beneš in January 1943 and briefly revived in May 1944.\textsuperscript{46} Moreover, the files suggest that Beneš had to be convinced of the advisability of the operation, although by who is unclear.\textsuperscript{47} The most likely interpretation is that Moravec, or one of his close advisors, instigated the plan, which then was accepted by Beneš, before SOE was approached in October 1941.

The majority of Czechoslovak émigrés in Britain were not told of these plans, nor were the resistance organisations in the Protectorate.\textsuperscript{48} When the resistance did discover the identity of the assassins’ target, after being asked to assist the agents while they were in Prague, the resistance demanded that the whole operation be cancelled.\textsuperscript{49} In fact, the consequences of the assassination were as dire as they had predicted and effectively obliterated the non-Communist resistance and severed its links to London.\textsuperscript{50} After the attack, and Heydrich’s subsequent death, Beneš maintained that the resistance itself had carried out the operation, publicly declaring this to be the case in a broadcast on the BBC.\textsuperscript{51} He never formally admitted his involvement during his lifetime (there is little documentary evidence to connect him with it) and this was perhaps unsurprising given the resistance’s objections and the costly retribution exacted on the population of the Protectorate.\textsuperscript{52} These considerations reinforce the thesis that the assassination was

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{46} See HS 4/4 The Iron mission, see also Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), Dokumenty z historie československé politiky, Vol. 1, p310.
\item \textsuperscript{47} HS 4/39 Report on Anthropoid mission by Wilkinson, 30 May 1942.
\item \textsuperscript{48} HS 4/39 internal SOE minutes, 23 July 1942, and reply.
\item \textsuperscript{49} For text of original message from the resistance in the Protectorate to London see V. Král, Otázky hospodářského a sociálního vývoje v českých zemích v letech 1938-1945, Prague, 1957-1959, Vol III pp 242-243. For SOE’s copy of the interception of the same message see HS 4/39 Intercepted German radio transmission, 26 May 1942.
\item \textsuperscript{50} HS 8/196 Minutes of meetings of Foreign Office/SOE liaison committee, 6 October 1942.
\item \textsuperscript{51} P. Tigris, Kapesní průvodce inteligentní ženy po vlastním osudu, Toronto, 1988, p156.
\item \textsuperscript{52} The actual number of Czechs that lost their lives, as a result of the assassination is difficult ascertain, but it was somewhere between 2000-5000 in total. See Luža, ‘The Czech resistance movement,’ in Mamatey & Luža (eds), A History of the Czechoslovak Republic, pp353-354 fn.
\end{itemize}
undertaken for political rationales, not least to prove the vitality of resistance in the Protectorate, to both the British and the Soviet governments, and to avenge Heydrich’s destruction of Moravec’s intelligence networks. It is also possible that the assassination may have been viewed by SOE as a way to help secure its own position and ingratiate itself with the Czechoslovaks, by aiding, what was in effect a politicised Czechoslovak operation, which had few wider strategic or tactical benefits for Britain. Additionally, it was hoped that such support might reverse Moravec’s cautious approach to subversive operations in the Protectorate and thus encourage the escalation of sabotage work there, thus reinforcing SOE’s own reputation at a critical juncture.

It should be noted, however, that such a suggestion is rather speculative and that after Heydrich’s death many members of SOE felt that Moravec had been playing them off against the SIS to his own advantage.53 This was only possible because Czechoslovak-SIS relations were far closer than those with SOE and these two British organisations were often in competition over resources and how best to conduct operations in occupied Europe. In the aftermath of the assassination, however, these objectives were not achieved and the Czechoslovaks seemed, at least to some in SOE, to lose all interest in subversive activities in the Protectorate, not least as many of the resistance networks had been destroyed and the majority of those agents sent from Britain had been arrested or killed.54 In fact, Moravec went so far as to state that the ‘Protectorate was an unsuitable country for subversive operations,’ and he continued to focus on intelligence gathering and preparations for ‘national uprisings’ later in the war.55

53 HS 4/4 letter from unnamed Major in SOE to Broadway Buildings (the SIS offices), 15 April 1943.
55 HS 7 / 108 Keary et al., SOE Country History: Czechoslovakia, p12.
As a result of these events SOE's initial enthusiasm for Moravec and the Czechoslovaks began to wane. With the collapse of the western orientated resistance in the Protectorate, SOE and SIS collaborated to strip the Czechoslovaks of control of their secret radio codes and their operational autonomy.\textsuperscript{56} This action was undertaken because it had became apparent to SOE and the SIS that prior to June 1942 neither had had received any 'first-hand' information from the Protectorate, as both were entirely reliant on 'second-hand' de-coded information passed on by Moravec.\textsuperscript{57} Although this information had once been highly valued and taken on trust, after the assassination this was no longer the case.\textsuperscript{58} In fact, the level of trust between SOE and Moravec had sunk so low that on 21 October 1942 Alfgar Hesketh-Pritchard, of SOE's Czech section, stole a radio log book from a Czechoslovak transmitter station in Dunstable to show Gubbins.\textsuperscript{59} An anonymous SOE memorandum went so far as to state that,

In face of the disturbing effect of such actions [the assassination] on steady underground work, it seems that the emigre Government is willing to risk reprisals at home and repercussions on its own position and political aims, but not for tactical SOE aims.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{56} HS 4/1 Record of a luncheon given by Lord Selborne for President Bene\v{s}, General S. Ingr and Colonel Moravec, also present were members of SOE's Czech Section on 24 September 1942.
\textsuperscript{57} HS 4/277 Detailed outline of operational activities in the Protectorate after the summer of 1942, p 142, HS 4/4 SOE internal minute, 1 May 1943, & briefing paper for Gubbins, 5 January 1944.
\textsuperscript{58} HS 4/5 on 9 July 1943 a report was forwarded to SOE from Ambassador Nichols and the Foreign Office.
\textsuperscript{59} HS 7/277 SOE's War Diary for Poland and Czechoslovakia, p36.
\textsuperscript{60} HS 4/5 SOE Memorandum on Czech activity May 1942 to May 1943, 13 May 1943.
Henceforth, SOE, SIS and later the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS), took control of all operations to the Protectorate and Slovakia, and joint planning and working committees were established for this purpose.\textsuperscript{61} Czechoslovak military intelligence and the sending of agents to the Protectorate was placed under far stricter SOE/SIS control, and they laboriously tried to re-establish resistance networks in the Protectorate during 1943 and 1944.

Moravec's standing within the intelligence community and the operational autonomy he had previously enjoyed was therefore seriously curtailed. SOE's relations with him also began to deteriorate, to the point where plans were made to oust Moravec and replace him with General Miroslav and even to close SOE's Czech section altogether.\textsuperscript{62} Heydrich's actions in the Protectorate had, quite simply, undermined the most important asset that Beneš and his government had at their disposal. Nevertheless, Beneš managed to use the assassination to his advantage and the Foreign Office was obliged to compromise on a number of political issues as a consequence. Thus the kudos and political leverage once provided by Moravec's intelligence organisation, the regular Czechoslovak armed forces in Britain and the resistance in the Protectorate had, in effect, served their political purpose and Beneš's interest in these assets declined correspondingly.

From the middle of 1942 onwards Beneš and his government turned their attention to regularising their international position. These developments were firmly

\textsuperscript{61} HS 7/277 SOE's War Diary for Poland and Czechoslovakia, pp7 & 89 & HS 7 / 108 Keary et al, SOE Country History: Czechoslovakia,pp11-12. Weekly planning meetings began in the summer of 1942. An Anglo-Czechoslovak Planning committee met for the first time on 5 October 1942 to plan future operations.

\textsuperscript{62} HS 4 / 7 Memorandum by Perkins, 18 September 1942. General Miroslav was an officer in Czechoslovak military intelligence and he operated under a \textit{nom de guerre}, his real name was Bedřich Neumann. Otáhalová & Červinková (eds), \textit{Dokumenty z historie československé politiky}, Vol. 1, p807-808.
located in the diplomatic arena and collaboration with SOE, which had never been an
overriding priority, largely fell into abeyance during 1943 and early 1944. SOE was well
aware of these factors and it was noted in May 1943 that, 'The general impression was
that the Czechs had made extremely good use of their early evacuation to Great Britain;
and that they were trading heavily on the shocking treatment which was meted out to
them in 1938.'63

As the tide of the war turned resistance movements across Europe began to
prepare uprisings in support of (or in some cases to disrupt) the approaching allied
armies, actions that were meant to be the culmination of SOE's work in occupied
Europe.64 SOE's operations with the resistance in France, in support of the Normandy
landings in June 1944 proved to be relatively successful, as was its continued support for
Tito's partisans in Yugoslavia.65 Yet, SOE's inability to support the uprisings in Warsaw
and Slovakia, both of which commenced in August 1944, proved to have serious political
repercussions. Even though the British authorities had no direct involvement in the
planning, timing or tactical direction of the Slovak uprising they became involved when
the Czechoslovak government in exile made repeated requests for support, both political
and military, for the insurgents. Moreover, unlike the assassination of Heydrich, about
which the Central Department was not informed, the uprising in Slovakia was of direct
concern to the Foreign Office. Britain's failure to support the Slovak uprising meant that
only the Soviet Union sent military assistance to the insurgents and the Red Army's
subsequent occupation raised the question of heightened Communist influence in the

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63 HS 4/5 SOE Memorandum on Czech activity May 1942 to May 1943, dated 13 May 1943.
64 HS 7/11 History of Special Operations (Air) in the Mediterranean Theatre, pp74-77.
65 Foot, SOE, pp317-324.
This was a development that undermined Beneš’s policy of maintaining equality in his relations with the western and eastern allies and belatedly resulted in the British government’s attempts to encourage American forces to liberate Prague in May 1945. Therefore, some of the background planning for the uprising must be examined, even though it was a Czechoslovak affair, in order fully to comprehend the British position.

While the uprising had Beneš’s backing, and the government in exile was involved in its preparations from late 1943 onwards, the revolt revealed some troubling divisions amongst the various groups that were involved in its organisation, not least the differences between the political exiles in Britain, the insurgents in Slovakia and their respective political organs, such as the Slovenská národná rada (the Slovak National Council). These divisions caused serious problems for the commanders of the uprising and exposed just how unwilling some Slovaks were to rejoin a Czechoslovak state. These issues demonstrated that, although Beneš’s control over the émigrés in Britain was (largely) secure, as was his stewardship of the exiled government’s foreign policy, his authority over the population back home was far more tenuous. This was a crucial consideration, as it would mean that the Czechoslovak émigrés in London were unable to fulfil a key precondition imposed by SOE; that support would only be forthcoming if the uprising was triggered by a prearranged signal from London. Yet, while the uprising eventually failed it did help remove the stigma of Slovakia’s collaboration with Nazi

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68 Steiner, *The Slovak Dilemma*, pp74-75
69 HS 7/277 SOE’s War Diary for Poland and Czechoslovakia, p94 & Prečan (ed), *Slovenské národné povstanie*, p85.
Germany and reversed the rather lack-lustre performance of resistance in Czechoslovakia since 1942.

Preparations for the Slovak uprising can be traced as far back as the summer of 1943, even before Beneš’s talks with Stalin in December when he inquired about Soviet military assistance for a possible revolt on Czechoslovak territory. While he was there the Soviets had made it clear to Beneš that they were unimpressed with the current levels of resistance in the Protectorate and Slovakia. These complaints had an immediate effect and, upon his return to London, he made explicit reference to the need to encourage resistance in Czechoslovak territory in a keynote speech to the State Council on 9 February 1944. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union agreed to support the rising even though Slovakia was an Axis power and her soldiers had fought on the eastern front. By April the Ukrainian Partisan Staff was training Czechoslovak partisans and preparing to send them back into Slovakia.

However, whereas the Soviet Union had agreed to support an uprising in Slovakia, the British authorities neither believed such a revolt possible nor agreed to offer any assistance prior to its commencement. This contrast was made all the more striking by the fact that that SOE had been informed of the possibility of an uprising in Slovakia before the Soviet authorities. The subject had first been raised at a meeting between Miroslav, Gubbins (now the head of SOE) and Harold Perkins on 10 July 1943. During

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71 FO 371 38927 C2987/134/12 Nichols to Roberts, 2 March 1944.


these talks SOE agreed to deliver arms for up to 50,000 men, to transport 500 Czechoslovak parachutists to the region, to transfer Czechoslovak fighter squadrons in Britain to airfields in the vicinity and to have the RAF bomb strategic targets. Although these were generous terms, there is little evidence that SOE had either the logistical or political ability to implement this agreement.

In addition, Miroslav mentioned that 80% of Slovak soldiers were opposed to the Tiso regime in Bratislava and that plans for a revolt were already in hand, although the timing would be spontaneous. To which Gubbins replied,

a) that he could only secure the equipment requested in Miroslav’s letter if he could show the COS the strength and location of the resistance groups who would use the equipment;
b) that aircraft would only be made available to convey large scale airborne support to Czechoslovakia if the rising was organised to take place at a signal given from this country.74

This reply was entirely indicative of SOE’s previous experiences with the Czechoslovak military authorities and their suspicion that such ‘secret armies’ were in fact non-existent. The Czechoslovaks repeated their claim that elements within the Slovakian army were prepared to fight in support of the allies in a later meeting with SOE on 29 September 1943, but SOE did not go beyond the terms of Gubbins’s earlier reply.75 On 14 December General Sergej Ingr, the Czechoslovak Minister for Defence, sent another official enquiry

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74 HS 7/277 SOE’s War Diary for Poland and Czechoslovakia, pp90-91 & 94.
75 HS 7/277 SOE’s War Diary for Poland and Czechoslovakia, pp135-136.
to Lieutenant General Sir Archibald Nye, Vice-chief of the Imperial General Staff. Once again SOE responded by stating that it felt resistance in Slovakia was non-existent and that it wanted to see more credible evidence of these preparations before any definitive plans were drawn up.\textsuperscript{76}

Beneš's speech to the State Council in February 1944 was well received in London and Roberts noted that, 'The Czechs want to be on good terms with everyone-and who shall blame them! They have taken Russian strictures on their passivity at home to heart.'\textsuperscript{77} Both the SIS and SOE were made aware of this development, but continued to view the possibility of an uprising with scepticism.\textsuperscript{78} They reiterated their doubts after yet another meeting with Miroslav on 29 March when he stated that Slovak divisions would be prepared to resist if the Germans tried to disarm them. The War Office's intelligence department replied that they already had been disarmed and that they knew of no viable resistance organisations in the region.\textsuperscript{79}

By April 1944, therefore, SOE had still not offered any assistance for the uprising, unlike the Soviet Union, and spent much of the first half of the year complaining to ambassador Philip Nichols and the Foreign Office about the lack of Czechoslovak cooperation in organising subversive warfare.\textsuperscript{80} In fact, relations between SOE and the appropriate Czechoslovak military authorities had reached a low point by 1944.\textsuperscript{81} Indeed, when rumours reached the Central Department in February that Beneš was talking with the United States and the Soviet Union about a possible insurrection in Slovakia these

\textsuperscript{76} WO 216/99 Ingr to Nye, 14 December 1943, and subsequent minutes 23 December 1943.
\textsuperscript{77} FO 371 38927 C2987/134/12 Roberts minute, 7 March 1944.
\textsuperscript{78} FO 371 38927 C2564/134/12 Roberts minute, 25 March 1944, on talks with the SIS and SOE.
\textsuperscript{79} HS 7/277 SOE's War Diary for Poland and Czechoslovakia, p 186.
\textsuperscript{80} HS 4/4 Draft briefing paper for Gubbins on SOE-Czechoslovak relations, 5 January 1944.
\textsuperscript{81} FO 371 38927 C1619/134/12 Nichols to Roberts, 1 February 1944.
were immediately dismissed as further examples of the President 'talking big.'

No mention was made of a possible uprising at either of the monthly Foreign Office-SOE committee meetings in April or May. Finally, talks between the British COS, the Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force (SCAEF), General Dwight D. Eisenhower, and the Czechoslovak military authorities had made it plain that they considered Czechoslovakia to lie outside the west's sphere of military responsibility, in line with the decisions made at the Allied conference at Tehran.

So not only did the Foreign Office and SOE feel that any uprising was improbable, but they also made it plain that any such insurrection would not be their responsibility. In fact, the Foreign Office only began to consider the question after it had received an official request from Miroslav, on 14 July 1944, for Britain to send supplies for a planned revolt in Slovakia at the end of the month. Roberts noted,

It is relevant to mention that hitherto SOE have been most dissatisfied with their contact with the Czechoslovak government...SOE are therefore particularly anxious not to rebuff this proposal, which should easily be carried out as it only involves two or three flights...It may seem odd that the Czechs should consult us in this matter. This is, however, consistent

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82 FO 371 38927 C2564/134/12 Roberts minute, 29 February 1944, and Victor Cavendish-Bentinck minute, 29 February 1944 and Roberts minute, 25 March 1944.
83 FO 371 38927 C5202/134/12 & C6507/134/12 extracts of 28th and 19th Foreign Office-SOE committee meetings on 12 April and 9 May 1944. See also HS 8/197 Minutes of Foreign Office/SOE liaison committee meetings 15 February 1944 and 12 April 1944.
84 FO 371 38927 C2564/134/12 from Charles Peake, Political Liaison Officer with Supreme Allied Commander, to Central Department, 16 February 1944.
85 FO 371 38927 C9350/134/12 Perkins to Roberts, 14 July 1944. Miroslav originally sent the request to SOE on 13 July 1944 see HS 4/27 Miroslav to Perkins, 13 July 1944.
with their recent policy, which is to avoid becoming too exclusively associated with and dependent on the Russians.86

It seems, therefore, that the British authorities were willing to help supply a revolt for political reasons, with a token number of flights, and as long as the Soviets agreed. But this was a far cry from SOE’s earlier promise to send equipment for 50,000 men. A letter was dispatched to the British Ambassador in Moscow requesting that he ascertain the Soviet position and that if no reply had been received by 7 August then SOE would send supplies regardless, a tactic developed to compensate for the Soviets’ irregular responses to official British requests.87 Although the Soviet Union never replied, the lack of any response had already been anticipated and circumvented by the Foreign Office.

But this policy was complicated by the Warsaw uprising which started on 1 August 1944 and which the COS had originally refused to support believing that it was operationally impossible.88 The uprising, therefore, placed the British in an awkward position. On the one hand they wished to help the Poles if they could (after all such risings were SOE’s raison d’être), but on the other hand these events threatened to destabilise relations with Moscow.89 SOE, however, had always enjoyed closer relations with the Poles than with the Czechoslovaks and this appreciation translated into

86 FO 371 38927 C9782/341/12 Roberts minute 19 July 1944.
87 FO 371 38927 C9782/341/12 Central Department to Clark Kerr, 31 July 1944 & FO 371 38941 C11068/1343/12 Clark Kerr to A. Vyshinsky, 1 August 1944. Vyshinsky’s reply of 6 August stated that Soviet military authorities were considering this question.
continued autonomy for Polish military intelligence, priority access to materials and
transport facilities and the ability of the insurgents on the ground to instigate an uprising
without consulting London.\textsuperscript{90} But once the revolt began SOE did send re-supply flights to
Warsaw at no small cost in men and machines, although their failure to send more
ultimately created a rift between SOE and the Polish government in exile.\textsuperscript{91} Nevertheless,
due to the inherent difficulties involved the uprising failed, with huge loss of life, on 1
October. Fifty years later, debate still rages whether the failure of the rising was the result
of deliberate Soviet policies or a combination of other factors such as unrealistic
objectives and a lack of co-ordination.\textsuperscript{92} This experience had a direct effect on how the
British authorities dealt with the events in Slovakia.

The outbreak of the Slovak uprising seems to have caught both Bene\v{s} and the
British authorities by surprise and apart from the solitary letter to Moscow no joint policy
had been agreed.\textsuperscript{93} One of the causes for the unexpected start of the rising was the arrest
and execution of the German military mission to Romania, led by General Paul von Otto,
by Soviet partisans dropped into the region in late August. Partly as a result of this
provocative act and partly due to Berlin’s growing concerns over Slovakia’s reliability,
German and Hungarian forces began to occupy the country on 28 August.\textsuperscript{94} The uprising
commenced the following day, under the auspices of the multi-party Slovak National

\textsuperscript{90} HS 7/277 SOE’s War Diary for Poland and Czechoslovakia, p34. Wilkinson’s meeting with Moravec, 9
September 1942 HS 7/277 SOE’s War Diary for Poland and Czechoslovakia, p34. Wilkinson’s meeting
with Moravec, 9 September 1942 & HS 7/9 History of the Special Duties Operations in Europe (Airforce),
\textsuperscript{91} Harrison, ‘The British Special Operations Executive and Poland,’ \textit{The Historical Journal}, pp1086-1089.
\textsuperscript{92} See Wilkinson & Bright Astley, \textit{Gubbins & SOE}, pp206-207 & Erickson. \textit{The Road to Berlin}, pp246-
290.
\textsuperscript{93} FO 371 38927 C10289/134/12 Political Warfare Executive directive, 31 August 1944. See Masaryk’s
telegram to Fierlinger in Moscow requesting Soviet assistance to the insurgents, 30 August 1944, in J.
\textsuperscript{94} Prečan (ed), \textit{Slovenské národné povstanie}, pp334-335.
Council and the Military Centre headed by Lieutenant Colonel Ján Golían, who was loyal to Beneš.\textsuperscript{95} This proved to be a serious problem as SOE had warned the Czechoslovaks that any uprising would only be successful if prior arrangements with them had been made.\textsuperscript{96} These events presented the Foreign Office with a new set of difficult problems on top of the troubling situation in Warsaw. While they were fully aware of the advantages to be had by lending support to the Slovaks these had to be balanced against some very real logistical problems and the Soviet Union’s position.\textsuperscript{97}

On 31 August 1944 Ingr wrote to Field Marshall Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, asking for British support for the insurgents in Slovakia.\textsuperscript{98} Discussions on this issue ranged across a number of bodies and departments - the COS, War Cabinet, Foreign Office and SOE.\textsuperscript{99} Predictably, the primary conclusions were to collect more information, liaise further with the Soviets and proceed cautiously, not least in order to avoid what was referred to as the ‘Polish pitfall.’\textsuperscript{100} All of these were eminently sensible recommendations from the British perspective, but of little help to the insurgents on the ground or to the Czechoslovak government in London. Hubert Ripka then requested that the Slovak forces be given the same belligerent status as the Polish Home Army and the French Forces of the Interior.\textsuperscript{101} This request was soon granted by

\textsuperscript{97} FO 371 38941 C11772/1343/12 Roberts minutes, 31 August 1944, & FO 371 38942 C12213/1343/12 Harrison minute on talks with Perkins, 9 September 1944.
\textsuperscript{98} WO 216/99 Ingr to Alan Brooke, 31 August 1944.
\textsuperscript{99} HS 8/197 Minutes of Foreign Office/SOE liaison committee meetings. 33\textsuperscript{rd} meeting, 19 September 1944 & 34\textsuperscript{th} meeting 10 October 1944.
\textsuperscript{100} FO 371 38941 C11772/1343/12 minutes by Oliver Harvey, 31 August 1944, Sargent 1 September 1944 and Eden 2 September.
\textsuperscript{101} FO 371 38941 C11702/1343/12 Nichols to Central Department, 2 September 1944.
Nevertheless, the Slovak insurgents (referred to as the Czechoslovak Forces of the Interior - CFI) were eventually recognised as allied forces by all the Great Powers.

The lack of prior Anglo-Czechoslovak consultation on this issue was used by the COS to defend their decision to refuse to send any re-supply flights in early September. The COS were mindful of the difficulties in the re-supply of isolated forces, the continuing issues related to the Warsaw revolt and the fact that the Soviets were already sending men and materials to Slovakia. As a result, by the end of September, the COS decided not to help re-supply the CFI and concluded that air operations would best be conducted by the Soviets. The American Chiefs of Staff reiterated this decision on 22 September. A parallel request by Ingr for American support, especially for the bombing of tactical targets by the United States Army Air Force (USAAF) on 1 September was also refused. Nichols informed Beneš of this fact on 7 September, stating that Slovakia was in the Soviet operational sphere and that it was unlikely that the West would be able to offer any assistance. Beneš was at pains to

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102 FO 371 38943 C14160/1343/12 Foreign Office minute, 13 October 1944. The United States had unilaterally granted belligerent status to the Slovak insurgents on 7 September 1944. See FO 371 38942 C11939/1343/12 Lord Halifax to Foreign Office, 8 September 1944. Britain recognised their belligerent status on 9 October 1944.
103 FO 371 38942 C12068/1343/12 From Offices of War Cabinet to Foreign Office, 5 September 1944
108 FO 371 38942 C12076/1343/12 Nichols to Foreign Office, 7 September 1944.
stress that he did not want the uprising to ‘make trouble in any way,’ adding that ‘If those
plans [Allied strategy] made it impossible to grant such assistance he would understand,
but he hoped, nevertheless that they would be able to help.’\textsuperscript{109} This was a pragmatic
position to take since the events in Warsaw, and the resulting effect on inter-Allied
relations, were uppermost in the minds of all concerned.\textsuperscript{110} Moreover, the Soviets were
already assisting insurgents and the Red Army had begun to fight its way towards the
areas they held.\textsuperscript{111}

This is not to suggest, however, that the western allies did not offer any support to
the uprising, but rather that it was insufficient and sporadic.\textsuperscript{112} Several SOE trained
agents were already in Slovakia and joined the CFI, providing them with a radio link to
London.\textsuperscript{113} On the 17 September a joint SOE/OSS/MI9 operation flew in more agents and
some supplies to Tri Duby (an airfield held by the CFI) and left with fifteen allied
airmen.\textsuperscript{114} But this was not an official mission and its primary purpose was to rescue
those allied airmen downed while bombing the Romanian oil fields the previous June and
July.\textsuperscript{115} An official mission was planned, code-named Mica, but was never sent.\textsuperscript{116} Thus,
by default, Major John Sehmer, who had been originally bound for Hungary, and an OSS

\textsuperscript{109} FO 371 38942 C12076/1343/12 Nichols to Foreign Office, 7 September 1944.
\textsuperscript{110} Kitchen, \textit{British Policy towards the Soviet Union}, pp241-246.
\textsuperscript{111} See Doležal & Křen (eds), \textit{Czechoslovakia’s fight}, p146-148, Erickson. \textit{The Road to Berlin}, pp299-307,
and its Relevance To Modern Conditions,’ in \textit{La Guerre et la Montagne, Vol 2, Actes des Colloques de la
Commission Internationale d’Histoire Militaire (XVII Colloque)}, Berne, 1993, pp357-363. Cf. P. Latowski,
‘Slovakia,’ in I.C.D. Dear & M.R.D Foot (eds), \textit{The Oxford Companion to World War II}, Oxford,
2001,p788.
\textsuperscript{112} FO 371 47085 N2584/207/12 Perkins to Allen, 3 March 1945.
\textsuperscript{113} HS 7 / 108 Keary et al, SOE Country History: Czechoslovakia, p12.
\textsuperscript{114} HS 7 / 108 Keary et al, SOE Country History: Czechoslovakia, pp18-22, FO 371 38942
C12704/1343/12 From Broad in Bari to Foreign Office, 23 September 1944. See also Prečan (ed),
\textit{Slovenské národné povstanie}, p672.
\textsuperscript{115} HS 8/278 SOE Headquarters files – policy and planning – January to December 1944.
mission led by Lieutenant James Holt-Green became the official western representatives to the CFI, though they were unable to secure the extra arms and equipment they urgently required. The Germans captured both these teams in late December 1944, after the rising had collapsed, and some were executed while others were sent to concentration camps. SOE headquarters was unaware of their fate and on 21 January 1945 a last desperate attempt was made to contact them by sending a lone, long-range fighter aircraft into the Slovak mountains.

The British authorities also helped General Rudolf Viest fly to Slovakia from London to take charge of the 1st Czechoslovak Insurgent Army at Banska Bystrica. He was accompanied by a political delegation of other exiles who had left for the liberated territories in late August via Moscow. This was a move designed to try to overcome the increasingly strained relations between the various military and political groups involved in the uprising and to bring the revolt more closely under Beneš’s control. This was only partially successful and may have actually helped increase the tensions between the Communist and non-Communist elements within Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia.

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117 FO 371 38943 C14770/1343/12, Report from Major J. Sehmer with SOE mission to Slovakia, October 1944.
120 FO 371 38932 C12632/239/12 Nichols to Eden, 21 September 1944, & FO 371 38943 C13781/1343/12 From Philip Broad in Bari to Resident Minister Central Mediterranean and Foreign Office, 10 October 1944.
Finally, on 7 October SOE launched Operation Quartz from Italy, led by Major Henry Threlfall, which brought more supplies and liaised with Golián who stressed his desperate need for arms and bomber support. On his return Threlfall noted,

Altogether a most interesting and enjoyable excursion...it was in fact a very moving one, and the visit to that small army, which is doing its best with the most slender resources imaginable, really did make one understand rather better the human element involved in the phrase 'Resistance Movements' which is such a common and everyday occurrence in the mass of paper we have to deal with. Golián and his officers were very dignified and reasonable, but there is no doubt they need help badly, and I feel it is up to us to do whatever we can.¹²⁴

Threlfall also brought back with him three members of the Slovak National Council who then travelled on to Britain for consultations with Beneš and his government.¹²⁵ Ján Ursiny, Laco Novomeský and Lieutenant Colonel Miroslav Vesel arrived in Britain on or around 13 October for meetings with both Czechoslovak and British representatives, and staged a press conference before returning to Slovakia on 14 November.¹²⁶ This was a

¹²⁴ HS 4/27 Threlfall's hand-written report of Operation Quartz, 9 October 1944.
¹²⁶ FO 371 38942 C14016/1343/12 Nichols to Roberts, 12 October 1944 & FO 371 38930 C14590/224/12, Lias to Roberts on press conference given by Slovak National Council, on 18 October 1944.
visit that demonstrated to the Central Department the increasing difficulties that Beneš and his government were now experiencing in their relations with the Slovaks.127

In response to an enquiry from General Ingr on 27 September 1944 regarding future support for a possible rising in the Protectorate and Threlfall’s appeal the Central Department re-opened the debate on support for the insurgents, in part because they did not want ‘to leave the Czechoslovak Government with the impression that we are no longer interested in events in Czechoslovakia and that we regard them as being entirely in the Soviet sphere of interest.’128 The COS duly reconsidered this question on 7 October and again on 16 October, but on both occasions concluded that the Soviets were best placed to help.129 They even castigated SOE for exceeding the directives it had been given on 20 March 1943, and for encouraging the Czechoslovaks to expect assistance from Britain.130 This was a charge that SOE strenuously denied, but one that seemed to have motivated Ingr’s earlier request.131 Nevertheless, the COS made it clear that not only would no supplies be sent to Slovakia, but that no assistance would be offered to any future uprising in the Protectorate.132 Consequently, the Czechoslovak authorities attempted to have the Czechoslovak squadrons under the RAF’s command in Britain.

128 FO 371 38927 C13611/134/12 Text of Ingr’s request Assistance to the Czechoslovak Home Army in Bohemia and Moravia, 27 September 1944 & FO 371 38943 C14312/1343/12 Foreign Office to Chiefs of Staff Committee, 14 October 1944.
129 CAB 79/80 COS (44) 331th meeting, 7 October 1944 & COS (44) 339th meeting, 16 October 1944.
130 CAB 79/80 COS (44) 331th meeting, 7 October 1944.
131 FO 371 38942 C14121/1342/12 Gubbins to Foreign Office, 13 October 1944.
transferred to the liberated territories, in order that they might undertaken re-supply missions, but this request was also refused.\textsuperscript{133}

According to Nichols, Beneš was unhappy with the COS’s decision, as were those members of the Slovak National Council in London.\textsuperscript{134} Beneš felt that the British were willing to see ‘her [Czechoslovakia] enter definitively and permanently the Soviet sphere of political influence...’, accusations Nichols sought to dispel by stressing the purely military and logistical nature of the COS’s decision.\textsuperscript{135} After this meeting Nichols made one last request to Eden for military supplies to be sent.\textsuperscript{136} Thus, for the final time the COS considered this question on 27 October and again rejected these calls. They reasoned that,

\begin{quote}
It is at least arguable whether it is not better from the point of view of prestige to stand firm on the principle that we cannot help at all rather that to render token assistance which benefits nobody and merely leads to appeals for additional help which cannot be met...they [COS] view with apprehension the prospect of being committed to supporting a rising which has every appearance of proving abortive.\textsuperscript{137}
\end{quote}

The Central Department continued to stress the political case, however, and Alexander Cadogan even approached the Prime Minister on 31 October, but the reply was the same

\textsuperscript{133} FO 371 38944 C 16468/1343/12 Archibald Sinclair, Air Ministry, to Eden, 23 November 1944, and subsequent discussions up until 22 December 1944. See also A. Brown, \textit{Airmen in Exile}, Stroud, 2000, pp 116-118.
\textsuperscript{134} FO 371 38943 C14652/1343/12 Nichols to Eden, 20 October 1944.
\textsuperscript{135} FO 371 38943 C14664/1343/12 Nichols to Foreign Office, 23 October 1944.
\textsuperscript{136} FO 371 38943 C14772/1343/12 Nichols to Eden, 23 October 1944.
\textsuperscript{137} FO 371 38943 C14863/1343/12 General Leslie Hollis, COS, to Foreign Office, 27 October 1944.
the military arguments were decisive and any re-supply would only now 'prolong the agony.' By the end of October these discussions had become largely academic as the uprising had faltered, overwhelmed by superior German forces and the remnants of the CFI retreated to the mountains to await the arrival of the Red Army.

Much historiographical debate continues to surround the Slovak uprising, especially since these events fell hostage to competing the Cold War versions of history. But several key conclusions can now be made in the light of new archival research. First, that most of the operational planning for the uprising had been undertaken between the various Czech and Slovak political organs involved and the relevant Soviet military authorities. SOE’s and the OSS’s involvement was extremely limited prior to the outbreak of the revolt, even though they had been forewarned. Second, the Soviets did indeed send significant levels of men and materials to support the uprising, as well as launching a major operation to break through to the areas held by the CFI. That these proved insufficient was not necessarily an indication of a lack of Soviet willingness to lend support, even though this was the conclusion that the Czechoslovak government in exile eventually reached. This was an interpretation of events that the Foreign Office


and the COS were more than happy to accept as it neatly diverted attention from their own refusal to send assistance.\textsuperscript{143}

Third, under the terms of the military agreements made at the Tehran conference the previous December Czechoslovakia had been placed in the Soviet sphere of military operations and given the west’s military position in the autumn of 1944 there was little reason to alter this situation. As a result, there were no overriding tactical reasons for the western allies to send supplies to a rising about which they (so it was believed) had little forewarning and from which they were geographically distant. These considerations underpinned the British COS’s decision not to approve requests for re-supply flights, despite the fact that both the Foreign Office and SOE repeatedly stressed the political advantages to be gained by doing so. Although the Central Department did not want Beneš and his government to think that they had been left solely to the tender mercies of the Soviets there was very little they could actually do to dissuade him from this (largely accurate) perception.

Fourth, the outbreak of the Warsaw uprising prior to the revolt in Slovakia had disturbed the ever-delicate dynamics within the Grand Alliance. Although SOE had made great efforts to re-supply the Polish insurgents in Warsaw when the time came to consider lending the same assistance to Slovakia the inherent risks to allied harmony outweighed the very minor tactical advantages such assistance would have brought. Moreover, neither the British or the United States wanted to upset east-west relations at a time when they seemed to be progressing smoothly, and when thoughts were turning to the Soviet Union’s future involvement in the war in the Pacific. In any case, Air Marshal Sir John

\textsuperscript{143} CAB 79/82 COS (44) 370th meeting 15 November 1944.
Slessor, commander in chief of all RAF forces in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, had banned further flights to central Europe after the heavy losses over Warsaw.\textsuperscript{144}

Finally, and most importantly, the re-supply by air of isolated ground forces was an inexact science in the 1940s. Both the British and the Germans had previously failed to supply their own forces in Stalingrad, Tunis, Arnhem and Warsaw (although British experiments in Burma had proved more successful).\textsuperscript{145} Therefore there is no reason to suppose that if the west had sent re-supply flights that they would have prevented the uprising from failing. Large scale bombing by the RAF and the USAAF might have made a difference, but neither London nor Washington ever seriously contemplated this course of action.\textsuperscript{146} At best, regular re-supply may have allowed the insurgents to prolong the uprising for a few more weeks, but that would not have been long enough for the Red Army to fight its way into central Slovakia. Even this scenario, however, was unlikely because at the very start of the uprising German forces had disarmed two Slovak divisions in eastern Slovakia and it was these forces that were supposed to have made contact with the Red Army.\textsuperscript{147} Therefore, even if Britain and the United States had had the appropriate weapons to send, and a sufficient number of aircraft to carry them such re-supply would not have guaranteed the success of the uprising.

\textsuperscript{145} HS 7/108 Keary et al, SOE Country History: Czechoslovakia, p27, see also Foot, SOE, pp 275-276.
\textsuperscript{146} WO 216/2384 G-3 Records of SHEAF operations, September 1944 to May 1945, General Ingr to Colonel William Dunn, American Military Attaché to the Allied Forces, 1 September 1944 and subsequent rely from Brigadier General A.S. Nevins, 14 September 1944. This conclusion was also accepted by SOE, HS 7/108 Keary et al, SOE Country History, Czechoslovakia, p12.
In effect, the uprising was doomed to failure once it was clear that allied ground forces would not reach the insurgents in time. It can be concluded, therefore, that the uprising was likely to fail from the outset and this had little to do with the levels of assistance that the Soviets sent or the west’s refusal to send more.\textsuperscript{148} Crucially, this shows that with close reference to the British files, the persistent myth that direct parallels can be drawn between Soviet behaviour during the Warsaw uprising and their behaviour towards the Slovaks can be firmly rejected, as can the suggestion that the Soviets refused western requests to use their airfields for re-supply flights. As has been clearly illustrated the COS’s decisions from as early as September 1944 onwards show that no such requests were made. Consequently the reasons why the uprising failed can only be comprehended with reference to the military and logistical context.

The Slovak uprising marked a decisive and conclusive alteration in the nature of Anglo-Czechoslovak relations. Although the Foreign Office continued to inform Beneš and his government that they had not lost interest in Czechoslovak affairs the west’s failure to support the Slovak uprising, and the sluggish progress of the western allies eastward, meant that the Soviet Union looked increasingly likely to play the leading role in the liberation of the county.\textsuperscript{149} SOE had one final chance to provide the equipment and supplies it had long promised to the Czechoslovaks – during the liberation of Prague in May 1945. Unfortunately, as had already occurred in Slovakia, the west would prove incapable of matching the military assistance proffered by the Soviet Union.

Before April 1945 Britain and the United States had never seriously contemplated the prospect that their forces might actually reach Czechoslovak territory, but with the


\textsuperscript{149} FO 371 38946 C16611/1347/12 Eden to Nichols, 27 November 1944.
rapid advance of their forces across France and Germany early in the year this became a possibility, especially as the United States Third Army, under the command of General George S. Patton, was on the verge of crossing Czechoslovakia’s western borders by mid-April.\textsuperscript{150} The arrival of United States forces on Czechoslovak territory necessitated the resolution of a number of political problems that then arose. A Czechoslovak liaison team was despatched to Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force’s (SHAEF) forward headquarters where they began the task of synchronising policy between these forces and the relevant Czechoslovak authorities.\textsuperscript{151} This development came at much the same time that Czechoslovak military authorities in London requested that its Armoured Brigade, which had been stationed outside Dunkirk since late 1944, now be employed on active operations in order to provide a counter-balance to the influence of the Czechoslovak troops fighting with the Red Army, ideally in Germany or on liberated Czechoslovak territory.\textsuperscript{152} Ripka passed on this request to the British government on 18 April 1945, but this was denied.\textsuperscript{153}

On 1 May uprisings against the German occupation began in Moravia, organised by local national committees, and these revolts spread westward in advance of Soviet forces until they reached Prague on 5 May.\textsuperscript{154} It was these events that briefly re-opened the possibility that the Third Army might well be ordered to liberate the last German occupied capital in Central Europe.\textsuperscript{155} These uprisings revived the possibility that the SOE would be expected to send supplies to assist them. Moreover, pleas soon emanated

\textsuperscript{151} FO 371 47086 N 4701/207/12 from SHAEF forward HQ to Sargent, 27 April 1945.
\textsuperscript{152} FO 371 47139 N3640/1904/12 Nichols to Eden, 3 April 1945, on talks with General Ingr.
\textsuperscript{153} FO 371 47139 N4327/1904/12 Nichols to Eden, 18 April 1945, on talks with Ripka.
\textsuperscript{155} FO 371 47086 N4766/207/12 Churchill to Truman, 30 April 1945.
from the Česká národní rada (Czech national council), the political body in charge of the revolt for military assistance to be sent, be it from the east or the west. During the last days of the war, therefore, SOE became a crucial nexus between the SCAEF, the British and the Czechoslovak authorities and actually provided the first British political representative on the ground in Prague after the war.

This was a somewhat incongruous position as the SOE officer involved, Harold Perkins, had close ties with the Poles, had earlier called for the closure of SOE’s Czech section and had shown little sympathy for Czechoslovakia’s delicate political position. Perkins was with the Third Army in western Bohemia when the uprising started and was in contact with a SOE trained Czech officer Captain Jaromír Nechansky, code-named Platinum, who was in the capital and kept SHAEF and the Foreign Office informed of the developing situation. In addition, Captain Pavel Hromek, code-named Bauxite, was in touch with the Military Representative of the Czech National Council in Moravia. It was through these contacts that requests for the despatch of supplies and weaponry began to reach both SCAEF and SOE.

SOE had already considered the question of the supply of weaponry to the Protectorate and the possibility of supporting any future uprisings back in January 1945. This issue was discussed during the monthly Foreign Office/SOE liaison meeting in January 1945, when Gubbins had stressed that what pro-western resistance there was in Bohemia would ‘disintegrate unless adequate supplies could be sent to it,
and as the matter stood the available airlift was not sufficient. This question was then referred to the COS. They concluded that, although SOE should continue to encourage sabotage in the region and supported the sending of at least ten supply flights a month to the region, it should be made clear to the Czechoslovak authorities that no supplies would be provided for a general rising. This was a decision Gubbins reluctantly had to accept. Thus SOE’s limited ability to send support was recognised as far back as January as being of a political, rather than of a military nature. Concern was voiced in the Northern Department (re-named after Foreign Office reforms in late 1944) that this position was ‘dangerously vague’ and that it was unclear whether the resistance groups in the Protectorate were aware that no supplies would be arriving from the west.

In the event this was exactly what happened when requests from the insurgents in Prague were not met with sufficient deliveries of supplies. Hromek was the first to be disappointed, as his requests for the delivery of supplies to the insurgents in Moravia were not met due to bad weather over Italy, the constantly moving Soviet front line and a lack of accurate intelligence on the ground. As the situation became more desperate so did Hromek’s messages, he radioed (in a rather garbled message) that, ‘That former unfortunate Munich, repeat Munich, is repeated from the west,’ on 8 May he added, ‘We are hearing from you only excuses as weather or front line. This is our last desperate try.

162 HS 8/197 Minutes of meetings of Foreign Office/SOE liaison committee, 37th meeting, 16 January 1945.
163 FO 371 47099 N259/259/12 from Field-Marshal Sir Harold Alexander (Allied Supreme Commander in the Mediterranean) to AMSSO and Foreign Office, 4 January 1945 plus accompanying minutes by Gatehouse, 12 January 1945 & CAB 80/91 COS (45) 39 (O), 18 January 1945.
164 HS 8/197 Minutes of meetings of Foreign Office/SOE liaison committee, 38th meeting 13 February 1945.
If not successful will be forced to finish with you... After these messages had failed to elicit the required response, he did just that and SOE never heard from him again.

SOE did prepare 24 planeloads of equipment and had four parties of agents ready to be sent to Prague and RAF did make several drops, but these were infrequent and ineffectual due to bad weather in Italy and lack of reception committees on the ground. Nechansky also forwarded more calls for supplies and aerial support to Perkins, and to the Czechoslovak liaison team with SHAEF, but with little effect. Eventually on 6 May the RAF informed SOE that, 'they were unable to carry out any operations on the following day; no reason was given.' The actual reason is not difficult to ascertain - Germany surrendered the next day and RAF commanders and crewmen were understandably unwilling to risk their lives on active operations now that the war had ended.

For a second time in six months SOE had failed to re-supply the resistance in Czechoslovakia, this lack of assistance reinforced the belief of many that Czechoslovakia had been liberated by the Soviet Union alone and the west had done little to assist them. Perkins later wrote that, 'The communists are also making great propaganda out of the fact that no help was received from the west.' Clearly this was an unsatisfactory end to SOE relations with the Czechoslovak exiles and one that may also have inadvertently provided the KSČ with a significant propaganda victory. For one final time, the delicate interaction of political and military considerations had made its effects felt on

167 HS 7 / 108 Keary et al, SOE Country History: Czechoslovakia, pp29-30
168 HS 4/6 SOE history of the Czech Rising, 17 May 1945.
169 FO 371 47086 N5445/07/12 SOE, to Warner, 8 May 1945, FO 371 47159 N5223/5217/12 from BBC monitoring of Radio Prague's calls for help with the uprising & Pogue, The Supreme Command, p504.
170 HS 4/6 SOE history of the Czech Rising, 17 May 1945.
171 HS 4/7 Perkins to Gubbins from Prague 16 May 1945.
172 HS 4/51 SOE to Warner, memorandum of Perkins's activities in Prague, 16 May 1945.
Anglo-Czechoslovak relations. Beneš and his government in exile had used military and intelligence assets at the beginning of the war in order to secure political recognition, while Heydrich’s assassination had pressurised a reluctant Foreign Office to denounce the Munich Agreement. But military issues also proved to have negative effects too as the Slovak and Prague uprisings amply demonstrated.

When SOE came to assess their relations with the Czechoslovaks during the war, which had begun with such high hopes, Heydrich’s assassination was rightly regarded as a major coup, but the overall lack of success was categorised in four groups. First, direction: SOE never had full control over operations to the Protectorate and liaisons with those Czechoslovak officers entrusted with SOE work had always been problematic, most of all with Moravec who tended to focus on intelligence gathering rather than sabotage. Second, distance and weather. In fact there were only a few days in the year that an aircraft could make the journey to the Protectorate under cover of darkness and SOE’s work was continually hampered by a chronic lack of aircraft. Third, ‘The over-riding claims of Poland,’ a reason that is largely self-explanatory and was amply illustrated by SOE’s different approaches to the Warsaw and Slovak uprisings. Finally, the natural hesitancy on the part of the COS to give a full and clear directive to the Czechoslovaks, due to the failure of Czechoslovak military authorities to give full details of its secret army and the fact that by 1944 the COS regarded operations in Czechoslovakia as a Soviet commitment.173 Be this as it may by the end of the war it seemed to some people in Prague that the west had yet again, as it had done in September 1938 and again in

173 HS 7 / 108 Keary et al, SOE Country History: Czechoslovakia, p34.
March 1939, failed to come to Czechoslovakia's aid in its hour of need. This was a conclusion echoed in SOE's official history. 'SOE had done its best: but the whole story, from Munich 1938 to the Prague rising of 1945, will serve mainly to teach future generations of Czechs that in a crisis little is to be expected from the west.'

Conclusion

In many respects British policy towards the Czechoslovak government in exile, based in London during the Second World War, was ambiguous, contradictory and reactive. This is not to suggest that the British government or the Foreign Office were unduly biased against these democratic refugees or uninterested in Central European affairs, but rather that the Czechoslovak question came way down the list of British wartime priorities. The conduct of the war in Europe and in other theatres, domestic and Imperial considerations, relations within the Grand Alliance and with other allies and governments in exile (especially with the Free French and the Polish governments) all took precedence over issues related to Czechoslovakia. In effect, the sheer volume and complexity of Britain’s global interests during this period and Winston Churchill’s disinclination to consider long term plans for Europe’s future precluded the formulation of a coherent series of policies by the small number of officials in the Foreign Office’s Central Department, which also had to deal with eleven other countries and contained less than ten staff. As a consequence, British policy toward Edvard Beneš and his colleagues was hesitant, designed to avoid any unwarranted or unforeseen commitments and was largely formed in response to policy initiatives instigated by the exiles themselves. Those British policies that did emerge, therefore, were all formulated in reaction to Beneš’s objectives and goals, such as those on the question of political recognition and economic relations, the re-establishment of a Czechoslovak state, relations with the other exiled governments in London, military support for uprisings on occupied territory, tripartite relations with the Soviet Union and the proposed transfer of the Sudeten German population.

The incremental nature of British policy toward the Czechoslovak émigrés was most clearly demonstrated by the slow progress of the recognition question, a
process that lasted nearly two and half years. The British authorities reluctantly recognised a Czechoslovak National Committee in December 1939, then based in Paris, but only did so because of the earlier recognition granted by the French authorities. The subsequent recognition of a Provisional Czechoslovak government in London in July 1940 was only agreed to because of the perilous military situation Britain then faced. These were factors that the Central Department accepted even though such enhanced political recognition went against its own advice on this issue. The final phase of the recognition process that ended in July 1941 was again motivated by external influences, this time by the German invasion of the Soviet Union and Moscow’s swift and unreserved recognition of Beneš’s government. During all three stages of this process, therefore, the British authorities were reluctant to grant increased political recognition to Beneš and his colleagues, but were impelled to do so by the course of events, Beneš’s political sophistication and his relentless determination to prevail. Beneš’s resolve was again demonstrated by the dramatic reversal of British policy on the Sudeten German question and on his government’s relations with the Soviet Union in 1942 and 1943.

From the beginning of the war onwards British attitudes towards the Czechoslovak émigrés were quite explicit, even if the resulting policy was not; they were designed to extract the greatest possible levels of cooperation from the Czechoslovak émigrés on military, intelligence, economic and industrial matters while proffering the minimum level of support for Beneš’s political agenda. While this position was solely motivated by British self-interest and the wish to avoid any long term commitments in Central Europe that might prove impossible to implement, it was one that complicated bi-lateral relations. The roots of this approach lay in the fact that Czechoslovakia had ceased to exist in March 1939 and there was little
enthusiasm within the Foreign Office to see this ‘indefensible mosaic’ resurrected. Moreover, there was very little the British authorities could actually do to alter this situation, nor did they want to antagonise those states that had benefited from Czechoslovakia’s dismemberment, such as Poland and Hungary. Consequently, the Foreign Office accepted this situation and gave little consideration to issues related to the former Czechoslovakia until the outbreak of war in September 1939. By way of contrast Beneš and his colleagues created an ‘action abroad’ in the United States that summer, which was dedicated to the annulment of the Munich Agreement and the reestablishment of the Czechoslovak state. This difference in approach proved crucial, as from the outset of relations the Czechoslovak exiles had a clearly defined set of political objectives, while the British authorities had none. This gave Beneš and his colleagues a distinct advantage in all subsequent negotiations, as they had explicit goals they wished to achieve and using the political, military and intelligence assets at their disposal they were repeatedly able to ‘short circuit’ British decision making to their advantage, as they demonstrated during the recognition process. They demonstrated this ability once again in the summer of 1942 when, in the wake of the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich in Prague – an operation assisted by Britain’s Special Operations Executive (SOE) – Beneš was able to secure his most cherished objective in the face of the Central Department’s strenuous objections: the denunciation of Britain’s adherence to the terms of the Munich Agreement.

But it was the powerlessness of the British authorities unilaterally to influence events in Central Europe, as was demonstrated in March 1939 and again in May 1945, that exerted the largest influence on bilateral relations. It was Britain’s inability to project its power into the region, both in reference to Czechoslovakia and Poland, that impelled Beneš and his government to regularise and formularise their relations (after
June 1941) with the one allied power that could, the Soviet Union. Although Beneš's desire to pursue a foreign policy based on equality between the western and eastern allies was understood by the Central Department it was viewed with some suspicion, which increased as the Red Army began to advance westward. Indeed, Beneš's decision to sign a treaty with the Soviet Union in 1943 was strongly criticised by the Foreign Office, not least because of the effect it might have on the Polish government in exile, and they repeatedly tried to delay it until Anthony Eden reserved this policy at the Foreign Ministers Conference in Moscow in October. Yet from the Czechoslovak perspective they had little choice but to deal with the Soviet authorities, especially given the Polish government's deteriorating relations with Moscow, and the Soviets' willingness to agree to the post-war recreation of a Czechoslovak state. This position was further reinforced by Britain's refusal to re-supply the Slovak Uprising in the autumn of 1944 on the grounds that Czechoslovakia now lay in the Soviet zone of military operations.

A further consequence of the British position was that throughout the war the Foreign Office maintained a series of reservations regarding its recognition of Beneš and his government. These were on the 'juridical continuity' of the Czechoslovak state, a refusal to acknowledge or commit itself to the restoration of any particular frontiers in Europe and restrictions on the exiled government's jurisdiction over the Sudeten German émigrés in Britain. As a result, unlike the Soviet Union, the Foreign Office never officially agreed to the recreation of the Czechoslovak state which was Beneš's ultimate objective and it was only in March 1945 that the War Cabinet finally agreed that the Czechoslovak government could 'excise full political authority' within the area bounded by the frontiers of 31 December 1937, at least until the anticipated post-war peace conference. This was a largely symbolic gesture, however, as by this
time the vast majority of Czechoslovak territory was under Soviet control. While Britain’s refusal to acknowledge any frontiers in Europe had little effect on those allied counties west of the Rhine this policy had quite different consequences for the Czechoslovak and Polish governments in exile.

It was in an attempt to address this issue and mutual concerns over security that both governments entered into discussions, in late 1939, regarding the possible creation of a joint federation after the war. This policy was enthusiastically welcomed and supported by the Foreign Office, as it was believed that large federations in Central and South-eastern Europe would provide an excellent *cordon sanitaire* against any future threat of German or Soviet expansion. Yet while these federative ideas seemed appealing in 1939 and 1940, it was later apparent that the Poles difficult relationship with the Soviet Union meant that Moscow would be unable to accept its creation. In the event it did not and these British-sponsored plans failed, although responsibility for this failure should be equally apportioned amongst all the relevant parties. The other problem that faced the British and Czechoslovak authorities was the question of the Sudeten German population, who had been the impetus for the Munich Agreement in 1938. The Central Department was at first favourably disposed toward those Social Democratic Sudeten Germans that had escaped to Britain and they protected and assisted them financially, not least Wenzel Jaksch, and encouraged Beneš to incorporate them into the exiled government. But this support declined as the government in exile’s political position strengthened after 1941, and Jaksch’s plans for an autonomous Sudeten German region were replaced by proposals for the wholesale removal of the German population from Czechoslovakia after the war.

The evolution of these transfers plans and British acceptance of this principle provides a unique example of the formation of a joint Anglo-Czechoslovak policy.
This was because the first concrete proposals for extensive population transfers emerged from the Foreign Office’s own Foreign Press and Research Bureau (FPRB) in May 1940, which produced a detailed memorandum on this subject in response to one of Beneš’s speeches. As plans for Central European federations stagnated so both the British and Czechoslovak authorities looked for alternative solutions to increase security and stability in the region and the transfer of ‘troublesome’ minorities became an increasingly attractive, yet controversial, solution. Thus in the wake of Heydrich’s assassination and the denunciation of the Munich Agreement the British authorities agreed to the ‘principle of transfers’ in July 1942. The subsequent development of these plans by the government in exile and the Foreign Office demonstrated that the British authorities were in fact considering far more radical and widespread proposals than were the émigrés. The eventual acceptance of the Czechoslovak government’s proposals by the European Advisory Commission (EAC) and later by the members of the Grand Alliance at the Potsdam Conference in August 1945 resulted in the implementation of these plans after the war. This was an unprecedented development for whereas the British government had been willing to appease Germany over the Sudeten German question in 1938 so as to avoid war, six years later they had completed a dramatic volte-face on this issue.

It is interesting to note that the very last British policy initiative on the Czechoslovak question, developed in late April and early May 1945, emanated from the highest levels of government and was designed to encourage the United States to order its forces to liberate Prague before the Soviet Army. Yet this belated attempt to forge a credible western presence in the Czechoslovak capital failed, it had come too late and, as had so often been the case, could not be implemented by the British authorities themselves. To paraphrase the conclusion of SOE’s own history of its
relations with the Czechoslovak exiles it could be said that - the British authorities had done their best: but the whole story, from Munich 1938 to the Prague rising of 1945, would serve mainly to teach future generations of Czechs that in a crisis little was to be expected from the west.¹

The British authorities were consistently cautious in their dealings with Beneš and his government during the war for one simple reason; no one could predict, with any degree of certainty, what the outcome of the war with Nazi Germany and her axis allies might be. Consequently, British attitudes on the Czechoslovak question were designed to keep open the widest possible number of policy options, so as to be able to react and respond to a number of possible post-war scenarios and thus avoid untenable commitments. Moreover, after the creation of the Grand Alliance in 1942 and the growing political and military predominance of the United States and the Soviet Union the Foreign Office was increasingly unable unilaterally to commit itself to any policy in Central Europe without prior reference to its principle allies. The British authorities, therefore, had little choice but to maintain a reserved and cautious attitude toward the Czechoslovak government in exile, while warning them not to become too reliant on the Soviet Union. However, the Soviet Army’s physical presence on Czechoslovak territory from early 1944 onwards meant that Beneš had little alternative but to seek some form of accommodation with Moscow. As the war in Europe came to an end in early 1945 the Foreign Office became increasingly concerned about Czechoslovakia’s international position, but as had already been demonstrated in Poland, there was very little that the British authorities could do to influence events. Thus, although the Czechoslovak government in exile had been

based in Britain for nearly six years it returned to a liberated Prague via Moscow, and Czechoslovakia’s future political orientation would not be influenced by the decisions made by London.
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1 All spelling and diacritic marks in this section follow the form found in the text itself and may vary.

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